

Federal funding will help AU programs aimed at serving underprivileged youth

7/17/07

ALFRED ? U.S. Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl, R-29th, has secured federal grant appropriations for two Alfred University programs aimed at benefiting youth in the Southern Tier. Alfred University will receive a combined \$900,000, which allows for the continuation of the Rural Justice Institute and the Lea R. Powell Institute for Children and Families ACCESS to mental health services program. The Rural Justice Institute will receive an \$800,000 award, while the Powell Institute will receive \$100,000. The funding comes from earmarks in the House Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Bill and the House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the bills later this month. "These funds are important investments in the youth of Allegany County," said Rep. Kuhl. "The Rural Justice Institute and the Powell Institute are both important to students at Alfred who are learning how to help underprivileged and underserved children in their future careers and to the people living in the communities of Allegany County who benefit from these services. Some incredible work comes out of RJI and the Powell Institute, and I'm glad that these funds were included in the bill." "These programs have had a broad impact on the Southern Tier of New York through the development of collaborative partnerships with community schools, agencies, law enforcement and county judicial systems aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency and domestic violence and increasing access to mental health services to children and families in this underserved region," said Dr. Ellen Faherty, director of the Powell Institute. The Powell Institute's ACCESS (Access to Children's Counseling and Early Support Services) program provides counseling services at rural public schools in the Southern Tier of Western New York and Pennsylvania and is coordinated through the Powell Institute's Child and Family Services Center. The Powell Institute had received a \$500,000 federal grant in 2004, which was used to establish ACCESS satellite programs in the Letchworth, Pioneer and Allegany-Limestone school districts in Western New York and the Athens (PA) Area School District. Graduate students in Alfred University's School Psychology program provided counseling and mental health services in those districts in exchange for remission of their tuition to graduate school at AU. "This program has been very successful. Families in rural areas have benefited from it and it provides a fantastic opportunity for our graduate students," Faherty said. "I'm very excited to be able to continue and build on a program that has affected positive change on children and families in this area." The Rural Justice Institute at Alfred University, which received \$300,000 in federal grant funding in 2004, provides support to several social services providers in the region for the development of more effective outreach, treatment and support mechanisms for troubled youth. The \$800,000 in funding will be used to continue existing Rural Justice Institute initiatives, which include training on how to identify and help youngsters affected by domestic violence; the development of programs aimed at helping families of at-risk children obtain the services they need; and initiatives in schools to identify and assist children who are victims of domestic violence. It will also create new initiatives to address problems faced by area youth. Among the initiatives is a program to prevent "teen dating violence," Faherty said, as well as an effort to provide services to at-risk youth through mental health screening. "With these new grants, the Rural Justice Institute will work with our partners throughout the region to provide domestic violence educational programs for education and mental health professionals, expand the educational programs currently in place in regional schools that develop problem solving skills as alternatives to violence," Faherty said. "It will allow the Powell Institute to develop additional family focused mental health service programs in rural school communities that serve children and families with limited access to professional counseling services." Dr. Charles Edmondson, University president, and Dr. William Hall, executive director of the Rural Justice Institute and associate provost at Alfred University, thanked Rep. Kuhl for his work in securing the federal earmarks. "Alfred University is very appreciative of Congressman Kuhl's support of these important regional initiatives," Edmondson commented. "This funding will allow us to enhance our services to children in the Western New York region," added Hall. "It's another illustration of how Randy Kuhl has provided the support needed to allow us to continue these important projects."