



# Oregon

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## Oregon Youth Authority

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June 25, 2010

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

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### **13 youth recognized Friday in significant Hillcrest YCF commencement**

Wearing traditional caps and gowns, 13 youth offenders were recognized for educational achievement Friday afternoon during commencement ceremonies at the Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility in Salem.

Ten youth received diplomas from Hillcrest's Robert S. Farrell High School and two others received GED high school equivalency certificates. One youth received his associate's degree from Chemeketa Community College.

Commencement speakers were Hillcrest program director Shawna Smith and Rick Hanson, Willamette Education Service District director of school improvement and instructional services.

Hanson urged graduates to use their achievement as a springboard to new accomplishments. "Keep growing and keep learning," he said. "And when times are tough, remember what you've been able to achieve today."

Graduates also were invited to speak during the ceremony, and family members were able to congratulate youth during both an "open mic" period and a reception following.

The commencement was especially significant because educational achievement is fundamental to supporting offenders in leading productive, crime-free lives after they return to the community.

Willamette ESD provides education staff for year-round Robert S. Farrell High School through a contract with the Oregon Department of Education.

Hillcrest YCF is an all-male facility that also handles intake for OYA male offenders. OYA 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, and the agency supervises approximately 1,100 youth on parole and probation in communities throughout Oregon.

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