

Deschutes Sheriff's Office Class Prepares Volunteers to Mentor Children

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Central Oregon Partnerships for Youth (COPY), a program of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, is offering a class to prepare volunteers to become mentors for children with an incarcerated parent. It is estimated that, on any given day, 350 kids in Deschutes County are dealing with the disruptive effects of parental incarceration.

COPY aims to break this cycle by connecting these children with a safe and appropriate mentor. After initial training and background checks, volunteers are matched with a child who shares similar interests and activities and commit to spending a few hours a week for a minimum of one year.

This time is often spent going to community events, working on homework, attending art programs, participating in sports, or simply hanging out and talking.

“Having a parent who is incarcerated impacts every part of these children’s lives,” explains Les Stiles, Deschutes County Sheriff. “For children involved in the COPY program, having a adult mentor is something they can count on. It is a point of stability in their life.”

The COPY program’s winter class will be offered in Bend on Saturday, January 20 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Upon completing the class and background checks, volunteers are able to be matched with a child living near them. COPY program serves children living throughout Deschutes County.

The class covers program policies, how to establish a mentor relationship, the impact incarceration has on families, and communication skills. There is no cost to attend, but an application is required. For additional details or to request an application, please call 388-6651 or email COPY@deschutes.org . Additional program information is available online at www.deschutes.org/copy.

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