

Community comes together for after-school program grant

THURSDAY
AUGUST 2, 2007

EAGLE TIMES

By MELISSA LAFLAMME
Staff Writer

With the receipt of a \$1.3 million grant, the community is pulling together to support after-school programs for local youth.

Newport "In order to offer students opportunities that they might never have and to build on the academics they are learning in school, we will need to collaborate with as many other organizations as possible and we need volunteers from the community," Patti Harford said in a statement.

The town submitted a proposal to the N.H. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center, and soon learned it would get a five-year grant. The town can apply for a continuation grant after the five years.

Grant money is expected to be used to hire a program director. The after-school programs are funded from a few sources, said Darlene Ayotte, director of the Newport Enrichment Team in the press release.

The 21st Century grant combined with reimbursements from the USDA Child and Adult Care Food program, and fees collected from participating families are the main financial backing for the programs.

Cinnamon Street Early Education and Child Care and the Newport Enrichment Team will operate three after-school programs in the town beginning sometime in September.

"We used poverty figures and crime statistics for the young people," said Harford about statistical proof the town provided to obtain the grant. "The kids were on the street," she said.

Staff from both agencies surveyed local parents and youth about after-school programs. The response was resounding — the community warmly welcomed such programs.

"They were like, 'yes that's what we want,'" said Harford about parents' views.

The programs will be held at Richards Elementary School, Towle Elementary School, and the Newport Middle School, and are open to every student in the Newport School District.

Cinnamon Street and NET plan to collaborate with other organizations such as Sullivan County 4-H, the Library Arts Center, Women's Supportive Services, Star Dancer's Studio, Richards Free library, Newport Recreation Department, and the Performer's Playhouse to add other activities.

"In order for the students to have these types of opportunities, we will need the support of

the community," said Ayotte in the release.

The grant writers, Ayotte and Harford, feel community support with the after-school programs is vital for students to gain real-world experience. It's their hope that students can become a part of the community while working in service-learning opportunities. "Service-learning allows youth to develop future job skills and become a part of their community," Ayotte said in the press release.

Volunteers are still needed to help run the nine-week enrichment activity, which includes preparing and facilitating a 45-minute activity each week.

Applications for employment, child enrollment and volunteers are being accepted.

Those interested should contact Patti Harford at (603) 863-4543 or Darlene Ayotte at (603) 863-5560. To enroll a child contact Ayotte or Heather Blake at (603) 863-4543.