



THE OREGON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Southern Oregon Regional Action Initiative Youth Mentoring for Educational Success

YOUTH MENTORING FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

The Southern Oregon Regional Action Initiative Committee wishes to collaborate with community organizations in Southern Oregon's Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Lake Counties to support child and youth educational success through connecting young people with caring adult mentors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Oregon Community Foundation launched the three-year Regional Action Initiative (RAI) in 2008 to engage Oregonians in a new level of civic leadership to increase Oregon's quality of life and improve communities in a significant and lasting way. OCF is contributing a one-time, special allocation of \$1 million to each of OCF's seven service regions, including Southern Oregon, to implement the RAI. The Southern Oregon region includes Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake Counties.

Volunteers from the OCF Southern Oregon Leadership Council and the community comprise the RAI committee. After reviewing existing research, gathering information through a series of 19 focus groups, and holding community forums; the group has crafted this Youth Mentoring for Educational Success Initiative. The Southern Oregon RAI Committee is committed to improving student achievement and community engagement to support child and youth educational success throughout the region.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

All children need support and guidance from caring adults as they grow and develop. This can take the form of ongoing, secure relationships with parents and family members; as well as formal and informal relationships with other adults in school and community environments. Studies have shown that a strong connection between a caring adult and a young person can protect that youth from problem behaviors such as alcohol abuse, drug use, sexual activity, and violence. These relationships also promote positive attitudes and behaviors which help young people complete school and achieve in life. One-third of teens and 20% of younger children indicate that they lack quality relationships with their parents and only 8% of young people ages 6-17 have a formal mentor. Please refer to the following websites for more information about mentoring:

Oregon Mentors www.oregonmentors.org

MENTOR www.mentoring.org

INITIATIVE DESIGN

The Southern Oregon RAI Committee has designed the following three-pronged approach for the Youth Mentoring for Educational Success Initiative:

1. Support effective mentoring programs, based on proven models. More youth need to be connected with caring adult mentors to improve their educational success. Organizations that implement mentoring programs and have strong collaborative relationships with schools are asked to submit proposals to request up to three years of funding to strengthen their programs. Proposals are due no later than February 18, 2010. Funding announcements for competitive proposals will be made in May 2010.

Intended outcomes for program support:

- a. Improved academic achievement for students
 - b. Improved student attendance
 - c. Reduced disciplinary referrals
 - d. Improved future orientation of students (i.e. intent to pursue post-high school education or training)
 - e. Increased volunteer involvement
2. Strengthen local and regional systems to increase and support adult volunteer mentors. Southern Oregon needs an abundance of safe, capable, and consistent adult supporters for the young people in our communities. Strategic partners will receive funding to coordinate volunteer recruitment, retention and training efforts, as well as staff training in the four-county region. RAI Committee members will work with community partners to design this prong of the Initiative. Funding recommendations will be presented to the Southern Oregon Leadership Council and the OCF Board of Directors in May 2010.

Intended outcomes for system support:

- a. Mentoring program staff will receive education in effectively recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers, ultimately building the capacity of all mentoring programs.
 - b. Mentors and program staff will receive training to develop mentoring skills and improve their abilities to support youth.
 - c. Improved community and regional coordination among youth-serving organizations; more sharing of resources; duplication of efforts is reduced.
3. Support and/or initiate a regional media campaign. This campaign will increase awareness of the Youth Mentoring for Educational Success Initiative and impart the importance of mentoring relationships for youth development and educational success. RAI Committee members, strategic partners, and media representatives will be convened to further define this prong of the Initiative. Recommendations will be reviewed by the full RAI Committee, Leadership Council and OCF Board of Directors in May 2010.

Intended outcomes for media campaign:

- a. Increased community awareness of the Youth Mentoring for Educational Success Initiative, The Oregon Community Foundation and partnering organizations.
- b. Increased strategic community partnerships to support mentoring and sustain the Initiative by leveraging resources.