



chuck

## who we are

Spokane County has a higher percentage of homeless students in its population than King County. For 3,500 students in the county living with homelessness, Communities in Schools (CIS) is a source of empowerment and encouragement.

The program currently helps 600 students facing homelessness throughout our county and has site coordinators in Spokane Public Schools, Medical Lake School District, and Cheney School District. It does so without any federal, state, county, or city grants. Their goal is to change the picture of education for students by keeping kids in school, eliminating barriers for success, and never giving up on anyone. CIS' services go beyond the classroom, and encourage success in life skills, family engagement, physical health, and more. The mission of the organization is simple, for Executive Director Chuck Teegarden.

"If we're not taking care of our children, we're not taking care of our future," said Chuck.

CIS has the largest mentoring program in Spokane County, with 370 mentors last year. This school year, they're aiming to have 500 mentors, and the results speak for themselves.

By offering hope through their mentor program, and encouraging success, at least 80 percent of students with mentors improve their math and reading scores. Mentors are located in school districts throughout Spokane County.

Beyond classroom encouragement, CIS partners with Second Harvest Food Bank and HRC Ministries to provide students with a regular food source throughout the year. Last year, 92,000 food items were distributed from pantries located in each CIS school. Summers prove to be difficult for education organizations, as many students don't get enough to eat, depending on their living situation.

Chuck points out that while some non-profit organizations similar to CIS plan to exist for the long-term, he envisions a world where CIS isn't needed. He hopes that one day, Spokane will be in a position where the region won't need its services.

"We're not here because we see ourselves as a long-term proposition," he said.

Member: Communities in Schools