

NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Jail bed rentals help keep offenders off the streets **Rehabilitated and giving back**

Fulfilling a twice-weekly routine for inmates and deputies at the Benton County Jail, Transport Deputies Melissa Werdell and Andrew Formiller recently rounded up selected inmates for relocation.

They searched each one, placed all of the nine inmates' medications, paperwork, hygiene supplies and other essential items into a black bag, applied the shackles and locked them in a holding cell. After each had gone through the process, they lined up in the hallway and were herded to a van. One inmate was resistant because he didn't want to leave.

"We're constantly juggling people," Formiller said. "There are times when inmates don't want to go. A lot of them don't like to go out of Benton County because they have a connection in the community."

But the inmates don't have a say. It's all based on a complicated decision-making matrix that considers where beds are available, the agreements with each of the receiving jails, the length of stay, severity of the crime, impending court appearances and numerous other factors.

"One thing we don't allow is for them to dictate whether they go or not," said Lieutenant Jeremy Jewell, who oversees the inmate transport and courthouse security programs for the Sheriff's Office. "They don't get to dictate how things

are done at the jail."

Aside from the twice-weekly transports Werdell and Formiller also regularly pick up and drop off inmates throughout the week as needed, constantly juggling inmates in response to ongoing jail space shortages. In 2011 deputies logged 16,191 miles to move 1,414 inmates between jails. For security reasons, none of the inmates know where, when or even if they are leaving the jail on any given day.

"We don't notify them in advance," said Captain Diana Rabago, who oversees the jail operation. "That's for security purposes. We don't want anyone to know when or where they're going."

With a sparse 40 beds available in the Benton County Jail, shipping inmates around the region is the only way to manage an overcrowded local jail. The Benton County Sheriff's Office rents 40 beds in Yamhill, Linn and Lincoln counties each day to keep from releasing offenders. Of



Deputies prepare inmates for transport.

those, 20 beds in Lincoln County get top priority because the contract states Benton County pays for them whether they are full or not. A similar agreement applies to 10 beds in Yamhill County's jail, though 10 more are available there on an as-needed basis. Up to 10 more beds also are available in Linn County. A maximum 40 total beds can be rented among all those facilities at any given time.

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Helping parents in the home



Dan, Lisa and Samuel Leventhal

On a sunny Sunday afternoon this spring at a Northwest Corvallis park, local children enjoyed the warmth, chattering and laughing as they frolicked on the playground equipment. Lisa and Dan Leventhal emerged from a nearby cluster of houses pushing a stroller with their 7-month-old son Samuel.

The Leventhals, just like any young family, are experiencing the newfound joy of parenthood. In many ways, Samuel is a healthy and active baby but he does face some challenges that not all 7-month-olds face. Samuel was born eight weeks premature at Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend. This presents challenges for his parents and puts him at risk for serious health issues and developmental delays. As with any premature infant, the hospital referred the family to a specialized home visiting Public Health Nursing program for infants, children and youth who have serious medical issues or are at risk of developing them.

This program, Nurse Care Coordination (CaCoon), is designed to provide high-level nursing and care coordination services to families in the comfort of their own home. Benton County Public Health Nurse Jan Liebeskind, who works in

CaCoon, received the referral and started services with the family in conjunction with the pediatrician.

Once the family was home from the hospital Liebeskind, who is a Registered Nurse and Certified Asthma Educator, initiated contact and made her first of many home visits. Her in-depth visits provided physical assessments, medical guidance and support for the Leventhals, who were overwhelmed by being thrown into the medical world. Liebeskind worked to support and empower the family, while being a constant resource for concerns or medical questions about Samuel.

"Families of babies who have spent time in the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit often experience anxiety after the initial discharge," Liebeskind said. "While in the NICU babies are closely monitored and everything is measured, all of which give parents piece of mind. When they transition to the home, they lose that perceived safety net. Having a pediatric nurse making home visits, assessing the baby's physical status, reviewing the discharge information, ensuring they understand what needs to be done and allowing them time

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Alysen Brown is the first to admit she could easily have been dead by now. Growing up with an abusive father, she says she turned to drugs and alcohol for an escape.

