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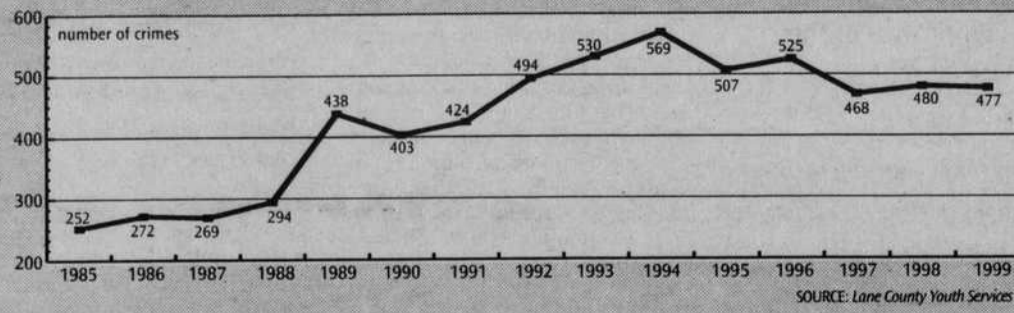
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Juvenile violent crime declining

Violent juvenile crime remains a serious concern, dropping slightly over the last few years but still at a level almost twice as high as the mid 1980s. Violent crimes include assaults, homicides and sexual offenses.



Katie Nesse Emerald

Crime

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combination of using at-risk tools and having various agencies linked electronically has helped his office work to reduce crime more effectively.

"Identifying it at the early levels has been important," he said. "Program by program we can address issues like substance abuse, for example, and target that in our schools. We're getting more effective."

Looking Glass Youth and Family Services, celebrating its 30th anniversary in Lane County this year, has provided a host of programs that target juveniles before, during and after they get involved in criminal activities.

Development Director Cheri Brokaw described their work as focusing on the continuum of juvenile crime, which begins with at-risk behaviors. But it doesn't end there.

"At-risk means a lot of differ-

ent things," she said. "Even when kids have entered the system, our efforts continue to hopefully prevent repeat offenses."

Brokaw also noted that most juveniles that Looking Glass works with have not one but often several contributing factors to their delinquency.

"We understand that we can't just focus in on one issue," she said. "Kids have all types of problems and the interventions required have to be different too."

The Department of Youth Services will use the data provided in the report to both evaluate existing programs and be able to document its progress in the application process for federal and state grants.

Martha Evans, volunteer coordinator for Youth Services, echoed the importance of recognizing the problems that might develop into criminal behavior before a juvenile enters the criminal justice system.

"We're doing a better job of

identifying kids who need our prevention services," she said, "and our understanding of the factors that lead to crime has been really important."

Some of Evans' work has been to flesh-out those juvenile crimes that appear to be gender-specific, as the county has a number of programs in place targeting young, at-risk girls.

"With certain crimes such as shoplifting, girls are over-represented," she said. "So we try to find out what are their issues, as teen-age girls, that affect them differently."

She added that the many volunteer opportunities in the community can play a crucial part in reducing juvenile crime rates.

"One of the best things for kids is a solid relationship with a caring adult," she said.

To find out more about volunteering with at-risk youth, contact 682-4734 or visit the county's Web site at www.co.lane.or.us/ys.

Dead Man Walking

The Journey



Speaker, Sister Helen Prejean, Csj, author

EMU Ballroom
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