

2003-04 SESSION  
COMMITTEE HEARING  
RECORDS

Committee Name:

Senate Committee on  
Health, Children,  
Families, Aging and  
Long Term Care  
(SC-HCFALTC)

Sample:

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- 03hrAC-EdR\_RCP\_pt01a
- 03hrAC-EdR\_RCP\_pt01b
- 03hrAC-EdR\_RCP\_pt02

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➤ \*\*

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ \*\*

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

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➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ \*\*

➤ Hearing Records ... HR

➤ 03hr\_sb0057\_pt03

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ \*\*

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ \*\*

**Jermstad, Sara**

**From:** Amy Randleman [amy\_randleman@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, March 09, 2003 2:03 PM

**To:** sen.robson@legis.state.wi.us

**Cc:** sen.reynoldsr@legis.state.wi.us

**Subject:** Northern Center

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you to ask you to please examine the facts more closely to see why Governor Doyle is really wanting to close Northern Center. It is strictly political. He figures that because we are "up North" and nobody really know where we are, that he can make these damaging cuts and "it really won't hurt anyone" Out of sight out of mind mentality.

This area is already economically depressed. We are slated to lose 80 jobs in a large nursing home, over 400 jobs at Mason shoes and 500 at Northern Center. All of these cuts in a area that has over a 6 percent unemployment rate.

The Governor proposes to add 148 jobs to Central Center so we can move down there and work. He is proposing to add 148 jobs to an economy that has a 2 percent jobless rate, does that make good economic sense?

The trickle down effect from Norther Center closing would devastate all the small towns in the area. Car dealerships, grocery stores, gas stations, clothing stores, and the vendors that supply Northern Center to name a few, will all be affected. Is this fair?

Governor Doyle said that the budget cuts he was going to make would be spread fairly over the state. That simply is not true. He also delayed the opening of Highview prison at Northern Center and that was also an economic blow to this region. When you look at the figures many of the cuts to other agencies are not really cuts. For instance, it shows that an agency will need to cut 64 jobs but they have 84 openings. Therefore no one loses a job. Most of the job cuts he proposes are the type where the job just isn't filled. Those type of cuts don't hurt anyone. When all is said and done the actually bulk of the actual cuts of real people will come from Northern Center. Please tell me how the pain is equally distributed?

Northern Center has an excellent history of providing outstanding care to our residents. They have wonderful community outings, in - house dances, carnivals, fairs, outing to local restaurants, camps etc. They have vocational workshop with "real" jobs where they earn good money. Their apartments are beautiful. The get wonderful; nursing care and live a long good life.

Not all community placements have fairy tale endings. Many clients have dies within in weeks of leaving Northern. They have been scalded, choked on their meals and died etc. We have the proof to show you if you should be interested.

03/10/2003

Please vote to keep Northern open. We are not faceless and nameless people. Please come see what we do for these people and the full and rich lives they lead before you make your final decision.

We are counting on you,

Sincerely, Amy Randleman and Douglas Reace

Telephone 836-0910

615 Summer St.

Eau Claire, WI 54701

Please know that just because it is e-mail doesn't mean the form of the communication is not valid.

---

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6:43 PM 3/9/2003

MAR 14 2003

*Sandra Ann Rossler,*

Hello,

I'm writing to you as a caregiver at Northern Center, a taxpayer, wife, mother and grandmother.

If my job is cut at the Center all these things will be affected. The places I shop, services I require (medical, dental), how much I can contribute to church and be able to help out our daughter and grandchildren, etc. etc. All aspects of my life will change and the Chippewa Valley will suffer this also.

One of the big losses will come to the people that I care for at the Center. These people have become part of our extended families. Many employees have spent more Holidays here at the Center than with their own families. We also have become part of theirs. They have familiar faces, continuity of care and a pleasant clean place to live as their home. No matter what type of cares these people need or how fragile they are, these peoples needs have been met. Some have not been easy!!

These people will go somewhere, if back to their own counties, that means higher county taxes. If they are moved to Central where they have a harder time keeping employees, will they get the continuity of care? There are many with special needs.

I do believe our years of experience and service to those we work for and with have benefited in many ways and so have we. We worked hard to place our people in the community and our dedication and experience has shown how good we are at our jobs. Look at the figures and it's black and white. It's a sad thing to think that we are doing such a good job that we no longer will be able to continue to do just that. Sad for the many people that still need the help and services to reach that goal.

