



Oregon

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NEWS RELEASE

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Hillcrest youth offenders get real-world experience, gain knowledge of community needs while deciding grants to nonprofit organizations

Seven Willamette Valley nonprofit organizations received a total of \$5,000 in grants this week from students in a Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility class that spent a year reviewing proposals from a number of organizations.

The Hillcrest youth, who are enrolled in a class called Community 101, awarded grants from money provided by the Oregon Community Foundation. The Robert S. Farrell High School at Hillcrest in Salem is among 57 schools that received grants from the foundation to be disbursed to organizations students deemed most worthy.

Although the usual question is, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" said Oregon Youth Authority Director Colette S. Peters, Community 101 helps offenders explore the question, "What type of person do you want to be?"

School principal Bill Conlon said among the skills students gain are grant writing, public relations, talking with community leaders, teamwork and interviewing. "They grilled some of the people with tough questions," he said, "and they came up with the questions."

Organizations receiving grants from the Community 101 class at Hillcrest are:

- Boys and Girls Club of Albany to support its SMART Moves prevention program;
- Emmanuel Community Services, a Portland inner-city services organization, to buy backpacks and other school supplies;
- Family Building Blocks, a Salem relief nursery, for art supplies;
- Jubilee Transition Homes, a program for homeless men in southwest Portland and in Tigard;

- Juvenile Assistance Corporation, which works with Clackamas County at-risk youth, to support a program of dance, music and poetry;
- Mano-a-Mano, a Salem-area nonprofit, to support an after-school program; and
- Oregon Outreach, a Portland-area nonprofit, to help support a science camp for children.

From the \$5,000 provided by the Oregon Community Foundation, each organization received \$733 except Oregon Outreach, which received \$602.

Sue Miller, Family Building Blocks executive director, said this wasn't the first time Hillcrest youth had supported her child-abuse prevention program. She told about Hillcrest youth helping a family last Christmas and said only last month she received a \$50 check from a Hillcrest youth. "They always have such a heart for the children in our program," she said.

Rebecca Black, Oregon Outreach executive director, said Hillcrest youth had provided money that helped a homeless woman get an apartment, furnish it and buy kitchen utensils. The woman has since received training leading to a certificate as a certified nursing assistant. "She didn't have a family to give her a push," Black said, "but you guys did."

Among others attending the event were Rep. Kevin Cameron of Salem; Danny Santos, senior policy adviser in the Governor's office; and Jennesa Datema of the Oregon Community Foundation.

The Community 101 class is taught by Gordon Kruse, whom the boys in the class honored with a plaque and comments about his traits such as integrity, industriousness and support for his students. "He always stayed by our side," said one youth who chose "faithful" as a word to describe Kruse, "even when we were knuckleheads."

Educational staff members at Hillcrest's Robert S. Farrell High School are provided by the Willamette Education Service District.

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