



April 17, 2013

Good afternoon Chairperson and members of the committee. Thank you for taking the time to hear us today. My name is Laura MacLennan and I am a PreventNet Site Coordinator for Northwest Family Services at Alder Creek Middle School in Milwaukie. I am here today representing the PreventNet Program through the Clackamas County Division of Children, Youth, and Families.

I have served at Alder Creek through PreventNet since the beginning of the school year and have worked with a caseload of 25-27 students throughout the year, where we meet weekly and discuss any issues they are having in school such as poor grades, behavior, social isolation, bullying, family trauma, drug/alcohol use, etc. In addition to case management, I coordinate the after school program twice a week where over one hundred students participate. Here we offer an opportunity for a student to stay after school for an hour where a snack is provided and students can engage in a variety of activities that include: soccer, basketball, volleyball, games, science club, art club, hip hop dance club and homework club. I have had many parents express their gratitude that we are able to provide a free, safe environment for their child because they are a single parent and work late, can't afford extracurricular activities, want their child to engage in more social activities, etc.

One student I have worked with since the beginning of the school year is a 7th grade female who lives with her mom, has some mental health and emotional issues, gets poor grades, and has low self-esteem. As I've continued to get to know her she has shared with me things she has dealt with outside of school as far as how some of her friends are in a gang and her drug use of smoking marijuana. She has told me before that it's hard for her to talk to adults but she that can talk to me. We were doing an exercise in a girls group, where we discussed what qualities a mentor has and she told me that I am her mentor and described things about me she looks up to. Last quarter we went around to her classes she was failing or doing poorly in and got a list from her teachers of missing assignments she had, and created a plan to complete them. Last quarter was the first quarter since she has been at Alder Creek where she had C's or better in all of her classes. This is a tremendous accomplishment for her and provides her with a much-needed sense of pride in herself. I believe it is very important that every child at least have one adult they feel like they can connect with at the school – there have been too many examples of kids feeling isolated and that no one cares about them, causing them to do something drastic to get attention.

This student is an example of many for how these prevention programs are essential for their growth and success when they have countless risk factors stacked up against them. Schools are consistently dealing with budget cuts causing counselors and administrators to be stretched thin, making the resources we provide more essential. We greatly appreciate the time you are taking to listen to us and sincerely hope you continue to keep the funding for PreventNet so we can continue to serve these kids who significantly need our help and guidance.

Thank you,

Laura MacLennan, Northwest Family Services – Alder Creek MS