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Three Rivers Montana to close

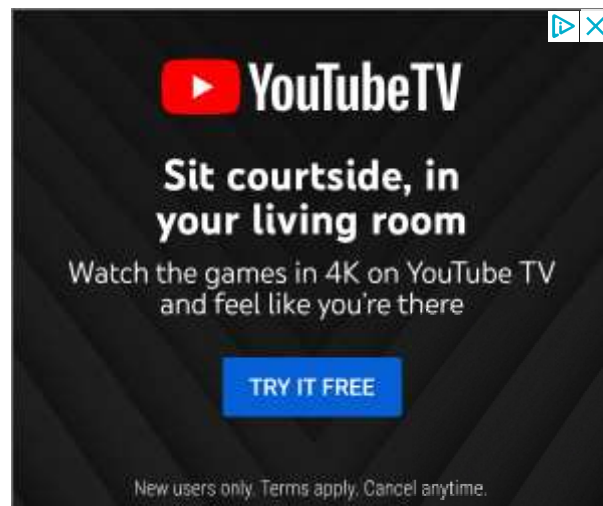
By AMANDA RICKER Chronicle Staff Writer
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Three Rivers Montana, a Belgrade-based wilderness program for troubled teens, plans to close Feb. 28, laying off its 37 employees, executive director Marylis Filipovich said Thursday.

"Normally, January is a very big admissions month for us and we didn't get any admissions," she said.

Three Rivers opened five years ago and has served more than 400 kids from across the nation. Teens experiencing difficulties at home or school could stay at the mental-health facility for a few weeks or months, earning high-school credits and receive treatment.

The nonprofit depended on admission fees, often funded by health-insurance reimbursements, donations and fundraising. Discounts were offered for low-income families.



"In this economy, many of our potential families cannot afford the cost of outdoor behavioral healthcare," Mark Parlett, director of programs and development for Three Rivers, wrote in an e-mail to the Chronicle.

Families often took out loans to send their kids to Three Rivers and the tightened credit market has hurt enrollment, Filipovich said.

"Our families tended to be middle-class, and with the economy like it is, they can't get loans," she said.

Three Rivers is shuttering its location on Dry Creek Road, but the nonprofit plans to keep its incorporated status. Filipovich and Parlett said they hope to continue working with local families in need.