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Brian Stewart, vice president for community relations and corporate responsibility, said JP Morgan Chase is committed to supporting development initiatives in high-need communities, particularly

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communities of color.

"The goals of JP Morgan Chase philanthropic giving is to really catalyze meaningful change in high-need areas that we serve," Stewart said.

The project's success depends on collaboration between the City of Portland, the PDC, small business owners, neighbors and

corporate funders, he added.

"So as you can see this type of initiative will take the combined efforts of a lot of people working diligently together. As a funder we've been able to help convene other funders to learn more about the opportunity and I would encourage them to join us in supporting this effort."

Commissioner Amanda Fritz said banks have taken big hits to their reputation in the wake of the economic crisis. So the donation is an occasion to remember that banks also do good things.

"It's important for us to recognize that banks are really useful," she said. "They help us save money. They help us invest in our communities, and when they're good community partners they help us be successful and provide for our community. So that's important and I very much appreciate the donation from Chase."

If the project succeeds, it could encourage other similar efforts, Fritz said.

"This is a pilot project, at least in my mind. So if this is successful in the prosperity initiative districts then we can do more."

Youth

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State University in 2010, found that more than 75 percent of those who take part in the program stay free of felony convictions.

For all crime, the study found, the rate of reoffending for CPR alumni is 32 percent compared to 50 percent for all high-risk young offenders in Multnomah County. And when you consider that the 50 percent figure includes the CPR group, the numbers look even better.

"We actually brought that number down; we dropped the average," Sevos says. "Because our group is a subset of the larger group."

CPR starts behind the walls of three prisons: Oregon State Penitentiary, Oregon State Correctional Institution and Columbia River Correctional Institution. High-risk young offenders are offered a chance to join the program, but participation is completely voluntary. CPR works with 58 men at a time, taking in about 6 new participants a month.

Once in the program, the men take part in cognitive behavioral therapy sessions, designed to change negative, or criminal, thought and behavior patterns. For six months before they are released, they spend at least six hours a week working with

parole officers, counselors and mentors to set goals for themselves and plan for release.

Then, on the outside, they continue in the program for a year, attending groups, meeting with case managers and following through with their plans. And most graduates continue to stay in touch with the program, returning to touch base with staff, mentors and newly released participants.

Leaving prison behind is not easy. Young men with felony convictions struggle to find jobs.

Marina Poltorak, transition coordinator for the CPR program, says financial insecurity and unemployment are the reality for most of the men.

"Surviving the process of not getting a job is the biggest challenge, with the economy the way it is and their history of incarceration," she says. "A lot of the young men I meet have never had an above board job, and they almost never have high school diplomas."

About 40 percent of CPR participants are fathers, Sevos says. They want to support their families, but the reality of the jobs market makes that impossible.

"Sometimes the women are the ones who

EASA

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"But up to 75 percent will never have another psychotic episode, if you can treat it early with wraparound family services and support."

That's exactly what EASA is set up to do. The goal is to reach young people with psychotic symptoms before they reach a mental health crisis. And it works. Former clients have gone on to graduate from school build successful careers and become parents.

"We've learned a lot about how to mitigate symptoms," says Robert Janz, EASA's team leader. "What we are really geared to do is to get people back into the normal pattern of their lives. And we focus on things like going to school, playing music, whatever their interests are. We've had skateboarding as part of our plan."

The EASA team offers information, support and hope. Made up of experienced mental health professionals who have helped hundreds of people deal with psy-

chosis, the EASA team includes: Falk, an intake coordinator, caseworkers with cultural expertise, nurses, an occupational therapist, and a jobs specialist. And you won't have to worry about paying for services or medications. The service is free to those who need it.

Based on research from Australia and New Zealand that shows early intervention improves long-term outcomes, the program is one of more than a dozen EASA centers, set up across Oregon to reach out to youth and their families having a first experience with mental illness.

"One young man was out of school for a year," Janz says. "Now he's back in high school and he just went to the prom."

What kinds of symptoms are we talking about?

The basic definition of psychosis is a loss of contact with reality. It can include symptoms such as: feeling paranoid and anxious,

Mens Meeting



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

A group of 25 men came together Aug. 4, at Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, to bridge the gulf between church and street. Convened by Royal Harris, who works with gang-affiliated offenders, the group included church leaders, outreach workers and men with experience of street gang culture. Some of the men had known each other for decades; others were meeting for the first time. The conversation looked at the reasons for mistrust between church and street leaders, as well as ways to build trust and productive relationships. Humor was never far from the surface although, or maybe because, the men did not avoid difficult topics. The men say the conversation will continue. Full story will be online soon.

help them survive," she says. "That is one of the things that helps stabilize them: if they can get jobs."

"Most of the men are very underemployed. They find work but it's very low income. We call those survival jobs."

The average cost of the CPR program is about \$6,100 per person. That's peanuts compared to the cost of incarcerating an

Volunteers of America also partners with SE Works, Metropolitan Family Services and the Constructing Hope pre-apprenticeship trades program.

Just like other teens and 20-somethings, these young men want to make their own decisions. They want to have nice clothes, stylish shoes and cell phones so they can text with friends.

"Can you imagine not having a cell phone at that age," Sevos says. "They can't buy that nice watch, and they have no money for clothes. It's the bling and the flash, and having stuff. They don't have parents who will put that on their credit cards."

As felons, these young men have to fight their way up from the bottom of our society. At the July graduation, counselors, parole officers and mentors spoke about how hard they worked to do so. One man worked two part-time jobs. Sometimes they have to distance from family and friends to stay out of trouble. All of them had to consistently attend meetings and follow their recovery programs.

More than 75 percent of graduates do not reoffend

offender. The Portland State study said that for each class of 58 men, CPR potentially saves society \$1.35 million.

CPR is funded by Oregon's Department of Corrections, Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice and some smaller private grants. For the next two years, its mentor program is guaranteed funding through the federal, "Second Chance" program.

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