As is often the case when youth indulge in drugs and alcohol, Brown ended up in trouble relatively frequently and came under the supervision of the Benton County Juvenile Department. Her first experience with the Juvenile Department happened when she was 12 and she spent her teenage years from 15 to 18 under supervision and working to get her life back on track.

"I was pretty bad off when I was doing the drugs," the 22-year-old said.

Brown worked with at least three different counselors in the Juvenile Department and completed a variety of program components. To deal with the drug and alcohol problem, she spent 18 months in Drug Court. The Drug Court existed from 2005 to last year, serving youth ages 14 to 17 who have been adjudicated for drug or alcohol offenses or if the use of drugs or alcohol is involved in the offense. The program included random urinalysis tests as well as educational services, counseling, vocational training and other features.

In addition to Drug Court, Brown took part in an inpatient rehabilitation program at Northwest Behavioral Healthcare Services in Gladstone for a month. She also spent a little more than a year in the Yes House Substance Abuse Services in Corvallis and served some time at the Linn-Benton Detention Center. The positive influence of the program, as well as the Juvenile Department staff with whom she was working, helped Brown turn her life around.

"It was crazy how much like family it was, though, because they really cared," Brown said of the Juvenile Department counselors who assisted her along the way.

The troubled youngster who at times attended Alsea High School, College Hill, Corvallis High School and an alternative school during her high school career completed her GED at Linn-Benton Community College.

She also got a job where she can make the most of her unique life experiences. After working for about two years at Jackson Street Youth Shelter in Corvallis - where she herself had stayed frequently when she was younger - Brown now is employed in Salem at the HOST Youth and Family Program, offered by Northwest Human Services.

HOST provides homeless, runaway and abandoned teens 11 to 17 years old a supportive, safe environment and works to unify the family through crisis intervention, counseling, family mediation, case management and parenting education services. Emergency overnight shelter is available to adults 24 and younger who are unable to return home as well. It's a perfect fit for Brown. She used to call upon these services frequently, and now

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Community collaboration yields a savings in jail space



Parole and Probation Officer Abraham Griswold works with clients.

When a person suffers from untreated mental illness, the results can include criminal behavior that leads to incarceration. And when a person suffering from mental illness completes their sentence, without further support they of-

ten end up back in jail.

Reductions in state services for the mentally ill have put local communities under increased pressure to address these issues. The Benton Sheriff's Office recognized that there is a community need to address this population within the criminal justice system. In addition, people with mental illnesses disproportionately tax the jail's limited resources, as those individuals are typically more expensive to incarcerate than other inmates.

In September 2008, Sheriff Diana Simpson established the Parole and Probation Mental Health Transition Program to identify and target offenders whose mental health conditions have played a significant role in their criminal behavior and repeated incarcerations. The program is funded with resources from the Health and Public Safety Levy, which was approved by voters in 2007.

Abraham Griswold is the Parole and Probation Officer who oversees the Mental Health

Transition Program. He works with a targeted group of offenders to provide intensive community supervision, coordinate mental health treatment services, and to ensure the offender has access to mental health medications. Through intensive community supervision and treatment, incarceration costs are reduced. The goals are to promote public safety, as well as reduce criminal conduct and incarceration rates of mentally ill offenders.

"We collaborate with our community partners to provide an enhanced level of service," Griswold said. "Treatment and medication are often more effective than traditional interventions."

The Mental Health Transition Program uses a multi-disciplinary approach by working closely with community partners to ensure that mentally ill offenders have access to treatment services, coordinated case planning, and intensive supervision. The program also provides two subsidized apartments as transitional housing. By keeping participants in the community and ensuring they remain engaged in treatment,

incarceration costs can be reduced. Limited resources are utilized for community supervision rather than spending \$150 per day for a jail bed.

