

LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

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“There is no real ending. It’s just the place where you stop the story.”

— Frank Herbert

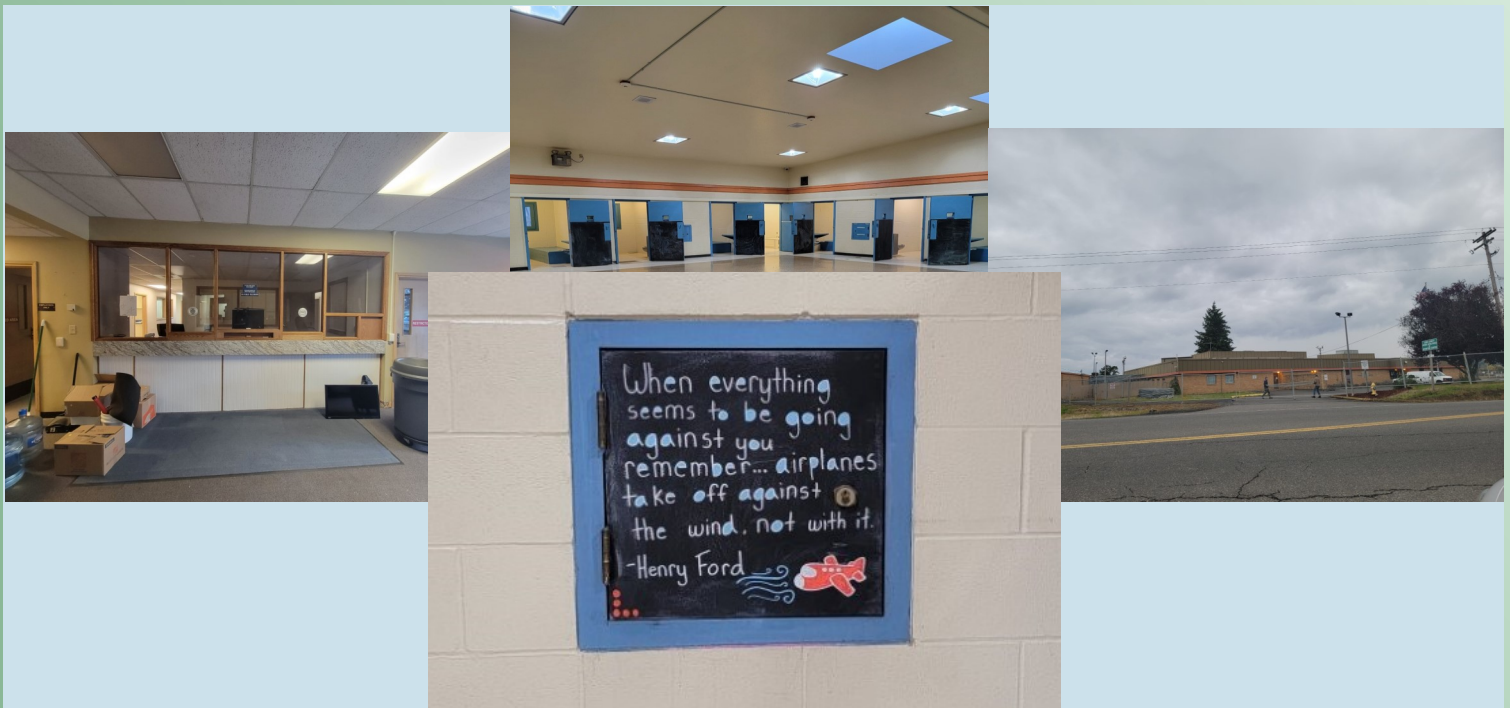
It is an interesting concept to think that we are all a part of something that will one day be captured and reflected on as a significant piece of the history of Lewis County. From a historical perspective, the Juvenile Court, in some instance, is still in the early stage of development. In a much broader spectrum, juvenile justice is still in the infancy stage as well.

Before the Lewis County Juvenile Court had its own designated building, the Juvenile Court operated under the Probation Department at what is now known as the historical courthouse. The Juvenile Court currently sits upon leased property owned by the State of Washington. The building was built in 1979 and until October 4th, 2021, had housed many youth over the years.

It is an exciting “pause” in the development of the Juvenile Court in Lewis County as the building now sits completely vacant after almost 42 years.

