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Weed and Seed program gains \$5,854

**By ROSALIO AHUMADA
BEE STAFF WRITER**

Community organizers trying to clean up and restore west Modesto will have a new communication tool thanks to a corporate grant.

The AT&T Foundation has donated \$5,845 to Modesto's Weed and Seed program to create a Web site.

Cindy Rhea, the program's director, said the Web site will help program organizers get the word out to residents and share information with community partners.

"We want to promote Weed and Seed," Rhea said. "We want the businesses and those community partners to know what we're doing."

The federally funded program started in early April. Its purpose is to weed out crime and seed much-needed services, including prevention, intervention, treatment and neighborhood restoration.

The program was started with about \$1 million to come over five years, and organizers had hoped the federal money would open doors for other grants and partnerships.

AT&T's grant will assist Rhea and other program organizers in creating a Web site that includes program and activity information, crime prevention information, links to Weed and Seed partner agencies, progress reports, and data collection.

The Web site, <http://www.paradise-south.com/>, is expected to be available by November, but Rhea is hoping it will be running sooner.

For instance, Weed and Seed is scheduled to host a free block party at 11 a.m. Oct. 21 for Robertson Road Park residents. Rhea said the Web site could help gather volunteers and support from community partners.

Rhea said the site will be used to recruit certified public accountants to participate in a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program in early April.

The outreach program, scheduled to start Feb. 1, helps people in the Weed and Seed area

file tax returns — for free.

But there are other programs Rhea wants to highlight through the Web site.

"There are a lot of services that already exist in the community, but nobody knows about them," Rhea said. "(The Web site) should make communicating a little easier."

To reach Weed and Seed before the Web site is operational, contact Cindy Rhea at 342-6105.

Bee staff writer Rosalio Ahumada can be reached at 578-2394 or rahumada@modbee.com.

Posted on 09/22/06 00:00:00

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