



# Oregon

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## **Youth at OYA's Tillamook facilities learning to be good neighbors**

By Tracie Hightower and Denessa Martin  
We work with incarcerated youth. We tell them every day they are preparing to return to the community as good neighbors by going to school, getting treatment and demonstrating good behavior.



Tracie Hightower



Denessa Martin

During Crime Victims' Rights Week, some of these youth got a vivid lesson in what it means to be a good neighbor. A Camp Tillamook youth work crew was sprucing up the Sacred Heart Community Garden when Mayor Suzanne Weber walked by with her dog.

The lesson is you never know who might see you devoting your energies to positive activities. It is an important message for youth who are getting their lives back on track and preparing to lead productive, crime-free lives in the community.

Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility and Camp Tillamook have 52 and 26 beds, respectively. A judge will send an adjudicated youth to Tillamook YCF, and the youth may be transferred to Camp Tillamook when he is ready to start his transition back to the community.

In both facilities, youth receive treatment to help them overcome anti-social behaviors. They learn at year-round Trask River High, an accredited Tillamook School District school that will have its commencement June 16. Some youth enroll in online community college classes, and may complete a two-year associate's degree before they are paroled.

Youth learn vocational skills. They cook in the kitchen. They clean the facilities. They assist maintenance manager Martin Boge with plumbing, painting and electrical work. In fact, a shell that youth built was incorporated into our new high school that opened in 2010. A Tillamook YCF youth-run business makes skimboards that are sold at two locations in the area.

Camp Tillamook youth manage a BLM greenhouse that grows most of the stock used for riparian restoration in the Tillamook Bay watershed. Last year they joined watershed partners in sharing a national award for this work.

And, as they did at the community garden, Camp Tillamook youth perform community service – setting up bleachers for the county fair in August, setting up for health screenings and other events, waxing floors for the Tillamook Air Museum (for which the museum generously provides admission tickets).

Most youth do well after they return to the community. At least weekly we receive calls from youth telling us what they are doing. Some go into the military, get a job or continue their schooling. One was managing a Subway restaurant when he got a chance to buy the franchise.

These youth are blessed to enjoy the robust support of so many people from the community. Volunteers mentor youth, lead religious services and Bible study, and help out in other ways. We would be delighted to have more volunteers, especially those who could tutor youth with their schoolwork.

We appreciate that so many of you are supporting youth with your friendship, guidance and modeling of a generous volunteer spirit that strengthens our community. Thank you.

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