April 2, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

April 6-12 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. This year’s theme – “30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice” – celebrates the great progress made for crime victims in the past few decades. Only 30 years ago, crime victims had few recognized rights within the criminal justice system. Victims were largely left on their own to access compensation or services to help rebuild their lives. They were often excluded from courtrooms and denied an opportunity to speak at sentencing.

We have come a long way since the passage of the federal Victims of Crime Act in 1984. Today, Oregon and all other states have crime victims’ rights laws and victim compensation funds. Thousands of agencies are dedicated to helping crime victims throughout the nation.

At OYA, we work hard to help the youth in our care and custody understand the impact of their actions on their victims and make restitution. In some cases, restitution takes the form of making financial payments to victims as ordered by the courts. In other cases, youth make contributions to local communities through charitable activities and volunteer projects.

OYA also supports crime victims by promoting their rights and providing them with information and access to resources in a timely and sensitive manner. We participate in the VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) program, which makes resources available around the clock at 1-877-OR-4-VINE. In addition, a crime victims’ advocate serves on the OYA Advisory Committee, which provides feedback to the agency’s senior leadership about its programs and services.

Support for crime victims also is offered by the Oregon Department of Justice, which has a Crime Victims’ Services Division. Similar assistance is available at the national level through the Office for Victims of Crime in the U.S. Department of Justice.

National Crime Victims’ Rights Week reminds us of the importance of continuing these efforts while recognizing that many challenges remain. We can best meet these challenges by continuing to focus on reducing future victimization by providing the treatment and programming that will help our youth learn to lead productive, crime-free lives. This focus is embedded in our mission and vision statements, and is a key component of the Youth Reformation System.
During National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, we encourage you to remain mindful of our responsibility to reduce victimization and to be responsive to the needs of victims. Thank you for your commitment to this important goal.

Sincerely,

Fariborz Pakseresht
Director

Joe O’Leary
Deputy Director