

The EICAP Vision

40 Years of Service and Going Strong

BY SHANNON AMY STOCKWELL

IT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU to know that there is a large percentage of Eastern Idaho residents who are one catastrophic illness away from losing most of what they have. With the federal poverty line set at \$21,000 for a family of four in mind, if you were to take a close look at the statistics of how many families are at financial risk you would find a staggering figure looming.

This is why we have agencies such as Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership, or EICAP

In Idaho Falls alone, EICAP has helped about 4,500 families in a nine-county area with one-time energy assistance in a year's time. That means they have helped with

utility bills during the coldest months of winter, usually November to March

Its mission is to make a difference in people's lives, and was started here 40 years ago. Since its inception it has grown to serve all ages of residents. From the Head Start program to mutual self-help housing, aging services, weatherization, and other community services, the director and staff at EICAP are dedicated to helping everyone they can

"Volunteers are always needed in many capacities," says Executive Director Russ Spain "We offer outreach services to a nine-county area, from the Bingham-Bonneville county line up north and over to the Wyoming border, and including Butte, Lemhi

and Custer counties. We can always use volunteers."

Head Start, including all satellite programs in the area, serves a total of 241 children, ages three to five years old, which involves the entire family.

EICAP also distributes food from the Boy Scout and Postal Food Drives to the local food banks and soup kitchens in eight of the nine local counties served, which is another effort for which help and donations are always needed

It will open an office in Madison County and take over the food bank there as soon as it can find a building. That will service Madison, Fremont and Teton counties.

It also facilitates the Haven Homeless shelter under its community services program, which helps families get back on their feet—giving a lift and some consistency.

There are about 312 low-income apartments in the area that are under its program. It also offers mutual self-help housing. In this program, families are required to spend about 30 hours per week building their own home. This is usually a six- to 10-unit group of homes, and nobody is allowed to move in until all the homes in this block are finished. So homeowners create a community and get to know each other in the building process and are hopefully a support for each other afterward. To date it has helped 116 families build their own homes—the program started in 1997. It is currently working on about 32 additional homes. There are other programs in the works at this time for more low-income housing opportunities for our area

EICAP started in a church in the area 40 years ago, primarily serving seniors. It has now grown to a staff of about 150 employees who help support citizens of all ages in the area. To find out more or to volunteer, visit eicap.org.



EICAP director Russ Spain