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Wisconsin Department of Corrections Completes Consolidation of Juvenile Institutions *DOC Secretary Opens Consolidated Boys School and New Girls School In Lincoln County*

IRMA, LINCOLN COUNTY—Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Gary Hamblin today announced the completion of its Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) juvenile institutions closure and consolidation plan.

At an event on the grounds of Lincoln Hills School (LHS) in Irma, DOC Secretary Hamblin officially opened the new Copper Lake School (CLS) for girls and an expanded Lincoln Hills School for male juveniles.

“This is a historic day for the state and the Department,” said Secretary Hamblin. “We are proud to open this new chapter in juvenile corrections. It represents the fulfillment of years of hard work at both the state and local level to prevent juvenile crime and reduce juvenile arrest rates.”

Due to falling populations at its juvenile institutions, the Department’s Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) in March announced a plan to save \$23 million dollars a year by closing two juvenile facilities in Waukesha County and Racine County and moving the youth to two schools on the grounds of LHS.

The plan is part of Governor Scott Walker’s 2011-13 budget recently passed by the Legislature. The consolidation saves counties millions of dollars in operating costs, holds down the daily rate paid by counties to house their juveniles and erases a \$20 million dollar DJC deficit accumulated over time by 2021.

Approximately 100 male juveniles formerly housed at Ethan Allen School in Wales, WI, have been transferred to LHS in groups over the past few months. The last group arrived June 14. The total population at the boys school is now 241.

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Twelve girls housed at the former Southern Oaks Girls School in Union Grove, WI, were transferred to CLS Monday morning. This is the first time girls have been housed at the LHS campus since 1994.

Copper Lake School sits on the 800-acre LHS site, but two inner and outer perimeter fences between the boys and girls schools and periodic suspension of any male juvenile movement will ensure the two populations never mix or see each other.

CLS has two housing units and the students will receive most programming on-site at their school. Some construction work continues, including renovation of a former housing unit into a new Activity Center. Until the work is done, some LHS program facilities will be used at different times by male and female juveniles to make sure both populations have access to all services and programming.

The consolidation plan included additional staffing needs for the schools. So far, 94 positions have been or are being filled, including nine by employees transferring from the former Southern Oaks Girls School and Ethan Allen School.

Originally, 292 employees at Southern Oaks and Ethan Allen Schools were “at risk” for layoff. A special accelerated job placement process, transfers to CLS/LHS or elsewhere within state government and retirements have resulted in most employees avoiding layoff. The Department continues to work with approximately 34 employees to help them find employment.

Local Lincoln County officials praised the consolidation of male juvenile institutions and the opening of the new girls school for bringing much needed jobs and economic growth to the rural communities of northern Wisconsin.

School Superintendent Paul Westerhaus oversees CLS/LHS. “Our staff is committed to providing our students with the highest-quality education and treatment programs possible in a secure setting,” he said.

The DOC has expanded opportunities for families of juveniles at CLS/LHS to stay in contact. Regularly scheduled bus trips to CLS/LHS have been quadrupled and include more pick-up locations. Families may also visit with juveniles by using videoconferencing equipment available in their county of residence.