Public invited to see new county Web site

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By Lynne Lynch
Herald staff writer

MOSES LAKE — A new Web site showing indicators of economic vitality in Grant County is to be unveiled to the public Monday.

A presentation is from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Big Bend Community College.

The kick-off event is the culmination of months of work and meetings in Moses Lake to determine what data should be placed online.

Details such as teen pregnancy rates and adults without health insurance are among the 145 items to be placed online.

Other areas include education, economics, public safety, housing, agriculture, recreation and tourism, said Patrick Jones, executive director of Eastern Washington University’s Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis.

The university has done several similar projects throughout Eastern Washington, he said.

Funds for the work were obtained through federal appropriations in 2009, Jones explained.

“We have sites of different vintages up and running,” Jones commented. “The site in northeast Washington has only been up for five months.”

He knows the Web site has been of value to the Tri-County Economic Development Council. The information was used for a community benefit assessment by the hospital organization in Stevens County.

In Spokane, the indicators project was called a gift to the community by the mayor, Jones said.

“We have quite a book of good responses from various leaders in these communities,” he said.

Donn Cook, executive director of the Columbia Basin Foundation in Ephrata, called the Web site a “terrific opportunity for our organization.”

She was involved with determining content for the site.

“It will give us a lot of information about what’s going on here and who is doing what,” she said.

Part of the foundation’s mission includes supporting all the non-profit organizations in its service area.

Some examples of the foundation’s work includes providing student grants for Quincy Partnership for Youth and donating funds to Quincy Communities That Care.
Grant County Health District Administrator Jeff Ketchel was also involved with determining site content. He finds the site a clear and useful tool to communicate to the community health data and to let people know how Grant County compares statewide on specific issues.

This summer, the following 11 health items received the most votes from community members for the Web site and will be added:

- Teen pregnancy rates by age group
- Share of adults considered to be overweight or obese
- Share of adults, ages 18-64, without health insurance
- Share of adults with a personal health care provider
- Number of medical doctors and doctors of osteopathic medicine per 1,000 residents
- Additional years of life expectancy at age 20
- Deaths by four leading causes
- First trimester prenatal care rates
- Hospitalizations by four leading causes
- Share of youth smoking
- Share of adults with diabetes

Ketchel said the site also helps give direction concerning where more effort needs to be spent.

In other counties, where the sites are completed, he thought the information was presented in an understandable way.

“I think it’s good for the casual observer and the person who is a little more into numbers,” he commented.

The kick-off event is free, open to the public and held at Big Bend Community College’s ATEC Center, located at 7662 Chanute St. N.E., Moses Lake.

To RSVP for the event, call 509-764-6579.