

Nonprofit connects incarcerated parents with children

By ERICA MORRISON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

On days when Irvin Hines' 4-year-old son comes to visit him, he feels anxious. "When I get into the visit room and he looks up and sees me, I see his face light up, my face lights up," and all the anxiety Hines had felt is gone.

Hines is an inmate at Columbia River Correctional Institute. He said building a relationship with his son while incarcerated has been hard.

"Initially he would come in and see other guys that look similar to me and think that was his dad, you know, and that hurt," Hines said. "But I also knew that it was no fault of his own."

Of the more than 14,000 incarcerated adults in Oregon, an estimated 80% of women and 65% of men have children, according to the Oregon Department of Corrections. On Friday, The Contingent, a Portland-based nonprofit organization announced a new program for people like Hines, called "Know Me Now." It aims to connect incarcerated parents with their children for an in-person visit at least once a month.

Hines' most recent stint in prison happened when his son was only seven months old. Family members would share pictures with the boy and they would have video visits. He has three children and said he's been to prison three times in his adult life.

"And now I could see that he knows I'm dad because he don't want to get off the phone. He goes to crying, he throws a fit," Hines said. "They have to fill out another visit form on the videos so we can video visit to calm him down."

Nichole Brown is the superintendent of Columbia River Correctional Institution which houses 600 male inmates. Most of them only



Irvin Hines at Columbia River Correctional Institute.

Erica Morrison/Oregon Public Broadcasting

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Nichole Brown | superintendent of
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have 12 to 18 months left of their sentence.

"There is an opportunity here to affect the lives of the children and families of these incarcerated adults with therapeutic interventions such as the treatment programs that we've offered, family reunification activities that impact long term success of the adults in custody and their children,"

Brown said.

In its first year, Know Me Now will focus on the Portland tri-county area with the intent of becoming a statewide, 36-county initiative. Children will be transported to seven prisons within a 60-mile radius of Portland. And for the first 90 days, the program is focusing on incarcerated parents whose children are part of the fos-

ter-care system. They are committed to transporting young adults who have aged out of the foster care system, as well as children as young as nine.

The program seeks not only to connect children with their incarcerated parents, but also support those families upon reentry into society. A host of community-based organizations, government agencies and volunteers are partnering to create radical change in the lives of individuals incarcerated in Oregon.

"We are going all in. We want to change the narrative that says a child who has an incarcerated parent is doomed to incarceration themselves," Anthony Jordan, President of The Contingent, told the crowd Friday in the Columbia River Correctional Institution multi-purpose room. "We

are committed to recruiting culturally responsive mentors that will walk alongside these 70 (foster) children."

At the same time the program intends to bring children into prisons, it's working to make the spaces for families more comfortable. The Columbia River facility's visiting room has metal tables with sharp corners and hard metal seats attached. Off to the side is a cart with bins of baby dolls, books and games for parents to engage with their kids. The Contingent is working with business partners, civic organizations, and faith communities to re-imagine spaces.

"We have transformed over 100 visitation room spaces across Oregon. All of those have been local community organizations and groups that are adopting or sponsoring those local

spaces," Brooke Gray, executive director of mobilizing community at The Contingent told the crowd.

"So we've already been in conversation with some community partners and businesses here that are excited about getting involved and designing the spaces. We try to provide as much freedom and creativity to those local groups while keeping a trauma-informed lens to the space."

Children with incarcerated parents face many barriers. Know Me Now hopes to to remove them and help strengthen foster families, like the bonds between Hines and his son.

"And now I see just in the way he says, 'Dad, I love you!' and 'Dad, what you up to?'" Hines said.

"That I know that my son is really harnessing that I'm ... I'm Dad."

Conservation groups want federal protection for wolverines

Found in
Northwest
mountains

By COURTNEY FLATT
Northwest News Network

Wolverines are the largest members of the weasel family, but they look more like small bears with bushy tails.

Conservation groups say the animals need to be listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Ten groups want to force the federal government to protect the elusive wolverines.

The groups estimate there are around 300 wolverines left, sparsely scattered across mountains in the west, including Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Their young depend on snowy, high altitude habitat that could disappear as the climate warms.

Gary Macfarlane is with the advocacy group Friends of the Clearwater, which signed on to sue federal agencies if they don't add wolverines to the Endangered Species List in 60 days. The notice of intent to sue includes 10 groups.

Macfarlane said Idaho has some of the most pristine wolverine habitat, but it's threatened by climate change and winter recreation.

"These areas are becoming fewer and fewer. And, they may be places that people want to snowmobile or recreate in the winter, and that's a huge concern," Macfarlane said.

A spokesperson with the Idaho State Snowmobile Association says a five-year study was inconclusive about whether winter recreation harms wolverines.

