



MEDIA RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development
1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite B, Olympia, WA 98512-5715
Contact: **Tuana L. Jones, 360-704-7709, tuana.jones@wa.usda.gov**

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USDA AWARDS \$32.4 MILLION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR EDUCATION AND MEDICAL SERVICE

Three Organizations in Washington State Are Selected For Grant Funding

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced this week the selection of 84 Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants totaling more than \$32 million, providing greater educational opportunities and medical service to rural citizens in 41 states.

“The Bush Administration recognizes the importance of technology in bringing new resources to rural America,” said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. “These grants will help expand the availability of state of the art health care and educational resources to rural families.”

In total, 57 distance education grants for \$23.5 million, and 27 telemedicine grants for more than \$ 8.9 million were selected for funding. The education projects will help 556 schools provide students with educational tools to better equip them for the global digital economy. Additionally, rural residents will have access to better, faster and more modern health care through 190 medical service facilities. A complete list of the selected grant recipients can be found at the USDA Rural Development web site at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

In Washington State, the funds will supply up-to-date technology to rural school districts for distance learning and to four small health clinics to provide teleradiology services for the rural residents.

Community Choice Healthcare Network in Wenatchee will utilize the funding for teleradiology services to allow prompt diagnosis for patients in Chelan, Brewster, Omak and Tonasket. Approximately 30,000 radiological studies per year are expected to be transmitted thanks to the equipment being purchased.

Big Bend Community College will make use of broadband connectivity to deliver real time instruction, advising, and global Internet access to school district buildings in Soap Lake, Warden and Mattawa, impacting over 3,000 students.

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The Wellpinit School District in the heart of the Spokane Indian Reservation continues to broaden the impact of their state-of-the-art “global classroom” concept with the aid of advanced telecommunications equipment. Funding from USDA Rural Development has been leveraged with assistance from the Gates Foundation and the Hewlett Packard Corporation for the venture. These new grant dollars will supply laptop computers to students unable to participate in the traditional school setting. The global classroom concept allows hundreds of students to complete their high school education.

Information technology is critical to rural Americans. It significantly improves the quality of their health care and their ability to receive access to educational programs that prepare them for a competitive future,” said Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

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