

Community Partnerships for Adult Learning

Partnership Profiles



The Donald H. Londer Center and its partners in Portland, Oregon

The Donald H. Londer Center for Learning, an adult education program housed within the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ), is designed to help prepare offenders on probation or parole or involved in treatment programs for successful reintegration into their communities through education, access to employment resources, coordination with other DCJ services, and partnerships with a variety of agencies.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PORTLAND ...

- **Offices within the Department of Community Justice**, which supervises 11,000 adults on parole or probation, work with the Londer Center to coordinate services to offenders under community supervision.
- **Community treatment programs** provide drug and alcohol treatment services to Londer Center clients, and Londer provides instructional services to the programs.
- **The One-Stop Centers** provide employment related services to offenders, and the Londer Center trains the One-Stop staff to work with offenders.

AND WHY THEY WORK ...

- **Partners have a clear common mission.** Their goal is to ensure that offenders successfully reintegrate into society, thus reducing further criminal behavior (recidivism) and increasing community safety.
- **Partners share an understanding that offenders have complex needs that cannot be addressed by one agency alone.** Partners coordinate to see that these needs are met.
- **Partners keep informed about all the services available.** DCJ and partner agencies participate in training, site visits, and orientations that build awareness of each other's services.
- **Partners share information about clients' needs, so that services can be deployed effectively.** They have found that such collaboration enables them to develop a more realistic picture of how to help clients succeed.

INTRODUCTION

Rita is an offender on parole. Like many offenders, she struggles with drug addiction, is a high school dropout, and lacks confidence in her ability to handle day-to-day challenges. Her outlook has changed, however, since she enrolled at the Donald H. Londer Center for Learning: “It [the Londer Center] makes me want to learn. It changed my whole way of thinking. I’d been on drugs so long, I didn’t think I could do it. Since I started coming here, I want to come more and more.” She is currently working on her reading skills, but also wants to learn how to work with computers because, as she points out, “My grandkids know how, but I don’t.” She also hopes to improve her job prospects. She explains, “I’m working at McDonalds now and just want to try to find a better job, but you need an education to do that.”

The Londer Center has many learners like Rita. Its mission is to help these adults “develop the cognitive, communication, and functional literacy skills needed to make responsible decisions, build and sustain positive relationships, achieve goals, and realize their potential at work, with their families, and in the community.” Cindy Stadel, the Londer Center’s program administrator, recognizes that the Center cannot achieve this mission alone. She cites the myriad personal obstacles offenders typically face when re-entering society, such as drug/alcohol addiction, medical problems, unemployment, debt, and lack of housing, work skills, and education.

For that reason, the Londer Center staff work closely with other Department of Community Justice (DCJ) programs that are part of a comprehensive, carefully developed system that strikes a balance among sanctions, supervision, and service. The Londer Center augments the services it and other DCJ programs provide by forming partnerships with community organizations, such as drug treatment providers and One-Stop Centers, to ensure that the diverse needs of these adult learners are addressed.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. jail and prison systems house society’s most educationally and socially disadvantaged adults.¹ Compared to the general population, the inmate population is more likely to include high school dropouts, adults with learning disabilities, and adults with low literacy skills.² Inmates in Oregon are no different. Seventy-nine percent lack a high school diploma, and 32 percent read at or below the ninth-grade level. Almost 90 percent function at the lowest levels in math skills. Many offenders also struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, as well as cognitive skills deficiencies.

Although federal and state funding supports correctional education, many offenders still re-enter their community without the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and in society. Faced with few employment options and other personal challenges, the majority of offenders return to a life of crime. The statistics are startling; nearly two-thirds of federal and state inmates released on parole are



¹Jails and prisons are part of a larger corrections system that includes probation and parole. Offenders who are awaiting trial or serving sentences of a year or less are typically housed in jails. Those who are serving longer sentences are housed in prisons. Offenders are placed on probation when a judge determines that the offender would benefit from being supervised outside of prison by corrections staff, rather than being sentenced to a correctional facility. Parole can be mandatory after inmates have served a predetermined amount of their sentence or can be awarded by state-appointed parole boards to inmates who behave well in prison and who are believed to pose a low public-safety risk.

