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Do You Count?

Those who watched the PBS program Sesame Street while growing up, or with kids or grandkids, are familiar with the lovable character Count von Count. Count loved numbers and was obsessed with counting anything and everything. But there's a counting event coming up that would be a daunting task even for Count von Count himself: Census 2020!

Although it is still months away, you will soon begin to see awareness campaigns for the 2020 Census. It will be here before we know it! April 1, 2020, is officially Census Day.

The census is conducted every ten years and is a tool to count our population. It counts people of all ages, races, and ethnic groups, including citizens and non-citizens. It may seem like an inconsequential event, but census data is critical to local governments like Murray City, as well as the State of Utah. If you are wondering why this should matter to you, here's why:

1. Federal Funding – Billions of dollars are awarded to states and local governments based on population and other data gained from the census;
2. Political Representation – Census data is used to determine the number of federal representatives from each state and is also used to determine federal, state, and local district boundaries;
3. Planning for the Future – Decisions are made about roads, utilities, community centers, and public safety based on census data;
4. Business and Economic Growth – Businesses rely on census data, particularly the demographics and statistics information, to identify customers and potential employees. It also helps them to target areas for expansion and relocation;
5. Community Services – Non-profit groups and public agencies both use census data to identify areas of need and allocate funding to address community issues.



In addition, 50% of the sales tax collected in Utah cities is redistributed to other cities based on population.

The 2020 Census will be conducted mostly online, which is a significantly different process than we've seen in the past. Many of us will find it convenient to access the internet and take the survey online, but others may be challenged by technical difficulties and lack of internet access. To help alleviate these challenges, the Murray City Library plans to offer dedicated Census computers during the counting period. The computers will be set up to only access the Census questionnaire and will be available to the public with no library card required. As we get closer to the Census date, you may see a call for bilingual volunteers to assist at our library and other locations throughout the state to help encourage the entire population to participate in the count.

It's helpful for all of us to understand how census data has benefited our state. According to the "Counting for Dollars 2020 Project" at the George Washington University's Institute of Public Policy:

- ◆ \$5.7 billion in federal funding was received in 2016 by the State of Utah and local governments
- ◆ \$1,870 is the amount of federal funding Utah receives per person
- ◆ \$18.7 million is the amount per year that Utah will lose for every 1,000 people not counted in the 2020 Census

Hopefully, you can see how important it is to be counted in the census. With an accurate census count, the state and local cities will have access to more federal dollars to continue building infrastructure and provide necessary services. You Matter – Be Counted!