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Literacy Volunteers seeking funds

By Diane Fowler

Beacon staff writer

fowlerdaddle@wmconnect.com

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GRANTS - The Grants City Council heard a request by the Literacy Volunteers of Cibola County for additional funds of \$2,000 to make up for a shortfall caused by a reduction in its yearly grant from the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy.

Barbara Wesley and Randolph Collins, director and president of LVCC respectively, informed the council about the activities and opportunities the group provides for local citizens who want to improve their educational situation and economic prospects.

"The importance of LVCC is related to local economic development because an educated workforce is needed," Collins explained.

Wesley pointed out that the group works on a budget of \$55,000 per year and a shortfall will mean a decrease in services to the local community. "We may have to close for the summer if we don't get help from others," she predicted.

Ordinarily LVCC requests \$8,000 from the city council for the fiscal year, but this year they asked for \$10,000 in order to make up for the lower grant from NMCL.

According to its literature, LVCC offers a variety of free services to members of the community, especially in the area of English as a second language. In addition to training volunteers to serve as certified tutors, the program offers free ESL classes in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

There is also tutoring in reading, writing and math for both adults and children in grades one through six. Programs offered at prisons include basic tutoring in reading, the "Fathers-as-Readers" program and tutor training workshops.

LVCC also offers preparation for both the U.S. Citizenship test and the GED examination, individualized math tutoring, computer literacy and family literacy. A lending library provides tapes, textbooks and workbooks, and lesson planning assistance and individualized lessons are offered to help meet the learners' goals.

Financial literacy is another facet of the LVCC program. Free classes in family finance, budgeting and balancing a checkbook are offered.

The organization cites some sobering statistics from Cibola County: a 35 percent illiteracy rate, a 34 percent high school dropout rate, a poverty level of 33 percent and a 7 percent unemployment rate.

In operation since 1986, LVCC currently operates literacy programs for Acoma Head Start, the City of Grants, the Village of Milan, Cibola County, St. Bonaventure Indian Mission School, the Pueblo of Zuni, Pine Hill Ramah Navajo Chapter and Cibola County Schools at Acoma, Laguna, Grants, Milan, Seboyeta, Cubero and San Raphael.

Wesley told the council members that the value of volunteer hours in fiscal year 2007-08 totaled \$2,379,917 and in-kind donations were valued at \$831,133.

The city council postponed action on the request for funding.

"We may have to close for the summer

if we don't get help from others."

— BARBARA WESLEY

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