



## **Director's Message**

June 27, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday's graduation at Hillcrest's Robert S. Farrell High School concluded a month full of educational accomplishments for OYA youth. The numbers are impressive: 241 high school diplomas, college degrees, GEDs, and vocational certificates were awarded to youth in facilities or under community supervision at graduation ceremonies across the state.

At Hillcrest, it was heartwarming to see the family of the late Mike Gregus in attendance as Mike's colleague Harry Bradshaw awarded the New Beginnings College Scholarship to a deserving youth, Pavel Bahmatov. Mike was a longtime JPPO whose untimely death last year moved his family to ask that donations be made in his name to a scholarship fund for youth who pursue higher education while at OYA.

We are grateful to the many special guests who attended facility graduations, including local officials and members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Relatives of the graduates were also there to applaud the achievements of their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews.

It was inspiring to see a number of youth voluntarily return to the facilities from which they had recently been released to formally receive their diplomas. For example, several girls who left Oak Creek after they completed their graduation requirements returned to the facility June 13 to walk across the stage.

None of this progress would be possible without the strong and productive relationships we have forged with school districts and community colleges throughout the state, the Oregon Department of Education, and various non-profit partners. Many people have worked diligently to foster these relationships, which are responsible for bringing dozens of committed and hard-working principals, teachers and instructors into our facilities to guide and mentor at-risk youth, and for introducing innovative educational programs. It takes a special kind of person to teach in correctional facilities, and we are fortunate that so many talented individuals are willing to offer our youth their skills, experience, and passion for learning.

The achievements celebrated by the graduation ceremonies reflect our agency's commitment, and that of our educational partners, to give at-risk youth the best opportunity to lead productive, crime-free lives after leaving OYA. The more youth learn while with us, the less likely they are to return to us. We are proud that Oregon is a national leader in terms of the quality and variety of classroom and vocational education options we offer to juvenile

offenders. Our graduates are now well prepared to continue their educations, find jobs, or pursue trades after fulfilling their OYA commitments.

Education is a vital element in OYA's culture of Positive Human Development, where kids feel safe to learn, grow and achieve. By helping at-risk youth overcome their pasts, our educational and vocational programs are preparing them for brighter futures. Please join us in congratulating our graduates – and thanking those who taught them – for making 2014 a year of educational distinction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fariborz Pakseresht".

Fariborz Pakseresht  
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe O'Leary".

Joe O'Leary  
Deputy Director