

## **More juvenile detention beds sought**

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Photo - Juvenile Justice Director Jim Goodwin stands in Josephine County's juvenile detention center, which has been shuttered since 2012 because of budget cuts. The county rents three juvenile detention beds in Jackson County, and is now looking at renting more beds on an as-needed basis in Douglas County for emergencies.

A car theft by a teenage boy in Grants Pass has set in motion a chain of events that could soon have Josephine County renting overflow juvenile detention beds in Douglas County.

Shortly before noon on Dec. 10, the owner of a Toyota Scion left it running in a driveway on Southwest Oak Street while loading some Christmas presents into the car. An opportunist took advantage of the situation, hopping in the car and driving off.

A few hours later, the Scion was spotted and chased by Josephine County sheriff's deputies in the Cave Junction area. The pursuit ended when the Scion crashed into a tree. Two juveniles were in the car at the time — a teenage boy and a girl. The boy was arrested.

Due to the seriousness of the incident, the boy normally would have been transported to Jackson County's juvenile detention center, where Josephine County rents three beds because its own Juvenile Justice Center is closed due to lack of funding.

But on that day, all three of those beds were already full. Two were occupied by youths facing Measure 11 charges, and the third was filled by a teen waiting to be transferred to a Oregon Youth Authority correctional facility, Josephine County Juvenile Justice Director Jim Goodwin said.

Josephine County has the option of paying more for a fourth bed in Jackson County when needed, but all of the facility's 21 other juvenile detention beds were already taken.

"Jackson's been running full or at near capacity for a couple of months," Goodwin said. "It just doesn't give us any of that additional room."

As a result, the teen suspected of stealing the car and fleeing from police was released to his parents instead of jailed. Goodwin was fuming: "The fact that we couldn't hold that kid was a real frustration."

In addition, earlier that day, a teen inmate who was staying in an overflow bed at the Medford facility after being arrested on a Josephine County warrant had to be let go because Jackson County needed that bed back.

"Not only did he get bumped, but the same day we had to cite and release the car theft case ... That really reopened the conversation about, 'Do we have other options?'" Goodwin said.

He contacted his counterparts in Douglas County to explore the possibility of booking juvenile offenders there.

"We said, 'Absolutely,'" said Aric Fromdahl, director of the Douglas County Juvenile Department.

Fromdahl said the county is now in the process of drawing up a proposed contract with Josephine County. He said the contract will likely call for Josephine County to pay \$131 a day per juvenile detention bed, on an as-needed basis.

"If they're not using it, we don't charge," Fromdahl said.

Douglas County's juvenile detention facility can house 32 youths, but it is currently staffed for only 24 beds. If Josephine County needs beds, extra staff can be called in, he said. The facility's average daily population lately hovers around 20 inmates, Fromdahl said.

Coos County also doesn't have a juvenile detention facility of its own and contracts with Douglas County for youth offender beds. Coos County pays up front for 1,095 "bed days," or an average of three beds a day, so it pays a lower rate for its beds.

Paying for "bed days" rather than a fixed number of daily beds gives Coos County the flexibility to book more offenders on certain days, depending on the need, without paying extra.

Douglas County has video conferencing equipment that allows juvenile detainees from other counties to participate in court appearances remotely, Fromdahl said.

The Josephine County Juvenile Justice Center, which included a 14-bed detention center and a 16-bed shelter, closed in the wake of deep budget cuts in 2012.

Goodwin said that if Josephine County entered into an agreement with Douglas County, it wouldn't affect the contract with Jackson County, which expires at the end of the fiscal year on June 30. Beyond that date — which is when the county is set to go over a so-called "fiscal cliff" unless there is an unexpected influx of federal money — it is unclear how many juvenile beds Josephine County can afford to rent in other counties.

The contract with Jackson County is for three beds at \$135 a day, which totals \$147,825 annually. When Jackson County has space available, the contract allows Josephine County to rent additional beds at a cost of \$145 each per day.

Any decision to enter into an additional contract with Douglas County would have to be approved by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners.

The teen who allegedly stole the Scion on Dec. 10 remains out of custody and hasn't yet been charged. Goodwin said the boy is facing possible charges of unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, eluding police and reckless endangering.

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