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Seven Years of Building a Movement to End Child Sexual Abuse

A landmark report details the impact of the Protect Our Children program in communities across rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif.

Roseburg, Ore.: A first-of-its-kind evaluation of child sexual abuse prevention programming in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. was released today by the University of Oregon’s Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) and The Ford Family Foundation. The report details the impact of Protect Our Children, a community-based training program that increases knowledge about child sexual abuse and promotes attitudes and behaviors to combat its widespread occurrence. Beyond measuring individual-level impacts, the evaluation also documents systems-level changes, which will help inform the entire field of child sexual abuse prevention.

Child sexual abuse and related trauma are compounded by a culture of silence. Among high school students who participated in the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Survey, nearly one in three (29%) experienced at least one form of child sexual abuse yet half (47%) had not disclosed their abuse to anyone at the time. Protect Our Children works to end the culture of silence by directly discussing sexual trauma and its features, and by providing hopeful and practical strategies for protection and social change. Nearly 40,000 people have been trained through the program.

“Every day I’m inspired and encouraged by the commitment, compassion and determination of our Protect Our Children partners,” says Mary Ratliff, Protect Our Children project director. “They’re relentless in their fight for the well-being of every child.”

The landmark report found that compared with randomly-selected Oregonians, participants in the program were:

- **Five times more likely** to report they know what to do to contribute to child abuse prevention in their community
- **Four times more likely** to ask about sexual abuse prevention policies
- **Three times more likely** to believe their community has a plan to reduce child sexual abuse
- **Nearly three times more likely** to look for signs of sexual abuse in children

Important capacity and community-level changes were also reported among Protect Our Children partner sites — including greater community awareness of their prevention efforts, growing cross-



agency partnerships, and new conversations and norms critical for action-taking and sustained change to prevent child sexual abuse.

“The ecosystem of partners that now exists as a result of Protect Our Children is a powerful tool for advocacy and the protection of the most vulnerable among us,” says Anne Kubisch, president and CEO of The Ford Family Foundation. “These are the investments we are deeply proud to make in our rural communities.”

A program of The Ford Family Foundation for the first seven years, Protect Our Children has reached a pivotal point in its evolution and implementation and is now a standalone program housed at the Tides Center. This move marks an important milestone in the program’s trajectory—expanding beyond rural to serve sites statewide.

To learn more about Protect Our Children, please visit: <https://www.tfff.org/mobilizing-oregon-communities-prevent-child-sexual-abuse>

About The Ford Family Foundation

The Ford Family Foundation believes in the power of rural communities. It is a private, nonprofit foundation proudly headquartered in Roseburg, Oregon, serving rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. Its investments through grants, scholarships and community building create the conditions so that children have the family, educational and community supports they need to succeed in life. www.tfff.org

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