



Probation success story: Judge praises youth for “5 years of perfection”



Left to right: Art Egger (grandfather), P/P Officer Tim Olsen, Forrest, Judge Deanne Darling, DeWitt “Hal” Montgomery (foster parent), Mary Egger (grandmother) and Brittney Schultes (sister). Olsen and Forrest’s relatives gathered in Judge Darling’s courtroom in Oregon City Jan. 13 to recognize his successful completion of 5 years on probation.

By [CJ Drake](#), Oregon Youth Authority
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The young man sitting in the courtroom in Oregon City had been taking photos of himself (“selfies”) breaking the law and posting them on his Instagram account. The assistant district attorney had the evidence in a thick file. The youth couldn’t explain his behavior to the judge – and neither could his parents sitting next to him. After scolding him for the selfies and various other offenses, the judge sentenced him to detention.

The clerk called the next case. Another young man – just a year older than the one who left – took a seat at the table facing the judge. His lawyer and P/P officer sat on either side of him. A courtroom spectator without knowing what was about to happen couldn’t be blamed for expecting another youthful offender to be interrogated by the judge for questionable conduct.

After listening to P/P Officer Tim Olsen summarize the case, Clackamas County Circuit Judge Deanne Darling turned to Forrest, 18. Here is what she told him:

“There’s a lot of people who don’t think that people can change. But I think that what Mr. Olsen was trying to say is that if you give them faith, that kids can and will change. No matter what their offense is, no matter what where they came from or what they did, the right intervention at the right time can make a huge difference in who you become. But all we can do is put a path down. If you won’t walk it, and you won’t try, nothing matters. As taxpayers, we spend a lot of money on you and it appears to me from what I’ve seen that it was worth every single penny. And if every young person in your shoes worked as hard as you did to make the changes that you have made the world would be a better place. Thank you for taking the lead and fixing your life and for becoming the amazing young person you were born to be.”

Forrest was in Judge Darling’s court for an “attaboy” hearing arranged by Olsen, Clackamas County Field Supervisor Vikki Whitmore and Liz Mead of the county juvenile department. Such hearings are held when staff want to recognize exceptional youth behavior or accomplishments. The hearing formally ended Forrest’s probation.

“You’ve gone 5 years without ever coming back to court on a probation violation,” Judge Darling told Forrest as she ended the hearing. “I don’t think in my career here of almost 19 years that has ever happened. Five years of perfection. That speaks volumes.”

Forrest, accompanied by his family, left the courtroom.

“A lot of our youth don’t always have the opportunity to get positive feedback,” said Olsen. “This type of hearing does that. It closes the loop for youth who deserve it. It’s accountability in a

very positive way.” Olsen has participated in about 10 “attaboy” hearings in his 14 years as a P/P officer. Forrest’s hearing was held the day after he completed probation.

“We’re making a conscious effort to implement positive youth development in Clackamas County,” said Whitmore. “We’re also very fortunate to have a judge who is willing to recognize positive outcomes.”

“These hearings are one way we have chosen to implement our vision of PYD in Clackamas County. Our goal is to recognize the positive work of our youth which will result in positive outcomes in our community,” says Olsen.

Forrest was put on probation at age 12. Since then, he has completed various OYA treatment programs and foster-care placements. He was on track to get a GED when he decided to instead pursue a high school diploma. He transferred to Clackamas Community College and is three credits away from being the first member of his family to receive a state high school certificate. Along the way, he played and lettered in basketball and football.

“Forrest has very good skills that were put in place by OYA and the county juvenile department,” said Mead. “He chose to take full advantage of the opportunities he was offered.”

In addition to being under Olsen’s supervision, Forrest had to appear before a Community Accountability Board toward the end of his probation to explain his goals for life after OYA. The board, the only one like it in OYA, is composed of local volunteers who meet with probationary youth to make sure they are on the right path.

Forrest, who was living at the time of the hearing with his older sister, Brittney, said he wants to learn a trade after he finishes high school later this year. He admits that the prospect of no longer being under OYA supervision is somewhat intimidating.

“It going to be hard because OYA has been making nearly all my choices for me but now I have to make them myself,” he said. “OYA has given me a lot of support but I want to be able to get a job and live by myself. I want to be able to sustain myself.”

“He’s smart, athletic, resilient, polite, well-spoken and bright,” Olsen said of Buchanan. “I could manage a caseload of fifty kids if they were all like Forrest.”

“I’ve worked hard for the past 5 years,” Forrest told Judge Darling. “I’m excited about what’s to come.”