

Head Start program proves beneficial to kids

Kathy Batterton, manager of the EICAP Head Start Program in Salmon, addressed the Salmon Rotarians at their weekly lunch meeting November 17 at the American Legion Hall. Salmon has one of six Head Start centers within the EICAP (eastern Idaho) region. The Salmon Center has 17 slots for children aged three to five years, and is located at 955 Riverfront Drive in the EICAP building.

Children must qualify by age and family income to participate in the Head Start Program, with the annual income limit of \$22,050 for a family of four. Once accepted into the program, a child may stay even if the family income increases. Foster children in this age group are eligible for Head Start participation regardless of family income.

In addition to Batterton, there are four staff members in the Salmon program. Darla Daniels and Savannah Gonzales are the teachers, and they are certified as primary school

teachers as well as holding Associate of Arts degrees in early childhood education. Family Advocate Angie Miller does liaison work with the children's families, and Kim Brown is the cook.

Cooking is an integral part of the program, as breakfast and lunch are provided for all staff and students, who eat family-style. Students assist in preparing for the meals and in cleaning up after the meals, as well as participating in discussions at the tables.

The Salmon program is using a new curriculum called "The Investigators' Club," which encourages children to take an active role in discovering new facts and ideas. Children learn by asking questions and playing the role of detectives rather than by passive listening. Social skills are also emphasized - students learn to share, to take turns and to understand how others react to their actions. The kindergarten teachers here in Salmon have noted that chil-

dren graduating from the Head Start program are advanced in working and playing cooperatively when they start kindergarten. Head Start also provides their students with free vision and hearing screening and well-child medical and dental exams.

Parents meet together monthly and an elected parent representative goes to the EICAP Head Start meetings in Idaho Falls at EICAP headquarters. Parents are also involved as regular volunteers at the center.

A major portion of Head Start's funding comes from a federal grant, and the grant requires a 20 percent match of in-kind donations. These donations can be either goods or volunteer labor provided by the community, so Head Start benefits doubly from community volunteer hours and donated supplies.

Although all 17 slots are currently filled, Batterton said the Center must maintain a waiting list of eligible children. Every year, some children move away, and any open slot must be filled within a month or there is a financial penalty to the program. This means the program loses funds while local children lose an opportunity to participate.

Batterton urges any parents interested in this program to call her at 756-3999, extension 102, so their children can be signed up on the waiting list. She urged Rotarians to use their contacts to encourage sign-ups to the waiting list.

President Kevin Wright chaired the meeting, and members were reminded to mail their checks to Elaine Mayberry for the December 8 Christmas Dinner.