

## ODHS program aims to keep youth off drugs

*by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources*

Parents who provide consistent discipline and are supportive are helping reduce the likelihood their children will have substance abuse or other behavioral problems when they reach the teenage years. That's the message delivered to parents and their 10- to 14-year-olds in 27 counties and the Siletz and Umatilla tribes during the Strengthening Families program sponsored by the Oregon Department of Human Services Addictions and Mental Health Division. The \$1.56 million two-year program was funded by the 2007 Oregon Legislature to improve communication and other family dynamics that are scientifically proven to prevent teen alcohol and drug abuse. The evidence-based program will reach up to 1,700 families. Seven sessions and two follow-up meetings are designed to strengthen parenting skills and families with role playing, discussions, videos, games and family projects.

"This is a great way to build families while providing a defense against teen substance abuse and addiction problems," said Bob Nikkel, DHS assistant director for addictions and mental health. "Getting parents and their kids talking and interacting has many positive benefits. This program has a strong track record in Washington and other states." Research on Iowa families who participated in a similar program found that young people in those families were more likely to associate with appropriate peers and resist drugs and other problem activities such as aggressive behavior. Parents became better at listening to and managing their kids, which had an overall positive effect on the family. Strengthening Families facilitators receive 2-1/2 days of specialized training and are certified, said Caroline Cruz, a DHS prevention specialist who oversees the program. During a session, parents or caregivers and youth meet together for the first hour then spend the second hour separately in family and youth activities. Cruz expects an average of 10 families per class. Participating counties and tribes, and the grant amounts are: Baker, \$30,479; Clackamas, \$102,000; Clatsop, \$83,505; Columbia, \$23,445; Crook, \$15,630; Deschutes, \$23,445; Douglas, \$40,038; Grant, \$18,150; Hood River, \$53,868; Jackson, \$68,292; Josephine, \$25,040; Lane, \$46,890; Lincoln, \$46,890; Linn/Benton, \$35,275; Marion, \$54,280; Morrow/Wheeler, \$16,770; Multnomah 1, \$133,914; Multnomah 2, \$78,304; Polk, \$35,310; Tillamook, \$16,170; Umatilla, \$50,000; Union, \$18,151; Wallowa, \$15,408; Wasco, \$31,690; Washington, \$164,555; Yamhill, \$32,786; Siletz Tribe, \$26,691; and Umatilla Tribe, \$16,680.

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