

Good Shepherd Services ponders next steps as youth pulled from residential program

By Erik Zygmunt

zygmunt@CatholicReview.org

"Heartbreaking" was how Michele Wyman described the reaction of Good Shepherd Services staff and leadership to the decision of the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and Department of Human Resources to remove youths from the care of the 153-year-old institution.

The Baltimore Sun first reported on the Feb. 16 announcement; Wyman, president and CEO of Good Shepherd, told the Catholic Review in a Feb. 24 email that all 49 youths (grades 8-12 and ages 13-21) currently at Good Shepherd will be transferred to other facilities approximately 30 days from that date.

Founded by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Baltimore in 1864, Good Shepherd moved to Halethorpe in 1970. It has treated adolescents with behavioral health needs stemming from mental health issues, trauma and addiction.

"Good Shepherd will run its current programming until all children have transitioned," Wyman wrote. "Then, the programs will terminate until the task force identifies a new mission and time frame for implementation."

The task force, she added, will be formed within 90 days and will, once formed, announce a new ministry for Good Shepherd within 12 months.

"The task force will embark on a very deliberative and exhaustive process, to include the evaluation of national healthcare policy and best practices all in the context of the Good Shepherd mission," she wrote.

Wyman confirmed that the state's decision impacts not only the children but Good Shepherd's more than 200 employees and approximately 100 contractors who provide services for the organization.

Wyman said that all Good Shepherd staff would remain employed through 60 days from the announcement.

"Good Shepherd will work with more than 200 employees to give them their full support during this transition," she wrote.

The Sun reported that the state had imposed four moratoriums on Good Shepherd Services since 2013 and, after citing the organization several times in 2016, gave it a directed plan of correction in January.

In a December, the Sun disclosed that the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene had investigated reported incidents at the facility, including sexual assault on a resident by another resident, as well as a resident stealing from a medicine cart.

Wyman commended Good Shepherd staff for their service over the years.

“The passion these professionals continued to have for our nation’s young people is astounding; they set the standard of all that is good about humanity,” she wrote. “It was privilege and honor to be a small part of love in action.”

Also see:

Good Shepherd Sisters devote lives to prayer, helping women

Good Shepherd Center plans leadership change