

Women's Fund El Dorado Site Visit Committee Report 2018

Assistance League of Sierra Foothills

On October 21 and November 4, 2017 Harriet Knops, Chairman of the Operation School Bell program, met with members of the Site Visit Committee at the Placerville K-Mart Store for an onsite orientation of the program. The Assistance League of the Sierra Foothills was awarded a \$25,000 WFED Community Focus Grant for the Operation School Bell Program in 2017.

Committee Chair Claudia Taylor and members Jamie Hartshorn, Helen Walsh, Martha Hom, Avis Jolly, Emogene Haller, and Paula Grady were given a brief overview of the Operation School Bell Program by Harriet Knops. The OSB program works with 31 schools on the Western Slope of El Dorado County to identify the socioeconomically disadvantaged K-8 students who would benefit from participating in the school clothes shopping events at K-Mart and Target stores. Identified students and families are provided with shopping vouchers (\$70 for elementary students, \$100 for middle school students) to purchase appropriate school clothing. The shopping events are scheduled to coincide with the arrival of winter jackets and coats in the participating stores. Students and families are provided a list of acceptable items and assistance from volunteers to find clothing, price items, keep a tally of the amount spent, check out with designated cashiers, and select a free book as they leave. K-Mart stores encourage participating families to pre-shop before events, provide OSB with a partial matching program of \$10 for every \$100 spent, and tax-free purchases with vouchers.

The Assistance League of Sierra Foothills held seven OSB events this year serving students in Placerville, South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado Hills. The \$25,00 grant was used for about 357 students out of the total of 907 served.

The Site Visit Committee members were very impressed with the extensive organization of this program. Volunteers provided supportive, sensitive assistance to students and families. Families were provided vouchers, shopping lists and volunteer assistance as needed to find and keep track of purchases. Families who did not arrive at the events by mid-morning were called and reminded. Transportation assistance was provided for some families as well as rescheduling one event due to weather restrictions.

Claudia Taylor
WFED Site Visit Committee