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## Web site provides access to resources

### Residents can find out about jobs, taxes, schools, health

By Yoko Minoura / *The Bulletin*

## beehive web site

NeighborImpact, formerly known as COCAAN, has launched a Web site known as Beehive Cascades that provides information on local resources and services.

The Web site can be accessed at [www.beehivecascades.org](http://www.beehivecascades.org).

Its official debut will be from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 14, at Winter's Hope Room at Mt. Bachelor Village, 19719 Mt. Bachelor Dr., Bend. Call 503-542-0862 or e-mail [rsvp@one-economy.com](mailto:rsvp@one-economy.com) to attend.

Help for Central Oregonians trying to find affordable child care, earn a GED or even get to work without a car could be just a few mouse-clicks away, thanks to a new Web site launched by NeighborImpact, formerly known as COCAAN.

The new site, known as Beehive Cascades, provides information on everything from filing your taxes to getting your children immunized. Users can learn about money management, finding a job, personal health, schools, starting a business and more.

The emphasis is on local resources and services that can help residents.

"This isn't just a Web resource, a phone listing," said Keri Podell, services planning specialist with NeighborImpact. "It's interactive."

For instance, people can learn how to fill out a check, file their taxes or create a resume online.

The site is a collaboration between NeighborImpact and One Economy Corporation, a nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C., that focuses on helping low-income people get access to and take advantage of technology.

"It's an incredibly persistent myth that low-income people don't use the Internet," said Robert Bole, vice president of One Economy's Western region.

A February 2005 study by the Oregon Public Utility Commission showed that more than three-quarters of all Central Oregon residents had a computer hooked up to the Internet at home, according to the commission's Web site.

Bole said that even among families with a household income below \$25,000, nearly half reported having a computer connected to the Internet at home in the same study. Among families with a household income between \$25,000 and \$40,000, close to 70 percent had Internet access at home.

"People are realizing technology is a way to get services that are denied to them," he said.

Podell said the number of low-income families who do have Internet access made NeighborImpact realize the immense potential for a Web site, as long as it was tailored to clients' needs.

The Beehive Cascades site is bilingual, available in both English and Spanish, to reach as many people as possible.

"We also realized a lot of information on Web sites is geared toward literacy levels that are a lot higher," she said. "This is written at a sixth-grade reading level."

The site also means people don't have to travel to find out about local services and can access information in private, which may make it less intimidating or embarrassing to seek help, she said.

Having a Web site also increases NeighborImpact's reach.

"The fact is, there's just not enough services to go around, either, so when someone's turned away and they don't know where to go, the Beehive Cascades is somewhere they can go," Podell said.

While the site is up and running, its official launch will be held Tuesday, Nov. 14, at Mt. Bachelor Village in Bend.

NeighborImpact and One Economy hope the debut will encourage local businesses to publicize the site among their employees.

"This is really about providing human resources to people," Podell said. "This just shows how you can support you employees and in turn really build your business."

Bole said Central Oregon has a number of employers who "get it," or understand the value of improving access to social services.

"A lot of times, companies have a hard time providing a wide range of benefits to lower (wage) employees," he said. "(The site can) help employers connect their employees to services in the community that they can use to stabilize them and help them grow. Kind of provide a free benefit that employers can pass on to employees."

The Beehive has already demonstrated results in other communities, Bole said, including Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami and elsewhere. More than 30 locations have a Beehive site tailored to serve the population there.

Bringing the site to Central Oregon, however, is on the leading edge of extending the service into rural communities, he said.

"I would have to say, this is the first rural work in Oregon and the West Coast," Bole said.

Podell said she hopes the Beehive Cascades grows in the future, but that will depend on funding.

"This is just a start. As a start, it's wonderful, but if we can build the funding, we can make it even better, even more interactive," she said.

NeighborImpact does not have a separate staffer dedicated to the site, so it is hard to estimate how much it costs to run the site, Podell said.

And though the site is targeted at low- and moderate-income families, she said it could be useful to just about anyone. The site includes information about saving for a first home and for retirement, local events and activities families can do together, transportation options and more.

"We try to make it really comprehensive," she said.

If the site is successful, she said NeighborImpact might explore providing a way for people to contact local, state or federal elected officials, or work with businesses to set up a blog on different professional fields.

"There's so many possibilities," she said.

To attend the Beehive Cascades' debut, call 503-542-0862 or e-mail [rsvp@one-economy.com](mailto:rsvp@one-economy.com).

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