

Literacy Campaign for Monterey County in the news...

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Grants target adult literacy

Seven groups get part of \$300,000 in funding

By ROBERT SALONGA

MONTEREY - A cadre of Salinas-area educators and community assistance groups will receive a combined \$300,000 to expand adult literacy resources, the Community Foundation for Monterey County announced Wednesday.

The foundation issued grants to seven agencies, all of which plan to hire additional staff to offer new literacy programs from Castroville to Greenfield.

Education officials estimate that 25 percent of adults ages 18 to 35 in Monterey County read at below fourth-grade level, which prevents many residents from improving their lives, said Todd Lueders, president of the Community Foundation.

"Lack of literacy is a barrier for many people as parents and in their employment," Lueders said during an announcement ceremony at the foundation's office in Monterey.

Even in agriculture, which traditionally has relied on unskilled labor, literacy is increasingly becoming a necessity, said Jim Bogart, president of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California.

"We're really morphing ... from an unskilled, hand-labor work force to very technical, professional labor," Bogart said. "Good reading and writing skills are vital ... and can afford opportunities for workers and families to not just sustain themselves, but promote themselves."

The largest share of the funding, \$100,000, will go to Alisal Community Healthy Start in Salinas to expand the Plaza Comunitaria program, which helps adults reach pre-literacy and elementary reading levels.

The organization's Latino Family Literacy Project, aimed at building reading routines between parents and their grade-school children, will also see increased offerings.

The programs have allowed Salinas parents with few language skills to gain the ability to fill out school forms, read teachers' notes and help their children with their homework, said program manager Annabelle Rodríguez.

"Literacy is a basic human right, and the foundation of lifelong learning," Rodríguez said.

Grant funds will also allow the Monterey County Free Libraries system to expand its adult literacy programs from one location in Seaside to libraries in Castroville and Soledad.

Greenfield will gain an indigenous-language literacy program, thanks to a \$45,000 grant to Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, better known as CHISPA. Residents who speak Triqui and Mixteco will learn Spanish and then apply learned concepts toward building English skills.

Cesar Lara, executive director of the Central Coast Citizenship Project, said its \$20,000 grant will allow the group to bring literacy courses directly to field laborers at their work sites.

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DETAILS

The following agencies received a share of \$300,000 in grants from the Community Foundation for Monterey County:

- ALISAL COMMUNITY HEALTHY START:**
\$100,000
- MONTEREY COUNTY FREE LIBRARIES:**
\$45,000
- CHISPA:**
\$45,000
- NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT:**
\$40,000
- CHARTWELL SCHOOL:**
\$30,000
- CENTRAL COAST CITIZENSHIP PROJECT:**
\$20,000
- VOLUNTEER CENTER OF MONTEREY COUNTY:**
\$20,000



Annabelle Rodriguez, of Alisal Community Healthy Start, speaks Wednesday at the announcement of the grants by the Community Foundation of Monterey County.

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RICHARD GREEN
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<http://www.thecalifornian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070118/NEWS01/701180312>

Literacy Campaign for Monterey County website: www.literacycampaign.org