Our Chippewa Valley will suffer a great loss.

NWC Employee  
Nancy Greene

MAR 14 2003

March 9, 2003

State Senator Carol Roessler  
Room 8 South State Capitol  
P. O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI. 53707-7882

Re: Following is the letter I have forwarded to Governor Doyle regarding the Proposed closing of the Northern Wisconsin Center For The Developmentally Disabled

Dear Governor Doyle:

This letter is in response to the above referenced matter.

It is extremely important to us, the caregivers, at the Northern Wisconsin Center, to see that the residents of the Northern Wisconsin Center receive the best of care and attention. We have prided ourselves on the fact that we care about our residents. We give each resident the care and love that they need to laugh and feel good about themselves. We have strived hard to prepare some residents to be able to live with and without assistance in the community. Some residents that did not receive any assistance just merely forgot to take their medications, or eat balanced meals and perished. Other residents were placed in group homes with most of them flourishing. Then there were the group homes where our special people were abused, starved, lost out in the cold, medications monitored improperly and either perished, or were returned to our care to try and make them learn to trust and love us again.

With your proposed closing of the Northern Wisconsin center, not only would the residents suffer emotionally and physically from being deprived of our loving care, the impact on the economy would be devastating. With the closing of the Wisconsin Northern Center, not only would jobs be lost, that alone causing great hardship to the community, it would cause homes to be foreclosed on, families stressed out, bankruptcies to increase, businesses to suffer extreme hardships and possibly relocate to neighboring States. The Wisconsin Northern Center is one of the largest employers in the area. Caregivers from dozens of counties are employed here. Our residents are special to us as they are to their loved ones who reside in the 52 surrounding counties we serve. We as caretakers have received much praise from the loved ones of our special people. These parents, siblings and guardians have told us repeatedly that they trust us as caregivers because we are so concerned with providing the best care possible to each and every one of our residents. Each of the parents, siblings and guardians who visit their loved ones stay in area hotels, eat at local restaurants, buy presents from local businesses, which employ people who in turn pay taxes!

Let's get to the issue of no new taxes! That sounds good to some, but look at the consequences of that statement. Homes will be foreclosed on, bankruptcies filed, people being laid off, unemployment benefits being paid (which already has been cut because of the lack of funds), no taxes being paid to the State of Wisconsin.....Where in the world do you expect the tax revenue to

come from to support the State? Who will be left to pay these taxes? Our employment record ranks behind our neighboring State of Minnesota. With the closing of the Northern Center and the many layoffs of the surrounding area businesses, we would fall to the taxable income level of Mississippi. The employed people of Wisconsin pay more taxes than many of the larger States and we still cannot make our budget balance! It took many years to get into this hole, why do you propose to "dig us out" all within a matter of just a few short years by cutting our jobs and crushing the local economy?

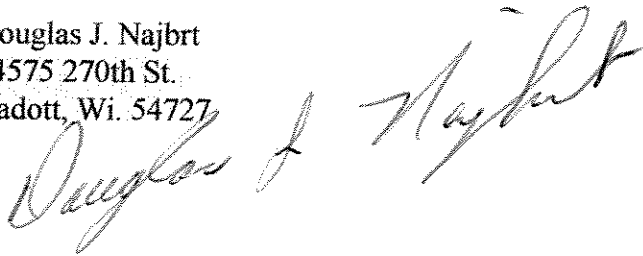
We as caregivers do not desire to relocate to the Madison area as you propose. Our facility is more than adequate to accept some of the residents of Central Center, with our sister Southern Center receiving the balance of the residents. Madison already has the ability to maintain their employment stability with the many other business, hospitals, Government positions in the Capitol and recreational attractions.

We are a dedicated, hard working people, who also love the many recreational opportunities northern Wisconsin has to offer; ie: snowmobiling, ATV riding, fishing, hunting, golfing, etc., which increases the job stability and money generated to pay Wisconsin taxes. We also seek medical and dental attention, which generates more jobs for northern Wisconsin.

We, the people in northern Wisconsin are not so far north that we do not vote, or pay our taxes!

