

Testimony in Support of Oregon Youth Authority Budget

Presented by:

Kathleen Fullerton, M.S.Ed, Project Coordinator

Hope Partnership, Janus Youth Programs

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Janus Youth Programs is one of largest agencies in the state for high risk youth and young adults. We provide 45 different programs at 20 locations in Oregon and SW Washington serving 5,838 youth in the past year. Janus operates the only homeless youth shelters in Portland, the largest teen parent program in the state, and the only emergency shelter in the state for minor victims of sex trafficking.

Janus has been a partner with OYA since OYA's creation. Through that partnership we currently operate 4 programs serving 40 youth/day. One of those programs specializes in working with Juvenile Sex Offenders ages 14-24 and the other 3 work with 17-24 year old young men transitioning from close custody back into the community.

We are here today to tell you about a courageous and innovative program as part of that long standing relationship that brings services into the close custody facility; The Hope Partnership. This program exemplifies the visionary leadership of Director Fariborz Pakseresht to develop a high performing, reformative and transformative juvenile justice system. To my knowledge there is not another program like Hope Partnership. We are youth created. We continue to be youth owned and directed to bring in workshops and groups focusing on the Arts; literary, performance, and visual art. Workshops, groups, and guest speakers bring opportunities for developing life skills and

vocational training. Workshops and groups provide access to transition services and re-entry support. Hope Partnership engages community partners to develop pro-social leisure activities and create community connections. These workshops are led by volunteers who are: professionals, experienced, award winning, and have standing in their communities. Hope Partnership also provides youth access to Restorative Justice processes and Non-Violent Communication skills as well as Leadership and Community Organizing skills to bring ownership to their current community and a belief that these skills that will transfer to their home communities.

In this way, Hope Partnership is Positive Human Development in action. The research behind ‘connection’ is a foundation upon which Hope Partnership is built and deeply embedded in the vision of OYA:

- Connection and meaningful participation mitigates the stranglehold of addiction.
- Connection mitigates the lasting harm of Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Connection, through a Restorative Justice lens, is what compels us to repair harm and propels a more fully formed young adult back to community.

This vision of Director Pakseresht is deep as it is wide when supporting programs such as Hope Partnership. This is the vision that youth can and should have a voice in their own journey to transformation. This is the vision that time must be spent productively rather than warehousing individuals ‘doing time’.

One of our youth who will continue to do time beyond OYA expresses the vision like this:

“In 2011, Kathleen Fullerton, Project Manager of the Hope Partnership, blessed me with a card that changed my perspective on how I lived my life. This quote read, with an elegant font on a beautiful card, “The greatest tragedy in life is not death; the greatest tragedy takes place when our talents and capabilities are underutilized and allowed to rust while we are living – Amma.” “

This youth continues, “Hope [Partnership] addresses the significance of this quote by acting as a catalyst for personal and professional development. Through a wide array of groups and dedicated armada of volunteers, participants are able to explore and find their talents while striving to become better in every sense of the word.

But, Hope [Partnership] does much more than *help* discover talents and maximize capabilities, it helps remind participants that instead of using a weapon or drugs to combat the daily struggles of life, they have a choice, instead, to pick up a paint brush, a pencil, or a microphone, in which they’re able to add value to their community.

Your support of the OYA Budget demonstrates a belief in and support for this visionary leadership in community connection and reformation which ultimately serves not only youth in OYA care and custody, but the families and communities of Oregon to whom they will return.

Thank You.

Additional Testimony from Volunteers and Community Partners:

RE: Hope Partnership, MYCF

I am honored to have been a volunteer with the Oregon Youth Authority and specifically with Hope Partnership for several years now. I am amazed at what Hope Partnership has been able to contribute to the incarcerated youth at MYCF: poetry slam classes and events, radio journalism courses, writing workshops, etc. If in fact it is our goal as a community to make the youth better than they were when they entered corrections, than Hope Partnership is invaluable in making that goal a reality.