²J. Travis, A. Solomon, and M. Waul. “From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry.” Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, June 2001.

rearrested within three years of leaving prison and almost half are re-incarcerated.³ Studies suggest, however, that education programs can provide inmates with the skills they need to succeed and reduce the probability that they will commit future crimes.⁴ Two DCJ studies have confirmed that the Londer Center's educational program has had an impact on reducing recidivism and/or helping offenders adjust to positive community roles.⁵ The most recent study examined the arrest patterns of 343 offenders who participated in courses at the Londer Center between June 1995 and February 2001, comparing their arrest rate for the two years

"Londer is the best thing that ever happened to clients in the criminal justice system."

Matt Svymbersky
Clinical Supervisor
Men's Residential Treatment
Program, Volunteers of
America.

before and the two years after they enrolled at Londer. The study found that their arrest rate declined by 58 percent during the two years after they attended the Londer Center. While this decline in arrests cannot be solely attributed to the Londer Center, there is little doubt that the Londer experience had a positive effect on the offenders.

The Londer Center, therefore, plays a critical role within DCJ in its work

with offenders on community supervision (parole or probation). It is part of a DCJ initiative, "What Works," based on principles and practices identified as effective by a Congressionally mandated evaluation

³Beck. "State and Federal Prisoners Returning to the Community: Findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics." Paper presented at the First Reentry Courts Initiative Cluster Meeting, Washington, DC, April 13, 2000. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/sfprc.pdf>.

⁴S. Steurer, L. Smith, and A. Tracy. "Three State Recidivism Study." Prepared for the Office of Correctional Education, U.S. Department of Education. Lanham, MD: Correctional Education Association, September 30, 2001. <http://www.ceanational.org/documents/3StateFinal.pdf>.

⁵Finnigan, M. "Outcome Evaluation Report: Multnomah County Corrections Literacy Program for Adult Offenders." Multnomah County, OR: Department of Community Justice, 1994. Rhyne, C. "Londer Learning Center participant descriptions and re-arrest rates." Multnomah County, OR: Department of Community Justice, 2001.

of state and local crime prevention programs. For more information on the implementation of "What Works" in Multnomah County, see <http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dcj/acjwhatworks.shtml>.

Portland Community College (PCC) provides adult education services to the community, but the Londer Center focuses solely on adults with criminal histories. For that reason, it is better equipped to handle the complex needs of offenders on parole or probation, who typically do not succeed in a traditional community college setting. Of the nearly 600 offenders served at the Londer Center during fiscal year 2003, more than half (56 percent) read at or below an eighth-grade level and 70 percent were assessed to be at a medium or high risk for continuing criminal activity.

"We understand the population," says Joanne Fuller, the director of DCJ. "Mainstream programs can be a recipe for failure. People with criminal histories are generally not accepted socially and in education. There is often no system for accommodating developmental disabilities or learning disabilities." DCJ has found that the best way to meet the needs of this population is through the tailored educational program at the Londer Center, which offers such crucial support as extended hours, a welcoming environment, cognitive restructuring courses, and a basic understanding of developmental and learning disabilities. As Carl Goodman, a DCJ program administrator, noted, "The Londer Center has brought compassion to DCJ and corrections."



Probation and parole officers (POs), as well as drug treatment counselors, see the educational services available at the Londer Center as an important component of offenders' transition plans — a resource for helping them successfully reintegrate into the community. They have found that Londer Center helps improve their clients' communication skills and confidence. According to counselor Edie Wooldridge, "Some clients say, 'I can't do this [participate in a counseling group] because I can't read and write.' So we hook them up with Londer and realize this guy can read and write. He's doing it at a third-grade level, but he has the basics. He was just always told that he can't." She adds, "These people experience stigma in all areas. They're told they can't change, that they're stupid, that they're dangerous. The GED removes the stigma."

