

# **Jackson Street Youth Services Success Story**

**J = Male from Corvallis, 16 years old**

WHEN J FIRST STARTED RECEIVING SERVICES from Jackson Street Youth Services more than two years ago, he had multiple problems. He was on probation and his behavior was often inappropriate. He would verbally test people he interacted with – talking outrageously to see if he could spark a negative reaction. He had no strong male role-model in his life, and felt he was constantly bullied at school for the way he looked, talked, and acted. J also reported some odd interactions he was having in intimate relationships and it seemed that some of the people he wanted to be close to were taking advantage of him. During weekly wraparound meetings (sessions with representatives of all the agencies involved in helping J's family), J specifically stated that he was struggling with his identity and wanted someone in his life to help him work through his issues.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE LAST TWO YEARS, we've provided both Overnight Shelter and Outreach Services. When things are too crazy at home, or his mom needs a break, J can stay in shelter. When he's living at home, he often comes to the shelter and participates in our After School Program. Throughout this time, we've provided Case Management, which means that a Lead Caseworker on our staff consistently works with J and his family, and coordinates services with other agencies such as the Juvenile Department and the Health Department

Early in this effort, J's case manager encouraged him to get involved with "Out and About Youth," and suggested the family connect with PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). We also placed him on the waiting list to be matched with a Jackson Street Mentor, and after several months we found a possible match, Joshua.

When we first spoke with Joshua about mentoring J, we were very honest about our concerns that J would be a challenging youth for any mentor to deal with, and we let him know that it was okay if he decided this particular match wouldn't work. However, after their first meeting Joshua told us he felt an immediate connection to J, and was excited to continue working with him. Now Joshua and J meet at least once a week and often spend more than the required 3 hours per week together. The two of them are always willing to try new things that interest each other and they can often be found going to the movies, re-enacting the Hunger Games, and cooking together.

IN THE PAST YEAR, J HAS MADE MANY POSITIVE CHANGES in his life, with support from his mentor. Joshua has been a resource J can go to when he is feeling depressed, needs help setting boundaries with friends, or just needs time away from home. J finally completed probation this October, thanks in a large part to his mentor, who helped hold him accountable for completing the terms of his probation. Now J is transitioning back into public school from a treatment facility. Joshua has helped J learn to communicate more effectively with his peers, and to be his own advocate, so that he can deal with the public school environment. Most importantly, Joshua consistently spends time with J, allowing J to build trust with an adult male, and allowing J to feel heard and valued.

Jackson Street Youth Services is a partner agency of United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties.