Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Oregon Youth Authority
Office of the Director
530 Center Street NE, Suite 200
Salem, OR 97301-3765
Voice: 503-373-7205
Fax: 503-373-7622
www.oregon.gov/OYA

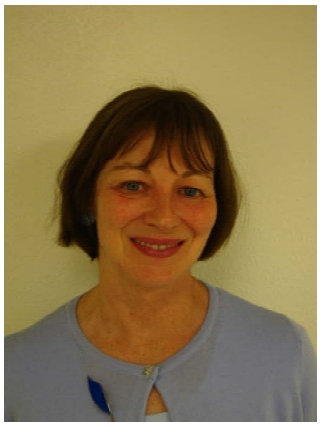
May 18, 2012

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Snyder, OYA Communications Office, 503-378-6023, ann.snyder@oya.state.or.us

Two physicians recognized as Hillcrest YCF volunteers of the year

Two Willamette Valley dermatologists are being recognized as volunteers of the year for their combined two decades' work removing gang and other anti-social tattoos from youth in the care and custody of the Oregon Youth Authority.



Susan Denman, MD

Carolyn Hale, MD

Physicians Carolyn Hale and Susan Denman, whose dermatology practices are in Keizer and Beaverton, respectively, visit the Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility in Salem monthly to remove tattoos from youth who have decided to give up the gang life. Denman began volunteering her services in 1996, with several years' break to manage a similar service at Portland's Outside In program, and Hale began her work at Hillcrest in 1998.

"Your generous donation of time, resources and energy is benefiting hundreds of Oregon youth as they attempt to turn their lives around and leave behind the violence and trauma of gangs and anti-social behavior," Hillcrest Superintendent Troy Gregg told Hale and Denman. "You are both philanthropists at heart."

When Hillcrest's tattoo-removal machine quit working recently, Hale and Denman purchased a new machine.

Although the tattoo-removal services are delivered at Hillcrest, they serve youth across the state both from OYA facilities and those on probation and parole in the community. Tattoo removal, which is voluntary, is important both to having youth renounce gang affiliations and helping them become more employable after they return to the community.

“I believe strongly in the rehabilitation of young people,” Denman said. “I think our community can only heal if we help them heal and help them become fully integrated members of the community.” Although they don’t often hear from youth whose tattoos they removed, she said, they have received letters from youth saying they had become a counselor, carpenter and real estate agent.

“These kids need to know we have faith that they can become productive people in society,” Hale said. “I hope that when they see I’m willing to come in and volunteer that I believe they are worthwhile people and I’m interested in them as a person.”

Hale said she often asks youth how their mothers feel about having the tattoos removed: “Almost 100 percent say ‘my mother is really happy, really excited.’ They get kind of emotional about it, they know it’s a good step.”

Hillcrest’s volunteer coordinator, Griselda Solano, estimated that through the years Hale and Denman had delivered more than 3,300 tattoo-removal treatments to OYA youth. Removal of a tattoo requires several treatments.

Volunteers support OYA’s mission to protect the public and reduce crime by holding youth accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments. OYA has custody of approximately 750 youth ages 12 to 24 in correctional and transitional facilities in Albany, Burns, Florence, Grants Pass, La Grande, Salem, Tillamook, Warrenton and Woodburn. OYA juvenile probation and parole officers supervise an additional 1,050 youth on probation and parole in communities throughout Oregon.

# # #