



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
800 West Evergreen • Suite 201 • Palmer, AK 99645-6539

Phone: (907) 761-7705 • Fax: (907) 761-7783 • TDD: (907) 761-7786 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak/>

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES FUNDS FOR CHILD CARE CENTER CONSTRUCTION *Faith-Based Organizations Encouraged to Submit Applications for Guaranteed Loan Funds*

Contact: Merlaine Kruse, (907) 761-7778

PALMER, Alaska, July 24, 2008 – USDA Rural Development is seeking applications from eligible organizations for Community Facilities loan funds to construct child care facilities in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and other parts of Alaska. Child care centers are eligible for funding and faith-based organizations with facilities in rural areas that might be adapted for that purpose are encouraged to learn more about fund availability through USDA Rural Development. In order to qualify for Community Facilities funding, an entity must be a public body, Indian Tribe, or an organization operated on a not-for-profit basis and must exhibit significant ties to the local community.

“As director of Community Facilities for USDA Rural Development in Alaska, I have been told that there is a need for child care centers in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and other parts of Alaska,” said Merlaine Kruse. “Any eligible organization should look into our direct and guaranteed loan programs. That includes faith-based groups that may be interested in providing child care services to the residents of rural areas.” Kruse noted that guaranteed loan funds are currently available and after the start of the next fiscal year, grant and direct low interest long term loan funding may be available, depending on federal appropriations.

An Executive Order requires USDA to “give equal treatment to faith-based and community groups that apply for funds to meet social needs in America’s communities.” USDA rules say that faith-based organizations that participate in USDA programs can retain independence and express religious beliefs provided they do not use USDA funds to support inherently religious activities. A faith-based organization can also use space in its facilities to provide a community service like child care, using direct USDA assistance, without removing religious symbols, including art, icons or scriptures. The facility must be open to the general public.

Recently Alaska faith-based organizations have used USDA Rural Development programs to fulfill their missions. For example, a consortium of 10 churches obtained direct and guaranteed loan funds through Rural Development to expand and move a thrift store in Wasilla. “We want to actively encourage any eligible organization with facilities that can be adapted to meet community needs to look at our programs,” said Acting Alaska State Director Chad Padgett. “Rural Development is ready to help.” Community Facilities programs are available across Alaska except in the Municipality of Anchorage, the City of Fairbanks and the City and Borough of Juneau. Loans and grants cannot be made in those areas because of population size. Applications are accepted anytime. An application package can be obtained at the state office or any area office. You may contact Rural Development at (907) 761-7705.

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To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

USDA Rural Development has its state office in Palmer with area offices in Sitka, Kenai, Fairbanks, Dillingham, Bethel and Nome. Further information on rural programs is available at any of these USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting the web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak/>

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