January 13, 2009

More seeking Aid – YOU can help

Monday, Dec. 22, 2008. The headline read "**More seeking aid at holidays**". The Tri-City Herald article featured a disabled mother (Mary Carter) of three who was "having a hard time pulling together Christmas for her family.." The article went on to say that many are struggling in our area and that the social service agencies can't help everyone with their limited resources. Or can they?

A few days later, a follow-up article summarized the outpouring of help that came from individuals, businesses, and agencies around the area. The mom and 3 kids got lots of assistance and, no doubt, had a happy, memorable holiday. But that was only one family. What about the many hundreds of others in need?   What about those that the Salvation Army and Safe Harbor Crisis Nursery, the only agencies mentioned in the Herald article, could not help? And what has happened to the Carter family since then? The only other social service resource cited in the Herald article was 211 – is that the only answer?

The answer? Everyone in need <u>can</u> get help. 211 is only is a small part of the answer!

4People online information and referral

www.4people.org – Meeting people's needs Online, Anytime! The online health and human services database provides county specific information and referral services statewide. Each county has a single list of resources with phone numbers and web sites (see County Resources logo on each county page) AND a searchable database that provides more comprehensive information broken down by taxonomy category. There are nearly 3,600 services listed for the state, with nearly 900 in Benton count and over 800 in Franklin county. View statistics for the last six months of 2008 are as follows:
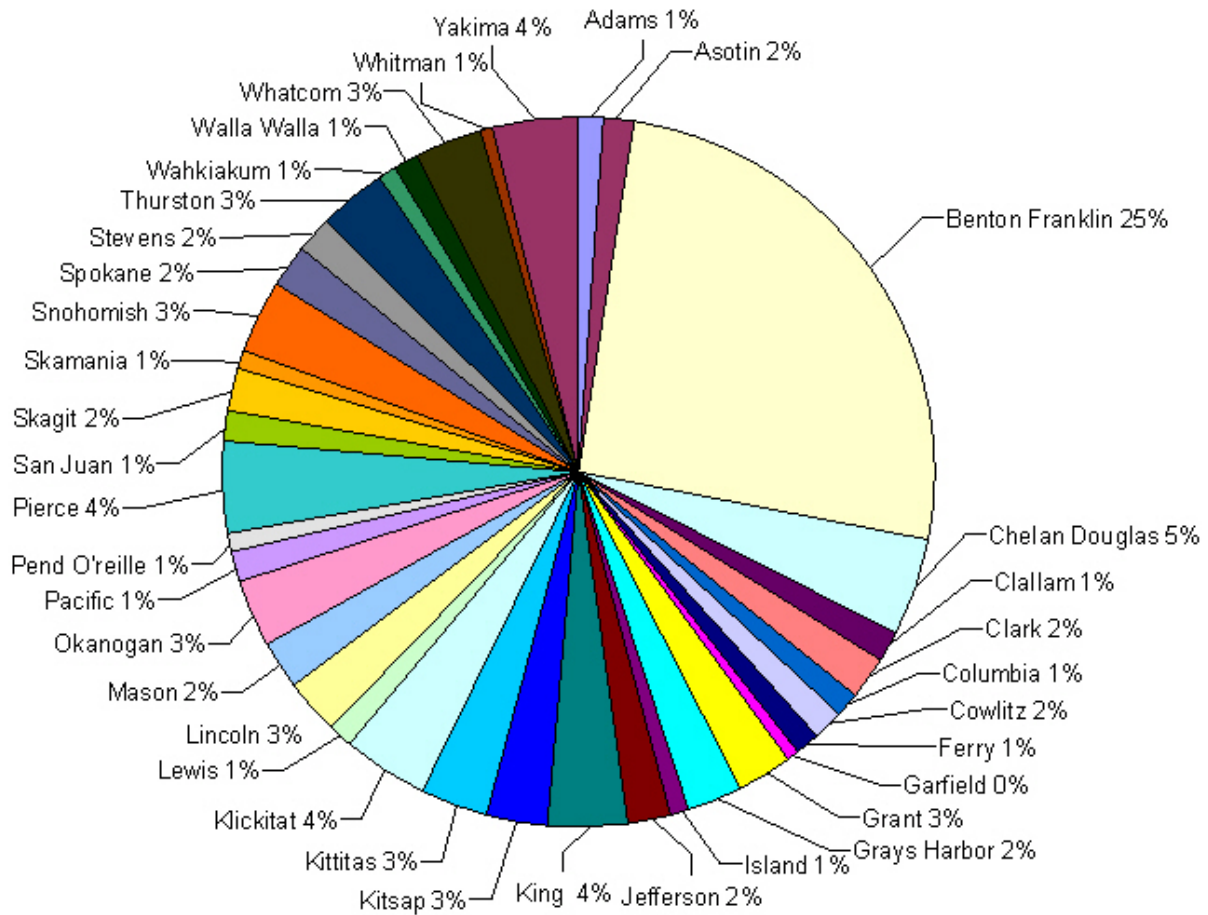
County Resources viewed July1 thru December 31, 2008
Total views = 6,824