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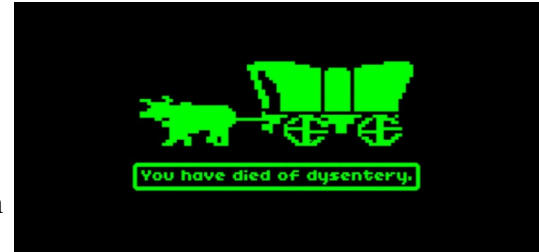
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History in the Making

Where It All Started By Rickie Anders

I remember the days of being an excited fourth grader, waiting for “Computer Lab” with Mr. Freeman at Washington Elementary School. If you are in your 30’s or have a child in their 30’s, you will likely recall the Oregon Trail game. I lived for the day that I got to click the up, down, left, and right arrows on a keyboard to try to make it to my new destination without dying. What I didn't know is the significance that the Oregon Trail would later have on the creation of the local judicial system, one that I am now devoted to.



The Oregon Trail took place from 1811 to 1840. Settlers in Willamette Valley saw a need to protect themselves against crime as well as protection for their civil rights. According to archival records, “In a meeting held on February 7, 1841 at Champoeg, which was then the principal settlement in the Willamette Valley, the Reverend Jason Lee advocated the selection of a committee for the purpose of drafting a constitution and code of laws for government of the settlement south of the Columbia River. At a meeting of nearly all the male settlers in the Willamette Valley, on February 18, 1841, Doctor Ira L. Babcock was appointed supreme judge with probate powers. It was directed that until a code of laws could be drafted, Dr. Babcock would be governed by the laws of the State of New York, although apparently there was not a copy of the New York code existing in the territory.” On May 2, 1843, a legislative committee was selected and a formal legal code was adopted by the settlers of the Oregon trail. “The first law books which had reached the territory in 1842 were the laws of the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa and thus, the Oregon statutes were based almost entirely upon Iowa statutes. Also on July 5, 1843, the newly formed Provisional Government of Oregon established four districts, two of which extended into the area which would later become Washington Territory.” One of the most politically-active settlers was John Robinson Jackson, who moved to Lewis County in 1845. “The first Lewis County seat was actually his log house, located on the Highland Prairie, near Mary’s Corner. He served as the first sheriff, county assessor, and tax collector.” (Hunt and Kaylor, p. 447). With the help of John Jackson, on March 2, 1853, the Territory of Washington was created and passed by Congress. “Under the Washington territorial government, 21 men served as justices of the supreme court, and sat as district court judges in their respective districts.”

“In 1855, a courthouse was built at Claquato, which served as the county seat until 1873, when it was moved to Chehalis.” (Hunt and Kaylor, p. 448). According to the Chronicle Archives, “In 1891, Elizabeth Saunders, who is known to be the first white woman to settle in Lewis County, built the Barrett Block, a brick building three stories tall with spires on all four corners. The upper two floors held the Grand Central Hotel, which cost \$40,000 to furnish.” During the time, there was a heated conflict between Eliza Saunders and various men in the area over development of plots owned by Ms. Saunders. In 1892, the building sustained major damage from two suspicious fires. Sometime between 1892 and 1927, the property where the Barrett Block had once stood, had been purchased by the Methodist Church. In 1927, Lewis County purchased the property and built what is now known as the historic courthouse. Court was held in the courthouse until the Law and Justice Building was built in 1976. Around 1979, the



Lewis County Juvenile Court was built at the current location on SW Pacific Avenue in Chehalis, WA.

COS

“Coordination of Services”

In 1997 Washington legislators decided to move from a heavy focus on extremely high risk youth (those in the institution) to using Evidence Based Programs (EBP) for youth on Court Supervision in the community. These evidence based programs include Employment Education Training (EET), Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Coordination of Services (COS). Each program has a different function and a different targeted audience. The first COS program began in 2003 and was first implemented in Lewis County in 2013. Probation Officer Lee Montgomery leads COS and is often assisted by a Detention Officer when facilitating the program.

What is COS?

COS is an educational program targeting low-risk juvenile offenders. Its purpose is to intervene with youth and their families at an early point in their involvement with the courts in order to avoid continued participation with the Juvenile Justice System. The program teaches them skills that can be used immediately and connects them with resources in our community that can be contacted should the need arise. The COS program consists of 12 hours of highly interactive instruction, offered over one weekend, Saturday and Sunday, 9am to 3pm. There are 5-8 sessions presented by professionals from the local community along with ice breakers and transition activities led by Juvenile Court staff. Each youth is required to attend with a parent or highly connected adult (i.e. grandparent, uncle, aunt). Some sessions will involve all participants together while other sessions will separate the youth from the adults.

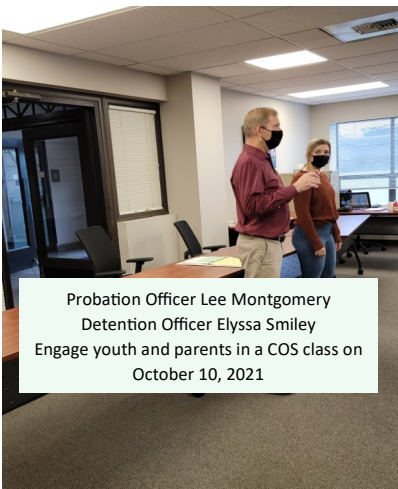
Making an Impact

COS benefits youth, parents and our community

Youth
Increases individual accountability. Empowers youth to set goals. Helps youth with employment readiness. Increases positive conflict resolution. Reveals to youth their value and purpose. Connects youth to their family and community.