Fleming McCarville, a PO who works primarily in the Domestic Violence Unit, agrees: "The GED can be a resource that gets people over the first hump." Even filling out a job application can be very intimidating to those with low literacy skills. The Londer Center helps them learn to read and write so they can improve their employment opportunities and, in turn, their lives.

Opening Doors for Offenders

Retired parole officer Kelly Carrol told of a female offender who found her way, by word of mouth, to the Londer Center. Carrol discovered that she had fled from the California correctional system. She had been progressing well at Londer, so when he contacted officials in California, he convinced them to let DCJ staff work with her in Portland. The client graduated from the Londer Center and earned scholarships, first at Mt. Hood Community College and then at Portland State University. She was an honors student at both institutions and eventually ran a transitional program for offenders. Carrol says, "People get a GED and start to think, 'Guess I'm not as stupid as I thought I was.'"

THE LONDER CENTER AND ITS PARTNERS

Since it was established in 1993, the Londer Center has expanded its reach and impact. It has strengthened its relationships with other DCJ programs and staff and established partnerships with a number of community organizations. For example, the Londer Center has a unique relationship with Portland Community College. Although PCC is one of the area's main providers of adult basic education and English literacy instruction, the Londer Center and PCC have agreed not to compete over limited adult education funds. Rather, offenders with higher literacy skills and lower risk to the community are generally steered to PCC; those with lower literacy skills or a higher risk of re-offending are sent to Londer.

The Londer Center also contracts with PCC to provide instructional support technician positions. To help Londer's students make the transition to further education, PCC pays for one semester of college for any offender who graduates from Londer. In addition, the two organizations have recently collaborated on a grant proposal aimed at reducing recidivism among young serious offenders (The *Going Home* Initiative is described on page 10).

The Londer Center has joined with the Multnomah County Library to encourage its adult learners to use the local library for additional resources and to participate in *Everybody Reads* (<http://www.multcolib.org/reads/>), a community-wide book discussion. Last year was the first time the Londer Center, its students and their families, POs, and other DCJ staff participated in the event, but Londer staff hope to continue its involvement. One



PO reported that participation in this event marked the first time that some of her clients had ever read a book. The Londer Center also has joined with the library and Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Ready to Learn" initiative (<http://www.opb.org/edmedia/rtl/>) to provide parent and child literacy workshops for its clients.

Some of the Londer Center's community partnerships are small, such as its partnership with Write Around Portland (WRAP), a nonprofit organization that deploys volunteers to offer creative writing workshops to low-income and isolated members of the Portland community. By invitation, WRAP volunteers have conducted several workshops at the Londer Center. More information about WRAP is available at <http://www.writearound.org>. Other Londer Center partnerships are more extensive, such as those with community drug treatment providers and the local One-Stop Centers. Those partnerships, as well as those that the Londer Center has with other DCJ programs, are described below.

Partnerships within the Department of Community Justice

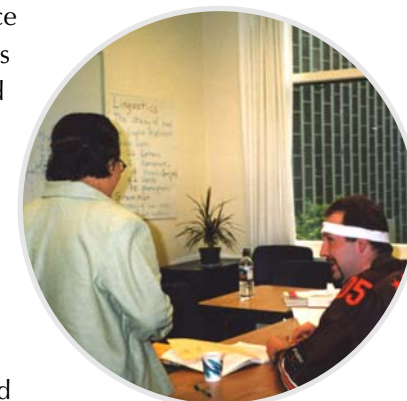
The Londer Center is only one program in a system of services set up by DCJ to ensure that offenders out of jail or in drug or alcohol treatment can successfully rejoin society. These services are more effective when they are coordinated. The Londer Center, for example, has found that adult learners' abilities to maintain their focus and to work are improved when their needs for housing, food, and counseling or substance abuse treatment are being addressed. The success of the Londer Center, therefore, is contingent upon other DCJ services falling into place when an offender is released from incarceration.