Yakima 4%
Adams 1%
Whitman 1%
Asotin 2%
Whatcom 3%
Walla Walla 1%
Wahkiakum 1%
Thurston 3%
Benton Franklin 25%
Stevens 2%
Spokane 2%
Snohomish 3%
Skamania 1%
Skagit 2%
San Juan 1%
Pierce 4%
Chelan Douglas 5%
Pend O'reille 1%
Clallam 1%
Pacific 1%
Clark 2%
Okanogan 3%
Columbia 1%
Mason 2%
Cowlitz 2%
Lincoln 3%
Ferry 1%
Lewis 1%
Garfield 0%
Klickitat 4%
Grant 3%
Kittitas 3%
Grays Harbor 2%
Kitsap 3%
Island 1%
King 4%
Jefferson 2%

Taxonomy Resources viewed July1 thru December 31, 2008
Total views = 119, 187

4% Target Populations
9% Organizational/Community/International Services
14% Basic Needs
11% Mental Health Care and Counseling
1% Consumer Services
2% Criminal Justice and Legal Services
18% Individual and Family Life
12% Education
5% Environmental Quality
7% Income Security
18% Health Care
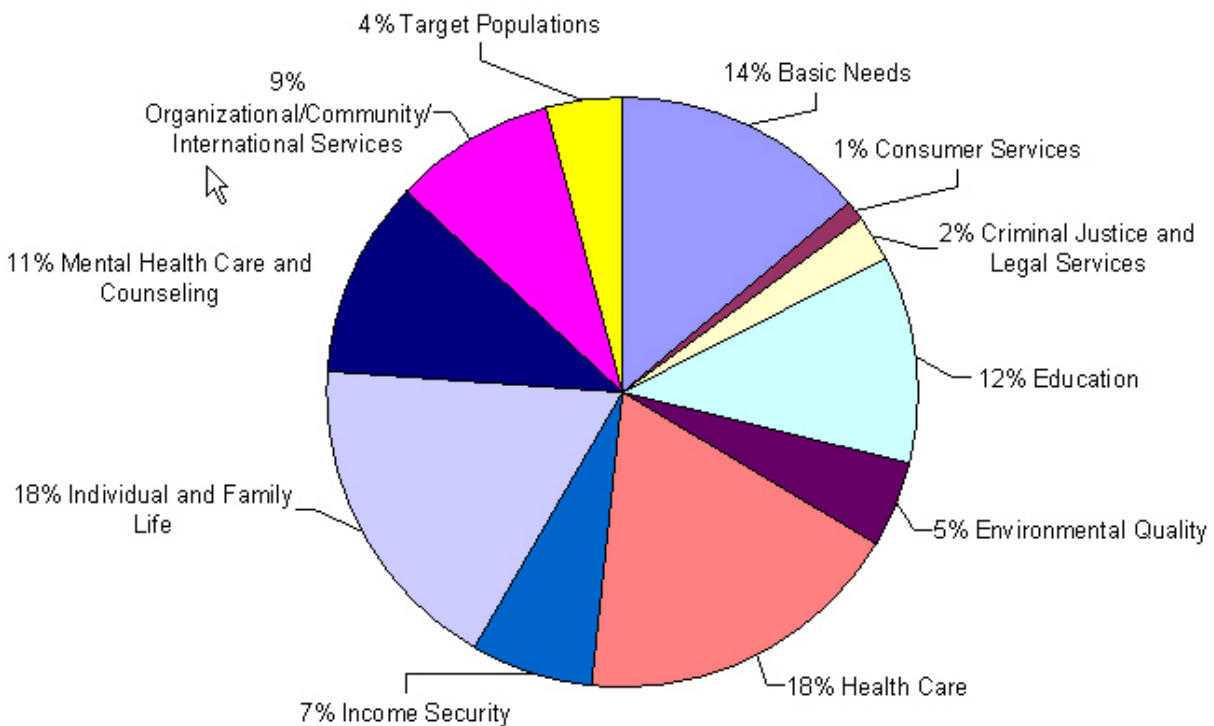
4People community case management

