

The Post and Courier

Donation gives facility more time

By Prentiss Findlay
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[Donations keep Webb Center open; Community response buys at least a month](#), published 01/31/09

The financially strapped Charles Webb Center for kids with special needs received a \$5,000 donation Friday, which will help to keep the center open for at least another two weeks.

The center had enough cash to operate through next week. Its weekly operating costs are \$5,000. "We've pared expenses way down," said Rick Magner, director of the Disabilities Board of Charleston County.

The donation included \$3,000 from Senate President Pro Tem Glenn McConnell, R-Charleston. He could not be reached for comment. State Sen. Robert Ford and state Rep. Wendell Gilliard, both D-Charleston, and other local officials donated to the cause, Magner said.

"We're receiving tremendous support," he said. Several options for continued support are being explored, including help from the Coastal Community Foundation, he said.

Gilliard and Ford presented the \$5,000 to the Webb Center. Gilliard said he is confident that Webb Center supporters, including the Charleston County Legislative Delegation and Mayor Joe Riley, will be able to find additional funding to keep the center open. "We're going to try to shore up some money from the state. I think we can weather the storm," Gilliard said.

Kids at the center range from infants to age 10 and have developmental problems such as autism or mental retardation. The center has a staff of eight.

The goal of the private fundraising effort is to keep the center open until the new state fiscal year begins July 1, when the center's \$150,000 in annual funding could be restored, officials have said. The state money enables the center to receive matching Medicaid funds to meet its budget, officials said.

The state Department of Disabilities and Special Needs cut funds for five child day-care programs, including the Webb Center.

The center has received \$35,000 in private donations, which kept it from having to close on Jan. 30. The state Department of Disabilities and Special Needs cut \$150,000 in annual funding for

the center in response to a General Assembly mandate to trim \$21.5 million, or 11.2 percent, from its budget.

The center serves 30 children whose parents said they would have a hard time finding a place of the same quality to care for their kids while they work. Several said they worried about having to quit their jobs to stay home with their special needs child.

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