



Oregon

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NEWS RELEASE

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OYA camp in Florence strengthening vocational opportunities for older youth

Camp Florence, a 25-bed Oregon Youth Authority transitional facility, has hired a vocational contractor to help older youth gain job skills before they return to the community.

Marc Barnum of Florence will bring his experience working in the trades plus his volunteer work with youth organizations to help OYA youth map career paths and gain on-the-job experience.

“Camp Florence has been part of the work fabric in Florence for some time,” said Clint McClellan, camp director. “But we haven’t had the staff to do as much skill-building as we would have liked, and this will take us to the next level.”

Although other OYA facilities have vocational programs, Camp Florence will be the first to match youth with contractors to work on jobs in the community.

Barnum, who will work on contract rather than as a state employee, has worked as a plumbing contractor and Realtor as well as coaching school and Boys and Girls Club sports. He said he did five months’ work experience at Camp Florence as part of his pursuit of a juvenile justice certificate he is seeking from Southwest Oregon Community College.

He said youth will have access to a computer program to help them identify their interests, what jobs exist, and what skills and education they require. He said he hopes to develop on-the-job training opportunities in areas ranging from construction-related trades to restaurant food preparation and broadcasting. The contract calls for him to develop a vocational program that also includes such

things as monitoring youths' online college courses and assisting with financial aid applications.

He said he had employed several OYA youth while remodeling a house during the past year, and also had several work with the sound crew for the annual Kiwanis concert in Florence.

"I would like to see them have a good work ethic, and to have the skills they need when they go out into the work force," he said. "I will tell them what I tell my kids – you're not doing the employer a favor, the employer is doing you a favor."

McClellan, the camp's director, said he has seen the value youth already receive from working in the community on work crews and as volunteers. "The community accepts them so well they get a sense of community," he said. "They begin to feel accepted in the community and know what that is like. That's huge."

Support for the vocational position comes from legislatively authorized program for OYA youth who have high school diplomas or who are 21 and older, the cost of whose education does not qualify for state basic school support. Frank Martin, OYA education coordinator, said the program assists facilities in delivering education and vocational services to help youth transition into the community. Research shows school and vocational programs reduce the likelihood of youth re-offending, he said.

OYA has custody of approximately 900 youthful offenders ages 12 to 24 in correctional and transitional facilities in Albany, Burns, Florence, Grants Pass, La Grande, Salem, Tillamook, Warrenton and Woodburn, and the agency supervises approximately 1,100 youth on parole and probation.

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