

Summer of Peace™ 2013

Restorative Justice: Rachel Pearl and GREEN Corps Fresh Start/Harvest of Potential Youth Programs (Jul. 25)

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Molly: Hello, everyone and welcome. This is your host Molly Rowan Leach. Welcome to Summer of Peace: Restorative Justice on the Rise. Restorative Justice on the Rise is an ongoing weekly telecouncil and webcast series that reaches people internationally and features conversations with many of our world's way-showers in the field from a wide spectrum of the field as well.

You, as a participant, are really important to this conversation. Today, as with every session, you can submit questions or you can ask them live right here with us, right now, during this hour by pressing *2 on your keypad. Before we go into our conversation today with our very special guest, I'd like to say a few words of thanks to The Shift Network, to Director of Peace, Philip Helmich, to the administrative host today, Lindsay King, as well as to Brianna Lawrence Merrill who is the Operations Manager of the Summer of Peace.

For more information about the Summer of Peace which features a whole bunch of different great tracks that all have intersections of course and different conversations and focal points, you can go to summit.summerofpeace.net. You can also look for places to converse and keep the dialogue going on Facebook by just logging in or searching for Summer of Peace there, as well as at Peace Summit at Twitter.

We also like to make the habit of following up with you post live session by sending out an email that provides links and resources and possible actions that you might want to take related to this particular conversation that we're having today.

Without further ado, I am really, really honored to be not only with the Director of the GREEN Corps Program in Clackamas County, Oregon -- she is an incredible gal. I also have with us and we also have with us two youths from the program which really excites me because it's so important to hear from our youths. I'd like to just say a few words about each of them and then we'll start the conversation.

Again, at about the half hour and then a little bit further into the last 15, 20 minutes or so, you can feel free to press *2 on your keypad if you have a question or a comment to engage in the dialogue.

First of all I'd like to introduce to you Rachel Pearl. She is the Community Connections Coordinator for the Clackamas County Juvenile Department. That's in Oregon of course. Her current role is to develop, implement and coordinate a Restorative Community Service program for youth offenders. In her current role, Rachel is also the co-founder and Program Coordinator for GREEN Corps Fresh Start, an urban horticulture and small business training program for youths in the Juvenile Justice system. GREEN Corps allows youth an opportunity to pay restitution to victims while also developing skills in the areas of farming, food and customer service, bicycle repair and forestry while assisting in the business aspects of the program.

Now she's going to tell us a lot more about what is happening within these programs and how they work, as well as are Roberto De La Montaña and Tristan Hagaman. We have a young man and a young woman who are both a part of the program. Tristan is a youth leader and Roberto is also within the program. They're going to all be engaged in sharing a little bit with us about how they work within the program.

I'd like to go ahead, first of all, by starting with you Rachel. If you would just share with us a little bit about what brought you into this field. Then we'll go over to Tristan and then Roberto. Go ahead and take a few minutes to share with us something that helps us get a context for your passion in this field. Also, just a really incredible combination that you brought into this program here in Clackamas.

Welcome.

Rachel: Thank you, Molly. Yeah. My path into this field and what I'm doing now has been a long one and a great one. I feel it started for me actually as a really young child. I feel I was very fortunate to have a pretty amazing childhood and was told so by my parents. My father has been an advocate for people who have made some mistakes in their lives. He informed me very young that, yes, I was fortunate and privileged and I had an obligation to help those who were not in my same situation.

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I took that to heart, was really very fortunate to be made well aware of how there is so much injustice in the world and how helping people to move forward was much more helpful to our communities and makes our communities safer than to just incarcerate people and treat them as though they no longer have value. That happened for me very early on.

I watched a lot of my own friends struggle with different things and end up in the correctional system. Just seeing how unhelpful certain aspects of that were for them. Just also that community was a huge part of my life. How much I feel my own childhood was about the village, right? The village really does raise our children.

I think that's lacking in so many young people's lives. They no longer have that sense of community. People don't know their neighbors. They don't have that sense of support outside of their family structure. Sometimes their home lives aren't great and if we don't have people outside of that to look to, to help us, that really, really creates a situation in which we may not make the best choices because there's no one there to help hold our hand when we start to struggle.

So I think community and understanding that that's an essential component to having a healthy and fulfilling life has been something that's always been a focus for me and looking at working with young people early on. I started working with youth offenders in California and moved up here to Portland and have continued to work with young people who have made those choices in their lives and are trying to move forward since then in lots of different capacities.

I feel like I'm always learning. I think I've learned the most from the youths that I work with. It's incredible to see how strong and resilient they are. These two young people that are with me right now are absolutely amazing. I learn from them all the time and feel that they both should feel nothing but proud of themselves for all that they've accomplished and all of that they've overcome.

