



## Rogue Valley Youth Correctional Facility debuts renovated kitchen



Superintendent Ken Jerin (left) honors kitchen staff at the celebration.

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The problem at Rogue Valley Youth Correctional Facility started in October with a kitchen floor drain that clogged over and over again, despite multiple attempts to clear it.

When facility staff opened up a small section of the kitchen floor to investigate the underground wastewater pipe, they discovered much more than they bargained for: the metal pipe buried under three feet of concrete and gravel had deteriorated beyond repair. To fix it, they would have to saw through the entire kitchen floor to replace the pipes.

In the meantime, with sewage water exposed in the kitchen, cooking meals there was out of the question until the pipes and floor could be replaced. And the facility still had to feed 100 youth three meals daily.

Quick-thinking OYA staff solved the problem of feeding the youth by reaching out to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) about the possibility of using their mobile kitchens to prep meals. ODF delivered two of the kitchens — large semis equipped with cooking appliances for feeding firefighters during wildfire season — to Rogue Valley on Halloween.



Inside one of the new coolers.



The outside of the new coolers, and the new kitchen floor.

For nearly five months, while repairs were underway, Rogue Valley had no kitchen. During that time, the trailers sat out front while kitchen staff braved winter weather, trudging up and down metal steps to carry food from the kitchens into the facility.

“It was a long grind,” superintendent Ken Jerin said. “We had a week-long freeze where nothing worked out there. Our staff dealt with freezing rain, carrying food up and down those steps, a mishap with a canopy — it was kind of like Murphy’s Law.”

After all that, it was with much fanfare that Rogue Valley staff and youth celebrated the March 3 re-opening of their remodeled kitchen.

At the celebration, Jerin honored the Rogue Valley staff who went above and beyond to continue food services during the repairs: Jeff Bassett, Jaime Garibay, Bob Page, Leann Barry, Justin Gibson and Gordon Brosmore.

As they worked to keep youth fed, other teams worked to fix the kitchen as quickly as possible. Beaman Architecture of Portland drew up emergency plans for the project. A slew of local contractors signed on to do repairs: Shamrock Plumbing, Pro Electric, Dwayne Curtis Sheet Metal, Layton Refrigeration, Umpqua Sheet Metal, Cut and Break Concrete, Lowe’s Construction, and Rubenstein’s Tile.

While the rotted pipe was an unwanted surprise, the repair did give Rogue Valley a chance to make some additional and long-desired kitchen upgrades.

“For years we’ve wanted to fix up this kitchen,” facilities manager Rex Emery said. “It was finally an excuse to redo the floor tiles and the walls. Now it’s beautiful.”

Rogue Valley already was scheduled to receive two new walk-in coolers as part of OYA’s 10-Year Plan for Facilities. Contractor Ausland Group installed the new coolers during the repairs.

On February 26, staff moved into a much better kitchen than the one they had left. The week of March 7, OYA returned the mobile kitchens to ODF — also in much better shape than before (staff members had them professionally cleaned and detailed).



*The ODF mobile kitchen trailers sat outside the front of Rogue Valley for several months.*

Staff brought in pizza and cake for all the Rogue Valley youth and staff to enjoy on the day of the celebration. Jerin presented thank-you gifts to several staff, and then he cut the ribbon for the kitchen with a blessing of sorts: “May it live long and prosper.”

#### **What happened to the pipes?**



Facilities staff don’t know yet why Rogue Valley’s underground pipes deteriorated. OYA has hired an engineering firm to investigate whether it had to do with the pipe material or the soil around it.

OYA staff also will examine the three other facilities built at the same time as Rogue Valley — North Coast, Oak Creek, and Eastern Oregon — to see if their pipes have issues.

OYA’s goal is to learn from this event and prevent it from happening again.