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Connect Community Services bridges the gap in Fritch



Member of Connect Community Services in Fritch work to organize canned goods for a food drive they held to help residents of Fritch and Sanford. (Courtesy Photo)

By April Davis (806) 273-5612

Connect Community Services [CCS] is a non profit organization, designed to help residents of Fritch and Sanford to connect low income or in crisis individuals and families with services and resources to help improve their lives.

The organization was founded in 2014, just in time to lend a helping hand for the Fritch fires

that struck on Mother's Day, 2014.

"There are a lot of people in Fritch and Sanford that need help," began Sue DeShields, one of the founders of CCS.

"There are many organizations in the Panhandle that will help them, but they don't know how to get there, what help is available, or where to go. We help them connect to the right place for what they need," DeShields says.

CCS works as the bridge between the people that need help and the places that provide help, offering assistance in variety of different ways.

DeShields explains how CCS came into being.

"Gere Jester worked at Pantex in Amarillo. She was connected with United Way as the coordinator and saw this great need in the community. She and her husband, Gale, had seen the poverty. She retired and was looking for something to do. Her and Gale talked and decided to do something to help the community. This all started with them," says DeShields.

While organizations like Panhandle Community Services take care of the whole panhandle, CCS focuses on Fritch and Sanford." she adds.

See Service pg. 2

Service

Continued from page 1

Some of the events that CCS has offered aide for include Angels trees at Christmas time, food pantries, and just this year, CCS provided shoes and socks for students at Sanford-Fritch ISD that were in need of them.

"We've done a lot of work and benchmarking with Elia Moreno at Cal Farley's, tells DeShields. "We were doing lots of meetings with different communities and organizations to see what they were doing... but we do focus on the entire family, not just children. So our focus is families, not just one person in a family."

CCS has also participated in several poverty seminars.

"Dr. Donna Beagle came to Borger and spoke. Her story is incredible. She talked about how she grew up using powdered soap from a gas station to wash her hair. That was normal to her. The idea behind CCS is to help people better their lives so that they can have a better life and be out of the tough situation they are in," explained DeShields.

Co-founder, Brenda Taylor, added that the poverty seminars changed her view.

"You don't see these people the same anymore. It changes your attitude. It's very eye opening. There is poverty here in Fritch and Sanford, it's just not as visual here," she says.

Executive Director, Davina Brown, says CCS has lots plans for next year.

"We hope to be in a building the middle part of 2017. We've never had a building and have been working out of homes. With a building, CCS will have a more visual place in the community," says Brown.

Other plans for 2017 include a food pantry, clothing closet, and a computer center for clients to be able to use computers.

"So much of these services are online now and not everyone has that ability," says Brown. "We will help them fill out forms and work with High Plains Food Bank with our food pantry and we will assist with job searches, too."

Once CCS has their building, there will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer with mentoring programs, too.

Part of the mentoring programs will include healthy cooking and college courses, just to name a few.

For those in need of services, contact ccsoffritch@gmail. com or via mail at P.O. Box 533, Fritch, Texas 79036.