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Prison Re-Entry programs grow as correctional costs soar

By [Susan Goldsmith, The Oregonian](#)

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Beth Nakamura. Incarcerated women at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville participate in a salon training program at the prison, which allows them to cultivate skills for when they are released. Inmate Christy Ashby (left) watches program facilitator and instructor Tammy Kennedy trim inmate Chelsie Neffendorf's long hair.

Portland's first one-stop prison transition center offers visitors a front row view of misery.

People stream in and out of the North Portland church basement, most just released from Oregon's prisons or struggling on post-prison supervision. Some have no place to live, no money, no job and at least one felony on their records. Others have lined up temporary housing but need work. Many have children but no high school diploma.

"I need a job. I need housing. I have two beautiful kids," says Munirah Brown, 29, who's on post-prison supervision for an attempted assault with a deadly weapon.

"They don't want us selling drugs, don't want us stealing or selling our bodies." But with no money, she says, "what are we supposed to do?"

It's a question elected leaders, judges, corrections officials and social service providers around the country struggle to answer.

In Oregon, nearly 400 inmates are released from prison each month. Thirty percent of them end up back behind bars within three years.

In hopes of lowering the number who return, the state is increasing programs to help inmates make the transition to life out of prison. With corrections costing Oregon \$1.4 billion for the next two years -- more than the state spends on higher education -- it may be cheaper to help former inmates on the outside than to pay for them to come back.

Several efforts are attacking the same issue, for example:

The Portland center, at Calvary Christian Church, is one of four slated to open around the state in the coming months. The centers are financed by nonprofits, foundations and federal grant money.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski created a Re-entry Council two years ago to identify the barriers inmates face and coordinate programs to help them. A similar approach is being tried in several other states.

The Oregon Department of Corrections recently unveiled an online wiki to help offenders learn about jobs and other resources. Inmates leaving state custody now get help obtaining state DMV identification cards before they are released. They also get a 30-day supply of their medications when they get out.

A pilot program in Eugene started by U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken gives former inmates a team to help with the transition from prison. The judge who handled the case, attorneys for both sides and treatment providers monitor inmates closely. Participants agree to sanctions for their mistakes, but in exchange get a relationship that is more supportive and less adversarial.

"We need to get a handle on this in a more cost effective way or we are going to pay the most expensive way, which is a prison bed," Aiken says. "We're recycling people. It's been just catch and release and catch."

Despite its official newness, Calvary Christian has operated as a defacto re-entry center for years. As offenders returned to the North Portland neighborhood, Pastor Frederick Woods' church offered food to the hungry and he began to hear stories about life after prison. Many who came for meals were on probation, parole and post-prison supervision, the bulk of them fighting drug and alcohol addictions.

"You are dealing with a population of people with low self-esteem," he says. "They are hopeless and they have poor educational skills. You can give clothes. You can give food, make referrals and connections. Everybody knows somebody who might be able to give these people a chance."

A group of organizations working in the area of re-entry in Portland, including Woods, submitted a United Way grant in 2009. United Way committed \$444,000 for three years and Mercy Corps Northwest became the lead agency for the grant.

Now, 45 agencies in Portland, including Wood's church, work together through the center to coordinate and provide emergency housing, computer access, interview clothing, job development and dental treatment.

"We're kind of on the leading edge of re-entry, and if we can pull this off, it'll be pretty cool," says Doug Cooper, assistant director of Mercy Corps Northwest. "Whether you're a conservative or a bleeding heart liberal, you want to have these people as taxpayers who are re-engaged with the community and paying taxes rather than using them."

The center hired two "navigators" to work directly with the offenders. Both are former inmates who understand what those who come in the door face.

Felton Howard, 57, the center's only full-time navigator did 13 months in federal prison for drug dealing and was released less than a year ago.

"Nobody was there for me," he says. "There are a lot of resources out there if you know where to look. But the population that needs those resources is growing and there's waitlists. These programs helped me turn my life around."

Harris worked as a janitor initially and then landed the job at the center, which opened in early September. He beat out 100 applicants for the \$32,000 a year job.

Former inmates are the most qualified to work with newly released offenders, he says. "You don't want to learn football from someone who plays baseball."

One of those getting help from the center is Chris Dailey. Now 35, he's been in and out of prisons since he was 18 for stealing cars and for drug and alcohol offenses. This time, with the help of transition programs, he took out a student loan and is attending Mt. Hood Community College full-time.

Dailey is convinced that the re-entry puzzle has two important components -- the help piece and the offender's part. Both are essential, he says, to success.

All the help in the world won't matter if someone doesn't want to change," he says. "For me, there's no doubt what my future holds now. It's my movie to make."

Inmates construct park benches

For Tucker memorial

By [Susan Matheny](#)

For the second time, inmates at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution are providing seating features for Madras parks.

Five new steel benches will be installed at the Pfc. Thomas Tucker Veterans Memorial to recognize the branches of the military.

Guff Thorpe, who taught metal shop at Madras High School for 20 years, and owned a welding shop for 20 years, was persuaded to coordinate the project by Don Reeder, who is on the Veterans Memorial Committee.

