

Klamath Falls, OR.
(Klamath Co.)
HERALD & NEWS
(Cir.D.18,637)
(Cir.S.20,135)

MAY 25 2001

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 188.

HERALD AND NEWS, Klamath Falls, Oregon Friday, May 25, 2001 — Page B5

5098 OVER

Friday Focus

TEENS: A generation at risk

Programs overwhelmed by number of troubled kids

By LEE BEACH
H&N Staff Writer

Throwaways. Rebels. Victims. Drug users. Petty thieves. They're teenagers who are a long way down the wrong road.

And they tend to overwhelm the various public and private agencies that are trying to steer them straight.

The future of teen services doesn't look any brighter, either, if Gov. John Kitzhaber's Oregon Children's Plan, currently working its way through the Legislature, is enacted.

It diverts funding from services and facilities for older youth to coordinate and beef up programs for infants and young children. The stated goal is to fund more services to prevent people from entering a criminal lifestyle by intervention with at-risk children early.

Dan Golden, assistant director of the Klamath County Juvenile Office, sees about 700 kids a year detained at the juvenile hall. Of those, he estimates 200 are literally or functionally homeless. Some youth have asked to be kept in custody until after supper so they can have something to eat.

For the most part, only youths charged with violent crimes are detained for long periods. If a judge determines long-term corrections are needed, youth fall under the jurisdiction of the Oregon



what we want, and the governor's office has to decide. Kids and families are our only concern; he has the whole state to worry about."

So where can children and teens go when their home isn't safe?

In Klamath Falls, Exodus House, part of Integral Youth Services, may be the only shelter available on an emergency basis. According to statistics released by John VanOrder, coordinator, Exodus House served 242 kids between September 29, 1998, and September 28, 2000. Females accounted for 64 percent of the total, including 53 who were 14 or under, 39 who were runaways, and nine who were living on the streets. More had snuck out of the home but had not had a report filed.

Exodus House can serve a maximum of eight youngsters at a time, four girls and four boys, ages 10 to 17. It is dependent primarily on private donations, while IYS itself has multi-layered funding and is not as affected by the bill, according to Sherri Wegner, director. One portion of that funding goes to homeless education — keeping children in school even if they and their families are living out of their cars.

Klamath-Lake County Youth Ranch, Bonanza, is licensed to serve up to 19 boys ages 15-18. James Yoder, executive director, anticipates a 7.4 percent cut in funding if the governor's plan is approved as presented in the Legislature.

"We are very vigorously advocating, through the Alliance for Children's Programs, that it's fine if they want to strengthen children's programs. But let's not do it at the expense of our youth," Yoder said.

The Haven in Klamath Falls provides shelter and living facilities for up to six teen mothers and