



Saturday
January
31, 2009
6:16 AM
EST

Connecticut Junior Republic to close campus for troubled teens

Litchfield campus to shut down in April

BY JIM MOORE | REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

LITCHFIELD — Connecticut Junior Republic will end a 105-year tradition of sheltering and educating troubled teens here in April.

On Friday, 107 teachers, counselors, and support staff were told they will not have a job when the campus, except for the administration building, shuts down April 2.

The nonprofit organization, founded with a 1904 bequest from landowner Mary Buel but funded primarily by taxpayers, has suffered in recent years from changes in how the state treats juveniles in trouble. Over the past decade, CJR expanded and updated its campus, with a \$5 million education center in 1997 and a \$1.4 million family and student services center that opened in 2003.

But in 2008, CJR's number of beds was cut from 84 to 60 in response to shrinking demand; only 38 teenage boys, most referred from the court system, live on campus today.

"That does provide a sense of how quickly things have changed," said Director of Development Hedy L. Barton.

Increasingly, the state refers troubled teens to community and home-based programs rather than residential facilities now reserved only for those teens who demonstrate the highest risk behavior.

What can the state do now that the Connecticut Junior Republic will close its Litchfield campus? Comment on this story in the form below.