



Director's Message

June 5, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to announce that a panel of judges that included Chelsea Clinton has awarded first place in a national contest to a poem written by youth Aaron at Rogue Valley YCF.

Aaron's poem, "[Meth](#)," took top honors in [Words Unlocked](#), a poetry competition sponsored by our partners at the [Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings](#). Ms. Clinton was among four judges who ranked Aaron's poem first out of 430 entries nationwide.

Remarkably, this is the second consecutive year a poem written by one of our youth took first place in the Words Unlocked competition. Last year's winner was a young woman from Oak Creek YCF who took top honors for her poem, "[Hell's Angel](#)."

The accomplishments of Aaron and the other youth recognized by Words Unlocked prove once again that incarceration doesn't need to stifle creative expression. Our youth are talented, and so are the educators who serve them. We commend Aaron, his teachers, and all our other young poets for being courageous enough to express themselves and to submit their work for judging in a national competition.

Aaron, 20, is from Roseburg. He already has his GED and is working toward graduating June 24 with his diploma from Rogue Valley's Newbridge High School. Aaron credited teacher Kim DeForest for encouraging his creativity. Aaron and Kim will be featured this Sunday on National Public Radio's "[Weekend Edition](#)" program. Broadcast times may vary, so please check [your local public radio station](#) for details.

A total of 98 youth in local or state custody in Oregon submitted poems for the competition. "Meth" and poems by seven other OYA youth will be published in the [Words Unlocked 2014 Anthology](#). This year's second place winner, Mariah, wrote her poem while at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center in Salem. [Click here to read all the Words Unlocked winning poems](#).

In addition to Ms. Clinton, [judges for the competition](#) included Reginald Dwayne Betts, Joaquin Zihuatanejo and Josh Lefkowitz. For placing first, Aaron will receive a certificate, inclusion in the [Words Unlocked 2014 Anthology](#), a signed copy of Mr. Zihuatanejo's book, "Family Tree," and a \$100 cash prize.

This month, OYA facilities across the state are hosting graduation ceremonies. As we celebrate the educational accomplishments of our youth, we commend those who have made an extra effort to achieve distinction. Please join us in congratulating Aaron, Kim, and all youth and staff who strive for excellence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fariborz Pakseresht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Fariborz Pakseresht
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe O'Leary". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being the most legible part.

Joe O'Leary
Deputy Director