

Rural Residents Encouraged to do Survey on Education and Training Needs

A needs assessment that will identify and address education and training needs across rural Alberta begins this week. The Battle River Training Foundation (BRTF) and the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) are collaborating on the project, which includes the distribution of a survey.

The survey will explore questions such as: What do rural residents need in the form of education and training? What do local businesses need in terms of employee skills? What are the best ways to deliver accessible training? What are the barriers to getting training?

Once the results are compiled, ARDN will distribute the information to post-secondary institutions to help them address gaps and fill needs. BRTF will use the information to refine the courses that they offer access to and work with post-secondary members in their area to offer more opportunities. ARDN hopes to get feedback from rural residents throughout Alberta so they can increase access to essential learning opportunities.

ARDN and BRTF share a common goal – the education and training of rural Albertans. ARDN is a consortium of 21 post-secondary institutions working together to support rural development through education and training. BRTF provides adults in Flagstaff County and East Central Alberta with access to courses in the region and elsewhere.

Urban and rural communities have many differences in their needs for education and training. People in small towns and villages have more challenges and obstacles to overcome: travel distances, the isolation of their communities, and minimum enrolment numbers are only three things that hinder rural access to learning opportunities.

“By assessing the needs of rural residents and employers, we can make sure that the Battle River Training Foundation and nearby post-secondary institutions can offer rural Albertans the courses and training that they really need,” says Dee Ann Benard, executive director of ARDN. “The goal is to provide access to education and training opportunities that will make a substantial difference to rural communities.”

Rural Albertans are encouraged to complete the online survey which can be found at www.brtf.ca or www.ardn.ca. Surveys must be completed between August 23 and October 3, 2010 for the chance to win one of three \$100 cash prizes. The results will be posted on ARDN and BRTF websites by November 5, 2010. ARDN is funded in part by Rural Alberta’s Development Fund, whose funding is provided by the Government of Alberta.

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Contact:

Dee Ann Benard, Executive Director
Alberta Rural Development Network
780-449-1006 ext 223
exec.dir@ardn.ca