"He called me one day and asked me if I could design something for the memorial downtown," Thorpe said.

Using an idea generated by a former student, Ezra Pasikatan, Thorpe made a few changes in design to fit the location, and then contacted Parrish Van Wert, DRCI community development coordinator, to see if inmates might help get the project moving.

"Guff called and had an idea about the creation of these benches, but they had limited funding," said Van Wert. "They knew inmates made the picnic tables at Sahalee Park, so Guff was curious if we had the technology to weld up all-steel benches."

Van Wert had just the person to oversee the project: Madras resident Bill Filbert, facility maintenance specialist at DRCI, who also operated a welding shop in Madras for years, until 1990.

The committee supplied the inmates with \$1,476 worth of materials, and the project was under way.

"The people at the prison stepped up and changed a couple ideas, and built us a prototype," said Thorpe. Once it was approved by the committee, the other four were built.

This week, Commercial Powder Coating, of Bend, will powder coat the benches at no cost to the committee. "Instead of paint, it's a lot more durable finish," said Thorpe. "(The owner) volunteered to do it for free since it's for the veterans' memorial."



Submitted photo

DRCI inmates who worked on the project, and their supervisor, from left include John McLean, Mike Klaus, DRCI maintenance specialist Bill Filbert (center), Stewart Reagan, and Jason Scroggins.

Four inmates worked on the project, which took about four weeks -- Jason Scroggins, John McLean, Mike Klaus, and Stewart Reagan.

"Skills such as metal fabrication assist in the reform process and enhance employment potentials after release," said Van Wert. "I know these men are very proud of this project and understand the importance to our community and the Tucker family."

The men agreed. "It's good to do something for our military," said Scroggins. "I served in the military and am glad to be able to give something back to our armed services."

"It's nice to be able to give back to the community," said Klaus. "I knew Tom Tucker and am proud to do something nice in his memory."

<http://www.madraspioneer.com/MAPNews6.shtml>

Macy's parade taps Hilhi, Century bands

Friday, November 13, 2009

The Hillsboro Argus

The Century High and Hillsboro High school marching bands will participate in the Nov. 27 Macy's Holiday Parade in downtown Portland.

The parade starts at 8:45 a.m. at NW Park and Davis streets, goes east to Broadway, south to Alder, east on Alder to Fourth, north to Flanders, and west to NW Park. It lasts about an hour and includes floats, marching bands, equestrian units, and distinguished guests.

In addition to costumed characters and inflatables, 2009 parade entries include the Oregon Department of Corrections Color Guard, The Salvation Army Kettle and Marching Officers, the Portland Fire Bureau Toy & Joy Makers, Wells Fargo Stagecoach, the Get A Life Marching Band and a special Make-A-Wish family.



Argus Observer Article - Veteran's Day Parade - DOC Honor Guard

ONTARIO — Veterans Day is not until next week, but opportunities for honoring all those who served will begin Saturday with a host of activities, including the annual Veterans Day parade.

Lineup for the parade will begin at 11 a.m. on Alameda Drive, with the parade to start at 1 p.m. at Alameda and Southwest Fourth Avenue.

“We’ve got almost 60 entries, over 100 vehicles and close to 400 people involved, so far,” Steve Farrow, commander of American Legion Post No. 67, Ontario, said.

The parade route now follows the same route as the Winter Wonderland Parade — east on Southwest Fourth Avenue to South Oregon Street, north to First Avenue and back around on Southeast First and Depot Road, to end at the train depot.

Ontario Police Department Capt. Mark Alexander said motorists in Ontario Saturday afternoon should be aware that streets along the parade route (Southwest Fourth and South Oregon) will be blocked off beginning at 12:30 p.m., and drivers should find alternate routes to get around town. He said the procedures will be same as for the Winter Wonderland Parade and asks for motorists’ cooperation.

“This is going to be our eighth year,” Farrow said. “People are still coming out and showing respect for veterans.” He said people ask him if there is going to be a grand marshall, but in his view, every veteran who shows up is a grand marshall of the parade.

The parade first started with 12 veterans carrying flags marching up Southwest Ninth Street from the Veterans Hall to Park Boulevard and Evergreen Cemetery, and it has grown every year. While the first several parades were held on Veterans Day, the parade was moved to the Saturday before to get the community more involved, Farrow said.

The traditional Veterans Day services will be held Wednesday at 11 a.m. at Evergreen Cemetery.

Starting off Saturday’s activities will be the dedication of the Veterans Monument, honoring those who have served or are serving in the military. Chuck Sokolik, monument committee chairman, said the ceremony will start at 9 a.m. with the Ontario High School band sounding the call to attention. Members of the Oregon Army National Guard will conduct a flag-raising ceremony and local ministers will offer prayers, blessing the monument. There will be a singing of the National Anthem and some speeches thanking those who were involved in the project.

Also, Saturday, Veteran Advocates of Ore-Ida will have an open house at their office in the Park Center, starting at 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

There will be VA staff from Boise on hand to give out seasonal flu shots to veterans. Among the displays will be a memorial developed by Janice Gates, honoring her son Josh Brennan and other things to see and do and there will be food available.

There will be bleachers at the Park Center for viewing the parade.