A lot of people couldn't do what they have done. I think that's pretty remarkable. For me, it's been really thinking like how do you create a situation in which all of these components are there and present? It's not just about recidivism. Because people do stop committing crimes and still go on to be unhappy in their lives.

I think that what we want and what GREEN Corps is really about is, yes, it creates a space where youths have opportunities and can break the cycle of committing crimes in their lives but also gives them a sense of belonging in their community, a sense of their own personal value and also understanding the value of others. Ensuring, creating this sense of personal health which includes, obviously, physical health.

But then how do you create health with your activities outside of work and school? What does your social life look like? What are your recreation activities? How do you deal with stress? So that any changes that are made are sustainable for them because when we don't have that full, rounded life, we can't be healthy.

If we're at risk for falling back into negative behaviors that were a pattern for us in the past, if we don't have the support system in place to be healthy and successful and move forward, we're really setting ourselves up for failure. I feel like that's an obligation that we have. Because working with young people is to create that opportunity for them.

Molly: Wow, wonderful. Well Rachel, let's pass the mike over to Tristan.

Tristan, I'd love for you just to start out if you wouldn't mind by sharing what officially your roles are or your role is with the program and which program. Because I know there are multiple programs it looks like within the GREEN Corps system. Again, I just want to welcome you, Tristan, to Restorative Justice on the Rise. Just share with us a little bit about what brought you in here, into the GREEN Corps program with Rachel and everyone else.

Tristan: Okay. Well thank you for welcoming me. I'm a youth leader that just started actually a few months back. We just got new kids on the team so I'm helping training them. We have barista and smoothies skills on top of bike training, woodcutting and customer service training really.

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I came here because I really wanted a chance to better myself. This was a really good opportunity to have because I didn't think I was going to have this kind of opportunity. I took it while I had it and it's really changed my life. If I didn't have this, I wouldn't be here today the way I am right now. I am very thankful for all of the people that are here.

It's pretty awesome actually having all these new experiences and things on my resume that I would never have been able to do on my own. It's such an awesome opportunity to have really.

Molly: Thank you so much, Tristan. Let's pass the mike over to Roberto, again, Roberto De La Montaña. Roberto, could you share a little bit about what brought you into the program again and what your role is and anything else you'd like to share with everyone today.

Roberto: Well I do play a role as a leader in GREEN Corps too. What brought me here is that I made some mistakes in my life and I wanted to better myself. That way I can get more job opportunities because I really want to be a firefighter. I've always wanted to be a firefighter since I was a little kid.

So for me to pursue that, I do need job skills. GREEN Corps gave me that opportunity to get a lot of lot of job skills like barista and smoothies and bike training, even woodcutting, even customer service skills.

Molly: Great. It sounds like both you, Roberto and Tristan, both of you have had some experience of being within the system, whether it be the juvenile corrections or simply with law enforcements. Is there anything that you'd like to share about your views regarding the criminal justice system and how it operates with youths and any ways you think it might improve? Either of you can choose to take this question or not.

Roberto: For that I'm thinking like when you get in trouble then you get this big job opportunity. Why is it that you have to be in trouble to get this job opportunity? Why can't other people get the job opportunity too?

Molly: Right. So what are the things that you see the GREEN Corps Program -- do you feel like it's a good start in bringing in the community and bringing in new programs that will support our youths to feel like they are seen and heard and have like, say, a second chance and to not have a criminal record follow them for the rest of their lives?

Tristan: I do believe that because working in Farmer's Markets with all of the community coming in and talking with and all the things that we do for them, it really makes us feel like we are a part of original people that have never messed up or done anything like that. We have so many opportunities to just go out there and be a part of the society and feel like we're helping them. It really does help us feel like we're a part of it like anything.

Molly: Roberto, you made a really good point. We're going to go back over to Rachel here in a few minutes and talk a bit about the ground level of the program and how it got started. But I want to come back to that point you just made and acknowledge that huge point about how do we provide a new space or at least combine a space that provides better programming, better support perhaps at a community level for our youths so that no matter whether they've made a mistake and gotten mixed up in the system or not, they should have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, right?

I know that one of the programs that you have is called Harvest of Potential. Would you like to respond to that at all in the way of what do you see in the future with this program be applied not only for perhaps youth offenders per se but for all youths? How would you see that working?

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Roberto: It really works really well, probably in the future, hopefully.

Rachel: How do you want to bring other young people in it, is what she's asking.

Roberto: Oh. Basically, I would rather bring people in it for the future because it'd be harder.

Molly: That was a big question and it's not an easy solution.

Roberto: Yeah, it was. I didn't understand that that well. Sorry.

