

Good Will-Hinckley School to Temporarily Suspend Residential Programs

Government cutbacks, economic slowdown force Board decision

Hinckley, ME - June 9, 2009 – The Board of Directors of the Good Will Home Association voted to temporarily suspend the operation of its residential programs effective September 1, 2009. The decision will impact 46 students who currently reside at the Good Will-Hinckley School and approximately 110 staff. A separate, specialized education program at the Glenn Stratton Learning Center for day students with multiple learning and emotional challenges will continue operation. This program currently serves 18 students.

The senior class of 2009 of Good Will-Hinckley (Averill High School) graduated, as planned, on June 7. Arrangements are underway to ensure all departing Good Will-Hinckley students not returning to their homes are referred to appropriate schools or residences for the next school year.

“The Board has taken this action reluctantly and only after a thorough analysis of other options,” said Board Chairman Don Marden. “Two key factors contributed to this decision: significant policy changes by State and Federal Agencies cut reimbursement rates for residential care programs and the downturn in the economy reduced our ability to provide scholarships.”

The temporary suspension of residential operations will allow Good Will-Hinckley to conserve its resources while developing a strategic plan for its future. That plan will likely embody a model of the school as a “Center of Excellence” serving students at risk of school failure. The Maine Legislature recently unanimously endorsed this “Center for Excellence” model for Good Will-Hinckley and the bill will be signed by Governor Baldacci. The Board is already working on a new operational plan for the school. Larry Sterrs, former chair of the Good Will – Hinckley board and President and CEO of the Unity Foundation, has been named chair of the new Strategic Planning Initiative.

In a message to Good Will - Hinckley, Governor Baldacci pledged to “work in partnership with you to assure that the Good Will Home Association will survive and flourish in this new work.”

“This was a difficult but necessary decision that will allow us to focus on developing a new operational model to continue Good Will-Hinckley’s distinguished 120-year record of serving children in need,” said Neil Colan, Ed.D., CEO. Colan also expressed his concern for “our students and staff who will soon be departing. This is an emotional time and it is particularly difficult for children to leave a place where they have established so many positive connections. As for staff, leaving what has been far more than just a job, especially while the economy is so fragile, is a major concern. Every effort is being made to support students and staff during their departure.”

Good Will-Hinckley has faced adversity in the past and yet still found ways to continue its mission. “Everyone acknowledges there is a need to help children at risk to succeed in school and, ultimately, in life,” said Colan. “We hope and expect that Good Will-Hinckley will emerge stronger and better able to meet these needs in the future.”

“We want to acknowledge and sincerely thank the many supporters and friends of Good Will-Hinckley for their understanding as we make this difficult decision to suspend the residential program,” said Don Marden. “We are working hard to develop a plan that will continue Good Will-Hinckley’s long history of serving children.”

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