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BOYS AND GIRLS TOWN CLOSES ON WOODHAVEN PROPERTY PURCHASE (Published Dec. 25, 2004, in the Columbia Business Times) - 12/6/2004

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BOYS AND GIRLS TOWN CLOSES ON WOODHAVEN PROPERTY PURCHASE

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Boys and Girls Town of Missouri plans to close December 7 on its purchase of a portion of 5.5 acres of the former Woodhaven Learning Center property after a decade of the property sitting vacant.

The Boys and Girls Town tract lies in the southwest corner of the old Woodhaven campus on Bearfield Road south of Nifong Blvd. GAP Properties of Columbia purchased 61 acres of the 100-acre former campus earlier this year.

"I think it's going to work out really good for them; we were not initially at all looking to sell any of it, but we talked to them over a long enough period of time that they convinced me," said George Pfenenger, president of GAP Properties L.L.C.

Recently annexed by the City of Columbia, the property now holds six buildings, four of which will be renovated to house a dozen children each. Two cottages each will be assigned to girls and boys, and, of those, one cottage each will be assigned to Level 4 children, a state term used for children who are suicidal or dangerous. They will be the only homes for Level 4 children in this area.

The other two buildings will be converted into a dining hall and administration building. Coordinated by Jim Silsby of Boys and Girls Town, a \$2.5 million capital campaign is now under way to finance the renovations.

"Reutilizing the Woodhaven property for this purpose was just a great idea because it is just sitting there abandoned right now," said Rick James, president of the Columbia Board of Trustees for Boys and Girls Town of Missouri. "It just was a perfect fit, and financially it works out as a perfect fit for us because the properties are already gutted. And that's what we want

because we actually have to go in and rebuild them with really specialized stuff. If they hadn't been gutted, we would have had to gut them, so it worked out great."

Other buildings on the former Woodhaven property, which house the Hand-In-Hand Learning Center daycare facility, the Columbia Public Schools' Bearfield School program for students with behavioral disorders, and the Central Missouri Sheltered Workshop, will not be affected initially by the new development, Pfenenger said.

Boys and Girls Town currently provides long-term and transitional housing for 32 children with behavioral or emotional problems, but the new facilities would allow the organization to increase capacity. There are no plans at present to expand the facility further.

Originally a residential facility for mentally and physically disabled people, the former Woodhaven campus closed in 1994 when most of its residents were "mainstreamed" by moving them into homes, condominiums and apartments in other parts of Columbia.

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