

2009 A Time of Crisis... and Opportunity?

The current economic crisis poses a number of serious challenges for JRP as an organization and for the children, youth and families we serve every day. The Oregon Legislature is considering drastic reductions in programs such as child welfare, juvenile justice and the court system, including public defense for children and parents, as well as juvenile and adult defendants.

Agencies across state government were required to outline potential service reductions totaling up to 30% of Oregon's general operating fund. The list of reductions would be devastating and almost unthinkable.



During the last year, Oregon's Department of Human Services had set a goal to reduce the number of children entering foster care by 20% by 2011. Reducing the high rates of children placed in foster care in Oregon has long been a priority for JRP. However, the looming cuts will likely drive up rates of abuse and neglect and, thus, the number of children entering foster care. At the same time, support for children in foster care and their families will be slashed, as well, if the proposed reductions come to pass.

Proposed child welfare cuts include:

- The loss of drug and alcohol treatment services for 9,700 adults. Parental substance abuse is the number one risk factor among children who enter foster care.
- The loss of mental health treatment for 3,000 adults. Children entering foster care are also likely to have parents with unmet mental health needs.
- Oregon has pioneered the use of flexible funds in child welfare (a result of JRP's settlement agreement with DHS in 1995). An average of \$593 in flex funds per foster child per year are used to keep families together, reunite families, and meet a wide variety of children's other needs. By cutting state funds, Oregon also loses federal funds to support vulnerable children.
- Other cuts to child welfare include a \$7 million reduction in support payments to foster parents to meet children's living needs and the elimination of treatment for children who've been victims of sex abuse.

According to the Ways and Means Co-Chairs of the Legislature, state reserve and federal stimulus funds can help avoid the most serious cuts. However, it will be necessary to cut 20% of the state budget unless the Legislature takes bold steps to balance program reductions with additional revenue from profitable corporations and wealthy individuals.

In addition to the cuts listed above, other cuts to vital services that would hurt the long-term health of our families and our communities include:

- The denial of court-appointed counsel to foster children, their parents and defendants in juvenile

Continued on page 2.

SUPPORTING JRP AND HELPING CHILDREN IS EASY

Individual and business contributions support the SchoolWorks and HelpLine programs, as well as our Legislative advocacy. We've made it easier to give. Just go to the JRP web site (www.jrplaw.org) and click on the **DONATE button to make a one-time donation or set up regular donations to support JRP programs throughout the year.**



From the ED: JRP at the Legislature

I completed my first decade at JRP in January and my first year as Executive Director in March. The work that we do at JRP is just as important and just as challenging as the day I started.

You may have read some of the stories in the media recently about problems in our foster care system. At JRP, we know that those are just the tip of the iceberg, occasionally peeking above the surface of the general public's awareness. JRP has been steadfastly dedicated to improving the lives of Oregon's most vulnerable children day in and day out for over three decades.

JRP is appointed by the court to represent 1,400 children in the foster care system each year. Our attorneys, investigators, social workers and legal assistants work to find the right homes for children, work to return children to their parents and toil to get services for children with mental health needs, and developmental and learning disabilities. It's not easy, nor are we always as successful as we want to be.

In order to address the systemic barriers our clients face, we also go to Salem every other year to provide expert testimony on improving the systems that serve Oregon's vulnerable children.

JRP is comprised of an incredibly talented, knowledgeable and dedicated group of professionals. During the 2009 Legislative session

thus far, we have had nine of our staff testify on bills related to a range of issues concerning the foster care and juvenile delinquency systems. These included JRP attorneys who testified for the first time — Mary Skjelset, Heather Clark, Kevin Ellis, Jennifer McGowan, Mary Kane and Tawnya Stiles-Johnson — as well as those who've appeared before too many legislative committees to count — Brian Baker, Julie McFarlane and myself.

JRP is responsible for numerous innovative policies in Oregon and for improving the resources available to serve children, youth and families in the child welfare, juvenile justice, education and mental health systems, in particular.

Currently, JRP is fighting to prevent deep cuts to these systems and to public defense. We are also working to promote smart policies for treating and rehabilitating youth in the juvenile justice system and resisting the perennial push to treat children as if they are merely small adults.

I want to thank those of you who have supported our work to reform systems to benefit Oregon's children through your individual and business contributions!

Warmest regards,
Mark McKechnie

2009, continued from p. 1

and criminal cases for up to 6.8 months (a 30% reduction).

- The elimination of juvenile court referees, who hear thousands of cases each year and monitor the safety and well-being of children in foster care.
- The Oregon Youth Authority would eliminate 58 community placements for youth offenders at the same time they close 320 correctional facility beds. This would mean that more youth offenders would be served by overburdened county systems and some youth would be transferred to adult prisons, regardless of their progress in treatment, educational and rehabilitation programs, increasing the likelihood they will offend again as adults.