Family
Empowers parents and increases positive communication. Teaches parents to recognize high-risk behaviors. Increases family’s knowledge of and connection to community resources.

Community
Reduces recidivism by about 3.5 percentage points in low risk juvenile offenders which translates to \$23 saved for every dollar spent. Connects youth and parents to available service providers and businesses.



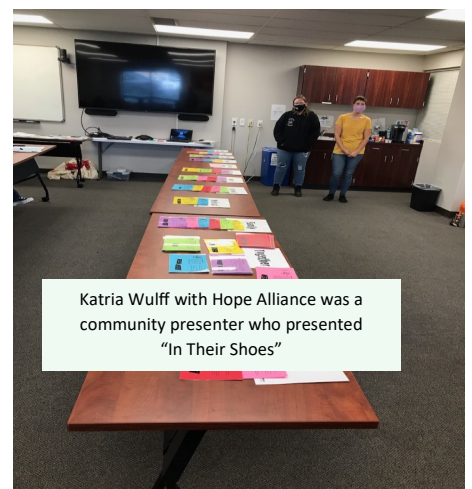
Probation Officer Lee Montgomery
Detention Officer Elyssa Smiley
Engage youth and parents in a COS class on
October 10, 2021

What did parents have to say about the program?

“Fantastic program that treated the kids with respect and provided helpful resources. Very positive experience. Thank you!!”

Let’s hear from the youth

“Very good class for kids struggling at home.”



Katria Wulff with Hope Alliance was a community presenter who presented “In Their Shoes”

You Matter

Youth Suicide and Prevention

Over the years, the Lewis County Juvenile Court has been dubbed the “Hub” for all juvenile related matters. The goal of the Juvenile Court is not only to track and reduce youth recidivism but also to track and improve outcomes for youth. As a community, we should be continually checking the pulse on youth outcomes: high school completion rates, youth employment rates, teen pregnancy rates, recidivism rates, and youth suicide rates. These youth are literally the future of the community.

Talking about death as an outcome is unpleasant, suicide even more so. It is an increasing public-health problem with a million different faces, affected by many factors. According to the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), “In Washington State, suicide is the second leading cause of death for teens 15 to 19 years old. According to the Washington Healthy Youth Survey (2018), 32% of eighth graders, 40% of 10th graders, and 41% of 12th graders felt so sad or hopeless for 2 weeks or more that they stopped doing their usual activities. 16% of 8th graders, 18% of 10th graders, and 18% of 12th graders reported making a suicide plan. Most students who reported feeling sad or hopeless said they have an adult to turn to for help, however, 13% of 8th graders, 16% of 10th graders, and 15% of 12th graders report there are not adults for them to turn to when feeling sad or hopeless.” Sadly, those statistics were pre-COVID pandemic. “Significantly higher rates of suicide-related behaviors appear to have corresponded with times when COVID-19 stressors and community responses (e.g., stay-at-home orders and school closures) were heightened, indicating that youth experienced elevated distress during these periods, according to “Suicide Ideation and Attempts in a Pediatric Emergency Department Before and During COVID 19” (Hill RM, et al. Pediatrics. Dec. 16, 2020). The American Academy of Pediatrics reported, “Results showed recent suicidal ideation was 1.60 and 1.45 times higher in March and July 2020, respectively, than in March and July 2019.” According to the Lewis County Coroner’s Office, there were 0 youth suicides in Lewis County in 2018, 2019 and 2020; however, there has been three youth suicides in 2021.

When a youth is brought into custody at the Lewis County Juvenile Detention, a Detention Officer conducts an Intake Health Screen on each youth. This Health Screen covers everything from physical health to mental health, including suicidal ideation. Every youth is screened and assessed by a mental health counselor and additional referrals for treatment are made if recommended. When a youth is out of custody, and perhaps not even involved with the court, the Juvenile Probation Department brokers services to youth in need and helps to facilitate referrals for family counseling, individual counseling, and wrap around services.

