

State Saves \$400 Million

Since gaining a federal OK to use Medicaid dollars for home- and community-based care outside of nursing homes, Oregon has saved \$400 million on services that are preferred by seniors and people with disabilities. This commentary also explains where Oregonians can learn more.

By Jim Wilson

If \$1 million would provide home-delivered meals to 1,100 senior citizens for a year, or a year's foster care for 250 abused children, then think what \$400 million would do.

That is the amount the state has saved since 1981 by helping Medicaid-eligible seniors and people with disabilities receive care in their own homes or in options such as adult foster care and assisted living facilities.

This is one of the reasons Oregon is considered an innovative state. Consider:

Oregon was the first state to win federal approval to provide care to people where they retain greater independence while costing the taxpayers less. Because home- and community-based care costs a third to half of nursing facilities', the savings now amount to about a million dollars a week.

Even today, with most states having followed Oregon's lead, we still have about a fourth of the nation's community-based facilities with only 1 percent of its population.

Oregon was just chosen to help with a U.S. Administration on Aging project to help other states improve

the quality and reduce the cost of publicly financed care for seniors and people with disabilities.

That these care options save money is good. That people who are elderly or disabled prefer them is even better.

Recently, I talked with E.H. "Bing" Bingenheimer, who lives at Rackleff House, an assisted living facility in Clackamas County. Born near Lebanon in 1893, a year that Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison were in the news, Bing says he treasures his independence.

"I want to live my own life," He told me. "If you were born out in the open, you want to live out in the open."

At Rackleff House, he enjoys the privacy of his own apartment, which includes a kitchenette, as well as access to regular meals in the dining room, many activities, and attractively landscaped courtyard and nursing care if he needs it. Residents furnish their private apartments with their own furniture and hang personal mementos on their walls.

Bing and others have told us they prefer to live their last years outside of an institution. Oregon's commitment to promoting people's independence, dignity and quality of life has made this the only state in which fewer Medicaid-eligible seniors are living in nursing facilities today than 10 years ago.

Oregonians like Bing who benefit from home- and community-based care are often older than people expect: Seven Oregonians who

are 100 or older live in their own homes or apartments, receiving in-home services such as help with cleaning, shopping and bathing. Another 49 Oregonians ages 100 and up live in adult foster homes or assisted living facilities.

But this isn't just a story about benefits for people who are eligible for Medicaid. The opposite is true.

By encouraging home- and community-based care, Oregon has broadened options for people who pay their own expenses from savings or from insurance. That people want to retain their independence and dignity is reflected in the fact that 80 percent of residents of assisted living facilities, such as where Bing lives, and 70 percent of adult foster-care residents are private-pay.

However, even though Oregon has long been a leader in promoting living and care options for seniors and people with disabilities, Oregonians still may have trouble sorting out the alternatives and then making choices.

The state Senior and Disabled Services Division may be able to help. We have a toll-free number for families to call to learn where they can receive information locally: 1 (800) 282-8096. If the choice is a community-based facility, then we can also help with decisions including offering our free consumer booklet, "A Guide to Adult Foster Care." Jim Wilson is administrator of the Senior and Disabled Services Division in the Oregon Department of Human Resources.

Jester Named Superintendent Of MacLaren School

Robert S. Jester, who has spent his career as a juvenile corrections counselor and manager in Oregon, is the new superintendent of MacLaren School. His annual salary is \$69,180.

Jester, 44, had been acting superintendent at the school for male juvenile offenders since November 1992.

Announcing the appointment, Rick Hill, juvenile corrections manager of the Children's Services Division, noted Jester has accepted increasingly responsible positions over the past 23 years.

"Bob has managed the camp system as well as the parole unit and has a broad perspective on Oregon's juvenile justice system," Hill said. "His long association with MacLaren and other Oregon juvenile institutions has given him broad understanding of issues."

Jester began his juvenile corrections career in 1972 at MacLaren as a practicum student from Oregon State University. Jester sees more

pressure on juvenile institutions now.

"This is a time of challenge and change, a time of intense focus on juvenile justice in Oregon," Jester said. "The public will be looking closely at how we operate our institutions for juvenile offenders and the results we achieve."

Principal issues that face Oregon's juvenile justice system are: Senate Bill 1, which separates juvenile justice from the Children's Services Division and names it the Oregon Youth Authority, and Ballot Measure 11, which treats 15-to-17-year-old youths as adults for certain offenses that carry mandatory sentences.

MacLaren could see its current population of about 320 young men increased by 100 during the 1995-97 biennium as the result of Ballot Measure 11. The juvenile justice system is predicted to absorb an additional 450 juvenile offenders during the two-year period beginning in July.

PDC
PORTLAND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEETING
Date: June 21, 1995
Place: Key Bank Community Room
Walnut Park Retail Center
Corner of MLK Jr. Blvd. & N. Killingsworth
Time: 7:00 p.m.

Commission meetings are open to the public. A complete agenda is available at PDC or by calling 823-3200. Citizens with disabilities may call 823-3232 or TDD 823-6868 for assistance at least 48 hours in advance.

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Building Healthy Forests

In Wallowa County, forests are suffering from disease and fire. As a logger, Larry Miller relied on those forests for a steady income. But as the timber industry began to change, Larry knew he must also.

With a dream and a loan of Lottery dollars, Larry started Little Foot Construction. Working with the US Forest Service and private contractors, Larry helps restore the forests of northeast Oregon by recreating habitats using natural barriers such as trees and boulders.

"Without the Lottery funding, it would've been real difficult to buy the equipment to start this business and do the projects and challenges I knew I'd face," said Larry.

By helping keep these forests healthy and restoring eroding stream banks, Larry can see the fruits of his labors. "The wildlife is back and the trees are starting to grow," Larry points out. "Seeing otter and fish more abundantly is very rewarding and you know you're doing something good."



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