

# Reaching for the STARS

STAR Court

Winter 2004/2005



## Marion County STAR Court News

### STAR Court Recognizes Graduates

In December 2004, STAR Court was pleased to hold a graduation ceremony recognizing two participants. Graduation is an exciting celebration during which the honorees shred their juvenile petitions publically. Upon graduation, participants are closed from probation and their juvenile records are dismissed.

Ann (name changed to protect confidentiality) joined the program in May 2003 with a long history of trauma and substance abuse. Her drug of choice was methamphetamine. She participated in outpatient and residential programs to overcome her addiction and graduated STAR Court as a young woman who is employed and reunited with family members.

Adam joined the program in May 2004. His drug of choice was methamphetamine too. He stepped down into STAR Court from an Oregon Youth Authority treatment placement and is the first OYA-STAR Court participant to complete successfully. Adam's hard work began long before he joined STAR Court. He brought a positive attitude and good work ethic into the program, role modeling for others on the way to graduating from high school as well as STAR Court.

STAR Court's next graduation will be in the Spring of 2005.

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"I don't see dysfunctional families," says Barbara Huff, Executive Director of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. "I see families that are over-stressed and under-supported."  
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### Programming Enhances Support

STAR Court took advantage of Local Law Enforcement Block Grant funds to develop a Parent Support Program. Facilitated by Sandii Butler, Parent Support provides the parents of STAR Court participants with a forum to discuss parenting issues, STAR Court issues, and personal issues related to their children's choices and development. The program uses a peer group format to give parents opportunities to vent frustrations, process concerns, and commend one another on their efforts to support their children in recovery, and allows them to learn skills to help manage differently. Butler joined the STAR Court team in September 2004 and meets with the parents weekly.

Soon STAR Court youths will participate in a Wellness Program facilitated by ECHO and Northwest Human Services that includes 12-step meetings and programming to support healthy lifestyles and independent living skills. This exciting strength-based component will increase the wrap-around supports offered by STAR Court and allow for more services to occur in a supportive and structured setting.



## Jurisdictions Confront Addiction

**A**cross Oregon, local courts are developing drug courts to address the myriad of substance abuse and addiction problems that accompany criminality and delinquency. The first drug court in Oregon was the second drug court in the country, started in 1991 by Multnomah Judge Harl Haas. The Multnomah County STOP Court quickly became a model program for drug court development efforts nationwide, including in Lane County, where Judge Daryl Larson began his drug court in 1994. In October, Lane County drug court celebrated their tenth anniversary.

Currently, there are 27 drug courts: 17 adult, eight juvenile, and two family dependency programs operating in Oregon, counting STAR Court and Marion County's Adult Drug Court. And another seven are in planning stages, including in neighboring Benton County.

Although local jurisdictions face different issues, from heroin to alcohol to methamphetamine, courts have determined that the Ten Key Components that define drug courts set a firm foundation for addressing addiction and criminality in a cost effective, solution-focused way.

## Drug Court Conference Kicks off New Year

**O**n January 5 and 6, the Oregon Judicial Department sponsored a state-wide drug court professionals conference in Eugene. This two day event began with a drug court coordinator forum where coordinators from all Oregon drug courts gathered. This forum offered information on maintaining drug court data, building mentor programs, using effective incentives and sanctions, and confronting barriers to success.

The second day training conference brought together practitioners from all sides, including Judges, trial court administrators, district attorneys, defense attorneys, treatment counselors, probation officers, law enforcement, researchers, and

coordinators. A nationally recognized speaker provided information on federal confidentiality guidelines - specifically, how to create appropriate consent forms to manage 42CFR and HIPAA regulations. Also, Portland's NPC Research presented very positive information on recent drug court outcome evaluations, and the group worked with court administrators on devising strategic planning initiatives for the future of Oregon drug courts.

## Strength-Based

**A**s Methamphetamine continues to wreak destruction on young people throughout Marion County, STAR Court continues to build on the concepts of a Strength-Based approach to engage participants. Ongoing research suggests that strength-based programming is successful in helping young people reverse the course of delinquent and addictive behavior.

According to Laura Burney Nissen, Director of Reclaiming Futures, the strength-based philosophy emphasizes "solution-focused interviewing, goal setting, and assisting youth in identifying and mobilizing strengths that may be useful in their own therapeutic process." She continues, "the strengths approach specifically seeks to use targeted counseling and intervention techniques to not only identify, but build, reinforce, and mobilize those qualities, attributes, and aspirations that have the greatest potential to contribute to positive outcomes with the express goals of building resiliency through a therapeutic and solution focused, rather than [strictly] prevention-oriented, process."

One cornerstone of a strength-based approach is the mobilization and coordination of multiple community resources. With juvenile methamphetamine abuse as the catalyst, a number of resources work together within the STAR Court structure to activate strengths in youths who are regarded as "high risk." STAR Court is



positioning itself to become a barrier between youths on probation and upper-level residential and institutional programs, even in the case of co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.

## Three is a Magic Number

In an effort to increase the number of youth and families participating in STAR Court, the program has set a target for referrals. STAR Court will enroll a minimum of three new participants per month. To do this, [we need your help](#). If you know of a youth who is struggling with substance abuse and getting into legal trouble, contact STAR Court to make a referral.

To participate in STAR Court, a youth must be on probation with the Marion County Juvenile Department. If the Juvenile Court has not yet established jurisdiction, the youth must admit to the charged allegations and be placed on probation. Specific drug charges are not required; any non-person felony charges and a drug problem will do.

Referrals can come from probation officers, defense attorneys, and treatment counselors. Potential participants are offered an opportunity to observe STAR Court prior to making an initial commitment, and are offered a 30-day trial period before committing to the year-long treatment program.



## Research Shows Brain Erosion

On December 10, 2004, The Oregonian newspaper published a story describing new research that highlights specific damage methamphetamine does to the brain. Although research on meth is still in early stages, recent findings demonstrate how meth damages neurotransmitters, literally “chopping off” brain tissue. Meth addicts look more like victims of traumatic brain injury than people who need traditional therapy.

Meth increases brain levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which causes pleasure and increases energy. Then the chemicals in meth sever dopamine terminals entirely - the brain no longer produces dopamine and thus no longer signals pleasure. Without ongoing meth use, the user feels clinically depressed and in some cases experiences psychosis. Only after significant clean time does the brain begin to rewire itself, sometimes in effective ways, but also sometimes leading to permanent psychological problems. And antidepressant medication has proven ineffective unless the user was depressed prior to the meth-induced brain damage.

Currently, prolonged abstinence and wrap-around treatment offer the best opportunity for recovery.

We're on the web at:

<http://www.ojd.state.or.us/mar/drugcourt/juvenile.htm>

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*If you treat an individual as she is, she will stay as she is.*

*BUT,*

*if you treat her as if she were what she ought to be and could be,  
she will become what she ought to be and could be.*

~ Goethe

