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Literacy programs merging

Tuesday, Mar 22 2011, 7:11 pm

Liliana Castillo

The Curry County Literacy Council is being absorbed by the Adult Basic Education program at Clovis Community College.

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy's budget was cut 57 percent by the Legislature. That means the coalition will be providing limited funding to each of the 26 literacy councils in the state. By combining the two programs, CCC will be able to continue providing literacy help through ABE.

The two programs have worked in tandem since the council was created in 2004, Council Director Mona Lee Norman-Armstrong said.

The council tutors people in basic literacy, assists with life skills, workplace literacy, pre-GED preparation, and citizenship test preparation, as well as English as a second language tutoring.

The ABE program provides alternative education services such as GED, English as a second language and basic math, reading and language skills classes.

Through the council, volunteers worked one-on-one with adults whose

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reading and language abilities were below the third grade level. As part of the ABE program, the same adults will be put into a classroom setting and taught by trained educators.

The ABE program has served adults whose reading, language and math skills are at and above a third grade level and will simply begin to include those below the third grade level in June.

“We realized we could be more productive meeting our students needs through the classroom,” Norman-Armstrong said.

Norman-Armstrong, also the director of ABE’s home, the Center for Student Success, said it will cost \$250 per student through the ABE program compared to the \$600 per student through the literacy council.

The ABE program will continue to use volunteers in the classrooms, Norman-Armstrong said.

Services provided by the ABE are free and textbooks are provided.

Becky Rowley, CCC’s vice president, said she believes the transition will be smooth.

“The ABE program provides most of those services already. This helps us mainstream those services,” Rowley said.

Rowley said the most important thing is that the services are not cut completely from the community.

“We have to do it, is the bottom line, when there are people in the community that need those services” she said. “Even though it falls a little out of our services.”


Rowley also said that the CCLC was housed with the ABE program previously, so keeping the programs together will make it easier for those receiving the services.

By the numbers

Curry County Literacy Council students since established in 2004:

- 2004-2005 — 11
- 2006-2007 — 57
- 2008-2009 — 29
- 2009-2010 — 29

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While it is commendable that the community college is willing to support the literacy council, the loss of the Curry County Literacy Council's one-to-one tutoring program will have a negative impact on the low-level readers in Curry County, where the demonstrated need is so great. We trained and certified their professional volunteer tutors to work one-to-one with low-level adult literacy students. They did not receive training to work in the classroom, and this population can't learn to read in a classroom setting. That's why we were founded almost 24 years ago – to meet an unmet need. I do hope that something can be done to allow for one-to-one services to continue.

Though our funding was reduced for fiscal year 2012, the legislators did their best in light of many difficult circumstances. Despite budget cuts, we will continue to support this marginalized and hard to serve population in need – adults who read at or below the 6th grade level. In fact, statewide our cost per student is only \$175 compared to ABE's average of \$267, but we do serve different populations. Please rest assured that services were not and are not duplicated. Therefore, how will these students' needs be met? We wish you the very best and much luck as you work to serve the adults in need of literacy, basic education, and higher education in Curry County. We will continue to do our part, too.

Best of luck.

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