



HOC serves a population called “disconnected youth,” defined as a person between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor employed. This age group forms a cohort of emerging adults who struggle for self-sufficiency. Often this group languishes in low-paid jobs for a lifetime. Research shows there is a need for expanded societal efforts to help them transition into decently paid jobs that become careers.

HOC provides the opportunity for these youths to succeed by giving them a stable environment with rigorous physical tasks, high expectations, and strict rules. The YouthBuild program is an ongoing success, training youth in construction job skills. Students make a 12-month daily commitment to work on their GED or high school diploma and participate in constructing a three-bedroom, two-bath single-family affordable home for a low-income family. The YouthBuild home in Prineville is due for completion this spring.

The other programs managed by HOC include the well-known AmeriCorps program, Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, Camp LEAD, a Thrift Store in Madras, and the Stewardship program for private employers and local governments.

So why should you care? I joined the HOC Board of Directors in 2018 and discovered an organization whose mission for youth has a track record of success and deserves your consideration. The issues in Central Oregon are not dissimilar from those nationally, but some trend lines are more acute. The HOC Board is developing a new strategic plan for 2021 that will be evaluating demographic shifts and employment opportunities emerging in our community. One issue that will be evaluated is the impact of an aging population. The Bend Council on Aging announced recently that 20 percent of the Central Oregon community is 65 or over and by 2050 that number is projected to grow to 25 percent. There will be housing, infrastructure, and care management jobs to fill, but youth need to be educated and trained to fill them.

Heart of Oregon Corps is looking forward to the future with your support. Please consider a gift to HOC this year and/or sponsor a table at the **Farm to Fork Fundraiser on Sunday, September 13, at Seven Mountain Resort**. Please go to this link to learn more about donating, volunteering, mentoring, joining the Alumni Network or the Employer Advisory Council: <https://heartoforegon.org/get-involved/donate.html>

Broken Top Living Cares

Written By **Leslie Barbour**

HEART OF OREGON CORPS

The Broken Top Community’s capacity for generosity is well-known and appreciated in the Bend community. The Broken Top Club hosts the Birdies for Babies and Cork & Barrel annual events. Both events contribute non-restricted funds to organizations that help children. Given the history of this support for the young and vulnerable populations in our community, I’d like to introduce you to the **Heart of Oregon Corps**, a non-profit that helps youth succeed in Central Oregon.

Heart of Oregon Corps (HOC) was established in 2000 to help youth find employment in the local economy. The organization has expanded since that time to manage six programs (two are nationally recognized), for careers in construction, retail, and the environment. The organization serves about 300 Central Oregon youth every year and has compiled a stellar record of support for nearly 6,000 men and women in 20 years.