

Friends of Long Creek Youth Development Center

Annual Report 2019

The last twelve months have brought the prospect of change to the Long Creek Youth Development Facility.

Despite this atmosphere of change, the Friends of Long Creek continue steadfast in our work to raise funds to support programs for youth in Maine's criminal justice system. But we have widened our scope of support for programs to include support for kids outside the facility.

There are fewer young people in Long Creek than there were when it was built in the 1990s. There are 50 or so residents there now, in a facility built for 150 plus. For that reason, the state Corrections Department seeks to adjust the mission of the facility, by transferring women into Long Creek from the Windham correctional facility. That proposal was referred from this session of the Legislature to be considered in the next session, beginning in January, 2020.

At the same time, a task force has been empaneled to consider alternatives for young people in the corrections system, with an ambitious goal of phasing out youth incarceration.

In the face of all these changes, The Friends of Long Creek organization is redirecting its efforts to support young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system to help keep them from ending up at Long Creek. We provide funds for the juvenile probation officers to support incentives for the kids who do well on the outside, helping them to avoid incarceration. These funds help provide movie tickets, restaurant meals, fishing trips and other pastimes that the kids can enjoy as they build positive relationships with their probation officers, and provide incentives for the kids to do well on the outside.

Going forward, we also want to use our funds to support the residents as they are discharged from Long Creek, often without significant support or job and housing prospects. We want to enhance our ability to assist these kids in their all-important transition efforts.

At the same time, we continue our successful efforts to provide programs for residents at Long Creek, including our successful Creek to College program, where we support post-secondary classes for residents. These classes have included welding instruction, which can provide a steady job for young people as they transition out of Long Creek.

We are able to do all of this with the faithful support of our friends and donors who have been with us along the way, often for many years. We are grateful for that support, and we are determined to continue our work, even as Maine's system of juvenile corrections is poised for change.

Marian McCue

President, Friends of Long Creek Youth Development Center