



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT WITH OUR CHILD WELFARE WORKERS

There's no doubt in our minds that one of the hardest jobs in our country is the work performed by the good people at Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and Child Welfare at the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. But don't just take our word for it. At our Annual Cheers to the Year Event, which took place in March, these staff members served on a panel, a chance for them to pull back the curtain on their experiences, sharing what is hard and heartfelt. The audience heard them, some people for the first time ever, as this panel of powerful voices truly helped humanize their collective efforts, struggles and successes.



No question, being heard and supported also helped validate the challenges and rewards of their jobs. And so did recent praise, collected through a "rock star" survey that, among other things, asked 180 workers at ODHS and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to share positive words about fellow staff members. The simple but vital praise pumped up staff, which finds regular motivators like this do lift their spirits and fuel their sense of purpose. Here's what else keeps them and our child welfare partners in Warm Springs striving and smiling:

- Team-building events throughout the region we serve: Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson Counties, plus the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Think: ax throwing at Unofficial Logging Co., '90s glow party skate night in Prineville, It's Just Paint Sip n Paint Night, yoga at Namaspaspa, and night out events by Dustin Riley Events at High Desert Music Hall. Staff love these so much that they drive the distance to attend events in the different counties. The connection and camaraderie are crazy important.
- Finished and stocked resource closets, which store diapers, wipes, car seats and clothing bundles that are given to youth/families in need. Speaking of which, we need donations for all four! Discover how easy it is to give your dollars or goods right here: <https://everychildoregon.org/centraloregon/give/>.
- Hospitality...fun things like Crumbl Cookie deliveries to every ODHS office for that much-needed afternoon pick-me-up. And "helpful" is an understatement when you've been on call and up all night for 24 hours. Cookies, coffee and kudos make the difference! Want to help with an act of hospitality? Contact us to make an impact: <https://everychildoregon.org/centraloregon/connect/>.

Our Mission:

Mobilizing community around families and youth impacted by foster care.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NANCY RUSSELL, CPS CASE WORKER

At Child Protective Services (CPS), Case Worker Nancy Russell starts her workdays with a “quiet hour,” typing up her term-paper-sized client reports and prepping her days for success. Because as Nancy says, “You never know what your day is going to be.”

But that’s a big part of what she loves about her work with the clients CPS serves. A typical day really varies but often involves meeting with and/or interviewing youth, their families, or other key case contacts. The monthly goal: 20 cases a month, typically 10 new ones along with 10 open cases, each running about 60 days.

“It can be very emotional,” says Nancy, who with a background in psychology, community health, and working closely with the unsheltered and people experiencing substance use disorder, has been in social work for 20 years.

“We’re not meeting parents and families on their best days, and there’s a power differential because they know we are coming and could possibly take away their kids. That’s really hard, although their fear and anger is really pointed toward the agency, not case workers personally,” she says.

Helping with that hardness, Every Child Central Oregon brings much appreciated support to Nancy and her CPS co-workers, bringing in pick-me-up goodies, plus sourcing essential items for CPS clients and even holiday gifts for kids who might otherwise go without. Nancy says these acts of kindness are more than just gestures.

“Honestly,” she says, “the best way I can describe what they’re doing is it’s like magic. When we need or want something, it appears.”

For Nancy, the work is tough but can also be incredibly rewarding, such as when she sees parents take self-improvement steps to better themselves and the home so their children can either stay or be returned. Even for the hardest cases, like those involving substance use disorder, happy endings do exist.

“They’re my favorite clients to work with,” Nancy says. “They aren’t bad people. They’re just making these choices. I really want them to be the best they can be and let them know I can help.”



Nancy Russell, CPS Case Worker (far right), pictured with her daughter and favorite mouse!



RESOURCE CLOSET NEEDS

LOCATED AT FIVE CHILD WELFARE OFFICES, THE CLOSETS PROVIDE MORE THAN VITAL GOODS FOR NEW FOSTER FAMILIES.

These items help reduce the stress of foster care transition. New families—sometimes called to foster in the middle of the night— can get what they need from these organized, stocked shelves versus feel the need to rush out and buy such essentials. Youth receive comfy, clean new clothes, making them feel cared for and secure.



Our volunteer liaisons make sure the closets are filled with goods, identifying when resources run low in any of the resource closet locations: Bend, Redmond, Madras, Prineville and Warm Springs.

Donate today! everychildoregon.org/centraloregon/give/

FOUR EASY WAYS TO GIVE

\$20

avg. cost of diaper wipes

\$30

avg. cost of diapers

\$50

avg. cost of clothing bundle

\$125

avg. cost of car seat

REVVIN' UP RECRUITMENT

A MULTIFACETED APPROACH IS WHAT MAKES FOSTERING WORK.

Throughout the rest of the year, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) will be revving up foster recruitment efforts, hosting info tables with staff from Oregon Department of Human Services at various community events. According to Melissa Williams, ECCO's executive director, the need for foster homes remains very real. New homes have opened doors to fostering this year, however, the same number of homes have also closed, which means placement demand remains very high.

"The challenge of recruiting people to foster is always there, particularly with teenagers, and that's why we work so hard to educate people whenever opportunities surface," says Williams. "It takes a very special kind of commitment, however, the rewards are incredible. What's more, they do not have to do it alone. People are always surprised to learn how we really wrap around these families and give them support in a number of ways, so they know they are lifted and cared for throughout the fostering experience. "



For example, some of the very real supports ECCO provides include the MyNeighbOR program, though which people can donate money or tangible goods to people in their immediate area and who have specifically requested for certain needs and items for the youth they foster, everything from diapers to sports fees and music lessons.



Another mobilization program is The Neighborhood, which supports foster families by engaging volunteers who, for a six-month period, provide assistance—specifically, two meals a month plus one act of kindness—through a small-group, high-impact model of community. Volunteers can be people simply wanting to help or a small group from a business, place of faith, or nonprofit.



In addition, ECCO coordinates with volunteers throughout the region to provide Foster Parents' Nights Out (pictured here), which give guardians an evening (or sometimes a day) of free, quality childcare, seven times a year from October thru May.

"These events, along with Foster Appreciation effort and Flash Boxes of goods and treats for youth experiencing foster care send the message to our families that they are cared for and truly matter," Williams says. "And there's no question that they do!"

ECCO OUT AND ABOUT: FUNDRAISERS, FUN AND FULFILLMENT



Please Join Us for One or More... BINGO FUNDRAISING PARTIES!!!

Play bingo, help ECCO raise funds to support the MyNeighbOR program!
 Upcoming Bingo Parties: Fridays, 6:30-9 p.m. on Aug. 18, Oct. 14 & Dec. 8
 High Desert Music Hall, Hosted by Dustin Riley Events
 Buy tickets and consider giving more, visiting the
 2023 My NeighbOR Capital Campaign webpage:
<https://everychildoregon.org/centraloregon/give/2023-campaign/>



\$60,000

2023 FUNDRAISING GOAL

\$18,333

CURRENT FUNDS RAISED

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Online Version Available at:

<https://everychildoregon.org/centraloregon/stories/2023-ecco-newsletter/>

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