Personally, I have seen many youth transform through the various programs and opportunities that Hope Partnership provides. By engaging in pro-social activities, gaining interests, skills, and confidence, and by engaging in appropriate interactions with a variety of volunteers, youth begin to see themselves differently, and they begin to imagine – and work toward - different lives for themselves. I applaud Hope Partnership and OYA: together they are making real changes in the lives of youth and thereby making our community and our state a better place.

Deborah Smith Arthur, M.A, J.D.
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For several years, some of the members of the Ceili of the Valley Society in Salem have spent time teaching and dancing with some of the young men at MacLaren. I know that for all of us it is one of the most important things we do as our outreach to our community. The young men have been unfailingly enthusiastic about learning and doing the dances. They seem to enjoy the experience so much! Some of them even dress in kilts and Celtic attire.

They are always courteous, and friendly, and it is a joy to bring what we love to do to them.

Thank you,
Ann McBride - Ceili of the Valley Society

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

The opportunities that Hope Partnership provides for the youth at OYA are not only beneficial healthy outlets for them, but are also crucial to their reintegration into society. As a volunteer, I have seen the youth learn so much through group activities that they would otherwise not be learning without Hope Partnership. Youth are able to work on things such as identifying positive social skills, figuring out their goals and career paths, and learning the ways to go about becoming successful in their future endeavors after leaving OYA. Hope Partnership teaches the youth activities and skills that can be utilized in everyday life, and allows them to find hobbies that they are interested in and enjoy to do. The work that these youth are doing with Hope Partnership's coordinators and volunteers build the foundation for these young men to change their lives for the better by providing them with the opportunities to grow into successful adults. Hope Partnership presents youth with the opportunity to discover their aspirations, gives them hope for their future, and teaches them the skills necessary to positively transition back into the general population.

-Kelsey Lovelace, QMHA, Hope Partnership Volunteer

The Hope Partnership has created myriad opportunities for me to create and enact social change by working with young people. As a volunteer I am empowered to share knowledge, challenge ideas and create community within working groups. I cannot put enough emphasis on the impact the relationships that youth and staff have granted me has afforded my own self-awareness and identity. My experience with Hope Partnership groups throughout my volunteer work has not only made me feel more committed to social justice, but has helped me understand that each person's life experience acts as an individualized skill set. Seeing young people use their skill sets in these groups has reinforced my desire to work in youth justice. I feel strongly about the positive experiences provided by the Hope Partnership for young people in OYA custody, and look to advocate for and with them whenever possible.

Kylie Goss-Dedrickson – Hope Partnership Volunteer

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

This statement is in support of Hope Partnership and the strength and services their staff members are giving to youth incarcerated with the Oregon Youth Authority.

Since September, 2014 I have participated as a volunteer trainer in a weekly Nonviolent Communication program at MacLaren youth detention center in Woodburn. The participating youth have been recruited and well prepared for this program by Kathleen Fullerton, lead Hope Partnership staff person at OYA. In addition to Nonviolent Communication, Kathleen has brought classes in Restorative Justice, courtesy, and basic communication to the youth. She also has created a Leadership program giving experience in leadership roles to many youth.

Most striking is the respect given to Kathleen by all of the youth. They clearly recognize that she and Hope Partnership are offering them opportunities for growth and development of new skills they would not now be receiving anywhere else. Further, her physical area is a place of safety and acceptance and is most clearly appreciated by the youth who meet there for classes. This is all being accomplished within an atmosphere of the highest level of professionalism.

Kathleen has also attended and fully participated in each class. This participation and time commitment sends a strong message to the youth that these skills are valuable and are worth mastering. At all times over many months it has been a true joy to work closely with Kathleen.

I submit this in the hope that Hope Partnership will be fully funded and supported to continue and to expand most valuable services for our OYA youth.

