



Fences For Fido honors MacLaren partnership



Left to right: Abe Rios, Rebecca Yazzie, Robert Spencer, Dan Berger, Michael Conn, Steve Middleton, Jeff Canfield and Frank Martin at the April 25 Fences For Fido gala in Portland.

By [Sally Murdoch](#), OYA Communications
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OYA went to the dogs April 25 as [Fences For Fido](#) (FFF) honored the agency at its annual gala in Portland. About 300 people, including OYA staff, FFF volunteers, and corporate sponsors celebrated the non-profit's accomplishments.

At the sold-out event, FFF formally recognized MacLaren YCF's contributions to the group's mission. Youth at MacLaren – with instruction provided by the Willamette Education Service District – build fences and doghouses for local distribution by FFF to owners whose dogs are tethered in yards, allowing them to live unchained.

FFF was founded in 2009 when volunteers arrived at the Portland home of Chopper, a dog that had been isolated from his family and chained to a tree for years. In fact, Chopper had spent so long tied to one section of yard that he wore down the confines of his small world to bare ground.

In six years, the organization has grown to serve dogs throughout the Pacific Northwest and in March [celebrated the unchaining](#) of its 1,000th canine.

The doghouses (MacLaren youth) build are fantastic," said FFF volunteer Jennifer Adams. "I pull up the truck and the guys tell me about pets they've had ... before I know it, the guys have the truck loaded up with gates and fences and doghouses and I'm on my way home with a fully loaded Fido truck."

OYA has partnered with FFF for less than a year, but youth are already reaping rewards from the partnership. "It's restoring our sense of self, and that's the biggest thing," said youth Nate. In addition to helping the dogs and their owners, the partnership enables youth to learn vocational skills while serving others in a very direct way.

Said OYA Education Coordinator Frank Martin, "It was a great night full of energy and enthusiasm and it was so nice to be a part of this celebration. It was also nice to see the community so enthused about the great work of OYA youth."

FFF co-founder Kelly Peterson fought back tears as she gave a heartfelt speech filled with personal anecdotes about what the organization has accomplished. When the silent auction ended, three welded sculpture pieces created by MacLaren youth had fetched upwards of \$150 apiece.

The evening's highlight was the showing of a [video featuring the FFF-OYA partnership](#) amidst hoots and hollers from the crowd in support of OYA.

"We're honored to help Fences for Fido accomplish its mission," MacLaren Superintendent Dan Berger told the gathering after the video was shown. "At the same time, you are helping us accomplish ours, and that is to protect the public and reduce crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments."

On behalf of MacLaren, Berger accepted FFF's "Chopper's Hero of the Year Award," the non-profit's most prestigious honor. The award recognizes the exceptional service youth and staff are performing for Oregon's communities (and represented by the Community Connection level of the [Positive Human Development pyramid](#)).



“These two vulnerable populations – at-risk youth and at-risk dogs – have much to learn from each other and have much to offer each other,” said Berger.

[Click to watch video.](#)