

Summit deemed a success

Event draws 160 to learn what's right with rural areas

By Dee Camp
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN – Wednesday's Success Summit drew together about 160 people for a day-long discussion of what makes a rural area successful and how those bright points can be expanded.

"The greatest thing was getting to make connections with so many positive people," Okanogan teacher Ron Cate said. "There are a lot of things going on with different agencies and businesses that I was not aware of."

"It went really well. People were very engaged and interested in learning," Nancy Warner of the Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship said. "People each year are excited, encouraged and inspired by each other."

The event, at Okanogan Middle School, included updates on previous Success Summit stories dating back to the first year in 2009, including the Chumstick Fire Coalition, bacterial control of cheatgrass and farm-to-school programs in Bridgeport and Wenatchee.

Those who attended learned about a planned dental program expansion for Family Health Centers, the Salish language program at Waterfall School near Omak, restoration of Salmon Creek and use of digital media in the classroom.

"I really enjoyed hearing about the Salish-speaking school," Okanogan freshman Alahna Timentwa said.

Middle school students, under the direction of Doug Woodrow, showed a video they'd produced about Okanogan.

In the afternoon, participants broke up into groups to brainstorm on issues



Jennifer Marshall/The Chronicle

Julie Ashmore sings "What's Been Done Well" during the event.

such as recruiting volunteers, developing leaders, engaging youth in the community, and reducing waste and increasing recycling/repurposing, Warner said.

People learned about a student initiative to increase graduation rates and developing a database of volunteer needs.

"People learned about resources they didn't know were there," she said.

"I really enjoyed the group activity in the afternoon," Okanogan sophomore Nacole Todd said. "I got to interact with adults and hear their stories about being a leader."

"I came out of the event feeling energized and realizing what a great place Okanogan is to live," Cate said. "So many people dedicated to the rural lifestyle and trying to do their

part to make it an even better place."

Slow Food Okanogan provided lunch from local products. The Okanogan Grange women provided pie and the Okanogan Chamber of Commerce kept the coffee pot full.

"It was great to see how the community came together to put it on," freshman Jill Townsend said.

Next year's Success Summit will be in Douglas County, probably in Mansfield or Waterville, Warner said.

Last year's event was in Entiat.

"Having grown up in Entiat, it was great to have people from there, where the last summit was, come to Okanogan. I am also excited to go to next year's summit," Cate said.

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