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Program for at-risk youths getting broad support

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By Johnny Jackson

jjackson@henryherald.com

Earlier this month, the Henry County Board of Commissioners accepted a \$4,000 donation from Paradise Empowers, Inc., a non-profit subsidiary of PEI Logistics, Inc, whose goal is to help at-risk youths and their families.

"I am glad to get it," said District I Commissioner Warren Holder.

The donation was for Life Management Solutions, a new department established in May to assist families whose teens are getting into trouble, hanging around questionable crowds and otherwise participating in potentially self-destructive activities.

"It's sort of an on-going thing that was previously handled through the Juvenile Courts," Holder said.

The department provides life-management-skills programs for families as well as people involved with the court systems, he added. The department will also assist courts in helping first-time offenders get the help they need to avoid repeating mistakes that can ruin lives.

"The generous donation will help to sponsor families who are at risk and in need of these services, but are financially challenged and cannot afford the program fees," said Julie Hoover-Ernst, Henry County spokeswoman.

Nedrah Weaver, an accountant and group administrator for PEI said: "This is definitely something we wanted to get involved in. We've attended some of the programs, and we've seen progress and improvement. We want to be a part of something as great as this."

Hundreds of people have been helped by these programs since their inception under the Juvenile Court in 2000, and only a small percentage of the court-ordered youths, who have completed these programs, have gotten into trouble with the courts again, according to Hoover-Ernst.

In July, the Life Management Solutions department was awarded two grants, worth \$85,000 and \$63,750, from the Governor's Office of Children and Families for a combined \$148,750. The grants required a \$34,000 match, of which \$28,160 will be provided through in-kind services, and \$5,840 will come from the grant-match account.

The department has also received sponsorships and donations of about \$12,000 from faith-based organizations, businesses, and community members. The different sponsors help pay the cost of programs for individuals and individual families to attend the department's life management training and seminars.

"We're trying to build this on a community foundation," said Sandra Reagan, Life Management Solutions department



Sandy Reagan, director of Life Management Solutions (front row, center) accepts a check from Nedrah Weaver of Paradise Empowers, Inc., as Henry County commissioners and others look on.

director. "This is not just for youth, it is also for families and adults."

Reagan said the department is always looking for sponsorships and donations from the community.

"This is not an individual problem," she added. "What we're dealing with is a community issue, and we want the whole community involved."

To learn more about the Life Management Solutions department's youth and adult programs, visit the department's web site, or call (770) 288-6899.

On the net:

Paradise Empowers, Inc.: www.paradiseempowers.org

Life Management Solutions: www.co.henry.ga.us/LifeManagementSolutions