



Oregon

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July 16, 2013

NEWS RELEASE

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Teacher at OYA facility for girls honored with national award



Scott Ryan

A teacher at the Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) facility for at-risk girls has been honored by a national education organization for inspiring his students.

Scott Ryan is one of four teachers nationwide to receive highest honors in the "[Lighting the Fire](#)" awards from the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS). An English language arts teacher at Three Lakes High School at Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility (YCF) in Albany, Ryan was praised by students for nurturing their creativity.

"Mr. Ryan is the window of success for so many of us," said one of his students. "He is nothing if not fair, respectful, respected, easily accessible, caring and knowledgeable," said another.

In a statement announcing the winners, CEEAS said, "Teaching in a secure youth facility can be difficult work but it is teachers like these who continue to remind us of what is possible. Just one teacher has the power to alter the trajectory of a student's life and the work of these teachers is proof of that. Many before them might have given up on these students, but they have seen opportunity in optimism and shared effort. They inspire their students to dream big, challenge them to work hard, and support their journeys – even when the path is daunting."

Earlier this year, Ryan encouraged his students to enter their poetry in the "[Words Unlocked](#)" national competition sponsored by CEEAS, resulting in 17 girls submitting 33 poems in the contest. "Often I was asked, 'Is this good enough?'" recalled Ryan. "My response was, 'It is not good enough if you don't take the risk to submit your voice.'"

More than a thousand entries from across the U.S. were judged by a panel that included Chelsea Clinton. One of Ryan's students, Brianna Nicole Ireland, won first place and two others, Angela Denise Miller and Angel Whisper, tied for third.

Ireland and Miller also graduated from Three Lakes High School June 14. To improve their prospects after they complete their court-ordered commitments and return to society, all youth in OYA facilities must participate in education programs. OYA partners with the Oregon Department of Education and local school districts to offer classroom and vocational education opportunities.

OYA Director Fariborz Pakseresht praised Ryan as an inspiration to his students and peers. "Scott is a teacher who empowers youth to unlock their hidden potential," he said. "Though his students are in secure facilities, he has given them the freedom to express their creativity. He helps prepare them to lead productive, crime-free lives after they leave OYA. His work contributes directly to juvenile justice reform and to making Oregon a better place to live, work and play."

Ryan, who lives in Hillsboro, has been teaching at Three Lakes High School since 2011. He and the other recipients of the "Lighting the Fire" awards were chosen by a panel of three judges from a nationwide pool of applicants. The winners each received an inscribed copy of *Hip Hop Genius: Remixing High School Education* by Sam Seidel, a framed certificate and a cash award.

Oak Creek YCF is one of 10 youth correctional and transitional facilities managed statewide by OYA. Three Lakes High School is operated at the facility by the Multnomah Education Service District.

For more on OYA's education services, [click here](#).

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The Oregon Youth Authority is the state's juvenile justice agency, reducing victimization by helping at-risk young people lead productive, crime-free lives. Learn more at www.oregon.gov/oya and follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/oregonyouth.

The purpose of the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings is to maximize teaching and learning in alternative schools. Its mission is to help alternative schools — in community settings and in locked facilities — implement transformational, student-focused practices, designed to significantly improve the life chances of the students they serve. Learn more at www.ceeas.org.