

Peer Court bids farewell to two volunteers

Sublimity residents donated countless hours to area youth

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After several years of service, Lauren Atkin and Haley Rauch are saying goodbye to the Stayton/Sublimity Peer Court division.

Both ladies began volunteering with Peer Court in the seventh grade, the earliest that interested children can start. Atkin, 18, has been a volunteer for Peer Court for nearly seven years, while Rauch, 15, has been a volunteer for nearly five.

During their time participating in Peer Court, they enjoyed attending conferences – for Atkin, a trip to Washington D.C. sticks out, while Rauch remembers a Corvallis retreat – in addition to sitting on the court’s Advisory Board, working with STOMP (Stop Tobacco of Minors Prohibited program) and regularly aiding in court sessions.

“I’ve been the President of the Advisory Board for two years running,” Atkin said. “It’s been a great group, and we’ve helped the community a lot.”

Atkin graduated from Stayton High School June 2, and plans to continue her education in the fall at the University of Nevada Las Vegas to study business management.

“My sister [Kirsten Atkin] was one of the Peer Court’s original members,” she said, “and I would watch her participate and do all these fun things like go to conferences, and I wanted to do that.”

As soon as she became a seventh grader, she explained, she jumped right into participating with Peer Court.

“It’s my way of giving back to the community,” Atkin said. “And it’s just part of who I am. I don’t stand for drugs and alcohol, and that sets me apart from the crowd. It makes me special – my way of life and community service.”

“I’m going to miss spending time with everybody, and I’ll miss this small town,” she said. “But I’m looking forward to meeting new people and fitting into a my new life.”

Rauch was also eager to become part of Peer Court her seventh-grade year. And like Atkin, Rauch participated on the Advisory Board, acting as Treasurer over the past year.

“One day, the idea popped into my head that it would be kind of fun to argue all day as your job,” Rauch said. “Ever since then, that’s what I’ve wanted to do.”

Rauch recently completed her junior year at Regis High School, and moved to Chantilly, Va., with her family on Saturday due to her father's job transfer.

"It's a big change," Rauch said, "especially moving from a school that has less than 200 students to Chantilly High School, which has 2,900."

"It's scary and exciting at the same time."

While Rauch hopes to come back to Oregon where she was born and raised, she pointed out that her plans for college lie on the East Coast.

"I want to go to Harvard, Yale or Stanford," she said. "I want to be a lawyer, and I've definitely always been a big-city girl."

And although the Stayton/Sublimity Peer Court will lose two integral members, all look forward to the future.

"I'll miss Oregon a lot," Rauch said. "Definitely."

"I'll miss the small-town closely knit community where we have block parties and know our neighbors," Atkin said, "but I'm looking forward to the change."