Six months before inmates are released, staff with DCJ's Transitional Services Unit (TSU) develop a transition and release plan for inmates and help them find long-term housing and apply for Social Security or disability benefits, if they are eligible. Once inmates are released into community

supervision, the TSU assesses their needs in light of their criminal history and risk of recidivism. Based on this assessment, the TSU can immediately refer offenders to various DCJ and community services—such as the Londer Center, counseling, social service agencies, and assistance with housing, clothing, meals, and transportation—rather than wait for parole officers, who have heavy caseloads, to do the referrals. DCJ has found that the abscond rate (the rate at which offenders flee community supervision before completing their sentence) declines substantially when they are provided with such services immediately upon release.

Parole and probation officers are also responsible for making and tracking referrals to services using an electronic database. To improve this process, DCJ has instituted a "Duty Officer Pager" that gives POs a direct link to any DCJ program. By contacting programs directly, POs can reduce the time between detecting a need and connecting an offender with the appropriate service.

To ensure that staff know how to make referrals to the various services available to offenders, DCJ provides extensive professional development. Staff at the Londer Center, along with all other DCJ staff, are trained by the same office within DCJ. New staff receive 40 hours of orientation to help them understand DCJ and its various programs and services. The professional development activities also give employees a chance to network and learn from one another or, as DCJ's training coordinator calls it, "to cross-pollinate." In one recent department-wide effort, Londer Center instructors helped develop the curriculum and facilitate the



training of other DCJ staff in “motivational interviewing,” techniques designed to help staff overcome offenders’ resistance to change.

Partnerships with Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs

Cindy Stadel reports that most offenders at the Londer Center say they began using drugs and alcohol at an early age and eventually developed an addiction. She says that many also sustained head injuries from drunk driving and assaults, and most have underdeveloped literacy and social skills. Because offenders often continue to struggle with alcohol and drug dependency when released from jail or prison, Stadel and her staff have cultivated relationships with a variety of treatment organizations. Literacy and treatment staff have worked together to establish joint referral processes, coordinate schedules, and share professional development. They attend each other’s staff meetings, and treatment center counselors have an open invitation to attend Londer’s GED graduation ceremonies.

Londer staff feel that working with the treatment agencies creates a more holistic approach to helping clients reach their goals. For example, treatment center counselors can inform Londer instructors if they notice that a student needs to work on a specific area. In turn, instructors can call counselors if a student does not come to class or if they are having a problem with a particular student.

Treatment counselors also see the benefits of partnerships. For example, the Londer Center works with the Women’s Residential Program, a drug treatment program run by Volunteers of America (VOA). According to program director Felicia Otis, 80 percent of her clients have less than a tenth-grade education, and 65 percent have less than an eighth-grade education. Before working with Londer, VOA had to rely on volunteers for literacy instruction. They found that, though dedicated, volunteers generally did not have the skills needed to help clients reach their educational

goals. Additionally, volunteer instructors tended to focus on preparation for the GED test, and few resources were available for those at lower levels of literacy.

As a result of the collaboration with the Londer Center, the women in VOA’s program are now formally assessed and there is a more formal fit between their needs and instruction. Otis says, “Some clients have left because the fear of writing and reading was so daunting. The biggest thing is to get help, not only from the Londer Center, but from each other. The Londer Center has become an integral part of how we provide services for clients. I don’t know that we would get the same results the old way [with volunteers].”

Partnerships with One-Stop Centers

Like education, employment is a major issue for many offenders; finding a job that offers a stable, living wage is a tremendous challenge. Based on research that underscores the importance of offenders finding such jobs and because it considers educational attainment vital to offenders’ obtaining employment, DCJ has used the Londer Center as a vehicle for including employment services in its community supervision program since 1995.

In collaboration with Worksystems, Inc. (the local Workforce Investment Board), the Londer Center has worked to link Portland’s five parole/probation offices to its four One-Stop Centers. The goal of the partnership is for One-Stop staff to share information with parole and probation officers about employment services and for POs to share information with One-Stop staff about DCJ, resources available to offenders, and the specific challenges offenders face. The Londer Center also organized training for the One-Stop staff about the general conditions of offender supervision, office safety, the concepts behind cognitive restructuring, and the types of barriers faced by those with a criminal history when seeking employment.

