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offering shelter services for homeless or runaway youth, would give them \$75,000 a year for five years — a huge boost.

The nonprofit planned to expand the Host Home Project across Clackamas County should it win the grant award.

And in early July, DHS sent notice that The Inn had won.

“Our dreams had come true,” Olsen said. “We sent e-mails out to all (school) superintendents and told them we’re moving forward.”

The Inn rented a new office and posted job ads for a full-time case manager to help with the workload of covering the whole county. The first check from the state came in early August. Olsen interviewed potential managers.

“This was a really big deal,” Kinnie said.

And then it all fell apart. In early September, DHS told the nonprofit that it hadn’t won the grant after all, that the department had made an error in scoring the various applications.

Similar grants were awarded in six regions around the state. Most regions had four DHS employees scoring the grant applications according to how well the scorer thought each proposal met the state requirements, said Andrea Cantu-Schomus, a DHS spokeswoman. In the Portland region there were five scorers. But when it came time to average their scores, the computer only considered the first four numbers because it was still set up for the other regions, Cantu-Schomus said. When the error was discovered and all five scores were taken into account, the Portland nonprofit Boys and Girls Aid came out ahead.

The state will send money to The Inn through the end of October, Cantu-Schomus said. Hardly enough time to find new grants of a similar size, which are hard to come by anyway. The nonprofit now missed the window to at least re-apply for the small county grant it had been receiving the past few years, Olsen said. He’s not giving up yet.

“We feel we have a case to file a grievance with the state,” Olsen said.

There is no appeals process for the loss of the grant, Cantu-Schomus said.

“A lot of resources go into Portland,” Kinnie said. “But what about the surrounding counties, especially the rural parts? We’re just trying to do right by these kids who have nowhere else to go.”

Exporting a unique model

The Beaverton School District has more unaccompanied youths in its schools than any other district in the state, almost twice as many as Eugene, the runner-up, according to state records.

No wonder its homeless official has developed a program that appears to be unique in the nation, one that will soon be emulated in other districts around the state.

About five years ago, Lisa Montesana, Beaverton’s homeless liaison, looked to go beyond school district resources to help the many homeless students she encountered. It was time to ask the whole community for help.

Taking bits and pieces from other programs, a unique model emerged: a collaboration between the school district, the city and an interfaith nonprofit, which matches homeless, unaccompanied students with families.

The result was a nonprofit called Second Home, which is under the umbrella of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and which finds adults willing to take in homeless youth.

In its first year, Host Home helped three students. Last year, it helped six. But there are about 70 known unaccompanied youths in the district’s schools and about 250 throughout Clackamas County.



PHOTO BY DIEGO DIAZ

Kristin Kinnie, the homeless liaison for North Clackamas School District. She, along with the nonprofit The Inn, created Host Home to house unaccompanied homeless students in the district.

When Montesana’s office is made aware of a student in need of a home who is without family, she vets the student to see if he or she makes a good fit for the program.

Once host family and student are matched, all parties get together at the dispute-resolution center in the Beaverton mayor’s office. The mediators there put together a rental agreement between the student and the family, said Jenny Pratt, student coordinator for Second Home.

Students have to be 16 years old, which is the minimum age to rent an apartment in Oregon. The rental agreement will

include provisions such as expected curfews, house rules and which chores the youth will take on in lieu of rent. In turn, the family agrees to provide a home.

Second Home helps an average of 10 to 12 kids a year, Montesana said. It runs on about \$20,000 per year, none of which is school-district money.

All three participants are crucial to the program, Pratt said. It helps greatly to have trained city mediators put together agreements. The school district refers the kids, can waive fees for sports programs or other activities, and provide supplies, food and clothing to the youth through its donation programs. And the nonprofit does home visits and background checks, and carries crucial insurance for accidents or lawsuits.

Faith-based organizations also contribute donations and mentors.

It’s a formula that is ready to be exported to other parts of the state. It looks like Lincoln County will be first.

The Lincoln County School District ranked ninth in the state in the total number of homeless students in the 2012-13 school year, trailing only districts with at least twice its population.

And now, the school district, the county’s dispute-resolution center and the Newport nonprofit Samaritan House are on board to start up a program modeled after Second Home, Pratt said.

No commitments are in writing yet, but they might be by the end of the year, she said.

Sit down to dinner

Part of the success of these programs is that they enable students to come home to a family, even if it’s not their own family. They’re not living in institutions while trying to finish school and getting over the loss of their family connections.

Yes, the school districts can offer mental-health counseling, which is crucial to these kids after the traumatic loss of their childhood.

But more importantly, the programs make it possible to go to a place after school where people sit down to dinner together, which is a first for some of them. Some learn how to make a bed for the first time. And most see adults who are responsible, who know how to manage anger, who know how to communicate. It’s an invaluable experience, the program coordinators said.

Pratt, of Second Home, asked one student what kind of home she was looking for: one with small children or pets, perhaps?

“I just want a house where there’s love,” the child replied.

Feelings

By Steven R. Miller

As the rain soaks the dusty ground,
Old proverbs can be found laying around

Hate makes you late...
For the right decision.

Greed fills no need...
Just gobbles up all the room

Envy of others destroys brothers,
Sisters and blisters friendships

Lust isn’t the ugly shadow of love

The words above aren’t jewels to live by,
But tears the world cries.

Untitled 21

By William Holmes

hardly aware of bold steps towards
sharp eyes
hasty laceration through stressed
breaths and flesh
brandishing immutable colors which
quickly overwhelm
heightened senses law swiftly in
concise execution