But crisis can also bring opportunity. While we may not yet see a wholesale restructuring of our tax and revenue system, we may see a combination of policy changes and revenue enhancements that will better balance fiscal responsibility in the state budget between revenues and funding for vital services. We also have an opportunity to enact smarter policies that protect children in their homes, which is far more effective and affordable in the long run. We may also realize, as other states have, that we can reduce crime without resorting to mass incarceration and instead use more cost-effective community prevention and intervention to keep our communities safe.

You can find your legislators and tell them to take bold steps and balance program reductions with revenue enhancements from profitable corporations and wealthy individuals by going to: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>.

September Gala and Concert Benefits JRP

The Portland Classical Chinese Garden will serve as the stunning backdrop for our Saturday, September 19th benefit event, and *you're invited!*

The ticket price of \$100 includes a buffet dinner by Food in Bloom, signature Asian-inspired cocktails, wine from elite local wineries, a traditional Chinese lion dance, and a very special concert by pianist and composer, Michael Allen Harrison.

Doors to the garden open at 6:30 p.m., and a variety of Chinese-themed activities will welcome you throughout the garden, from custom calligraphy to lucky fortunes.

What better way to spend a beautiful Saturday evening than creating lasting memories at the Chinese Garden while supporting your community and helping at-risk children and youth?

Tickets and sponsorships are available by calling Janeen Olsen at 503.232.2540, Ext. 231 or by emailing janeeno@jrplaw.org.

JRP's Giving Needs Increase

Like most human service organizations, we find demand for our programs increasing at a time when revenue options are shrinking. At-risk youth are being hit particularly hard by the fallout from the troubled economy as supports from public and non-profit agencies are being reduced or eliminated. They are in serious jeopardy due to no fault of their own. At our current level of funding, we are only able to serve 20% of the youth in need of assistance through either the HelpLine or SchoolWorks programs.

We depend upon individual, corporate and foundation giving to continue the cause for youth in need. Please help us sustain the programming that plays such a critical role for Oregon's at-risk youth. You can donate on line, by phone, or by mail.

The People at JRP



Meet Lynn Haxton, Staff Attorney

Q: What do you do at JRP?

Lynn: I represent children in the schools and in the courtroom. My primary job is advocating for foster children in the school system. I work on getting special education services for them, represent them in expulsion procedures, assist with enrollment in school, help maintain them in the same school or apply to alternative schools, and assist with transition planning to post-high school programs. Foster children are often underserved in our school system due to their frequent moves, often chaotic home life, lack of parental involvement, and unrecognized disabilities.

Q: What do you think the public misunderstands, or understands least, about the foster care system?

Lynn: That it works well. We should use foster care much less than we do, and only as a last resort. Just imagine that someone comes along and says to you, "I see you have a spouse and children, but I don't think they are good for you, and I have another spouse and children that you have never met that I think are better." Then you are taken away to strangers for an unknown length of time. We can do a lot more to keep children safe in the first place. What we need is better prevention and community support for families from before a baby is born, which is what you see in many other countries.

Q: What do you think the public misunderstands, or understands least, about the juvenile justice system?

Lynn: Many people think kids are small adults and are either good or bad. What they are is traumatized by abuse and neglect, and their brains are very different from adult brains.

Q: What has been your greatest success at JRP?

Lynn: Working here. I am honored to be able to work with these people and this mission.

Q: What is your favorite word?

Lynn: Peace, peace for the world and peace in my life.



401 NE 19th Avenue
Suite 200
Portland, OR 97232

Web: <http://www.jrplaw.org/>

See Below: Two
Upcoming JRP
events!

SchoolWorks 2008 Annual Report Enclosed

Save the Date!

Please Join
Juvenile Rights
Project

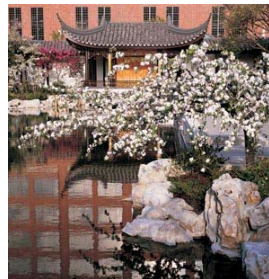
An Evening at the Portland Classical
Chinese Garden

Featuring special guest
Michael Allen Harrison

Sat., September 19, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

A fundraising event presented by Knowledge
Learning Corporation for Juvenile Rights
Project to foster success for children.

Tickets: \$100 / Sponsorships available.



Fat, Drink and Support JRP

Pour Wine Bar and Bistro is
doing it again!



Join us at Pour between
7:00 and 10:00 on Wednesday, May 20,
2009, and 50% of all purchases of food
and beverages will be donated to support
JRP's programs serving vulnerable and at-
risk children and youth .

Pour features wines by the glass and by
the bottle to fit every taste and budget
and small plates of local and seasonal
cuisine to complement their fine wines.

Address: 2755 NE Broadway, Portland