"There's a community safety benefit, but there's also a cost incentive," Griswold said. "We're actually saving the taxpayer a significant amount of money."

Program participants receive intensive supervision through frequent contact with staff in the office, random home visits and frequent drug testing. They also are required to participate in a number of programs including all recommended mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, employment programs, financial management classes, cognitive skills programs and other services as appropriate. All participants also receive comprehensive assessments that aid in case planning and targeting specific factors that contribute to criminal behavior.

The program goals are to reduce recidivism and incarceration costs by providing increased supervision levels, stability, and treatment for mentally ill offenders living in the community.

Putting youth back on track

By the time clients get into Erin Fox's caseload, they typically are no strangers to the criminal justice system. Every day Fox – a Juvenile Court Counselor with the Benton County Juvenile Department – works with the highest-risk youth on the department roster, and she loves what she does.

Fox's clients tend to be repeat offenders or those who have committed felony offenses. Because she works with those who require more attention and intense supervision, Fox's caseload is smaller than most other counselors with the Juvenile Department at 12 to 15 clients at a time. She puts them through a rigorous and effective program that connects the client with positive activities capitalizing on individual interests and aptitudes and stresses accountability for choices. The average client typically is with Fox for about a year.

The program is paid for with funding from the Health and Public Safety Levy passed by voters in 2007. The typical clients range between 12 and 18 years old, though sometimes she serves youth as young as 11 and as old as 22, when they have restitution requirements to fulfill.

When a youth ends up under Fox's supervision, the process starts with a risk assessment followed by strengths and things that trigger negative behavior. Then each client has an individualized plan built within the Effective Practices In Community Supervision (EPICS) principles. The planning usually includes goal-setting and achieving those goals becomes a priority for completing the probation program.

"If they have something to work toward they end up being more successful," Fox said. "We are always looking for ways to make it better. Using the EPICS model and getting kids involved in positive goal-setting is the key."

A more academic style curriculum also is folded into the program, with books and assignments that help youth better understand how they ended up in their situation and how to make better choices for the future. Fox visits her clients weekly at home, school, her office or anywhere else in the community that works for her and the youth. There also are court appearances and work occurs with community groups and agencies.

"We're really trying to be out there in the community working with them rather than being in the office doing paperwork," she said.

The program provides a positive approach to rehabilitation while focusing closely on accountability. This approach is more effective in many situations than incarceration because youth can fulfill their responsibilities in their own communities. They also choose topics from a Sparks List to see what speaks to them. The list includes diverse topics such as music, nature, business, arts, crafts, photography and many others. Then activities and opportunities for engagement are included in the program that hinge on those activities. The refocusing of energy on positive activities is central to the model's success.

"If they get involved in something they enjoy and they stay involved they're less likely to be out in the community committing crimes," she said.

It isn't always easy. Youth often slip up as they put their lives back on the right path. While there are many successes, occasionally Fox has to enforce consequences.

"It is challenging and that's what I like about it," she said. "You work at helping these kids make a positive change. You have a setback and it's challenging but you know what you have to do with them the next day."

She figured out pretty early on her passion

Jail *Continued from page 1*



Erin Fox, Juvenile Court Counselor

was working with youth. A Stayton native, Fox attended Western Oregon University where she studied criminal justice with a minor in psychology. An internship with an adult parole and probation program in Marion County reinforced to Fox – who also has coached youth track and gymnastics – that she most enjoys working with kids. Her career has included stops with juvenile departments in Yamhill County, Linn County and in Florida. Fox joined the Benton County Juvenile Department in 2008 as an outreach specialist and began her current role about two years ago.

Fox insists her position, though at times challenging, is highly rewarding.

"One day after court one of the girls I supervise said, 'You have a really tough job,'" she said. "And I said, 'Yes, I do,' and I'm glad that I have it."

