

First Lady of Oregon visits Bend's Youth Challenge Program

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Mrs. Mary Oberst, the First Lady of the State of Oregon and wife of Oregon Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski, visited with cadets at the Oregon Youth Challenge Program in Bend, Oregon, June 1. Oregon Youth Challenge Program Cadet Akui explains to Mary Oberst, First Lady of the State of Oregon (center), and Mary Len Rees, wife of Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard, a typical day during the program, during a visit to the facility in Bend, Ore., June 1. Akui and about 110 fellow cadets are set to graduate June 13 in Redmond, Ore. Photo by Oregon National Guard Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy. Cadet Clemens (left) and Cadet Akui, show Mary Len Rees, wife of Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard, around the library at the Oregon Youth Challenge Program facility in Bend, Ore., June 1. Akui, Clemens and about 110 fellow cadets are set to graduate June 13 in Redmond, Ore. Photo by Oregon National Guard Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy.

Mary Oberst, First Lady of the State of Oregon (center), talks with Oregon Youth Challenge Program cadets at Pilot Butte Park in Bend, Ore., June 1. The cadets are set to graduate June 13 in Redmond, Ore. Photo by Oregon National Guard Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy. She was joined by Mary Len Rees, wife of Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, The Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard, Brig. Gen. Mike Caldwell, Deputy Director of the Oregon National Guard, and Paul Evans, Policy Advisor for Governor Kulongoski. The group toured the facility and learned first-hand how the program helps turn at-risk youth into responsible citizens. Four cadets served as tour guides, leading the visitors through the library, living quarters, the kitchen, and other common areas. Following the facility tour, the group met with other cadets at Pilot Butte Park where OYCP members had been conducting a community service project that morning. "The transformation of these kids is quite astonishing," Oberst said. "Kids who are not interested in school or had some social interaction problems are transformed into well-spoken kids who are engaged in their schoolwork. It's really quite miraculous." The Oregon National Guard Youth Challenge Program is an accredited alternative residential school geared toward at-risk high school students. Eligible individuals are accepted from all 36 counties in Oregon. Staff members utilize a "hands off", tough love, caring, disciplined approach to instill values, train, and instruct cadets, who are eligible to earn a high school diploma, GED or credit recovery of 8 certified credits if they complete the required class work. Follow up work includes a mandatory 12 month mentorship phase once the student returns to their respective communities. For more information on the program, visit www.oycp.com.

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