

From the Memphis Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/memphis/news/2019/12/06/youth-villages-invests-22m-in-treatment-facility.html>

Youth Villages invests \$22M in treatment facility expansion, creates 200 new jobs

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See Correction/Clarification at end of article

About seven years ago, Youth Villages considered adding a gymnasium to its Boys Center for Intensive Residential Treatment, which serves children with severe emotional and behavioral problems. Then, it started looking at the waiting list for the facility — it can only take 72 people at a time — and discussed adding beds instead.

But, the idea for a few extra beds turned into a plan for 72 more beds, which turned into hopes for not only additional housing but a new gym, an outdoor pool, classrooms, and so much more.

“It just grew and grew,” said Patrick Lawler, CEO of Youth Villages.

Now, those plans have resulted in a 100,000-square-foot expansion for the Boys Center for Intensive Residential Treatment, which will also get a new, less disconcerting name— Bill’s Place.

“If you’re a kid,” Lawler said. “You’d much rather be at Bill’s Place than the Boys Center for Intensive Residential Treatment.”

Bill’s Place — named after Lawler’s father, who had been an orphan — is a \$22 million extension of Youth Villages’ Bartlett facility. Expected to open in early 2020, it will cover 148,000 square feet and can house 72 additional children, putting the facility’s capacity at 144. It will take boys and girls, ages seven to 18, and they generally stay four to eight months.

Those admitted to Bill’s Place had difficult upbringings. Many have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused. Often, they have unstable family lives and a history of failing in group, foster, or psychiatric homes. Just about all of them are either in state custody or covered by Medicaid insurance.

“They’ve had challenges in school, they’ve had challenges building relationships with other young people and adults, and, in some cases, they’ve self-harmed,” Lawler said.

Bill’s Place gives them a chance.

“They’re young people who haven’t had the same opportunities that many of us do have in this country,” Lawler said. “We want this to be a place where those young people who really need high levels of supervision and support can come and be successful.”

Each person is assigned a counselor and has a treatment plan. This involves pinpointing key challenges and goals, as well as initiatives that will help the resident achieve them. They’re also involved in 12-month academic programs with a student-teacher ratio of nine to two — though in classes with special-needs children the number of teachers will sometimes increase.

“Many of these people are behind in school,” Lawler said. “We work hard to catch them up.”

Youth Villages tracks residents six months, 12 months, and two years after they leave the program. In addition to the academic and emotional support, those admitted to Bill’s Place will have access to many programs and amenities.

Some of the features: A college-size gymnasium, soccer and football fields, an outdoor pool, a movie theater, dance areas, weight and exercise areas, a music room, a sensory room, new classrooms, and a full health clinic that will provide dental and



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eye care.

The expansion will also add more than 200 jobs to the Memphis area. The types of positions vary and include counselors, night monitors, teachers, and food-service staffers. About 90% of these employees will have college degrees, according to Lawler.

A hiring event will be held Dec. 10, from 1-4 p.m, and interested applicants should visit www.youthvillages.org/billsplacecareers.

Correction/Clarification

A previous version of this story stated that 90 of the 200 jobs would require a college degree, as opposed to 90%.

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