

Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents

Every Child Has Value! Northwest Family Services (NWFS) Runs One of the Only Mentoring Programs for Children of Incarcerated Parents in Oregon!

“Youth are five times more likely to graduate if they have a meaningful relationship with an adult.”

Lauren's 14 years of life so far have been cluttered with obstacles. Her father is serving a life sentence and her mother has completely surrendered to her drug use and alcohol addiction. There have been far too many men sharing her mother's bed to count, and some are really awful people. Add these men to her mom's addiction and the police know her family by name. CPS are also regular visitors to their apartment.

Two years ago Lauren was referred to the Northwest Family Services' Youth Solutions Student Mentoring Program. She was a 6th grader with very few stable adult relationships in her life. She was matched with a mentor and that relationship quickly flourished. Her mentor meets with her weekly sometimes just to sit at Starbucks and listen to her many struggles, but also to share in her triumphs as well. Her mentor offers her the unconditional support and direction that she is missing in her life, and a constant reminder that she is never alone.



Her mentor is able to connect her with services to help her find clothes and school supplies. She also helps to provide food when there is none at home, school fees, money for homecoming, and countless trips to Powell's as she is an avid reader. Her mentor also takes her to the prison to visit her dad. She is devoted to her father and these visits are invaluable to her.

Last fall Lauren heard about an agriculture program being offered through her school. Lauren is passionate about animals and aspires to be a veterinarian. The meetings were at night and parental involvement was mandatory. Her family has never had a car and her mom had never even been to her school. Unfortunately, the mom was not able to support an afterschool activity such as this.

Lauren asked her mentor who agreed to help her with this commitment. Lauren was able to attend the evening meetings and participated in statewide debates on agriculture issues. She even earned a position as an officer and other leadership roles.

Lauren was able to hand raise a young calf and was responsible for all aspects of its care including inoculations. Her mentor helped her raise the funds to participate in the Clackamas County Fair. After months of hard work, Lauren “showed” this young cow and won 3rd place overall! Lauren's relationship with her mentor has made a positive difference in her life by developing her potential for leadership and personal growth through this program. In addition, despite the many challenges Lauren has faced, she maintains a 3.80 GPA! Congratulations Lauren on your success!