Molly: It's okay. It's all right. That point that you raised is what we need to be I think looking at closely and I think we are. That Restorative Justice and Restorative Justice principals are really looking at ways to integrate within the existing system and benefit the system. We just had Police Chief Mike Butler on with us last week from the Longmont Police Department here in Colorado. Of course, he's convinced and the statistic show that recidivism drops way down low when they're working with these programs that they have. In fact that number, I believe, was 10% compared to the 60 to 70% level in general in our nation.

I'd love to move back over to you, Rachel, for a moment and to go back to talk about the GREEN Corps Fresh Start program which is just an incredible combination of the Clackamas County Juvenile Department and I understand that you work with many different programs in the Portland area. I'd love for you to talk more about how it was implemented. You represent CCJD. I just think it's brilliant that you're providing this bridge as a program. So let's talk about the implementation for a minute.

Rachel: Yeah. I think one of the great things about GREEN Corps and how it began is that it really has been somewhat of this organic process of growth that has happened for us. Our main partner for GREEN Corps is OSU Extension, Oregon State University Extension Services, the Metro area. Brett Halverson, who works for OSU Extension, is the co-founder with me of GREEN Corps Fresh Start. We really started as a community-based program off-site. We were able to -- in partnership with a café here in Oregon City called Singer Hill Cafe, they were wanting to improve the land.

There was a house that had burned down. They wanted to create a demonstration garden. OSU Extension was able to secure a Metro grant to have youths work alongside OSU Extension staff and volunteers to fix up that property and create a demonstration garden. Really from the beginning, our goal was to create somewhat of like a micro enterprise or social enterprise model where there could be ways for kids to become kind of entrepreneurs, if you will, and

think about alternative career options for them. How they can use their creativity to create businesses for themselves.

So that was initially kind of the vision. Things evolved and changed. We were presented with an opportunity to create a small farm on-site here which is called the Red Soils campus in Oregon City which is where all the county buildings are here. That was the process because the name Red Soils is actually very much characteristic of what we're dealing with here. We worked with a lot of businesses to bring in good soil that we could actually grow food on.

That was the process in it of itself to create an actual space of a farm, garden if you will that you can plant and grow food. Initially it was really all about horticulture and actually forestry as well. We were able, in partnership with Hopkins Demonstration Forest, provide an opportunity for youths to go into the forest, learn a lot about how people forest in a healthy way and harvest wood that needed to be removed and sell cords of firewood as well.

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Our first year was about a produce stand at the Oregon City Farmer's Market. We have an amazing partnership with the Oregon City Farmer's Market. Jackie Hammond-Williams, who is the Market Manager, is absolutely fantastic. We partnered with them for both community service as well as GREEN Corps. She's been a tremendous help in us getting started in terms of understanding what it takes to have a successful market stand.

We've now grown from one market a week to three. We're at the Oregon City Farmer's Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, in addition to Damascus Market on Thursdays. That's provided a lot more opportunity for the community to know what we're doing, to meet our amazing kids and to allow for more relationships to develop in that sense as well.

In this process, we have had a lot of people come to us and say they've heard about our program, perhaps read an article and said they want to be involved. They want to help out. This is something that -- whether it's because they love the horticulture aspect of it because, obviously, locally grown food is really a big movement in the entire country really. Portland is big around eating locally and eating local sustainable food.

For some people that might be the reason why GREEN Corps becomes motivating for them to get involved with other people. It's helping youths. We've now incorporated -- we drew a partnership with a program called Love INC. here in Clackamas County. They have a bike ministry and have actually, because of

that, they have their own bike shop and have created programs for GREEN Corps where youths can develop bike repair skills.

We have partnerships with local bike shops which in turn help youths to find internships and, essentially, land jobs as well. A lot of it -- we have an amazing partnership with Mt. Hood Roasters which is a coffee roasting company in Clackamas County. They do internships onsite at their coffee shop out in Rhododendron. Kids get to do overnight barista training where they stay at their cabin and are trained onsite at their café and really learning about that business.

So we have all of these people and businesses that have kind of come to the table with these resources that we could not replicate on our own. I think that's been kind of the beauty of GREEN Corps. I have to shout out to my director, Ellen Crawford, and my supervisor, Mark McDonald, for allowing us to be creative and think outside the box of how we can bring a program like this that's sustainable because if we as a Juvenile Department tried to do all of these different components on our own, it would be much more difficult to sustain.

And because the community has stepped up and said, "No, you don't need to create your own bike shop. We have one. We're going to train them. We're going to supply that. We're going to staff that," that allows us to create so much more opportunity.