The partnerships between the One-Stop Centers and parole/probation offices were formalized with a memorandum of understanding. A web-based referral process was developed so that offenders could be referred to any One-Stop, and an official partnership liaison was identified in each office. A summary of general partnership policies and procedures was created and distributed to staff in both systems. This document includes information on the principles underlying the partnerships, a summary of steps taken to support staff involvement and partnership success, a description of the roles of the liaison and the joint referral system, and a discussion of client confidentiality.



Carole Scholl
with student

Costs associated with establishing these partnerships were shared between the Londer Center and Worksystems, Inc. It is important to note, however, that Londer has not contracted with the One-Stop Centers to provide employment services to offenders. Instead, they have worked to build the capacity of the One-Stop Center staff to serve those with criminal histories. One capacity-building technique Londer has used is a specialized job search curriculum, *Jobs Now*. Carole Scholl, the Center's lead instructor, devel-

oped the curriculum with significant help from Worksystems, Inc., the Oregon Employment Department, and the area's One-Stop Center staff. The *Jobs Now* curriculum focuses on overcoming employment barriers faced by offenders, such as explaining to a prospective employer why they have not worked in recent years.

The curriculum, which uses cognitive behavioral change and motivational interviewing techniques to help offenders solve employment difficulties, consists of four modules that address overcoming barriers, job applications, job interviews, and resources. Over the course of the curriculum, offenders identify why it might be hard for them to find employment and

articulate their concerns about looking for work. They also define their employment goals, set a timeline for meeting them, and develop some strategies for dealing with obstacles. They prepare for completing job applications and for interviews, including how to answer the difficult questions about their past. The resources module provides information about a variety of services and resources in the community.

The curriculum was intended for classroom use, but the Londer Center staff also are using it to inform One-Stop employment specialists of the special circumstances these clients face when looking for work. DCJ and Worksystems, Inc. jointly hold the copyright for *Jobs Now*. To view this curriculum, contained in the *Jobs Now Participant Workbook*, return to the Oregon Partnership Profile Summary (<http://www.c-pal.net/profiles/oregon.html>).

Before the Londer Center developed strong partnerships with the One-Stop Centers, POs were not always correctly informed about the resources available at the One-Stop Centers, and employment specialists at the One-Stop Centers did not know how to serve offenders. As a result, offenders would arrive at One-Stop Centers with unrealistic expectations and find little to meet their specific needs. Because of the joint activities undertaken through these partnerships, POs are now better informed about resources for offenders available through the One-Stop Centers, and

Ensuring Commitment

To solidify partnership support from staff in both the One-Stop and Community Justice systems, planners took several steps to encourage partnerships at the field level. For example, training, orientations, and site tours were made available to staff in both systems, enabling them to make more informed decisions when referring a client or managing a case. This also enabled field staff to develop the personal relationships seen by some as critical to the partnership's success. As one program manager put it, "You have to let go of the formal structure and let relationships do it."

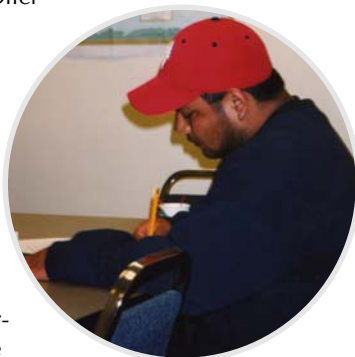
the employment specialists at the One-Stop Centers are better prepared to serve clients with criminal histories.

The work of Yvette Allen, an employment specialist based in southeast Portland, illustrates the partnership's impact. Her area has such a high concentration of people with criminal histories that it is known as "Felony Flats." Before her organization began collaborating with the Londer Center, she had seen a lot of offenders, but she didn't know how to help them. Through the training provided by this partnership, she has developed expertise in assisting those with criminal histories. She has completed training to become an offender workforce development specialist and is now part of a team that provides reach-in services, employment services that are brought to correctional facilities.

To Tell the Truth?

When filling out a job application, what should someone with a criminal history do when he or she comes to questions about criminal convictions? Lie? Ignore the question? Offer to discuss it at a later date? Be truthful?

