



OYA Youth in the Community Reach Graduation Milestone

By [Sarah Evans](#), OYA Communications
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The Oregon Youth Authority proudly celebrated 150 youth in the community statewide in June who earned their high school diplomas and GEDs.

This important educational milestone will help these youth as they work to reach their goals, while reducing their chances of committing new crimes.

Congratulations to these youth on parole and probation in the community who celebrated graduation this spring:

- **Central Region:** 7 high school diplomas, 7 GEDs
- **Clackamas County:** 5 high school diplomas, 6 GEDs
- **Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties:** 15 high school diplomas, 3 GEDs
- **Eastern Region:** 10 high school diplomas, 5 GEDs
- **Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Lake counties:** 17 high school diplomas, 4 GEDs
- **Lane County:** 8 high school diplomas, 5 GEDs
- **Linn, Benton, Lincoln, Polk, and Yamhill counties:** 8 high school diplomas, 1 GED
- **Marion County:** 9 high school diplomas, 8 GEDs
- **Multnomah County:** 8 high school diplomas, 4 GEDs
- **Washington, Columbia, Clatsop, and Tillamook counties:** 11 high school diplomas, 9 GEDs

Graduate Profiles



**Brad S., Michael P., and Matthew J.
McMinnville High School**

These three young men, who are in OYA foster care in McMinnville, have had amazing turnarounds during their time with OYA.

Despite having virtually no parental support, Brad completed his treatment successfully in a residential program before moving into the Mihm foster home, JPPO Zak Spiegel says. Brad had never played sports until about two years ago, but he graduated with letters in football, wrestling, and track. He plans to study computer engineering and software development at Oregon State University. "I never would have imagined I would be here today," he says. "Without OYA, I would still be that ignorant, selfish little boy."

Michael, known as "Junior," has been living in the Mihm foster home since he came to OYA as an eighth-grader. The Mihms essentially became his new family, JPPO Heidi Lung says. He is a funny, energetic teenager who had a great senior year both academically and behaviorally, Lung says. For now, he plans to continue working and staying with the Mihms.

Matthew struggled during his first OYA foster care placement, Lung says, but he has done well since moving into the Kaleta foster home about a year-and-a-half ago. He adopted a healthy lifestyle — losing 100 pounds and participating in high school sports — and he is skilled at theatre and acting. He hopes to get into Western Oregon University to study fine arts.



Beatrice O., Oregon City Service Learning Academy

When Bea started school at OCSLA in September, she only had 13.5 credits. She worked hard, took credit recovery classes at Clackamas Community College, and graduated with more than the required 26 units.

Bea, who lives in Rita Cosenza’s foster home, was active in the leadership class and became the unofficial class counselor. She was on the honor roll several times, and she received the Student of the Year award from her Oregon MESA class, a pre-college academic program that equips underrepresented students with science, technology, engineering, and math skills. Bea’s MESA team competed in a robotics competition in Portland where they built a working hand.

Bea also was the only student from OCSLA to recently receive an award from the Optimist Club. Next, she plans to attend beauty school.

Elly F., Wineva Johnson Center for Girls GED program



When she came to OYA in November at age 17, Elly had very few academic credits. She struggled with substance abuse and truancy, JPPO Christine Tegner says. But she worked hard at Wineva and was able to earn her GED. She is in recovery,

is working in food service, and plans to attend Chemeketa Community College in the fall.



Left to right: Matthew, foster mom Sandy Cochran, and Sean at graduation.

Matthew L. and Sean B., Yamhill Carlton High School

Matthew and Sean both live in Sandy Cochran’s foster home in Carlton. Before attending Yamhill Carlton High, Matthew was behind in school and not strong academically. But at Yamhill Carlton, he did better than ever in academics, JPPO Deanna Salvo says. Matthew caught up with the rest of his classmates and was able to participate in football, wrestling, and track. He plans to attend Chemeketa Community College in the fall.

Sean had a successful stay at St. Mary’s Home for Boys before moving into Cochran’s foster home and enrolling in Yamhill Carlton. He struggles with vision and hearing issues, but never uses that as an excuse, JPPO Diana Pedregon says. Sean was on the honor roll every term at Yamhill Carlton; participated in football, wrestling, and track; and also plans to attend Chemeketa in the fall.



JPPO Deanna Salvo with Jaccob at graduation.

Jaccob B., McMinnville High School

When Jaccob came to OYA at age 13, he already had a long history of violations, drug and alcohol abuse, and gang involvement, JPPO Deanna Salvo says. In the past two years, he made significant changes. For one, he made it his goal to graduate in his hometown with the classmates he grew up with. “Graduating was a huge accomplishment for Jaccob because there were several times over the last four years that it did not seem possible for him to get a GED, let alone graduate on time with his class with a regular diploma,” Salvo says.

Jaccob committed to himself and his family that he would stop his involvement in gang activity, and he has remained clean and sober with no new law violations. He plans to enter the Marine Corps in the fall and later attend college.

Jaccob says he owes much of his turnaround to the support of his family and his JPPOs. About Salvo, he says, “She sees something in me, even if I don’t want to see it myself. She made me see that guy who cares about people and values his family.”

Blake J., Roberts High School, Salem

Renee Hernandez, a Youth Services Coordinator for OYA’s Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations, says that Blake’s dedication to graduating was impressive. “Blake has demonstrated true dedication and determination to accomplish his goal of completing high school, all while working through his own obstacles in life,” Hernandez says.



Blake, who is living in the Wingett foster home, earned a paid state internship for the summer with the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS). He was chosen from a competitive pool of more than 90 applicants. He will spend time working in each DCBS division alongside mentors, giving him valuable work experience and exposure to working for state government.