



Parrott Creek Case Statement

March 10, 2011

KEY MESSAGES

- Like the children we see, Parrott Creek is at a crossroads
- Our public funding is declining while the need for our services is at a peak
- We are a Clackamas County nonprofit *for* Clackamas County youth, families and communities
- We're a place of great hope and care
- We believe in the capacity for troubled youth to change — and change starts with accountability
- We've been a respected, cost-effective provider of social services for more than 40 years
- We focus on the whole family
- Your donation will make a difference

NARRATIVE

You're a teenager in Clackamas County, Oregon. You've messed up and today you find yourself in trouble with the juvenile justice system. You're confused, angry, scared. Like your friends and unlike the rich-looking kids you see around school, life has never come easy to you and your family. Some adults are already writing you off as a juvenile delinquent, a troublemaker, a candidate to be sent away. But that's how adults always are in your life. When have they ever cared about you? You're invisible to them except when you make a mistake. And today you're in more trouble than ever. You're a teenager in Clackamas County and today life feels hopeless...

Young lives at a crossroads

This is the story of far too many young people across Clackamas County. They've made some bad choices and gotten into trouble with the law. Their life, barely begun, is already at a crossroads. Things could easily get worse from here. Without professional intervention, they could be sent home where their anti-social behavior could escalate to worse crimes and more victims. The justice system will then have no choice but to send them to a grim detention facility for what may be years to come.

It doesn't have to be this way. For some troubled youth in Clackamas County the crossroads also presents a life-altering path of hope and redemption. It's called Parrott Creek Child and Family Services. For more than 40 years, we have been repairing broken lives of 12-18 year olds in Clackamas County and given them another chance to become the good students, neighbors and citizens their communities need.

Like the children and families we treat, Parrott Creek is also at a critical junction point. Never has the need for our services been greater. And never have we been more challenged to find the financial means to meet those needs.

Since our founding in 1968 as residential facility to treat delinquent boys, the county's population has more than doubled to almost 400,000 residents. Each year of population growth means more youth at risk for delinquent or criminal behavior.

Even in the best of times, state and county public officials, community leaders and families are hard-pressed to keep up with the issues and needs of the area's troubled teens. And these are far from the best of times. Today's depressed economy is stressing families and placing at-risk youth in an even more precarious state.

We're dedicated to giving troubled teens in Clackamas County the tools, skills and emotional support they need to change and make better choices. And our track record of success has made us a highly respected partner of state and county juvenile authorities. Unfortunately, because of declining tax revenues, the government partners of Parrott Creek have fewer resources to fund our intervention, prevention and treatment programs.

Building stronger families and safer communities

Until the late 1960s, boys in Clackamas County who committed crimes were returned home or sent to the state training school. Seeking an alternative middle ground, county voters passed a resolution in 1968 to create a residential facility to treat delinquent youth. In February 1969, the first boys entered the program, then known as Parrott Creek Ranch. In 1976, the agency began providing post residential services, helping boys and their families adjust from a structured setting back to the community.

Today, Parrott Creek Child and Family Services is a multi-faceted nonprofit organization. Our social services are designed to prevent repeat law violations among teens, intervene in child and family crises and provide therapeutic services to juvenile offenders.

Never quitting on a child or family

Parrott Creek served more than 1,500 children, teens and families in 2010 with an operating budget of \$1.8 million. While the need for our services is at a peak, our public sources of funding are declining. Hanging in the balance are the prospects of hundreds of young people and families who are the future of Clackamas County.

We deal with complex, difficult issues – often the result of multi-generational family dysfunction and poverty. We are sometimes the last stop on a very hard road for our clients, a final chance to get off the path they're on. That's why Parrott Creek never quits on a child or his or her family. We've seen too many lives transformed, futures secured and dreams attained.

Parrott Creek isn't the end of the road for those we treat, educate and counsel. Not if we can help it. Parrott Creek lets kids and their families pause, take a deep breath and determine what they need. For them Parrott Creek is the rare opportunity for a new beginning.

Hard work and no guarantees

But there are no guarantees of happy endings at Parrott Creek. The kids, and often their parents, have to want change as much as we do. By the time we see a youth, he or she has already become involved in the juvenile justice system. We teach and demand accountability. Change starts there.

The youth in our care must understand their actions have consequences. And that can make Parrott Creek a hard place to be for some. The youths we see know we expect better from them. They also know we are home to great forgiveness, respect and care. Change begins there, too.

