

Boys Republic tries to allay neighbors' fears



Masie Kurzeja
nearby resident

Continued from Page 1

court system as first-time offenders for crimes such as breaking and entering or auto theft, said executive director Phyllis Griffin.

The facility provides residential care, counseling, supervision and education. The boys require only medium security. With structural changes to "keep boys on the premises in greater numbers," Boys Republic will remain a medium-security facility, Griffin said.

In May, Boys Republic agreed to a one-year contract with the Department of Social Services to set up a reception/assessment center program. The program began Monday with 20 court-referred boys.

It involves first-time offenders who broke probation for a crime such as burglary and were sent to Boys Republic by the DSS for a four-week review before placement in a long-term treatment center, Griffin said.

The boys, because they're new to the facility, may be frightened and anxious, Grannan said, and "if they have a chance to take off, they will."

There's a 24-hour window to reassess "a particularly bad apple" to another assessment program or a youth home, campus officials said.

TWO HOUSING units have been renovated with security window screens, door locks and an audio monitoring system. A fence 18 feet high encloses a basketball court off the first unit.

The first unit has been completed; it houses 20 boys in the assessment program. The second unit is scheduled to be done by Sept. 15; it will house 20 more assessment boys.

The objective is to reduce the number of opportunities for boys to exit the building and walk off the grounds, a wooded area north of Nine Mile, west of Inkster. Boys must pass a staff member to exit the buildings, Grannan said.

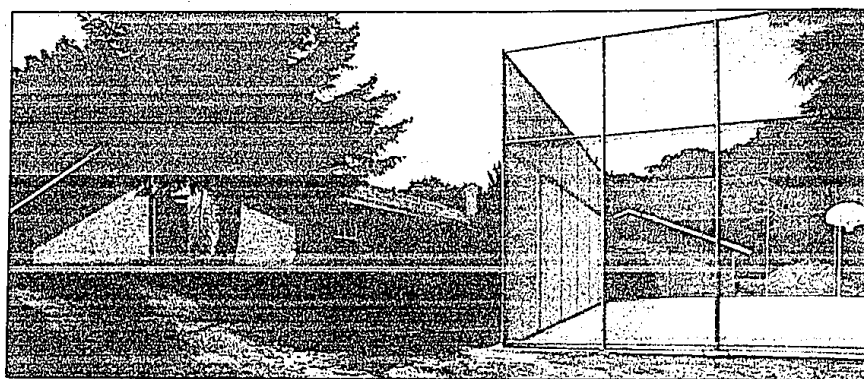
By mid-October, renovation is targeted to be done for the third unit, which houses 22 open treatment boys.

BOYS REPUBLIC continues to offer long-term treatment for boys who the DSS places there. These boys will be separated from boys enrolled in the assessment program. Open treatment boys have supervised community access; assessment program boys don't but family visits are allowed on site.

The DSS warned Boys Republic it would discontinue sending boys to the home for long-term treatment if security was not improved to lower the high truancy rate, Grannan said.

The facility obtained a \$1 million mortgage loan to pay for immediate renovations, Griffin said. State funds for the facility have doubled with the improved security.

"If you tighten your act and make it better, we'll begin to put more kids in there again at a higher daily rate



RANDY BOHST-staff photographer

The dormitory on the left is used to house assessment program boys. The fenced area on the right is a basketball court.

to help pay off the mortgage," Grannan said the state told him. "You can't stand still. You either go forward and progress. Or you back up and die."

"We'll do everything we can do to relieve your concerns," Grannan told neighbors still not convinced about the type of juvenile felons now housed at Boys Republic.

EVEN WITH the new assessment service, the campus will still house fewer than the 65 boys allowed under its 1989 license, Griffin said.

The facility receives \$179 per day (nearly \$64,000 annually) per boy in the assessment program and \$153.71 per day (nearly \$55,000 annually) per boy, in the treatment program, Griffin said. The figures include all operating costs, including staff payroll, food and utilities.

More staff also has bolstered security, Griffin said.

Previously, one staff member supervised 12 boys during waking hours and one supervised 16 boys at night. Now, one staff member supervises four boys during waking hours and one supervises seven boys at night.

Staff includes social workers, psychologists, teachers, and child care workers assigned by the state. They have the capability to supervise the boys. Security guards are not needed, Griffin said.

Boys in the treatment program have less supervision and more mobility to walk through campus and use the pool. Unlike assessment program boys, their bedroom doors aren't locked at night. As boys progress in the program, they are allowed to return home on weekends with the approval of facility officials.

None of the boys are allowed to

leave the campus unsupervised, Griffin said.

RESIDENTS WERE also concerned when Boys Republic discontinued busing the boys to classes held in the Shiawassee Center, now Farmington Community School, at Shiawassee and Tuck, in September 1988 and began holding classes on the facility grounds.

Griffin said under the new assessment program, on-site classes allow

direct staff supervision over students while Farmington school teachers conduct classes.

Although Boys Republic is a private, non-profit, social organization, the facility works with the Farmington school system to assure proper education for the boys.

Lt. Gordon Ross of the Farmington Hills Police Department will work as a liaison for the community and Boys Republic. He will be the facility's contact for truancy problems.



James Grannan
board president



George Roberts
nearby resident

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