"We do know that it's an important critter. We know that we care about them



Cascades Carnivore Project
A male wolverine was spotted at a wildlife monitoring station in Washington state's southern Cascades in 2018.

also help other species on the brink, like Canada lynx and pine marten. Wolverines live in some hostile environments.

"(Wolverines) are an indicator to what we're doing to the planet in terms of global warming because they do need persistent snow," Macfarlane said.

Conservation groups have been trying to get wolverines listed as threatened on the Endangered Species List for 20 years.

In 2016, the groups sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, after the federal government withdrew a proposal to add wolverines to the Endangered Species List, "going against the advice of its own biologists," according to a news report from E&E News. A judge ruled the federal government had to make a final decision about wolverines.

Wildlife advocates say the Fish and Wildlife Service has been "sitting on its laurels" because the 2016 court ruling didn't set a deadline. That's why they're trying to compel the government to make a decision, said Brad Smith, with the Idaho Conservation League.

"As we lost the last mountain caribou in north Idaho and in the Lower 48 states - it was really heartbreaking. I'd hate to see us also lose wolverines," Smith said. "As we lose more and more species, we lose more and more cogs in our ecosystem. It can have a cascading effect."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declined to comment on pending litigation.

deeply. What we hope is to educate snowmobilers to stay away from areas where there (are) wolverines. We don't want to negatively impact them," according to Sandra Mitchell, who oversees the public lands program for the snowmobile group.

In 2018, the Cascades Carnivore Project snapped trail pictures of a mother wolverine with kits - the first such find in the southern part of Washington's Cascade mountains in recent history.

Conservation groups say protecting the fragile ecosystem, where wolverines den in the snowpack, would

Robert M. 'Bob' Oja passed away December 24th in Astoria.

He was born on April 26, 1930 to Alexander Henry and Gertrude Maria (Johnson) Oja. He graduated from Astoria High in 1948, joining the Navy in 1950 and serving until 1954 as an Aviation Machinist. After the Navy he worked for Knappton Towboat, and at Tongue Point and Beaver working for Astoria Marine Construction Company and Nisko Marine on the laying up of the Reserve Fleet.

On June 1st 1957 he married Mary Johanna Wullger, she survives at the family home.

Bob went to work for White Motor Company in Astoria as a marine engine mechanic, installing and repairing engines in the area fishing vessels. With 2 partners, Earl Malinen and Rasty Mathieson, he later purchased the business, starting Columbia River Engine Company, in 1962 became the owner of the business with his wife Mary which they operated until 1974.

Starting with summers on the seining grounds, Bob became the 3rd generation of his family to become a commercial fisherman. During the 1950's he started fishing with his uncles and purchased his own boat in the early 1960's. In 1973 he had a new boat built and fished in Puget Sound, Willapa Bay and the Columbia River.

In 1983 Bob and Mary started another rewarding endeavor when they moved to the Youngs River farm that Mary grew up on. They, along with daughter Louise and Son-in-law Paul, operated Oja's U Cut Christmas Tree farm each year until his death.

Bob got a lot of enjoyment from the tree farm, from both the nurturing of the trees and welcoming the customers back each year, many of them multi generational.

In the mid 1980's a downturn in the salmon returns opened another opportunity for Bob, as he went to work for the City of Astoria public works department as a mechanic. Working for the city he became a member of the Teamsters Union. That Teamster membership enabled him to get a driving job working on the various movies shot in and around Astoria and Clatsop County. Bob enjoyed meeting and driving some of the actors and their families around town, picking them up at airports, and running the days footage to the airports also. Some of the films he helped with are The Goonies, Kindergarten Cop, Short Circuit, Point Break, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

In retirement Bob enjoyed morning coffee with a couple of groups in town. He attended the Uniontown Supreme court at Gunderson's Cannery Cafe and also at Home Baking. There was a lot of sharing of history and general reminiscing with those groups.

Bob enjoyed fishing, duck hunting, and clamming with his family. Photography was a lifelong hobby he enjoyed and shared with his friends and family, he kept his camera handy to record many events with friends and family and then to later share those photos with everyone. And in his younger days enjoyed motorcycles and hot rods with his hilltop neighborhood friends. He was a Life Member of BPOE lodge #180 and was also a member of the Columbia River Maritime Museum, Clatsop County Historical Society, a member of Salmon For All, and a past President of the Clatsop County Duck Hunters Association.

Bob is preceded in death by his parents and his Daughter-in-law Kathie.

In addition to his wife Mary, he is survived by his Son Bart (Mary), Daughter Louise Phillips (Paul), Grandchildren Christopher Oja (Melissa), Caitlin Oja, Andrea Phillips, Eddie Phillips (Steph) and Great-grandchildren Sawyer and Easton Oja. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews.

A private graveside service is planned. A memorial service is planned at a later time. Memorials to the Clatsop County Historical Society, Columbia River Maritime Museum, or the charity of ones choice.



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