One-Stop Centers in Multnomah County surveyed local businesses to see how employers would want job applicants to handle their criminal history on an application. Employers responded that applicants should be candid about having a criminal record. They further suggested that offenders attach an addendum to their applications that very briefly explains the circumstances of their conviction and steps the applicant has taken to address the issues that led to it. They added that both explanations should heavily emphasize personal responsibility. One-Stop staff have found that clients often need help in developing this addendum, because many do not have the literacy skills necessary to create it by themselves.



Other Partnerships

Inverness Jail

Based on the success of the One-Stop partnerships, the Londer Center began looking for a partner open to the idea of creating a similar program inside a correctional institution. The idea was to help prepare inmates to be job-ready by the time they are released, rather than waiting until after their release to start developing the critical literacy, behavioral, and job skills necessary for sustained employment. They found a receptive audience at Inverness Jail.



Inverness Jail is a medium-security facility in northeast Portland that generally houses men and women awaiting trial or serving a sentence of less than one year.

Inverness was founded on the idea that a combination of supervision, programs, and support services can prepare inmates for successful reintegration into the community. In support of this concept, the Londer Center and other DCJ staff have collaborated with Worksystems, Inc. to develop a One-Stop Resource Center in the jail.

At the Resource Center, a jobs lab is open for individual work-search projects, and inmates can use specialized software to develop a résumé. They can also view state employment listings via a kiosk provided by the Oregon Employment Department, check listings of local union shops and apprenticeship programs, and obtain information about One-Stop services available to them upon release. More intensive support is available through employment workshops. The *Jobs Now* curriculum developed by

Londer and its partners is offered by Inverness and One-Stop staff and serves as a framework for the workshop.

The National Institute of Correction's (NIC) curriculum, *Thinking for a Change* (<http://www.nicic.org/resources/topics/ThinkingForAChange.aspx>) also is offered, as are courses on domestic violence, anger management, parenting, drug and alcohol addiction, and other topics. Literacy services include computer-based instruction in adult basic education, GED preparation, and English language. Mt. Hood Community College provides on-site tutors, and inmates who need further literacy instruction upon release are referred to the Londer Center. To ensure a smooth transition, Inverness and the Londer Center use similar adult literacy curricula and have developed a referral process so that inmates know they can get help at the Londer Center once they are released.

The Going Home Initiative

Hoping to build on what has been learned at Inverness, the Londer Center, Worksystems, Inc., and Portland Community College's Workforce Network have been working to develop a reach-in employment transition program within the Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI.). The effort is part of Oregon's *Going Home Initiative*, a federally funded re-entry program focusing on gang-affiliated inmates with a high risk of recidivism (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/>). The initiative, coordinated by Oregon's Department of Corrections (DOC), draws together DOC and DCJ inmate transition efforts, enriching them with program resources provided by community-based workforce development, education, and social service organizations.

Inmates moving out of state prisons generally have served much longer sentences than those at county jails such as Inverness; this extended time provides more opportunity for program interventions aimed at reducing criminal risk factors. During the first phase of the initiative, gang-affiliated

inmates will be assessed for criminal risk factors and given access to education and life skills programs, drug and alcohol treatment, and work assignments. Six months before their release, offenders will be transferred to a "transition facility," such as CRCI, where a carefully staged series of re-entry programs (Phase Two) occurs, including a street survival life skills program, cognitive behavioral change groups, and employment preparation. A multidisciplinary team, including staff from DOC, DCJ, and community-based organizations, will meet to develop a transition plan with each offender.

Putting Experience to Work for Others

One of the career placement specialists with the *Going Home Initiative* is John Frazier, an offender who cycled in and out of prison for nearly 20 years. When asked what made him finally decide to leave his criminal life behind, he responded, "People who believed in me, despite the mistakes I have made," including his parole officer and his pastor. He also credits programs offered by DCJ, such as cognitive skills classes, parenting classes, drug treatment, and a program for African American males that cultivates a relationship between inmates and their parole officers prior to release. He became a career placement specialist because he feels he has the responsibility to share what he has learned with people just like him: "I want to tell them that crime doesn't pay." He also wants to encourage them to get engaged in life and build the skills they need for employment. As he pointed out, "Just because you are locked up, doesn't mean you have to be locked down."



