

Boys from page 1C

cure the problems we have with our children in society."

Boys Republic also deals with family problems. Most of the boys have been exposed to alcoholism, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and mental abuse.

"A lot of the families don't feel safe with the kids at home," Peck said. "The child needs to feel safe enough to go home. You can look in middle-class and upper-class families and find children who don't feel cherished, loved and safe in their own homes."

**Financial support**

Six months is the average stay at Boys Republic. If a youngster is referred by the county courts, Boys Republic receives \$112 per day. The state mental health system pays \$131 per day if it refers a child to the facility.

Fund-raisers also support the facility.

The future looked grim when Boys Republic lost a state contract in January 1993 and with it went the main revenue and source for referrals. Another blow came under Gov. John Engler's policy of trying to keep many youngsters in the community and out of institutions. When the state contract was lost Boys Republic began accepting county court referrals.

"We were not the quality that we should have been and that we are today," Peck said, adding that more and more people compete for less money.

Problems with truancy have ended, without a single case in 18 months, said Peck, who launched improvements after taking over her position two years ago.

**Under fire**

The facility was also under fire in 1988 and 1989 when nearby residents raised concerns about structural changes to increase security. Residents worried youths who committed more serious crimes would be admitted.

Despite those problems, there have been a lot of success stories, Peck said. Like one about a 12-year-old boy who was kicked out of school, punched a teacher and turned down by an Ohio psychiatric hospital for disciplinary concerns. The boy was an alcoholic, his father was an alcoholic and his mother was a drug addict.

"He was a little bit of a guy," Peck said. "He thought he was retarded and crazy. When he left here he found out he was smart, he wasn't crazy and he actually made the honor roll. You would not believe the difference in this child. He left here as a kid again. He felt good."

**Complete turn around**

Karl Dorn of West Bloomfield knows what it's like to leave Boys Republic and feel good.

He was a Boys Republic resident in 1967 when he was 13. Dorn was referred by the Detroit school system, because he had a truancy problem.

"I had a difficult time going to school," he said with a grin.

Dorn, who is now a Boys Republic board member, said his time there was a turning point in his life.

"It was a safe place to think and to get a little direction in my life and not to have outside pressures," he said, adding that he learned to deal with the things he must, accept the things he can't change and change the things he can.

"I was saved from a potentially very bad crowd," Dorn said, adding that he knew of one friend who was sent to prison.

While at Boys Republic, Dorn learned to accept he couldn't change his parents and that he had to make his own decisions and build self-confidence.

When he returned home, he said, it was like having a dose of



SHARON LEMIRUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Making changes: Maryjane Peck, Boys Republic executive director, is developing plans to turn the Farmington Hills facility around.**



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**"You don't want to make the wrong decisions anymore, and I won't make the wrong decisions anymore. I learned not to be a follower and to practice what I preach."**

16-year-old Boys Republic resident

vitamins that enriched him.

The troubled young Dorn went on to become a member of the Detroit Rotary Club, owner of KTD Printing Associates Inc., where he represents several printing companies; a husband and father of four children.

"If I can do anything from my experience to help youth it's the biggest reward," Dorn said as the reason he decided to become a Boys Republic board member.

**Support sought**

Peck said she hoped to find

more people like Dorn to help.

"We need them to see that it's not only our responsibility but theirs," Peck said. "People always say that we need to do something for children. Here's a good place to start."

Volunteers are needed in many different areas, fund-raising is always a concern and donations of all forms, even furniture and sports equipment are accepted.

"There's always a need for book cases, books, good VCR movies and money, even \$5 will make a difference," Peck said.



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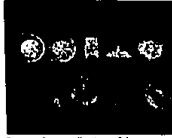
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