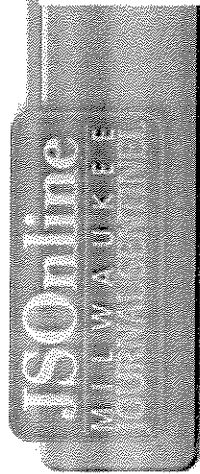
Yours truly,

Douglas J. Najbrt  
14575 270th St.  
Cadott, Wi. 54727

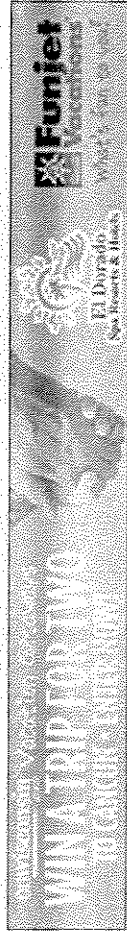
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas J. Najbrt". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and address.



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## Groups for disabled support shutting center But Chippewa County worries about job losses

By AMY RINARD  
arinard@journal sentinel.com

Last Updated: March 9, 2003

Chippewa County officials say Gov. Jim Doyle's plan to dramatically downsize the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled in Chippewa Falls could devastate the local economy, but advocates for the disabled say it's the best thing that could happen to center residents.

Agencies such as Ranch Community, which helps counties place people with disabilities in group homes and provides them with support and job training, have endorsed Doyle's proposal.

The plan would cut 301 full-time jobs at the Northern Center, which is home to about 175 people with developmental disabilities. Only

### Quotable

“The era of large-scale, state-run institutions has passed.”

- Lisa Mills,

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a handful of employees would remain there to operate a 17-bed intensive program to treat, stabilize and eventually return to the community patients who have acute problems.

Doyle's budget advisers estimate the reduction in state spending would be about \$4.6 million. And, budget documents note 38 other states have closed similar institutions because of a trend toward treatment and care of individuals with developmental disabilities in community settings.

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, which acts on behalf of more than 50 organizations that represent people with disabilities, children, families and senior citizens, praised Doyle's proposal as paving the way for the disabled to receive "more personalized and appropriate services in smaller community settings."

"The era of large-scale, state-run institutions has passed," said Lisa Mills, administrator of People First Wisconsin, an advocacy group run for an by people with disabilities.

"Those who have had the courage to look forward and develop community services have seen the obvious benefits that that accrued for people with developmental disabilities and our communities."

Leutermann said Ranch Community Services has helped place into community living settings many individuals from the state's three centers for the developmentally disabled - the Northern Center, the Central Wisconsin Center in Madison and the Southern Wisconsin Center in Union Grove.

### From institutions into jobs

**administrator of People First Wisconsin, an advocacy group run for the disabled**

**"We don't have a very robust economy. We're struggling day to day to keep what we have."**

*- Michael Murphy, Chippewa County Board chairman*

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With support from human service departments and local service agencies such as Ranch Community, most individuals who had been institutionalized make a successful transition into community living, he said. Some even get jobs.

"We believe most of the people in the centers can be integrated into community-based living," Leutermann said.

But state officials acknowledge that placement in a group home or other community setting may not be appropriate for all of Northern Center's current patients. Also, treatment plans for some of its patients may not be completed before June 30, 2004, when the downsizing is to be complete.

"We believe the majority of people now at Northern Center will make successful transitions," said Sue Jones, director of the bureau of developmental disability services in the state Department of Health and Family Services, which operates the centers.

"Some will be quicker and easier than others, but there may be some for whom, in the time frame we're going to do this, we won't be able to develop something. We don't anticipate there will be many, but we're really trying to look at all the options."

She said the staff at Northern Center would work with county officials, who have the legal responsibility for their residents living at the center, to develop "safe, high quality living arrangements for each individual."

### **Central Center to get larger**

Under Doyle's proposal, an additional 58 beds will be added to the Central Center, and some Northern Center residents may be transferred there or to Southern Center.

Michael Murphy, chairman of the Chippewa County Board, said he and other area officials hope to persuade the state to keep Northern Center open. With area unemployment already at 6%, Murphy said

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closing the center would hit an already-struggling economy hard.

"The word to use is *devastating*," he said of the economic impact on the county of Doyle's proposal.

In Chippewa Falls, 206 families would be affected by the layoffs, Murphy said. Other smaller cities such as Cadott, with 84 families affected, would be hit even harder because center workers make up a greater percentage of their population.

