

CHALLENGE: Program helps youth get a new start in life

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school, who are not attending school, or are failing in school. Many students earn their high school diploma, GED, go on to community college, enlist in the military, return to high school, join the job corps, start a job or similar vocational interest.

All students must have a placement and responsible plan to implement back in the community to be eligible to graduate.

“I didn’t think I was going to get into the program, but when I did I decided to do my best to improve myself, and since I’ve been here I feel much better about myself,” McCabe said. “I’ve accomplished a lot and it will set me up for the future. It’s given me tools and discipline I couldn’t have got anywhere else, and helped me to set goals for my future, so I won’t feel lost.”

Kala Golden, a 2004 graduate of the Oregon National Guard Youth Challenge and now an intern with Deschutes Soil & Water Conservation District (DSWCD) and a natural resources student at OSU-Cascades, took control of 45 cadets gathered at

Indian Ford Creek last week to, as Jan Roofner, technician for DSWCD put it, “correct 20 years of renegade land practices.”

Past years of over-grazing has left the entire meadow knee-deep in canary reed and cheat grasses, and there are illegal ditches and dams shunting water off to private lands, ruining the quality of the creek itself.

Private land-owners along the creek are mostly happy to see the corrections take place, and the grins from cadets in the youth challenge tell how they feel about what they’re doing, conserving water, and the improved condition of the creek itself.

In addition to clearing the creek of the illegal dams and other barriers preventing the creek from running through the meadow in a healthy state, the cadets also dug hundreds of ditches along the riparian area, removing canary reed grass and then placing bundles of native willows in the ditches that will bring the creek’s temperature down to normal as they grow and create shade.

Golden’s work preparing the students to take on the project included a class presentation about what DSWCD does—the project having been identified earlier by Oregon Department of Agriculture



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Cadets placed willows in the riparian area along Indian Ford Creek.

(ODA) as imperative for the life of Indian Ford Creek—and implementing the willow plantings.

A project of that magnitude would have cost a lot of money had it been contracted out, but with the cadets doing the work, not only is the task cheaper, but it’s a win-win for everyone, providing everyone plays by the rules.

Golden said, “This is a long-term project (more than five years), but we are currently making some good progress with the help of some of our local youth. Teaming up with the Oregon Youth Challenge Program to assist with project needs is going to bring great improvements.

“We’ve had upwards of 50 cadets (ages 16-18) coming out each weekend, volunteering their time to assist

with planting and restoration efforts. Most of these kids come from difficult backgrounds and have come to the youth challenge program voluntarily to improve upon their future.

“They are very eager to learn and to make a difference in their community; and I would really like to have their work recognized, as well as inform the public on the work

we do — are currently doing — in an effort to create further awareness of the challenges we face as a community.”

It’s as Cadet Jason Chafee put it after he dropped his bundle of willows into the ditch beside the creek: “I’m so glad to come out here. I want to give back to the tax-payers for the program we’re in; thankful for a second chance to be a success in life.”

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- 4 STRESS RELIEF:** Reduces stress, cortisol levels, and improves metabolism.*
- 5 INCREASED ENERGY:** Improves circulation, energy, and overall health.*

REASON #2 TO DO YOGA...

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**Source: yogahigh.org*

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