

March 5, 2025

My name is Tess Smithey, I've been incarcerated at Coffee Creek since July 2021. During my stay I've had several jobs (parks, landscaping, fire crew, CDC) but none of them guarantee me a career when I'm released. In my opinion, UPACT Oregon is the best program Coffee Creek has to offer, it will give us a career, financial security which is a big thing after being in prison for several years it sets us up to succeed and to stay out of the life we were living before our incarceration.

The last 3 ½ years I've worried about what my life would be like after I was released, I didn't know where I was going to end up or what I would do for a job since I'm a felon now but now that's a weight lifted off my shoulders because in 3 ½ weeks I graduate UPACT Oregon

This program has changed my life, and I wish everyone could have this opportunity. I know there is limited funding for the program, but I think it should continue so people in the future can have a chance to change their life as well. I have a friend who is very interested in the program, but she doesn't get released until 228 so she won't be able to do the program unless funding gets continued. There are several people who would like to do the program and would be successful but still have to much time. It would also be beneficial for us to have our own space. If we have our own work area, we could have more space to learn and do hands on stuff, also we wouldn't have to worry about being in the way of other physical plant workers. This program really is one of a kind and I hope it can continue on in the future.

- Tessa Smithey