



May 2, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Avista Community Garden, Women and Children's Free Restaurant honored
Asuris donates \$5,000 to the Women and Children's Free Restaurant on behalf of Avista Community Gardeners

Spokane – A small group of Avista employees has helped feed thousands of Spokane women and children healthy, homegrown produce, and they were recognized for their efforts Tuesday at the Avista “Green Thumbs” community garden. As part of that recognition, Asuris Northwest Health also presented a \$5,000 check to Spokane’s Women and Children’s Free Restaurant on behalf of the gardeners.

The recognition is part of Asuris’s Heroes campaign, now in its second year, which honors individuals throughout the northwest who are great examples of how a few people taking charge can make a positive difference in a community. A series of print ads features local heroes from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Utah, often people who aren’t in the limelight and who haven’t received a lot of recognition for their efforts. Asuris (Regence in locations outside of Spokane) then makes a \$5,000 donation to the non-profit group chosen by the “heroes.”

“Strengthening the communities we serve is an important value at Asuris,” Asuris CEO Mark Ganz said. “While we often focus on the difference we make in our

communities, sometimes it's just as powerful to draw attention to others who, with quiet determination, are living our values.”

In Spokane, the heroes are a group of five Avista volunteers: Kellee Quick, Steve Beal, Clancy Howard, Linda Williams and Jeanne Bohr, who started the Avista Green Thumbs Community Garden in 2003 on an empty Avista-owned lot near the company’s campus.

The garden started as an empty lot overgrown with weeds, and now yields more than a ton of produce each year, which the gardeners then donate to Spokane’s Women and Children’s Free Restaurant for meals enjoyed by hundreds of Spokane women and children each week. Throughout the summer, the gardeners harvest and deliver produce to the restaurant a few times a week along with flowers, vegetables and herbs from their personal gardens at home.

“With the generosity of their time and talent, our community gardeners reflect Avista's value of giving back to the communities we serve,” Anne Marie Axworthy, Avista’s Director of Community Development, said. “We appreciate Asuris's recognition of the great contribution of our employee gardeners to those in need.”

Volunteers at the garden number more than 100 each year, and include Whitworth and Gonzaga University Students, residents from the Riverview Retirement Community, and even pre-schoolers from St. Aloysius.

Asuris invites community members to see the ads and share their take charge stories at www.asuris.com/stories.

About Asuris Northwest Health

Based in Spokane, Asuris Northwest Health offers a full range of health care coverage options, including dental and vision coverage, for Eastern Washington employers and individuals. Asuris also offers Medicare supplemental plans and Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, and provides member access to more than 19,000 health care providers. For more information, visit the company’s Web site at www.asuris.com. Asuris Northwest Health, a not-for-profit health plan, is a subsidiary of Regence BlueShield, a leading health plan in Washington.