Area education, earnings shown on Web site

Saturday, February 5, 2010

By Lynne Lynch
Herald staff writer

MOSES LAKE - Grant County is behind the state average in education and income levels, according to data on the Grant County Trends Web site.

But as the economy turns around and different companies expand or locate in Grant County, there will probably be more focus on improving those areas, Grant County EDC Managing Director Jon Smith commented this week.

"There's a lot of work we can do in that area of the community," he said. "If you look at Washington State, we lead the state in the indicators on the level of employment being the wrong way around."

Statewide, 19.9 percent of the population has earned a bachelor's degree, with 17.5 percent having bachelor's degrees on a national level.

In Grant County, the figure is much lower at 8.5 percent.

Income levels are also lower, with Grant County's average wage and the state's average income widening. According to 2008 figures, there's a 49 percent difference between Grant County's per capita income of $28,707 and the statewide amount of $42,747.

This is an increase of 13 percent since 1987.

"This is going the wrong way," Smith said.

But Grant County has seen business growth continuing this year, a factor which lies in the area's favor.

With REC Silicon's expansion and SGL Automotive Carbon Fibers' upcoming plant, jobs requiring college degrees are becoming more available, Smith explained.

These opportunities pose a question: What can we do as community so local high school graduates can say they have the education they need?

Because some of the positions haven't been here, the training hasn't either, he said.

"As the occupational make-up changes, how can we as a community keep up to take advantage of the occupations?" he asked.

The gap between Grant County and the rest of the state isn't as wide when it comes to vocational degrees.

On average, 9.3 percent of the state's population has vocational degrees, as compared to 6.9 percent in Grant County.
But income levels show a disparity.

The median household income is also higher statewide than in Grant County, with 2009 figures showing the amount as $46,500 here and $56,313 across the state. Nationally, that figure was $49,777.

One possible reason for the difference is there are larger households in Grant County with 3.1 people per home, as compared to 2.55 people per home statewide.

It means the household income is being spread among larger households, resulting in the lower number, he explained.

For more information, visit www.grantcountytrends.ewu.edu/.