Molly: I want to pause right there, Rachel, because you're bringing a point that I really wanted to make sure we covered today. Because I know we have a lot of people in this telecouncil and webcast with us today from across the nation who might want to know a little bit more about how, if they don't have something like this rolling already, how would they do it? Sounds like in your case, in the Clackamas County Juvenile Justice Department, there wasn't any resistance to these kinds of programs or rather perhaps, a sense that this just wasn't doable.

There are typical excuses for a lot of things that are actually very valid in many ways, funding of course being one of them. What could you say to people who might be interested, who are working in similar positions across the country and maybe even in other places in our world who would like to implement a program like this? What are the key elements?

Rachel: Well first I would say that there's always resistance. I wouldn't say that there hasn't been resistance. If you were to present this whole model to a department, I can imagine its feeling overwhelming. So I think the key element for us has been that we started small. We did start with just the horticulture, forestry component and one market.

We made sure that we learned from that and then kind of grew in this natural way because we wanted to align consistently with this idea of Healthy Eating, Active Living. The first grants that we received were HEAL grants from the H3S which is the Health, Housing and Human Services program here in Clackamas County, to really provide opportunities for people to be healthy and active.

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So we, in our second year, are looking at what can we do to improve our program? That's when we started the Fresh Start part which is our coffee and smoothie cart, our focus on healthy smoothies really. We acquired funding to be able to provide free healthy smoothies to children of Oregon Trail Card holders, so families that were on food assistance. That aligned for us as well because we always try to incorporate a give-back component so that the community understands that not only are we helping young people who have made mistakes in their lives, but also we're trying to give back as much as possible and allow these young people an opportunity to give back and make right the wrongs that they have -- that have happened. Obviously, repair the harm that's been caused to the community.

It's really trying to create that. I think that's really helpful in creating a program like this because often there's resistance from the community. Thinking "Oh, funding is going -- these kids made these choices. Why isn't funding -- Like Roberto brought up that point. Why isn't this program being provided to youths who aren't in this system? Obviously we argued that there are a lot of opportunities provided to youths who aren't in the system and have more resources available to them.

So we are looking at now, how do we bring in youths from both sides of things? That's a process that we're actually looking at adopting and in the near future, bringing on kids from the high schools as well as kids from our program as well. Because we strongly believe in creating healthy peer networks and opportunities for youths to step outside their traditional peer group and look at options of making friends with people that they normally would not have been friends with, which may help them to stay and things of that sort as well.

I think the steps -- it's really to look in your community. See what resources are available and start talking to people. "Hey, I have this idea. This is what we're thinking about." If you're interested in this type of program, just going and talking to your local Farmer's Market. Talking about what it would take to have a stand there. Looking at local farms, if you don't have -- we're fortunate here to have a lot of space, but we also just acquired 10 acres from OSU Extension's research farm here because they have the space.

Molly: Wow.

Rachel: There are a lot of farmers who have additional space and land who would be willing to either lease for extremely inexpensive amount of money or for free as a tax write-off for their farm. There are a lot of options and creative ways to think about. I would suggest starting small. Obviously, you wouldn't want to go into all different four tracks at the same time. Farming is a fantastic way to start because it's so valuable for young people to grow things.

I'd say farming and assisting animals are two of the most empowering things for people who are struggling in their lives to have ownership over or caring for something and keeping it alive and having it grow to fruition.

Molly: That's interesting that you bring up the animal care as well. I know of quite a few programs within prisons where inmates are assigned a stray -- well not a stray but from the local humane society, they'll have a partnership. That seems just a really brilliant idea for that very reason.

Rachel: Right. Empathy is helping as well. Yeah.

Molly: Rachel, I want to pause for a moment because I know just on that note for people, what website could they go to or where could they find more about this program that is particular to what you've been talking about? And do you have some kind of outline or paper or graph that shows people how you've set it up and give them suggestions how they might go about it as well?

Rachel: Well we do have our Juvenile Department website which is the clackamas.us/juvenile, which provides some information about GREEN Corps but not a lot. We're actually in the process of developing our website. Because we're a county organization, Internet and websites take quite a bit of time just because it's the bureaucratic process and approval. We are still in that process right now.

But I have a ton of information. I'd be more than willing to -- you and I, Molly, if there's a way for me to pass that onto you and distribute that in that way. Or people are always welcome to contact me. My information is on our website. I'm more than willing to talk to anybody about ideas and ways in which they can create something like this in their communities.

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Molly: That's great.

Rachel: Do something different as well because I think that, for me, is collaborating and sharing ideas. For me being fortunate enough to have the community and

support that we have here and people who are willing to share ideas has allowed us to do this. Sometimes we get in that struggle of kind of fighting for the same resources that we're afraid to share ideas and afraid to pass that on to other people. What we do is we really stunt the progress that we can all make.