"We don't have a very robust economy," Murphy said. "We're struggling day to day to keep what we have."

Jim Malone, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Family Services, said state officials are discussing ways to "blunt the economic impact" of downsizing Northern Center. No decisions have been made.

Murphy said it had been thought that opening Highview Hall, a new 300-bed state prison facility for aging inmates on the center grounds, might soften the economic impact of closing the center. But Doyle also recommended in his budget proposal that the opening of Highview be delayed indefinitely.

A version of this story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on March 10, 2003.

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# Senate will hold hearing on Zien-Wood legislation

3-7-03 Dawn C.

The Senate Health, Children, Families, Aging and Long Term Care Committee will hold a hearing on the bill to close the Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, in the State Capitol.

Senate Bill 57, authored by Sen. Dave Zien (R-Wheaton) and Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls) would close the Central Center, relocate residents to the community and to the two remaining centers, and sell the land and buildings.

Zien and Wood, offered the bill as an alternative to downsizing and closing the Northern Center, as proposed by Gov. Jim Doyle and his administration.

Zien said it is critical to

make a strong show of support for the Northern Center as a care center for the developmentally disabled, and for its other possible uses at Tuesday's hearing.

"We need to tell our story of how great the Northern Center and its workforce is," said Zien. "Other legislators view this as a parochial issue that only affects the Chippewa Valley. That's not true. This has an enormous impact on the entire state — both financially and in how and where our developmentally disabled residents are cared for."

Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Helene Nelson said the state would save \$2.2 million by drastically downsizing the Northern Center to 17 residents by July, 2004.

Zien says closing Central Center instead will ensure better care for developmentally disabled residents and will save the state even more money.

"Madison realtors estimate the land at the Central Center to be worth between \$30 and \$80 million alone," said Zien. "Add the \$50 million value of the buildings and we're looking at between \$80 and \$130 million that selling Central Center would bring. This would make a sizeable dent in our deficit."

Zien said workers at Northern Center, many of whom have worked at the center for decades, are also known as the best in the state and have the best track record of placing residents in the community.

**Jermstad, Sara**

**From:** Seaquist, Sara  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 9:26 AM  
**To:** Jermstad, Sara  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Bill 57  
 CR email...not a constituent

-----Original Message-----

**From:** MMclennon@aol.com [mailto:MMclennon@aol.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, March 09, 2003 9:51 PM

**To:** sen.zien@legis.state.wi.us; rep.woodj@legis.state.wi.us; rep.suder@legis.state.wi.us; rep.kreibich@legis.state.wi.us; rep.hines@legis.state.wi.us; rep.balow@legis.state.wi.us; rep.ladwig@legis.state.wi.us; rep.lasee@legis.state.wi.us; rep.musser@legis.state.wi.us

**Cc:** sen.reynolds@legis.state.wi.us; sen.roessler@legis.state.wi.us; sen.kanavas@legis.state.wi.us; sen.brown@legis.state.wi.us;

sen.welch@legis.state.wi.us; sen.schultz@legis.state.wi.us; sen.robson@legis.state.wi.us; sen.chvala@legis.state.wi.us; sen.jauch@legis.state.wi.us;

sen.carpenter@legis.state.wi.us

**Subject:** Senate Bill 57

As friends of the parents of a child residing at Central Wisconsin Center, we are disturbed by the bill that you have presented to close the center. At this time, we would request that you provide us at least some basic information as to your reasons for this action, so that we can properly advocate for our friends, if appropriate.

Central Wisconsin Center provides care for many residents who are not appropriate for placement in the community. Their medical and developmental disabilities are so profound, and have been managed so proficiently over many years, that it is highly unlikely that the results can be duplicated in the community. Indeed, even at either Northern or Southern Center, the learning curve for providing proper care may negatively impact the residents' quality of care, quality of life, and may create undue hardship to these residents as they are forced into treatments that may be ill-suited for them.

The quality of staff, especially for those residents under age 22, (our friends' son among them), is outstanding. As the current rules indicate that Central Center is the location of choice for the under 22 population, this singles out a particularly vulnerable age group, as the new caregivers, by the state's own current preferences, are not accustomed to the medical needs of this age group.

