

## Project Rebound grant to help Baldwin County children with medical bills

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By **Guy Busby Press-Register**

A \$45,000 Project Rebound grant will give some Baldwin County school children whose parents cannot afford medical care because of the oil spill or other economic hardships an opportunity to visit doctors and dentists.



Rebecca Byrne

The grant awarded to United Way of Baldwin County will go to the United Medical Partnership for Children. The money will provide care for young people whose parents do not have health insurance or other ways to pay for help, Rebecca Byrne, United Way of Baldwin County executive director, said.

"We received a special grant through Project Rebound to help children whose families have been affected by the oil spill and this medical partnership provides funds for basic medical needs, vision, dental and pharmaceutical needs and that sort of thing," Byrne said.

The United Medical Partnership for Children is a Baldwin County program that has been in place for several years, Byrne said.

The program works with the Baldwin County public school system to determine which children need assistance.

"The school nurses have really got their fingers on the pulse as to which families qualify for this," Byrne said. "They're key in this whole process in determining where these funds go."

Many local school children do not have health coverage and medical bills can be a big burden for families already facing financial hardships, Martha Holloway, Baldwin County health services supervisor, said. She said state and federal programs, such as All Kids and Medicaid can provide coverage for children, but bills can accumulate until students are covered.

"Sometimes the children fall between the cracks and we use some of the money allocated to us to help those families," she said. "Some of our biggest needs right now are for dental services."

Byrne said the grant will allow school-system and partnership participants to expand the program to include more services and help more children.

"By having this special grant, it's going to allow us to do some things that before we didn't quite have the funds to do," Byrne said. "We're excited about it. It's a great program anyway, but we're going to be able to do things we've not been able to do before."

Byrne said several area dentists have agreed to cut prices for children in the program. "That's going to be even more

helpful and we'll be able to get even a bigger bang for our buck with the monies that are allocated," she said.

The grant is part of \$12 million in BP PLC funds being distributed for programs for residents affected by the oil spill, Paige Rucker of Project Rebound, said.

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in partnership with the Alabama Department of Mental Health awarded the funding to United Medical Partnership for Children.

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