

Northwest RC&D - 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Provider Pals®

In 2009, the Northwest Regional RC&D continued their partnership with the Presidential Award Winning Provider Pals® Program. In 2008, the RC&D sponsored a part time fundraising position for Provider Pals®. In just six months, this position not only created a county wide fundraising method, but executed phase one of the plan that raised \$12,000 for local programming. This year, the RC&D sponsored students to Provider Pals online educational gaming website, *Provider World*, and shared space at public forums in order to help spread the word about the program.



Provider Pals® is a 501c(3) non-profit education program with a very simple mission: Build a bridge of understanding between our nation's youth and the cultures of our rural resource providers. Provider Pals® started right here in northwest Montana and has grown from a small program into an international, Presidential Preserve America Award winning program that reaches over 10,000 students yearly in over 300 classrooms in over 30 cities and towns such as New York City, Los Angeles, St. Louis and Little Rock. Since the first *Wall Street Journal* article applauded the program as 'the most exciting education initiative in decades' Provider Pals® has enjoyed extensive and positive reviews in the local, regional and national press.



NYC and Lincoln County Provider Pals Students at Camp Raven.

Provider Pals® operates in cities and towns across the nation and Canada, but is headquartered in Libby, MT. Since its formation in 2002, Provider Pals has spent over **\$3,000,000 locally** in order to facilitate to participation of **over 4,000 local students**. These students have enjoyed a very unique form of natural resource education through classroom adoptions of natural resource providers and sponsored memberships onto the new, online educational gaming website, *Provider World*. Nearly 100 students and teachers have also been awarded cultural exchange scholarship to visit New York City and Washington, DC as rural ambassadors. In addition, over 300 local students and teachers accompanied by over 300 inner city peers have attended camps at our Preserve America Presidential Award winning Historic Raven summer camp located outside of Libby, MT – all free of charge.

Provider Pals fourth cultural exchange component, *Provider World*, came to life in 2007 due to the support of Caterpillar Foundation and Monsanto Foundation. *Provider World* is an interactive, educational virtual world where kids can learn, have fun playing games, interact with other students and cultures, and in general - have a great time! This educational gaming site consists of a City Center that is a 'hub' for Logging, Mining, Farming, Fishing, and Ranching Worlds. Each one of these worlds reflects various aspects of each 'real life' worlds and contains games that challenge students and players to learn more about the rural culture, jobs, and products produced in each environment. Logon to *Provider World* at www.providerpals.com/pworld and logon as a guest to experience this exciting website!



Provider Pals® has historically raised all of its money from individuals, private businesses, private foundations, and city and county governments – and 98% was raised outside of NW Montana. The economic troubles of our nation that began in 2008 caused the program to have to focus on growing local support and its online gaming website in order to survive. The money that has been raised and donated from the Northwest RC&D partnership with Provider Pals has assisted in these local programmatic efforts in Libby, Troy, Eureka, Plains, Thompson Falls and Noxon. For more information on the Provider Pals® Program, visit www.providerpals.com.