

Food

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"I'm glad to see some of that coming here at home," she said.

Program coordinator Javier Pulido said that the influx of funds from Walmart has allowed for program features that USDA regulations have prevented in the past.

"With the Walmart money we were able to reinstate snacks, which we had to stop doing a couple of years ago because of the economy," Pulido said. "We are also part-

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nering with the library for them to do story times in different languages for kids at selected sites, we are doing a pilot Saturday program, and we were able to increase the number of sites that the parks department has."

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served approximately 140,000 meals, and 4,200 children, and this year they hope to do more.

"Of the number of kids in the Seattle School District, approximately 35 percent qualify for the program," he said. Pulido added that of those who qualify, only about 14 percent actually take advantage of these services.

"It's a very underutilized program," he said. Pulido believes that transportation issues hinder participation levels. "We don't have sites in every location. The closest site may still be a couple of miles away. Even though that's relatively close, if the parents work or they don't have transportation to get the kids there, they can't access it."

David Takami, strategic communications advisor for the city's human services department, which oversees the program, agreed and said that publicity also affects participation.

"The challenge is getting the word out. Schools during the school year are a captive audience, and people know about the program and take advantage of it because it's right there and the kids need to eat during the day," he said. "But our view is that they need to eat healthy food and nutritious meals during the summer, too."

U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-7th District) added that the need for continuing the Summer Food Service Program is essential to the success of our children.

"Somehow, we think that kids lives end at summer vacation and everything is beauti-



ful," he said at the kickoff event. "It isn't for poor kids. Poor kids face the same problems in the summertime that they do the rest of the year, that is how they get food, keep themselves together and keep developing."

In addition to major changes for this year's program such as the Walmart grant, Pulido noted that internal economic changes affected the 2011 program. He said that he used to rely on college work-study students as staff, benefiting from universities paying 70 percent of their salary. But with state budget cuts, Pulido said work-study programs were drastically reduced, forcing him to pay 100 percent of his staff this year.

"Next year we are really going to have to look at the program and see if we can afford to do that," he said. "That will have a deep impact for us next year."

Despite Pulido's concerns, Patricia Wells, Pulido's supervisor in the human services department, said the city is committed to supporting the program, even if it is in a reduced form.

"We'll make the adjustments to continue the program next year," said Wells.

Janelle Wetzstein is a student in the University of Washington Department of Communication News Laboratory.

Roots

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In addition to the new outlets, the renovation will add more bathrooms and showers, a larger laundry facility, and will provide lockers for the guests.

"It will make it a better quality stay," Cunningham said. "It will be a space that will function more efficiently."

Brad Trenary, a board member of the Raynier Institution and Foundation, said they had been researching youth homelessness for two years before finding the right organizations to support.

"We went through a deliberate and specific process," Trenary said. "We wanted to find a way to make a significant impact on a social problem."

Their search came to an end in 2010 when the Raynier Institution and Foundation made a \$7.75 million contribution to two Seattle-based organizations that serve homeless youth. One of them was YouthCare, serving homeless and at-risk

youth aged 12 to 24, and the other was ROOTS.

The \$500,000 award to ROOTS was decided upon in February 2010, and now has officially been approved.

Renovations on ROOTS will begin in August and last about three months. Construction will take place during the day, allowing the shelter to remain open without much impact on the facility.

"One of the things that the Raynier Institute and Foundation is really hopeful about, is that this major investment into helping youth homelessness will invite other organizations and individuals to step up to the plate to contribute," Trenary said of the grant.

Lauren Dire is a student in the University of Washington Department of Communication News Laboratory.

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