



Ukuleles at Rogue Valley play a role in Positive Human Development



Steven Mounce leads youth in a ukulele concert at Rogue Valley's luau in August.

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I have been leading a ukulele group for youth at Rogue Valley YCF for the past five months. I chose the ukulele because – compared to a guitar – it's smaller, more affordable, not as loud and easier to play. I took up the ukulele after recently seeing one in Hawaii and after playing guitar for 20 years. I never took the ukulele seriously until I visited Hawaii, where ukuleles are held in high regard.

Superintendent Ken Jerin graciously allowed the purchase of some ukuleles and off we went. The group was full within the first week (a dozen youth in all) with a waiting list. We practiced all the basics and compiled a song list. We even played a set of eight songs at our facility luau in August.

So what do ukuleles have to do with [Positive Human Development \(PHD\)](#)? One youth in our ukulele group struggled while being incarcerated. His father was a police officer who died when he

was very young. The youth's behavior began to improve the last six months of his stay at Rogue Valley and he eventually turned out to be a success story.

So, there I was, driving around Grants Pass and saw someone on a bike with what looked like a guitar on his back. As I looked closer, it was the youth I had worked with; but he was carrying a ukulele, not a guitar.

The Positive Human Development pyramid



Prior to leaving the facility, the youth had asked me where he could get his own ukulele. We shopped online for ideas. I was pleased to see he actually followed through. A letter he sent to a youth on the unit verified the same thing. He commented in the letter that he loves his new ukulele and plays it every day.

Our ukulele group has been well attended since we started. We are now starting to learn jazz and hope to play in Rogue Valley's culinary fundraising event in November.

I thought this was a good example of PHD in action – especially **meaningful participation and caring and supportive relationships**.