It costs the Sheriff's Office between \$1.1 million and \$1.3 million each year to rent the beds, including transportation costs. The funding comes from the Health and Public Safety Levy approved by voters in 2007. Without the rentals, Benton County wouldn't be able to keep as many offenders off the street as it does, but even with 80 beds there's not enough space. Often, especially during busy times at the jail such as college football game days, inmates are released early because there isn't enough room to keep everyone who should be incarcerated. Early releases are based on amount of time remaining on the sentence, severity of the crime and other factors. In other cases the jail may close and new arrestees are kept waiting or cited in the field based on the seriousness of their crime.

"There are a lot of people who don't come to jail that probably should," Jewell said.

From January 1 through May 14 of this year the jail was forced to release 73 inmates due to overcrowding. Of those, 65 were sentenced individuals who already had been convicted of a crime and sentenced to jail, so they did not complete their full sentences. The other eight inmates were released pre-trial with release agreements for their scheduled court appearance dates.

"I think it makes a mockery of the system when they are not held accountable," Rabago said. "It also feeds into the criminal thinking. News spreads and inmates talk. They can manipulate the system with very little effort just because they know our system here doesn't work."

With the 40 beds Benton County's Jail is the smallest per capita in the state of Oregon. The average stay in the jail is less than seven days and Benton County has been renting beds in other counties for more than 10 years. Without the 40 rental beds jail crowding issues would be compounded.

"We need to rent the jail beds just to provide the level of service of where we are now," Rabago said. "Is it sufficient? No, but that's what we have."

Transitioning into self-sufficiency



Parole and Probation Officer Joel Pickerd works with a client.

When an inmate is released from incarceration back into the community without a support system of any kind, it's easy to fall back into old ways. That doesn't do society any good, and it doesn't do the offender any good. So the Benton County Sheriff's Office offers the Parole and Probation Transition Center to help.

The Sheriff's Office has been operating the Transition Center since 2001, providing a highly structured, supervised living environment. The center's primary goal is to provide a clean, sober and safe environment for temporarily homeless offenders while they develop alternative housing, employment and treatment resources in the community. Up to six offenders can be housed in the center at one time.

This temporary housing is provided for supervised offenders recently released from prison

or local jail sentences. These offenders have no other resources in the community and by providing housing these individuals can focus on seeking employment and participating in treatment programs. The ultimate goal is to promote successful transition back into the community, resulting in fewer returns to jail. It's also less expensive than further jail time.

The program is supported with funding approved by voters in the Health and Public Safety Levy, passed in 2007.

"Individuals transitioning from incarceration can be placed at the Transition Center where they can focus on making positive changes in their lives and becoming productive members of society," said Parole and Probation Officer Joel Pickerd, who oversees the Transition Center. "Things don't always go perfectly and sometimes people make bad choices. Those situations are met with immediate sanctions and some sort of accountability piece when people make poor decisions."

With two apartments located above New Beginnings Treatment Center in downtown Corvallis, the location offers easy access to treatment programs and the Parole and Probation Office. Residents receive intensive supervision, accountability and focused programming. They submit to frequent drug and alcohol testing, mandatory curfews and daily residence searches. Residents are required to participate in a structured job search, personal finance classes, substance abuse treatment, cognitive restructuring classes and any programming or treatment that may assist in their successful transition back into the community. They perform a variety of daily chores to keep the apartments clean and orderly; additionally they are required to complete eight hours of community service each week in lieu of rent.

"Transition Center residents are guests in our housing program," Parole and Probation Captain Gail Newman said. "We make the decisions regarding who's there and who leaves. This program gives us greater latitude in supervising high-risk individuals."

Staff coverage at the Transition Center includes a Parole and Probation Officer, whose responsibilities include overseeing the facility as well as working with incarcerated individuals who are pending release from state prison and local jail sentences. Additionally, three part-time college student interns provide evening and weekend coverage at the Transition Center until 11:30 every night, working one-on-one with the residents to hold them accountable to the rules while assisting with their transition back into the community.

