



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Occupational empowerment program is 'Helping Humboldt'

The property surrounding the library in Eureka is getting some much needed attention, thanks to a new program that provides residents with meaningful work that serves the community.

Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services' (DHHS) new Helping Humboldt program gives participants, many of whom have little to no work histories, opportunities to learn work skills while helping beautify the community.

Program Coordinator Melissa Furbee said the goal is to provide tangible job skills to assist participants into permanent employment. Also through this program, General Relief recipients have an opportunity to work off their repayable benefits.

Furbee said participants benefit from learning soft job skills like showing up on time and learning how to troubleshoot work dynamics, to more concrete skills like landscaping techniques.

As many as six participants and a project leader meet at a set time and assist with a project at a county facility or another location in the community. For example, Furbee said participants go to the Humboldt County Library's Eureka branch weekly where they pick up trash in front of and behind the building.

Library Operations Manager Ronda Wittenberg said, "Helping Humboldt has already made noticeable and favorable improvements to the library grounds, specifically in our patron parking lot. We look forward to even more grounds improvements as the program comes up to full speed."

Connie Lorenzo, program manager for DHHS's Employment Training Division, said, "The ultimate goal of the program is getting people doing constructive community work, but also getting people ready for work. We're really focused on that piece. How do you engage and motivate, and help people get plugged back in? This isn't just busy work. You're out in your community giving back."

While the program is still in its infancy, plans to expand it are already in the works. Lorenzo said they are planning to make it available to probationers and clients from other DHHS programs, as well as working with members of the business community to see what other locations need assistance with trash cleanup, light landscaping and eventually some graffiti abatement.

“It’s beneficial for the community to see our clients being constructive members of the community and giving back,” Lorenzo said. “It’s something that has an impact on the local community.”



Helping Humboldt participants Kirstie Wright and Ross Lewis, both of Eureka, stand in front of the Humboldt County Library’s main branch in Eureka.



Helping Humboldt program participant Kirstie Wright, of Eureka, removes weeds and trash from the parking lot of the Humboldt County Library’s main branch in Eureka.

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