I learned so much from talking to other people that have programs. There's an amazing program, Superfresh Farms in Washington County. Mia Bartlett who is their program coordinator has been amazing in giving us resources and ideas. We've used some of that to make our program stronger. That's what makes our communities improve and strengthen, is when we can work together to create even better programming I believe.

Molly: Thanks for that website information. Also for the resource information, you can pass that along to me and I'll make sure that it gets out in the update emails, the email that we send to everybody tomorrow as a follow up of this conversation.

I just want to pause too and just let you know this is Restorative Justice on the Rise. We're a 12-week track as part of the Summer of Peace. If you're just joining us, we're talking with Rachel Pearl with the Clackamas County Juvenile Department and the GREEN Corps Fresh Start program. She's the Community Connections Coordinator. We're also with Roberto De La Montana and Tristan Hagaman and they are youth leaders within that program.

It's great to have all of you here with us. You can press *2 on your keypad if you have a comment or a question for any one of them today. I'd like to go back over for a moment to you, Tristan and Roberto, and just ask a little bit more, converse a little bit more about your leadership positions. If you'd like to share a story, whether it be of your own or what you've witnessed given that you're a youth leader, I'm assuming that you work with other youths.

Tell us a little bit more about what you've observed and witnessed in any of the people, your peers that you've worked with. What's important to them and what's happened?

Tristan: Well through our program, we have a Straight Talk situation. Like when we bring in other youths who haven't been in this program for a while at all, we set up this thing so when we have an issue or a problem with another youth, that something has happened or something, we set them aside. There are steps that we take to let them know or talk about the issue or whatnot so it doesn't get out of hand or doesn't get to a different level. Yeah. It's just we try not to have very much trouble or very violent at all, like negative effects come out of it.

Molly: Could you share a little bit about what those tools are that you might have? Like do you have something set up as a response when these situations arise that you

could be a little more specific about? For example, do you have a response team when something shows itself to be a potential -- that could go out of control? Do you have a smaller response team or do you have like a general circle that's agreed to respond to these situations? Also how many youths are in your leadership circle?

Tristan: There are seven youth leaders. If we can't take care of the issue or what's going on with like two individuals who have the issue, we do bring it into a circle and see if we can talk it out and figure out what's really going on because sometimes kids can't deal with it in a good way that doesn't affect other kids here. If it's one on one and we don't bring it into the circle, we just go step-by-step. Like not bring it into other people's business. Don't let other people know what's going on. Kind of just figure it out and work it out just one on one so can just be squashed.

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Some people can't do that so we do have to bring it into a circle. Figure out what's really going on. It doesn't really go further than that. It usually stays between who and what's going on.

Molly: Do you receive training of any kind, for example, in non-violent communication or in circle processes? What kind of training do you and Roberto receive as you move through this program to be in this leadership position?

Tristan: Mostly communication training just so we all know how to work it out and what to do and what to say to others. How to say it so it doesn't go out of hand and out of proportion in any predicament or situation, if it's at the Market or one-on-one with the youths and youth leaders.

Molly: Roberto, do you have anything you'd like to say about that question of the experience of being a youth leader and anything you witnessed in particular with any of the kids that are in there with you? Like a transformation from behavior that was really difficult to deal with and maybe a few months later, something that happened that was a real change.

Roberto: Well it is a good experience being a leader because I worked here last year and I wasn't a leader. I started from the bottom. Yeah, I had some rough times too learning new things. Rachel was there to help me out. Then I got better with the skills that I've learned.

This year, I started being a leader because I was here last year. I knew some of the stuff. Now, basically, I can go back and say I did better than before and that I have more skills.

Molly: Great. Here's another question for the two of you. Either one can take it and if either one, if you don't want to, that's fine as well. Rachel, you can also take this question. It's about Restorative Justice, given that that's the heart of the conversation usually on the council and the series that we host here. What is your understanding of Restorative Justice? What does it mean to you?

Rachel: They're both pointing at me. Well I think Restorative Justice, first of all, just makes sense to me. That I think when harm is caused, it really does take involving all the parties impacted in order to make that right. I think it is so important and valuable and often missed in traditional, in this country anyway, traditional criminal justice system.

Pretty much, when you look at a triangle or for some people the diamond of victims, offenders and community, and oftentimes the system for some people is in a diamond model of Restorative Justice, oftentimes all three of victim, offender and community are left out. I don't know how we can be a healthy, functioning society when that's the case. So it means a lot to me.

It means a healthy community. It means a productive society in which people can thrive. Because all people make mistakes, whether they rise to the level of being criminal or not, mistakes occur and people are harmed. I think we all have an obligation to ourselves in our own smaller communities to make right the harms that we cause because otherwise we end up living alone even if we're around others. If we don't resolve harm as best as we can and put it as right as we can then we can't move forward.

