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Someone else's sacrifice

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The news just seems to get worse every day. Whether it's about layoffs, businesses closing, state agencies reducing services or failing financial institutions, lately any story that features the word "economy" is sure to be a downer. Even more telling, many stories that used to be written without reference to the concept of financial resources can no longer go without mentioning it.

America is heading ever deeper into a dire financial situation. With every passing week, more institutions seem to get dragged into the mess. A recent victim is the Hampton Roads Youth Center, a worthy organization focused on turning around the troubled lives of troubled youth and their families. In five years of service, the nonprofit agency served more than 75 families throughout Hampton Roads by providing residential, educational and counseling services from its location on Kenyon Road.

Less than a week ago, the organization announced via a letter on its Web site that it is closing its residential program. Members of its governing board wrote that the group had been a victim of factors ranging from changing regulations and licensing standards to a trend against using residential facilities to treat troubled teens.

It was the faltering economy that dealt the final blow, however. "Early on this year, they had started to see a growing gap between expenses and revenue," Development Director Laurie Harrison said of the youth center's board. "There was just not enough money coming in."

It's unclear how Hampton Roads, much less the nation, can awaken from its current economic nightmare, though it's unlikely that shouting "Change!" in a crowded market will have any appreciable effect. It's utterly clear, though, that all of us — even those already hurting a little — must begin to sacrifice for those who live at the margins of our society.

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