

Senate Testimony: February 25, 2015

My name is Rachel Pearl and I am the Program Coordinator for the Community Connections Program at the Clackamas County Juvenile Department. I will be talking briefly about one of our programs that receive JCP funding before you hear from one of our incredible youth leaders. GREEN Corps Fresh Start is just one example of a successful program implemented by the Clackamas County Juvenile Department. GREEN Corps is a job training program for youth that provides 4 tracks using a sustainable social enterprise model. We have a small farm where youth learn horticulture and farming and we sell produce at the Oregon City Farmers Market in addition to selling produce shares to community members. At the Market and other events we also have our FRESH Start Cart, which is our coffee and smoothie business, we have a firewood business and a bike repair business. GREEN Corps has blended funding from OYA Basic and Diversion funds, matched funds from the County level Juvenile Department funds and funding from Community Partners. We stretch each dollar as far as we can and collaborate with community partners to provide a life changing experience for our youth participants.

We have established a strong list of partners who not only provide funding for the program but also staff portions of the program. OSU extension has been our partner in developing and implementing this program since we started 5 years ago, they provide leadership, funding and farm training on our farm. Our other main partner for GREEN Corps is SchoolYard Farms. SchoolYard Farms provides accounting training and oversight, farm training and internships and leadership support to the program. Another example of how the community supports GREEN Corps is our bike repair track which is completely funded and staffed by the ReCycle bike ministry in Oregon City. We have business owners that train youth and provide internship opportunities, OnPoint Credit Union provides financial responsibility classes, Clackamas Women Services provides healthy relationship classes and we also partner with garden clubs and the farm community throughout the county. Youth also receive College Credit for the program through a SMART internship at Clackamas Community College. These connections help youth develop skills but also lasting relationships with people in their community who can be lasting supports and networks for them as they move into adulthood.

GREEN Corps has been a highly successful program since its inception. We have continued to grow and improve each year. The last two years we have developed a strong relationship with Starbucks and have now been able to assist youth in transitioning from GREEN Corps into a full time job with Starbucks. We had a young lady last year who was facing homelessness towards the end of GREEN Corps, we were able to get her a job at Starbucks where she quickly moved up to a shift supervisor and now has an apartment and is able to provide for herself. These are the stories we want. These are the stories we are continuing to see from our graduates. GREEN Corps is a financially responsible, sustainable, creative and innovative program that uses collaborative funding (including revenue) to provide an opportunity for youth to stand on their own two feet and move forward. This program is one example of how Counties are maximizing the States Basic funding to enhance service levels and sustain community involvement with our youth.

I have for you a copy of the portfolio that youth receive upon graduating the program. Inside you will find a sample resume, letter of recommendation, all of the certifications that youth graduates receive as well as job searching tips.

I would now like to introduce Tiava Anderson. Tiava was a youth leader in GREEN Corps and graduated the program in November. She has proven to be a strong, resilient and wise young woman with immeasurable potential. She has overcome so much and continues to impress me with her kindness, her ability to change her mind and her willingness to accept new challenges. Here is her story.