That's something that's been really important for GREEN Corps. Tristan mentioned Straight Talk. That's something why we value that so much, is that harm doesn't just happen when we commit crimes. It happens on a daily basis in our lives. We say things that are harmful. We do things that are harmful.

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I feel like it's so important to instill in these young people that they have the power to make that right. Doing that in just basic communication with their peers when something's said that they find offensive and then instead of turning to "Oh, we're going to talk bad about them behind their backs and create this huge kind of culture in our small group of negativity," to resolve that immediately and figure out what actually happened. Hear from each other. Learn about each other.

Because what I find is conflict is an opportunity to learn. Oftentimes we all miss that because we avoid having difficult conversations. But when we don't have

difficult conversations our lives become extremely difficult. I think it's a lot less painful to have a five-minute difficult conversation than it is to go around disliking someone for five years.

Those kinds of things we really try to instill in these guys. They have a lot of additional training. They have a lot of leadership training. They have resiliency training. We have a life coach that comes in and teaches them about resiliency and how to keep an open mind about situations that occur in our lives. Not to assume that we know what's going on with somebody else. Not to take everything personally.

Those are skills that I think most adults should have and need to have. For these guys, at 17, 18 years old, to be thinking about "Oh, maybe I don't need to take everything personally. Maybe I can think 'Maybe that person's having a really hard day.' I don't necessarily need to engage in that negative situation. I can give them some space and move on."

So really looking at creating a restorative culture within our program, I think it becomes a way of life when you think "I believe in Restorative Justice." Well it needs to happen for yourself everywhere. You have to be thinking about how you are and look at yourself. I have to look at myself all the time. We have open dialogues for these guys.

If they have an issue with one of us as staff or adult volunteers, there's an open door for them to come and talk to us. They just have to follow the same rules that they need to follow with their peers, right? It's about respect and respecting each other. Everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of what choices they've made in their life.

Molly: It really is a complete rewiring and re-understanding of ourselves as individuals within the context of a society that, let's face it, is in a huge transformation, not only systemically in this way but also in so many other ways. The baselines that we've understood that give us meaning for our role in the human family that we call the United States and of course the world itself. It's such a huge thing that's happening.

I also really appreciate, too the fact of brain science that comes into the whole mix especially at it relates to our youths. That neuroscience has proven that brain development really is still happening up until about age 24 and how critical it is to not push the limit of that amygdala or the fight-or-flight response in our youths. That causes a lot of issues and problems especially if we treat them as criminals and don't offer them opportunities.

Again I think what we're all saying here is that it's not about excusing or removing the importance of accountability, yet it's something that can really provide a moving forward much beyond, like you're saying Rachel and Roberto and Tristan, moving much beyond the things that we thought were possible in conflict.

I want to talk for a minute with this last quarter of our hour about statistical evidence, Rachel, with the program. Also, if you could share with us a few more points about what you've seen in the United States in general. I know that you're in Oregon, but are there other programs that you've seen up and running and successful country-wide? Then tell us a little bit about some of the stuff that you're seeing.

Rachel: Yeah, definitely. Just here in Oregon alone, we're currently in the process of starting a Youth Farm coalition. We have a partnership. Our financial management team is with a program called Schoolyard Farms who works with younger youths and elementary age. That's prevention piece of working with young people early on and getting them involved in growing food.

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Our youths have an opportunity to mentor those kids here in the fall. We're going to do some matching and mentoring with our kids with younger kids and teaching them about farming. Also, like I said before, Schoolyard Farms in Washington County -- I mean, Superfresh Farms, excuse me, in Washington County also do a phenomenal job of training at-risk youths in farming. They have Farmer's Markets as well.

I know there are programs in New York City doing like the vertical garden idea of growing food in urban areas, inside or outside walls where they don't have a lot of space to grow food. Which in turn is creating this whole new set of green jobs for young people to really become vertical garden installers and that is something that I find really fascinating and would love to explore more.

So there are a lot of programs that are working with young people around growing food for sure. I'm not familiar but wouldn't be surprised if there were other programs that are incorporating growing food with smoothies and bike repair and forestry. Again, we've been really fortunate to be able to create that kind of layered and multi-faceted program where kids can develop these skills in multiple areas. These are areas where there are jobs available to young people.

Oregon is struggling with one of the worst unemployment rates for teenagers in the country. So for these guys to have this resume and portfolio -- when they leave here is we do track all of their different hours in all of the training. They're

given certifications in each of those. Those go into their portfolio with their resume and their letters of reference that they receive that they bring to an interview. Which at 17 years old, you've got 15 certifications, your resume and ten letters of reference from a program, you're looking pretty good.

