



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Youth Authority

Director's Office

530 Center Street NE, Suite 200

Salem, OR 97301-3765

PHONE: (503) 373-7212

FAX: (503) 373-7622

Sept. 27, 2010

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Snyder, OYA Communications Office, 503-378-6023,
ann.snyder@oya.state.or.us

Oregon Youth Authority seeks foster homes in Benton, Linn counties

Going to the prom. Bucking hay. Working and volunteering in the community.

These are typical activities for many teens, although they usually are new experiences for offenders committed to the Oregon Youth Authority.

Foster parents provide these kinds of positive experiences for youth offenders, and OYA is seeking more such foster parents in Benton and Linn counties.

“We need to be able to match the special needs of our youth with the special abilities of foster parents,” said Colynn Elder, OYA foster care certifier for Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties. “Youth we place in foster care are doing well in treatment, can attend school and really benefit from living normal lives in a caring home.”

OYA has three foster homes in Linn County and none in Benton County, which can result in local youth being placed in other counties. “Youth are better served if the foster home is near the youth’s family, close to familiar school and community resources, and where treatment involving both the youth and biological family can occur,” Elder said.

The state juvenile corrections agency is seeking foster homes for youth who are on probation or parole, need an out-of-home placement, may be in various stages of treatment for their offenses, and for whom an evaluation has shown foster care to be appropriate. OYA is seeking both traditional foster homes and transitional homes where older youth learn more about establishing a bank account, preparing a household budget, shopping for food, preparing meals, job-hunting, and successfully performing other responsibilities supporting independent living.

Elder said the agency matches youth needs with foster parents' skills, so foster parents might not always have a youth in the home.

She said foster parents make a real difference in young lives, assisting with school and jobs, supporting volunteering, and modeling positive choices, behavior and family life. She tells about youth going to the school prom for the first time, some who earned spending money bucking hay, and others who are working and volunteering in the community. One Linn County foster parent tells about a youth who went from "shutting down" every time she brought up his offense to looking her in the eye and being accountable for his crime.

Qualifications to serve as an OYA foster parent include being at least age 21 (or 25 for transitional foster parents), a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, financially stable and able to pass a criminal history check. Prospective foster parents should be emotionally mature and have an understanding of how to help youth build positive relationships and live independently.

Elder said she has weekly contact with foster parents, does face-to-face visits monthly and is otherwise available to assist. Foster parents receive training ranging from first aid, CPR and mandatory reporting of child abuse to skills specific to working with youth offenders. A monthly maintenance payment reimburses foster parents for services they provide to youth.

More information is available by contacting Elder at Colynn.elder@oya.state.or.us or 541-967-2049. She also is available to speak to civic and service groups.

Placing appropriate youth in high-quality foster homes helps fulfill OYA's mission of protecting the public and reducing crime by holding offenders accountable and offering reformation opportunities in safe environments. OYA supervises approximately 1,100 offenders on probation and parole in communities throughout Oregon, and has custody of approximately 900 offenders ages 12-24 in correctional and transitional facilities in Albany, Burns, Florence, Grants Pass, La Grande, Salem, Tillamook, Warrenton and Woodburn.

#