



June 22nd, 2020

To Youth and Families,

At Heart of Oregon Corps, the health and well-being of our Corpsmembers, staff, and our communities is vital. We are experienced in managing the inherent risks associated with running youth workforce training programs—including, but not limited to, using hand and power tools, working in remote areas, and driving on Central Oregon highways. We ensure our staff and Corpsmembers are covered under worker's compensation insurance. We deeply believe the benefits of our programs are significant to our youth Corpsmembers, Staff, and the communities and public lands we serve, and we believe our local community needs us now more than ever.

We take the current COVID-19 health emergency very seriously, and recognize we cannot completely eliminate COVID-19 risk in a community-based program. As Oregon re-opens, our staff are working tirelessly to create and implement a new, comprehensive COVID-19 Safety Plan that will guide our actions as an organization in the following months.

Operations will be guided by the plans' Decision-Making Matrix, that provide key assessments on whether program operations can be safely carried out. I am pleased to announce the following about Heart of Oregon's programs:

- Stewardship program resumed on June 16th
- AmeriCorps program resumed on June 17th
- Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps will operate this summer, starting July 6th
- YouthBuild program will resume in-person programming on July 6th
- Thrift Store retail opening goal is mid-August, with students returning mid-September
- Camp LEAD is cancelled; youth overnight camps are not currently allowed

This summer and beyond, all program youth and staff will co-create a culture of wellness and safety by using the COVID-19 safety plan. This plan's key areas include signs and symptoms recognition, physical distancing rules, group sizes, proper PPE and mask use and workplace sanitation, transportation guidelines, and health screening. Our plan also outlines procedures for staff response to symptoms, post-event follow-up, and leave and return to work guidance. All of these efforts are made in coordination with public health departments to respond to incoming information at a local level.

As a part of joining HOC, youth and staff will be asked to commit to a Health and Safety Agreement, and take a pre-questionnaire and simple daily health check on arrival.

The past few months have been a period of uncertainty and struggle for many of us. However, when we reflect on the continued hard work and generosity of members in our communities, Heart of Oregon Corps is optimistic. We enter this period of economic recovery with renewed assurance that empowering young people holds the key to long-term economic sustainability in Central Oregon. As we resume operations, it is our hope that our safety plan reflects the focus we have placed on the health and well-being of the young people we serve, and the communities in which they play an integral role.

Thank you for being a partner in wellness and safety,

Laura Handy, Executive Director, laura.handy@heartoforegon.org