So that's something that has been extremely successful for us. Obviously our kids graduate at different stages in their lives. Some of them are going back into high school studying. Some of them are ready for jobs. All of our youths who have been ready for a job have obtained employment and are working and are working successfully.

We have had youths come into our program not enrolled in school. All of our youths if that's where they're at, either they're enrolled in an educational program or they're in a job placement when they leave, which for me is 100% success. So we feel really good about that. We also track their involvement in recreation activities. Who they're associating with?

We align a lot of our assessments with the risk in protective factors that they look at in terms of the likelihood that a youth is going to re-offend. We've had tremendous improvements in our youths in terms of their access to healthy people, their access to healthy activities, their involvement in pro-social free time activities and their kind of connection to their community in addition to their future plans.

A lot of times we have young people come into our program with not a lot of clarity in terms of where they're going in their future. Really just kind of "I don't know. I'm not sure." "What do you like to do?" "I don't know. I'm not sure." When they leave, they have a really strong sense of where they want to be. That may change, right? Because it often does I know.

For me it changed lots of times in terms of what I thought I wanted to do. But having a sense of where I think I want to go gets me somewhere where maybe I can then change my mind. I know I was a Photography major when I went to college and then I took a Bio Psych class because I needed to and somehow I became a Psych major.

It's like these life experiences being in college provides a whole new set of opportunities. It creates new friendships that may align with a healthy and sober lifestyle. It creates a new sense of identity for them self. Maybe some of our kids don't want to go to college. Maybe they have another idea. That's okay.

[0:50:00]

I think we need to encourage and support them. Help them get to where they need to be. It's amazing to watch how people come in. We've had a lot of kids come in that can hardly speak in front of a group and then jump at the chance to be on a radio show or present in front of a group of 40 people and talk about what it takes to be successful in working with youths.

Many of our GREEN Corps graduates come to our quarterly trainings and are youth trainers and they train the adults that work with kids on how to work with kids successfully. Because who knows better, right, than youth themselves who have had to deal with some of us adults who aren't always so wonderful to deal with and help develop skills that are going to make us more successful in working with young people.

So we have a lot of opportunities like that. Then we have kids, young people like Roberto who wanted to come back and we jumped at the chance to have him back. Because he had grown and shown so much dedication and commitment that we were excited to have him back as a leader. That success for me is having a program like this where kids want to be here and in turn have created so many opportunities.

Roberto is now a huge part of a program here in Clackamas County called "Fill a Stocking, Fill a Heart" which is an amazing non-profit that provides stockings to family who wouldn't get anything for the Holidays. A lot of it is hygiene, necessary items. Roberto's now basically their youth representative for their board. They call him for everything. He works at every one of their events.

Those people would do anything for this young man. They ask for him to be everywhere. He's now a part of something outside of GREEN Corps as well and a huge part of that community and very important to them. I think getting that understanding as an 18-year old that this community needs you and is calling you for help, changes your perspective on your importance as a person tremendously.

Molly: Wow, that's wonderful. Gosh, Roberto, that's great. That's really amazing.

I'd like to go back for just a second because I realized that we didn't talk about the ground level specifics regarding intake and the intake process and what that entails. Also, where are the youths living? How does that all work?

Rachel: All of our youths are in the community. They live at home or if they are with foster placement, whatever their current home situation looks like. None of our youths are in a facility. This is definitely an alternative to any form of incarceration.

The intake, their juvenile counselors which is what probation officers are called in the State of Oregon, juvenile counselors, refer them to GREEN Corps. We have an interview process where we talk to them, try to figure out what their goals are for themselves, how they'll best fit into our program. We have two separate referral processes now because we have the youth leaders who start before the other kids come into the program so they get a chance to really get their feet grounded in the program. Learn what they need to learn so they can assist in passing that information onto other youths. The other youths will obviously have an opportunity to be leaders, if that's something that they're interested in, in the future.

We definitely try to create this environment where no one is better than anyone else. It's really an inclusive process of team building and everybody learning from each other. That's always a concern for me, is making sure young people that come into the program feel comfortable. We don't set up this situation where they feel like they can't approach you as leaders or there's any entitlement going on because that often interferes with success.

We look at a variety of things. We look at, obviously restitution, if they owe money to victims. Obviously that's going to be a young person who is a priority to get into a program in which they can pay that back. That's important obviously that we serve the needs of victims and also allow kids the opportunity to pay that off in a timely manner so it doesn't continue to fall off the trail.

Those are things we look at. Really, we've tried to get an idea of what youths are most interested in, how we can help them to be successful. Have a lot of talking with our team about different kids and how they're going to do. Most kids get a shot. I will say that we do allow most kids to try.

