

Stangier Reviews Community Action Program

"We try to deal with problems as they actually exist rather than as we often think they exist," said Bob Stangier, executive secretary of the Blue Mountain Economic Development Council, speaking to the Chamber of Commerce on April 21.

He discussed the Community Action Programs in Umatilla and Morrow counties, stating that they are funded federally through a regional office in San Francisco. A 27-member board administers the program in the two counties. The board is composed one-third of public officials, one-third of interested persons, and one-third of low income persons, he said.

Advisory boards work with the local programs but have no official capacity. Neighborhood Centers are now operated in

Heppner, Hermiston, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater, and on the Umatilla Indian reservation.

Under the federal guidelines of poverty, 17% in Morrow county exist under conditions of poverty, Stangier said. This figure income of \$2100 or less annually for a couple, \$2600 for a family of three, \$3100 for a family of four, or \$3600 for a family of five.

Contract is drawn by the regional board and the local governing board for the operation of the Community Action programs, and there is 25% participation through local funds.

from \$1.60 per hour for unskilled help to \$25 per hour for attorneys or doctors.

In Heppner, the program operates on a budget of 1000 "hard dollars" with \$250 "in kind" service furnished locally.

Among "in kind" services performed are volunteers taking care of the office while the staff goes to Pendleton for training, volunteers taking people to Pendleton to the doctor or for rehabilitation services; sewing on bassinets; and other help.

Used clothing is given through the center, but this is not an "in kind" service, Stangier said.

Some \$200 to \$250 per month is given in clothing but this cannot be charged off because it does not replace any service offered by the federal government.

"There is a misconception in which people often believe this

said. "We don't have a dollar to give away. Our purpose is to help low income persons organize into a responsible group to help solve problems."

He added, "We are trying not to be a crutch to these people. We try to show them how to function and carry on their own responsibilities."

Last year, about 30 people in Heppner went through the G. E. D. classes for high school diploma equivalency through the neighborhood center, Stangier said. About half received their certificates.

Another purpose is to help senior citizens, particularly those of low income. The Center is a social center for them, a place where women can come and sew and do things in common.

Stangier said that some changes are planned for the new year following an evaluation by Blue Mountain Community College last year. The study brought a favorable report, but the plan is to train the staff to function better, work more closely on employment service by going into testing and counselling, and improve in other areas.

"We are trying to bring low income persons to the place where they are taxpayers instead of tax consumers," Stangier declared.

He was introduced by Jerry Sweeney, president of the Chamber.

Mrs. Tom Sargent of Lincoln City, Ore., was a visitor one day last week at the home of her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Jack McTimpney.

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