"Transition Center employees model pro-social behaviors while providing assistance and direction to the residents," Pickerd said. "The Transition Center targets factors that directly correlate to re-arrest and incarceration, such as criminal associates, alcohol and drug issues and antisocial beliefs and attitudes."

The Transition Center's goal is to reduce recidivism through intense supervision, accountability and programming. Since many Transition Center residents have substance abuse issues, a clean and sober environment is critical to success. Through intensive supervision and monitoring, violations are addressed quickly and community safety is enhanced, all while offenders are held accountable for their actions.

"The goal is to successfully transition these individuals into their own stable housing. This is a place where people are expected to work toward self-sufficiency," Newman said. "It's a place where people need to work hard and follow the rules."

Rehabilitated

Continued from page 1



Alysen Brown

she's able to be a positive influence demonstrating every day there is a way out. Brown has been a guest speaker at many events, as well, doing everything she can to connect people with services they need.

"I think Alysen is a great example of a young person who with a great deal of personal determination and effort – and some support and guidance from the Juvenile Department, Benton County Mental Health, the Circuit Court, the attorneys involved and Jackson Street Youth Shelter, among others – has been successful in becoming a productive young woman making it on her own," Benton County Juvenile Department Deputy Director Terry Thompson said. "It takes a lot of people for this to happen, but the hardest and most important work was done and is being done by Alysen."

Brown also continues to step forward as an ambassador for the programs that have meant so much to her, most notably Jackson Street Youth Shelter and the Benton County Juvenile Department.

"Anything I can do to give back because (the Juvenile Department) gave me my life," she said. "If they hadn't found me, I'd be dead."

CaCoon *Continued from page 1*

to ask for help give parents the confidence they need to care for their baby at home."

All the while, Liebeskind coordinates with the pediatrician and specialists to ensure all parties are informed of Samuel's progress and concerns.

"It is very reassuring to know that Jan and our pediatrician are in frequent communications," Dan said. "We know that we are getting correct and accurate information from all of our providers."

One important aspect of the nurse home visiting program is care coordination which facilitates communication, when needed, between various healthcare partners. Liebeskind's role in this situation is vitally important.

"Children with special health care needs typically have complicated medical needs," she said. "Often families are seeing multiple specialists and are given instructions and suggestions from each of those specialists, which can make coming home quite confusing. As a CaCoon nurse, I have the opportunity to explain the information in a more relaxed setting and parents have the opportunity to ask questions or clarify information. Many of our specialty clinics are in Portland or Eugene, thus families often need assistance getting connected to appropriate local support

systems such as mental health providers, occupational therapists and other local services."

Dr. Hathaway, Samuel's pediatrician at Samaritan Pediatrics, knows first-hand the value of the CaCoon nurse in the home. He said the program is essential to the most at-risk families in the community, and he is an active participant in helping to connect those families with the service.

"If I have a family that I feel is at risk for any reason I quickly contact the people at the CaCoon program to assist the family," Hathaway said. "The children with multiple medical problems are at the highest risk for serious medical issues. I have had several children with genetic disorders, physical disabilities and severe prematurity at birth go through the program."

Liebeskind currently serves 35 families – each with varying degrees of health care needs – during her allotted time of 32 hours weekly in the program, which is funded partially by the Health and Public Safety Levy approved by Benton County voters in 2007. CaCoon is designed to serve all children and families, regardless of income level, from birth to 21 years of age with special health care needs or those at risk of developing special health care needs. The program allows Liebeskind to see patients with a wide variety of diagnoses in-

cluding Cerebral Palsy, cardiac issues, respiratory issues, prematurity related concerns and seizure disorders to name only a few.