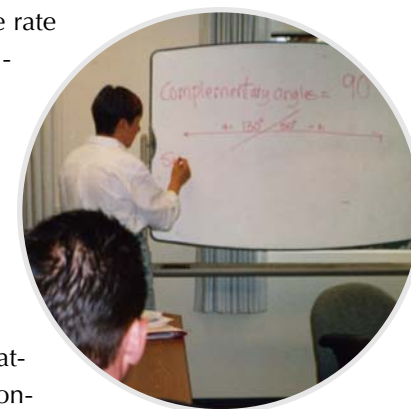
Upon release (Phase Three), offenders will report not only to their POs at DCJ's Gang Unit for community supervision, but also will participate in a transition support group and continue job search efforts at the One-Stop Center with the career placement specialists they worked with inside the institution. After release from CRCI, offenders can find post-GED services at Portland Community College or pre-GED services at the Londer Center.

CONCLUSION

Statistics show that the odds of offenders successfully reintegrating into society are significantly increased when support services such as education, drug treatment, employment counseling, and help with housing and mental health issues are available. Because of the Londer Center, other DCJ programs, and their community partners, offenders in Multnomah County have access to such services. The role the Londer Center plays in the system has not gone unnoticed. In fact, despite a serious budget crisis in Oregon, DCJ has made every effort to keep the Londer Center open. As Michael Haines, one of DCJ's district managers, explains, "Corrections is a three-legged stool—supervision, services, and sanctions. No one tool works in isolation."

The challenge for DCJ, then, is to keep cuts proportional and to identify the threshold at which further cuts would incapacitate one of the three legs. While partnerships are one option for maximizing resources, partner staff report that funding problems can hamper efforts to collaborate with other agencies and organizations. It takes time to develop relationships, figure out how all the pieces fit together, and establish systems for referrals and sharing information. Constraints on resources can make these tasks difficult because so much time is spent trying to manage day-to-day issues. Although it is a challenge to find the time and funds for partnerships, staff within DCJ and partner organizations emphasize the impor-

tance of working together to lower the rate of recidivism. They also credit the willingness of dedicated staff to navigate the obstacles posed by tight budgets or other issues. As one program manager says, "We're not going to put our hands together and say we can't serve you."



This level of commitment is demonstrated by partner staff at all levels; they continue their hard work because they believe in what they are doing. As one Londer instructor put it, "I enjoy working with this population because it is rewarding to feel like I am actually helping people change their lives." Londer administrator Stadel sums up the Center's approach with a quote from one of its founders, lawyer John Ryan, "There's no limit to what you can get done if you don't care who gets credit."

PERSPECTIVE
by Karla J.

Sometimes
I wonder how it all began,
somewhere in my past,
I veered off
the right path
not knowing where
it would end.

Throughout these years full of misery
and grief,
I reflect on happy memories
that seem only too brief

And yet,
I still keep seeking a new way of life
that I can fulfill
without any more strife.

Although this new path is unfamiliar
and seems long
in the end I believe
it's where I belong.

Sometimes you have to get off the beaten path
to get your perspective back.

Student writing sample

DO PEOPLE LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES?

Do people learn from their mistakes? In my opinion, they do eventually, but before that, they often stay in bad relationships, return to jail, and return to alcohol and drug abuse.

First of all, I am a twenty-two year old female who has had her share of bad relationships. I was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused by significant others, but because I was tired of hurting all the time, I got help.

Secondly, I have been in and out of jail since I was eighteen for not complying with stipulations of my probation. I am tired of being locked up with no freedom. So, now I comply; I am trying everything to stay out of jails.

Lastly, I have had a long history of alcohol and drug abuse to numb my pain. Since I went through Treatment and got help, I no longer need to numb my pain with mood altering substances. Today, I feel better about myself.

In sum, eventually, I learned from my mistakes, but it took me a long time.

Sarah H.
5/2/03

Student writing sample