Change is possible for humans of any age, never more so than as a child or adolescent. That's why the services of Parrott Creek are so important. We aren't treating throwaway children. There is no such thing. The children we see are every bit as much the future of our communities as the area honor roll students bound for Harvard.

Clackamas County is our home, too. And like all who reside here, we want our communities to be safe and healthy. We contribute the only way we know how: one healthier kid and one healthier family at a time.

And we need your help.

Saving public money now and into future

As the economy shrinks and people become less tolerant of bigger government, the future for community social services rests with nonprofits like Parrott Creek. Our government partners understand and value us for this. They know we deliver valuable, complex services at a lower cost than state and local government agencies can. We also save taxpayer dollars by helping to keep teens out of expensive state-run correctional facilities such as MacLaren in Woodburn.

An investment in Parrott Creek continues to pay dividends down the road. An adult offender is less likely to change behavior and more likely to re-offend than a teenage offender educated and counseled by Parrott Creek. Early intervention helps stop a first-

time teen offender from growing into a lifelong criminal and drain on community resources.

A lifeline for Clackamas County families

Our public partners also place a high premium on our location in Clackamas County. They understand we're a lifeline to area families. When teens get into trouble it's rarely a good idea to send them to a residential facility or foster home in another county or state. The distance prevents regular involvement of parents and other family members in the youth's treatment. Many are too poor, lack access to transportation or otherwise prevented from regularly traveling to see their child.

A unique quality of Parrott Creek is our focus on the whole family. Our family-centered programs (vs. individual treatment alone) greatly increase the odds of success for at-risk kids and their families. For instance:

- Our First-Time Offender Diversion program asks parents to be involved in the diversion panel process and sign the diversion agreement. They then feel accountable to the process as well as their child.
- While it's the teen that is adjudicated and sent to Parrott Creek Ranch, we strongly encourage and almost always have the family participate in counseling along with their teen. By addressing the needs and dysfunctions of the entire family, we're much more likely to create long-term positive change.

Making a difference, one child and family at a time

The Starfish Poem

An old man walked up a shore littered with thousands of starfish, beached and dying after a storm. A young man was picking them up and flinging them back into the ocean.

"Why do you bother?" the old man scoffed. "You're not saving enough to make a difference." The young man picked up another starfish and sent it spinning back to the water. "I made a difference to that one," he said.

—Author Unknown

Before Parrott Creek was established in 1968, troubled youth were not taken care of in Clackamas County. We're proud of our 40-year track record of successfully treating local youth and families. It's a legacy we want dearly to continue. And for that, we need your help.

The demand for our services grows each year. What's changed is the recent rapid decline in public funds to support our work. It's a situation that's unlikely to reverse itself soon, if ever. To close the demand and funding gap, we must rely on the generosity of people like you — just as communities have relied upon Parrott Creek to help meet their health and safety needs.

Seeing the need of kids, families, schools and neighborhoods for our services in Clackamas County is like coming across the shoreline covered in starfish. You can decide you can't save them all and do nothing. Or you can start saving the one in front of you now, in this moment.

Will your donation to Parrott Creek save all troubled kids and dysfunctional families? No. And that's not the point. You do, we do, what we can to make a difference — one child, one family at a time. And we do make a difference. So can you, by making a financial donation that helps keep our mission alive.

Over the years, thousands of young people and their parents have come through Parrott Creek programs. We can't say we saved them all. But in countless instances we're the

reason a teen veers from crime and matures into a proud high school or college graduate, a good employee, a caring parent and an involved citizen.

What your gift means

In this challenging economic climate, your donation helps ensure the continuation of our services to children and families in crisis. Community support from people like you is essential for the ongoing delivery of our programs.

Your financial support will do many things — such as helping us provide essential programs, enrich educational and treatment experiences, facilitate parental engagement and insure our programs achieve the highest levels of effectiveness. Out of every dollar you give, 85 cents goes directly to serving kids and families. Every dollar helps change a life.

A teenager in Clackamas County

You're a teenager in Clackamas County and today life feels hopeful again. You know you've broken the law and hurt some people. And you've stopped making excuses or blaming someone else for your actions — even though life has dealt you a tougher hand than most kids you know. You've taken responsibility, started to make amends for the damages you caused and learned how you can avoid trouble in the future. Since coming to Parrott Creek, you've changed, grown. You don't want to go back there. But now you know, some adults really do care.