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Even kids that we have some concerns about, we want to allow them the opportunity to prove who they want to be instead of holding them to some sort of past patterns. Like "Okay. Here, this is a different opportunity." We've had tremendous success. We've had a few kids who we were concerned about bringing into the program and because of the way that this program is very different from anything else they've experienced, a lot of them have just excelled, which is amazing.

Molly: Great.

Rachel: Sometimes, kids who are struggling at every other aspect of their lives succeed and excel in an area in which they are given ownership. They're given feedback about how well they're doing and they become part of a community. They then

say, "Oh, this is important to me so I'm going to do really well at this." That can be changing for them because then they get that positive feedback. Maybe that's the first time.

Now they say, "Oh, maybe I kind of want that feedback at school too. Maybe I'm going to try harder at school because I kind of like how that felt."

Molly: Wonderful. I do want to make sure we go back over, speaking of our youths here with us, just really honor you guys again. Excuse me, young lady and young man, Roberto and Tristan. You're here with us of course with Rachel today. It's really been great having you.

I want to move towards our closing by allowing you to have the mike again to share what you've learned. Either of you can respond to this or both preferably. What you've learned about yourself and about life and any further comments you'd like to make in conclusion today about this program. Let's start with what has changed for you and what have you learned?

Tristan: Well my whole entire life has changed for me. I've learned that what I have done and what I was doing prior to this, in changing my life was not the right path and was not what I really want my life to turn out like. I've learned to be a better person. Obviously this program puts you in a spot where you can learn about yourself and what not to be. It's really life-changing. It's awesome.

I'm just so glad that this happened because I don't think I would have had any other alternative if I was still going to be like that.

Molly: Tristan, did you feel seen and understood before you came into this program? And did you feel that way in this program and do you?

Tristan: What way?

Molly: What I mean when I say seen is by having a colleague or a guide or a mentor who sees who you really are and understands that you are a brilliant human being who has potential. Did you have that previous to coming into this program and have you experienced it in this program?

Tristan: Well other than my parents and my juvenile counselor, I didn't really have that. You know your parents are always there and going to say that, but it doesn't really put an outlook to where you understand it yourself. Having other adults and people who put you out there and say that kind of stuff to you really makes you change yourself and who you think you are and who you actually know you are.

Molly: Do you feel like you have relationships with your peers now that support you in moving forward?

Tristan: I do. All the leaders are always there for me. It's really cool. When the younger kids come in and they don't really know what's going on, they kind of look to us to try to be there for them and try to show them what's going on, which is cool because we have support from our own leaders and our own staff which helps us give other people that stability.

Molly: Thank you so much. I just want to give you the opportunity, Roberto, as we're closing to respond to that as well.

Roberto: All right. Let's see. I've made a big change. It was kind of hard for me at first. I was a slacker at school and everything. I thought I was not going to graduate this year so I'm really happy that I did graduate this year. This program has helped me with a lot of things.

They said I could get my GED, but I was like "No. I want to try to go for it." I actually went for it. I actually graduated. I got my stuff done. I learned a lot within this program. A part of this program, we do get college credits. That way when we go into college, we have like 12 credits or so.

[1:00:03]

Molly: That's great. That's phenomenal. Just one final question for you, Roberto, do you feel like moving forward you have the support and a strong network that will help carry you on even as you, at some point, will probably graduate from this program and move on to, say, college or wherever it is that you'll be going in your life?

Roberto: I do. I have my family also. I have Rachel. Which is if I need job references, I can always go to Rachel and she can be there for me. Because she's known all the changes I've made and what I've learned and the skills that I've taken forward with.

Molly: Well I wish we had so much more time to have this conversation. I just want to say a strong "Thank you," and recognition for the courage that may have taken both of you, Roberto and Tristan, to come onto this live show and to really share your stories. I'm really grateful to you both, I know that we all here, and to you Rachel, for the programs that you've put together and led us, the Community Connections Coordinator for the Clackamas County Juvenile Department.

I just want to say that as I noted earlier in this session today, we'll be sending out an email follow up tomorrow regarding this conversation, the finer points of

some of the resources. There's also a great video on YouTube that will be inserted in that email for everybody who is interested in staying in touch with Rachel and the program and further ways to do that in that email.

So on behalf of the Summer of Peace and Restorative Justice on the Rise, which is co-sponsored by The Peace Alliance, I'm your host, Molly Rowan Leach. I invite you to join us next week as we continue this series. We'll be talking with Leslie Neale who is the director of the documentary, Unlikely Friends. The next week after that, we talk with Jason Tashea of Youth Courts International. For a full schedule and for all of our programming for the Summer of Peace, please go to summit.summerofpeace.net.

I'm Molly Rowan Leach. It's been a great pleasure and honor. Have a great rest of your day. Thank you everyone.

[1:02:43] End of Audio

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