"The beauty of the program is that we span from birth to 21 years of age and any medical diagnoses ensure eligibility," Liebeskind said. "The home visiting approach is especially successful for those with chronic illnesses such as asthma. More recently, I have seen a large increase in the number of children with newly diagnosed asthma or a history of poorly controlled asthma. Seeing patients in their home environment helps give me an opportunity to work with kids and parents in understanding how to control their environment, how to manage varying symptoms and generally provide comprehensive information to ensure best outcomes. It is quite common to discover problems with self-management that may not be apparent just by virtue of being in the home."

The Leventhals can tell you first-hand how important it is to have the CaCoon Nurse coming into the home and what an outstanding service the program provides to all of its recipients. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that families of babies and children with involved medical issues are well prepared to manage their conditions in the home setting armed with the knowledge



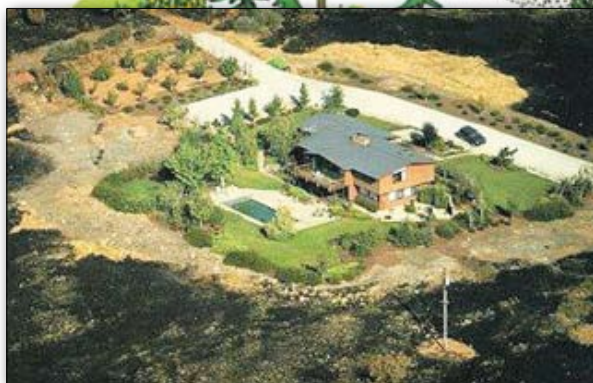
Samuel Leventhal

of how to appropriately utilize their medical resources.

"It cuts down on the stress that parents experience," Lisa said. "You can be a better parent when you're not stressed out."

Get Ready for Fire Season - Get Defensible Space!

Create Defensible Space



Defensible Space can save your home.

Defensible Space is a 30- to 100-foot zone surrounding your home. This is the area around your home where potential fuels have been reduced to slow the spread of wildfire to your home, significantly decreasing the likelihood that your home will ignite. Fuels can be any flammable materials and vegetation.

Fire season is approaching. Even in this area of plentiful rainfall, several weeks of warm and dry conditions significantly increase our risk of wildfire. Western Oregon's lush vegetation can be hazardous when it is dry. If you live

near wildlands – whether forest, brush or grasslands – your home may be at risk. Unfortunately, once a wildfire starts firefighters may not have the time or resources to protect every home in its path. However, you can take action to protect your home before a fire starts by creating defensible space.

Remember, the vast majority of homes lost or damaged in wildfires are the victims of embers – small burning pieces of wood materials carried through the air, sometimes a mile from the fire front! When these embers land in dry leaves, plants, grass or pine needles, a fire will result. Defensible space – an area around the home that is lean, green and clean – breaks up the continuous path of vegetation that could carry wildfire to your

home. And it gives firefighters a safe zone from which to fight a wildfire. It's worth the effort!

Your landscaping can be beautiful and fire-resistant, too. Ask your local nursery about landscaping with fire-resistant plants. For landscaping tips, those interested can visit

and fire-resistant plants for Oregon home landscapes can be viewed at http://www.firefree.org/images/uploads/FIR_FireResPlants_07.pdf.

Would you like a professional evaluation of your property's defensible space? Oregon Department of Forestry and Benton County Community Development have partnered to provide on-site risk assessments. Call ODF at 541-929-9165, or Benton County at 541-766-6293. Or visit www.co.benton.or.us/cd/cwppp/protect/phi.

10 Tips One Reason



- 1 Define your defensible space.
- 2 Reduce flammable brush around your home and under nearby trees.
- 3 Prune or remove trees.
- 4 Keep grass and weeds cut low.
- 5 Clear wood piles and building materials away from your home.
- 6 Keep your yard and roof clean.
- 7 Keep address signs visible.
- 8 Choose fire-resistant building materials and lawn furniture.
- 9 Recycle yard debris – avoid burning.
- 10 Be prepared to respond to wildfire.

News from Benton County

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