The 4People community case management database is secure, HIPAA compliant and low cost. There are 20 participating agencies including 10 faith based (e.g. churches), non-profits, and government. There are over 60 trained case managers who coordinate services to clients. There could, and should be many more. A total of 2,922 clients have been served since 2005 – most are still active. Following is a summary of service referrals (by case workers to other agencies) and services provided:

Year	Client Records Created	Number Referrals Recorded	Number Services Provided
2008	1,211	712	2,223
2007	847	648	1,362
2005-2006	864	296	827
Total	**2,922**[1]	**1656**	**4,412**

1. **Clients in the client records reported a total of almost 3,000 children. Total clients served including children are nearly 6,000**

Mary Carter is **NOT** among the clients in the database! Just think, if all of the individuals who helped her had been a member of one of the participating agencies, and those agencies that provided services had been participants in the community case management, she could have received the help her family needed **AND** the family unit would continue to be served on a coordinated, community-wide basis.

Clients who sign on with one of the participating members provide their personal and situational data one time. The data is entered into the online system by a case manager and can then be seen and managed by any of the other 60 + case managers.

The role of 211

Win211 is an important resource for those in need. Calls from Benton and Franklin counties are handled by the call center in Yakima. Here are some statistics:

July 1 – December 31 2008	Benton/Franklin Co
211 calls [1]	3435
4People county resource views	1706
4People Taxonomy resources viewed	29,797

1. Estimated based on July – October statistics reported by 211. Nov/Dec not yet available

The United Way of Benton/Franklin Counties funded People for People (Yakima call center) for July 2008 through June 2009 **$44,294**.

4People Information & Referral database is free to all. 4People case management charges $750/year per agency ($75/yr for faith based organizations).

Reality!

Neither Salvation Army or Safe Harbor Crisis Nursery are participating members of the Community Case Management system. Neither are hundreds of other organizations that should be. Each agency "doing their own thing", without any coordination with the rest of the community, is not effective. Individual agency resources are limited and becoming more so. Having the ability to draw from hundreds of resources from multiple agencies without duplicating services saves money and has the potential to serve "everyone" – at least partially. The Salvation Army is a wonderful organization that helps many hundreds of people and families every year. But do they know if the people they help have already been helped by another agency? No. If they cannot provide all that they need or even anything that they need, can they refer them to an agency that can? Not likely. Maybe 211? An easy way to pass off responsibility but marginally helpful. Ditto for Safe Harbor Crisis Nursery – great organization but their assistance is necessarily limited.

The same can be said by the United Way's Community Solutions plan. Great concept, ineffective execution. Each participating/funded agency does great things, but has no way of knowing what other community solutions partners are providing the same clients. The "community" in Solutions is negated by lack of technology to coordinate services.

The United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra require all those funded by them to be active participants in their community case management system – the same database system that is used by 4People. 4People could make that happen here.

What is needed

4People is run by an all volunteer working board of directors. Expenses include licensing fees for the online database, other operating expenses, and employees/volunteers from VISTA AmeriCorps, Goodwill Industries, and AARP.

Fee-for-Service (e.g. $750/year per agency) does not cover all expenses. Upgrades to the online database are needed – including a document storage feature where case managers can store and share client documents such as resumes and application forms. Promotional and advertising funding are needed to promote the Community Case Management system in order to increase participation, and promote the online Information & Referral resources.

YOU can become a 4People supporter for as little as $10.00. Visit our virtual open house for details at www.wifm.org.

Bruce McComb, Treasurer, 4People   www.4people.org