“No one person (parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, mentor, etc.) can implement suicide prevention efforts on their own. The participation, support, and active involvement of families, schools, and communities are essential.” (youth.gov)

Are you concerned someone else might be at risk of suicide? This person is fortunate you’re paying attention. Here are five easy steps you can take to help:

1. Look for warning signs. (acting hopeless; reckless; withdrawn; dramatic mood shift; no sense of purpose; increased substance use; anxious; change in sleep pattern; giving personal items away; self harming behaviors)
2. Show you care. This looks different depending on who you are and your relationship, but let the person know you have noticed something has changed and it matters to you. If appropriate, let them tell you how they’re feeling and why.
3. Ask the question. Make sure you both understand whether this problem is about suicide. “Are you thinking about suicide?”
4. Restrict access to lethal means. Help the person remove dangerous objects and substances from the places they live and spend time.
5. Get help. This person may know who they want to talk to (a therapist, their guardian, their partner). You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 800-273-8255. Don’t feel like talking on the phone? Try Lifeline Crisis Chat (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/lifelinechat.aspx) or the Crisis Text Line at 741741

Washington State Suicide Prevention Plan is available at www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/631-058-SuicidePrevPlan.pdf

Prosocial Outings

Teaching life skills through Prosocial activities and opportunities for the youth in our communities.

What are Prosocial Outings?

Prosocial outings are activities that teach and encourage youth to learn new skills and positive behaviors that can help develop them into responsible young adults.

How can You help?

Lewis County Juvenile Court is looking for sponsors to donate outdoor equipment, and professional partners to assist and coordinate our Prosocial Outings. Whether it's taking a group of youth mountain biking, fishing on a river or lake, or hiking one of the many beautiful hiking trails here in the PNW, we are in need of the proper equipment and professional partners to help facilitate these activities. Come partner with Lewis County Juvenile Court in working with the many youth and families in our communities, and developing responsible young adults.

You can contact Seth Foster at:
Seth.foster@lewiscountywa.gov

Many of the youth and families we work with have a disparity or are underprivileged. Because of this, many of these youth have never had the opportunity to experience some of the outdoor activities many of us enjoy. Research shows that outdoor recreation has many mental and physical benefits, teaches lifelong skills, and increases self-confidence.

Since the summer of 1999, staff from the Lewis County Juvenile Court have brought groups of youth to the High Rock Lookout in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Each spring and fall, youth were tasked with making minor repairs to the lookout in order to help keep it functional. "Save the Rock" project was launched in 2017 with partners: U.S. Forest Service, the Sand Mountain Society, the White Pass Country Historical Society, the Lewis County Juvenile program, the Forest Fire Lookout Association of WA, the WA Trust for Historic Preservation, Packwood Improvement Club and other entities. The goal is to restore the High Rock Lookout to a fully functional fire detection lookout. This 1930 L-4 building is one of three lookouts remaining in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

The Prosocial Outings program has continued to grow and expand over the course of the years. Through donations, probation officers, detention officers, assistants, GAL coordinators, defense attorneys, prosecutors and even Judges have participated in outings such as Rainier Baseball games, various hikes, trips to the beach, Job Corps, LeMay Car Museum, Mt. Saint Helens, Portland Zoo, Salem Ropes Course, Wolf Haven, and more.

As of 2021, Probation Officer Seth Foster has taken the lead on planning prosocial outings and has a passion to expand it even further to not just include day adventures that give youth the opportunity to see that there is more to their lives than what they have experienced so far but to expose local youth to healthy activities such as learning how to fish; being a part of the community by riding bikes on the Willapa Trail; how to put up a tent and cook a meal over a campfire in a safe manner; and more.



Lewis County Juvenile Court staff with youth at the Tacoma Rainiers Baseball Game



High Rock Lookout

Meet the Team



Elyssa Smiley

While in high school, I knew I wanted to work within Juvenile Justice. This would allow me to help youth that simply needed someone to listen to them and help them realize their full potential. I quickly decided to do a fast track college program to get a technical degree in criminal justice. I then worked as security at a children's resort to get my foot in the door of working with youth and their families. Not long after, I started my career with Lewis County Juvenile Court.

I have been a Detention Officer since 2018 and have really enjoyed my time working with the youth and families within our community.

In order to have more of an impact on our community, I went back to college and earned my B.A. this year, giving me the ability to move into new roles in our community as opportunities arise.

Since working for the Lewis County Juvenile Court, some of my favorite memories have been having the ability to sit down and have one-on-one conversations with in-custody youth about their plans, goals, and aspirations. I enjoy the unique opportunities to talk to youth at some of their most vulnerable times in their adolescent years. I have seen numerous youth that are now adults that stop me and yell across parking lots or

stop me in a restaurant and say, "Hey Elyssa!! I got a full-time job" or "I got my own place." I really love seeing these youth thriving and changing their lives around after making a mistake or two...

Outside of the workplace, you will find me spending most of my time in the gym and/or with family in an outdoorsy environment. Favorite activities include running, hiking, kayaking, or being out in the fields with the goats and horses. When I am not outside or at the gym, you can find me cozy on the couch or porch with a blanket and book in hand.