

OYA Director's Message



January 13, 2010

Welcome back from the holiday break, everyone, and happy new year to you and your loved ones. I hope that by now you have been able to take some time to relax and re-energize as we get ready to take on a new year full of challenges and opportunities.

As I reflect on the year that has just ended and my first six months with OYA, I continue to be impressed by your dedication to helping youthful offenders and to your passion for continually improving the services we deliver. Your commitment to the work we do has made it possible for us to come through a tumultuous year and still be filled with hope for the future.

Those of you who were here the first half of 2009 faced a difficult legislative session that included some significant budget reductions. Since that time, all of us have accepted and succeeded at the challenge of managing to a reduced budget level. I know we will continue to do what it takes to maintain our services and programs while remaining vigilant about spending.

This past year also was a time of many leadership changes – two directors, a reorganized Cabinet that now includes a medical director and a treatment director, and several new managers, superintendents and camp directors. Throughout these changes you have stayed focused on our mission. We are on the right track and we are making progress.

We are maintaining our focus on providing treatment and education in safe and secure environments. We remain committed to addressing the criminogenic risk factors that impact the youth in our care and custody. And we continue to build positive working relationships with counties, communities and advocacy groups to improve public safety.

These efforts will continue throughout 2010 – and beyond – as we work to ensure the success of the youth and families we serve. And it is through your dedication that we will be able to meet the challenges facing us in the year ahead.

The most immediate issue that concerns all of us, of course, is the January 26 special election, which will decide the fate of two tax measures. The results of that vote have the potential to significantly change how we do business. But we already are looking at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our work, and I know we can adapt to any changes that may result from the vote or the still-struggling economy.

We have several initiatives we will be focusing on during 2010. One key activity under way is the mapping initiative being led by our facilities. This project will study and track the risk factors, needs and progress of youthful offenders during their time in OYA's care

and custody. The goal is to ensure that each youth receives the right services in the right place at the right time. We also are looking at a staffing analysis to determine the appropriate level of staff needed throughout our field offices, and are implementing a new medical model that will improve the consistency and quality of the medical care our youth receive. The potential of these projects to improve services and reduce recidivism is exciting.

Also ahead this year is completion of the latest review of our mission, vision and values, which began several months ago. This exercise occurs every few years to ensure we continue to focus on the priorities set for us by the public and Legislature. I thank those of you who completed the Climate and Culture Survey question about OYA's core values for your help with this exercise.

I am constantly inspired by the many wonderful people who work here and the important work we do. I appreciate hearing your ideas for protecting public safety and improving outcomes for youth. I invite you to continue sharing your ideas within your workgroups, with your supervisors and managers, and with the agency's leadership. By working together this coming year, and by turning new challenges into opportunities, I am hopeful that we will continue to make a positive difference for Oregonians.

My best wishes for you in the year ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Colette S. Peters
Director