



## Woodburn Independent: Breaking ground: Work to expand MacLaren facility begins

By Ryan Nakano, Woodburn Independent  
July 6, 2016

A few golden shovels thrown into a sandbox marked a huge change for MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility in Woodburn on June 30.

Granted, the gesture was purely symbolic, as the real groundbreaking has been happening for the past month. But it was a reason to educate on the current renovations of the facility and the consolidation of Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility in Salem by June 2017.

The projects are part of the first year of OYA's 10-year-plan funded by a \$50 million bond awarded after the 2015 Oregon Legislative session. The MacLaren facility alone makes up \$31.5 million of that budget.

Contracted construction crews have started on the installation of six new living units on the backside of the MacLaren campus and gutted the old Grover residential dorms to be brought in line with the facility's vision of positive human development.

Ann Snyder, OYA communications manager, explained one reason why the facility is making updates to its infrastructure.

"Most of these kids did really bad things to get here. We're not trying to whitewash that," she said. "But most of these kids were victims before they were perpetrators, which is why we are converting to a more developmental model as opposed to a punitive one."

MacLaren was built in the late 1800s, so, needless to say, the buildings are outdated. On top of that, most of the facility was built before mental health and treatment was ever taken into serious consideration, according to Snyder.

As a result, the buildings are more reflective of a modern adult correctional facility.



*Left to right: Rex Emery, OYA's physical plant operations manager; Colette Peters, director of the Oregon Department of Corrections; OYA Director Fariborz Pakseresht; OYA Deputy Director Joe O'Leary; and MacLaren Superintendent Dan Berger pose for a photo at the symbolic groundbreaking at MacLaren.*

The new units being constructed at MacLaren will offer 16 separate bedrooms as opposed to the older units designed to hold 24 youths in dormitory style fashion.

Designs for the new units also suggest the addition of larger windows so youth residents will be exposed to more natural light and the outside world.

All of these changes fall under what OYA Director Fariborz Pakseresht described in the opening speech of the groundbreaking event, as the the organization's pyramid culture of success known as "Positive Human Development."

"This is much more than building buildings," Pakseresht said. "There is a flame that can be lit in each kid, and the kids light that flame and achieve their highest potential as they develop into adults."

Some of the key components of the PHD model are: safety and security, caring and supporting relationships, and high expectations and accountability.

One way that OYA is trying to foster this kind of model is to create normative spaces for the youths held at MacLaren.

Justin Hubbard, 19, has been in the correctional system for the past two years and at MacLaren for five and a half months.

“I like the openness,” he said. “I mean, we even have a running group here and it feels like we have a lot more freedoms.”

Snyder explained that the idea behind this normalization, which also includes a health clinic remodel to look like a regular doctor’s office, is to prepare the youth offenders for release back into the outside world and hopefully curb recidivism.

In addition to the new living units and current renovations being made on the pre-existing housing, the staff and youths at Hillcrest will be relocated to MacLaren facility as OYA consolidates the two programs in less than a year.

As part of the relocation several vocational and work programs from Hillcrest will be incorporated into the MacLaren facility including bike repair, building maintenance, culinary baking, custodial, grounds maintenance and tattoo removal services.

To accommodate for the relocation, the new housing units will bring MacLaren’s capacity up from 136 to 272 youth offenders. There are currently 125 youths at MacLaren and 125 at the Hillcrest facility.