Sincerely,

Delana Evans Beaton, M.A., M.S. Ed. Counseling

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

I met Kathleen Fullerton, who is working at MacLaren with Hope Partnership, for the first time last summer. OYA director Fariborz Pakseresht, Kathleen, Delana Beaton, and I were discussing how to bring Nonviolent Communication classes to incarcerated youth. Fariborz was visibly excited about offering programs to youth and staff to “change the culture”.

When Delana and I went to visit MacLaren, we were met by the Leadership team that Kathleen and the Hope Partnership had helped to create and nurture. Eight young men took us on an extended tour of the facility. They were solicitous, intelligent, polite, and curious. At one point during the tour, we were given an opportunity to talk about the class we’d be offering. One of the Leadership team said, “I’m interested in learning about mediation. Would Nonviolent Communication help me with that?” Later, during one of our classes, a participant shared that he wanted to learn good communication skills so he could take them back into the neighborhood where he grew up.

During two of our sessions, a young woman employed by the Woodburn Public Schools came and sat in and participated in our group. The first time she said, “I’ve been out here at MacLaren all day. This is the first place I’ve gotten an idea of what it’s like for the people who live here.”

For learning to take place, there has to be trust. Hope Partnership is exploring ways to rebuild trust once it has been damaged. This is something we need to invest in.

Mark Babson – Volunteer, Hope Partnership and Oregon Prison Project

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

I first came into contact with the arts programing of the Hope Partnership through attending a reading in June 2014 that featured plays the young men in Francesca Piantadosi's Playwriting Workshop had written. I was very moved by what the men were saying through their writing. It made me very aware of the variety of difficult life circumstances that contribute to someone ending up in a correctional facility. These were talented and engaging young men who were now trying to turn their lives around. They were also very approachable. I learned about an aspect of life I had not known about, and I saw them supporting each other in the presentation, and gaining self-respect and appreciation for their own and each other's talents and voices. In September I assisted Francesca in her next session of the 8 week Playwriting Class, and then began teaching my own 8 week Devising Theater class in January. In this class we have created a play which they will perform in March. The workshop puts the young men in a situation where they must collaborate and work with others to create an end product. This is not an easy task, and I have been impressed with their perseverance, willingness to try new things, imagination and sense of humor. They are practicing speaking up for themselves, as well as respectfully listening to others. It has been very rewarding for me to watch them develop presence, confidence and skills, and to learn to work with issues that come up between different personalities. These programs provide avenues for the men to practice pro-creative and pro-social skills, and to explore self-expression in a positive way. Kathleen has been immeasurably helpful in organizing the workshops and in sharing her knowledge of the young men.

Sincerely,

Anet Ris-Kelman-Hope Partnership

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

I have been volunteering within the Depth of Corrections since 2008 facilitating restorative justice groups at both OSCI and OSP and am an active facilitated dialogue program volunteer. 2 years ago I had the privilege of coming into contact with Kathleen Fullerton and the Hope Partnership program. Since my full time employment is centered on working with youth, schools and community in practicing Restorative Justice it made perfect sense to shift my volunteer time to a youth facility. Words cannot express how impactful this experience has been on my life thus far. I have volunteered for numerous organizations throughout my life and my experience with Hope Partnership and the youth participants and leaders at McLaren has by far stood out as my most meaningful volunteer experience. Hope Partnership's focus on creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for outside volunteers is directly related to this positive experience. Unlike many other institutions and organizations Hope Partnership offers volunteers clear and logistically easy ways to connect and have a rewarding and fulfilling experience with youth and staff while at McLaren. There has always been timely and clear communication, expression of appreciation and an invitation to always include other community members and grow the base of volunteers. Because of this I continue to be committed to volunteering my time to the youth and staff at McLaren through the support and guidance of Kathleen and the Hope Partnership program. It is my sincerest hope that they continue to get the funding, support and resources they need to continue the excellent and vital work they are offering our youth and the community.

Maria Scanelli, Insight Development Group, ResolutionsNW, and Hope Partnership
Volunteer