

# Graduates Make Up for Lost Time

Turning onto a course toward productive lives

What happens when a young person drops out of high school? For many dropouts the answer is: unemployment, drug abuse and trouble with the law.

But there is still hope, even for adults who have missed out on an education and found themselves enmeshed in the criminal justice system: the Londer Learning Center.

The center is a specialized education program operated by the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice. This unique school-within-a-parole-office provides adults on probation, parole, and in substance abuse treatment an opportunity to overcome educational and work barriers, attain their GEDs and go to college.

Last month, the program graduated 50 students who qualified for their GEDs.

Since its inception 12 years ago, approximately 700 students have earned their GEDs from the Londer Learning Center, and



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Celebrating the completion of their high school studies and a new course in life that puts them on a path toward productive lives are a group of graduates from a Multnomah County Department of Community Justice program. Pictured are John Terry, Roberto Dominguez, instructor Melinda Maiterth, Denise Robertson, Heather O'Neil, Elizabeth Candelario and Jarvis Zirkle.

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many more have worked to improve reading, math, writing, English language skills, and to develop strategies for success in college and on the job.

Among this year's graduates are a mother and daughter who both earned GEDs, a student who spent two years struggling with severe math anxiety and a homeless student whose road to recovery included education.

This year, under a partnership with Portland Community College, Londer Center gradu-

ates received a first-semester scholarship. A new "College Knowledge" class also helps graduates get ready to enroll and excel at PCC.

Students are referred to the center by their parole officers, the courts, and treatment providers to improve reading, writing and math skills, and their chances of finding work. Like many former prisoners, they are struggling to read and write.

Statistics show that two-thirds of inmates in Oregon prisons

read below an 8th grade level. Ninety-five percent of all students at the center cannot do math above a 5th grade level. Eighty percent of Londer students have learning problems that stem from past drug or alcohol abuse, or have other learning disabilities.

But most Londer students make significant educational improvements, which translates into better chances for long-term success and avoiding a return to prison or jail.

## Developing Careers that Work

Pioneer Pacific focuses on faster job track

Today's workforce is facing some challenges. Variable economic drivers and the retirement of many baby boomers are leaving a gap in some of the most important employment sectors out there including healthcare, information technology and the legal fields.

Pioneer Pacific College, with campuses in Wilsonville, Clackamas and Portland, is working toward helping keep skilled workers in these and several other employment fields by offering career-focused education in business, criminal justice, culinary arts, healthcare, information technology and paralegal.

"The focus of colleges like ours is to help people improve their lives through education," said Marci Hosier, director of marketing and advertising at Pioneer Pacific. "Many of our students are either under-employed or need to get into the workforce fast to start earning a living."



Pioneer Pacific College's campus in Wilsonville.

Pioneer Pacific offers diploma, certificate, associate and bachelor degrees in fields that are not only expanding but are actively looking for skilled employees to step in and hit the ground running in the positions they are hired for. The school promotes a hands-on, career-focused education that helps get people into the workforce faster.

All campuses offer career placement assistance so you can find that perfect job after you graduate and financial aid is available for those who qualify.

"Financing should never be a reason that someone can't go to school. There are many ways to

find funding for education and our dedicated financial aid staff is here to help", said Hosier.

If you're looking to start a career in business, law enforcement or corrections, computer systems administration, medical assisting, medical claims and billing, practical nursing, massage therapy, the culinary or baking and pastry arts, or the legal assistant and paralegal field, then you should contact Pioneer Pacific College on-line at [pioneerpacific.edu](http://pioneerpacific.edu) or call 1-866-772-4636. Classes start every 8 weeks for culinary arts and every 10 weeks for all other programs. The next start date is June 3.

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