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Teacher's pet: Classroom Law Project changes the way students think

Do you know who represents Oregon in Congress? Chances are you do, but most of the state's high school students do not.

A 2006 Oregon Civics Survey found that just 25 percent of high school students across the state knew who their representatives were. Another 23 percent thought then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski was one of them.

The **Classroom Law Project** seeks to combat that lack of understanding by reaching out to elementary, middle school and high school students and their teachers through a variety of programs that focus on civics and the legal system. Founded in 1983, the CLP's programs impact some 500 teachers and 27,000 students each year.

Still, that's just a drop in the bucket when you consider there are more than 500,000 students in Oregon, says **Marilyn Cover**, CLP's director. And, given cuts to school funding, larger class sizes and a new generation of teachers who may not be as educated about civics as their predecessors, the need for CLP's programs is greater than ever, she notes.

Among those programs, CLP sponsors mock trial competitions, We the People (Constitution Team), Law Day and Street Law, in which law students from Lewis & Clark teach high school students about civil and criminal issues and the ways in which law applies to their everyday lives.

CLP also organizes student visits to the **Multnomah County Courthouse** during the school year. Last year, more than 6,000 students toured the courthouse.

"They got to visit with judges, see lawyers on both sides of cases, and see the kind of career possibilities there are at the courts, including clerks and security guards," she says.

As a nonprofit organization, CLP couldn't pull it all off without a cadre of committed volunteers. It currently has 1,000 individuals, educators, lawyers and business leaders helping out, but organizers say it could always use more.

And, since its federal funding recently was cut, CLP is relying more on donations. It holds its annual golf tournament, one of its biggest fundraisers, on Sept. 26. Now in its 10th year, the tournament will be held at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

More information about CLP is available on the group's [website](#) or by calling 503-224-4424.