Our friends' son, age 16, is of course unable to advocate for himself. We feel the parents of these children must be properly informed as to your reasoning for introducing this bill. As there is not much time before the March 11 hearing, we would appreciate a response prior to this event. Please include the reason for providing so little time to develop a transition plan for the residents, their families and their medical providers. Closure in July of 2004 could force residents and families to make medical support service decisions too quickly with potentially devastating effects.

03/10/2003

Sincerely,

Mark and Mary Ann McLemmon  
2571 N. 86th Street  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin  
(414) 453-8251

**Jermstad, Sara**

---

**From:** Seaquist, Sara  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 9:59 AM  
**To:** Jermstad, Sara  
**Subject:** FW:

CR email...not a constituent

-----Original Message-----

**From:** twaldkirch@athenet.net [mailto:twaldkirch@athenet.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 9:58 AM  
**To:** sen.reynolds@legis.state.wi.us  
**Cc:** sen.roessler@legis.state.wi.us  
**Subject:**

Dear Senators Reynolds and Roessler:

As an aunt of a child residing at Central Wisconsin Center, I am disturbed by the bill that you have presented to close the center. I realize and fully advocate reduction in state spending but I would ask that you look at the alternatives for residents of Central Wisconsin Center. I am a Special Education teacher in the Green Bay Public Schools and I work with children who are physically and/or mentally impaired. Many of these people, including the students on respirators, can be served in the public schools. My nephew's medical and developmental disabilities are so profound, and have been managed so proficiently over many years, that it is highly unlikely that the results can be duplicated in the community.

Even at Northern or Southern Center there would need to be major changes and increases in programming to accommodate the needs of an adolescent like my nephew.

The quality of staff at Central Center is dedicated and committed to providing care that meets both physical and emotional needs of their residents. My brother's family feels welcome in their regular interactions with Andrew and are confident that he is receiving good care.

I hope this will reach you before the March 11 hearing as I would like you to consider an alternative for closure. The deaf school in Delavan has long seemed to me a violation of the Least Restrictive environment for deaf and hard of hearing students. In Green Bay Public Schools and many other districts around the state these students are very effectively integrated into the public school environment with support. They live with their families and are accepted into the community. They require little outside medical care. Why is a school like Delavan even in existence in the 2003? The housing and transportation of these students is not only costly but I believe not in their best interests. Surely this should be considered before closing a facility like Central Center where severe medical necessity justifies its existence! I think that the Central Center residents are a target because they can not advocate for themselves.

Is this fair?

I would ask that you contact me regarding the feasibility and rationale of these views. I further ask that you consider postponing any decisions until you can look into the options.

Sincerely,

Therese Waldkirch  
808 Mandalay Terrace  
Green Bay, WI 54301

**Jermstad, Sara**

**From:** Seaquist, Sara  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 10:12 AM  
**To:** Jermstad, Sara  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Bill 57  
CR email...not a constituent

-----Original Message-----

**From:** TWKW@aol.com [mailto:TWKW@aol.com]

**Sent:** Saturday, March 08, 2003 6:17 PM

**To:** sen.zien@legis.state.wi.us; rep.woodj@legis.state.wi.us; rep.suder@legis.state.wi.us; rep.kreibich@legis.state.wi.us; rep.hines@legis.state.wi.us; rep.balow@legis.state.wi.us; rep.ladwig@legis.state.wi.us; rep.lasee@legis.state.wi.us; rep.musser@legis.state.wi.us

**Cc:** sen.reynolds@legis.state.wi.us; sen.roessler@legis.state.wi.us; sen.kanavas@legis.state.wi.us; sen.brown@legis.state.wi.us; sen.welch@legis.state.wi.us; sen.schultz@legis.state.wi.us; sen.robson@legis.state.wi.us; sen.chvala@legis.state.wi.us; sen.jauch@legis.state.wi.us; sen.carpenter@legis.state.wi.us

**Subject:** Senate Bill 57

Dear Senators Zien, Brown, Brown, Representatives Wood, Suder, Kreibich, Hines, Balow, Ladwig, Lasee, Musser:

As parents of a child residing at Central Wisconsin Center, we are disturbed by the bill that you have presented to close the center. At this time, we would request that you provide us at least some basic information as to your reasons for this action, so that we can properly advocate for our son, if appropriate.

Central Wisconsin Center provides care for many residents who are not appropriate for placement in the community. Their medical and developmental disabilities are so profound, and have been managed so proficiently over many years, that it is highly unlikely that the results can be duplicated in the community. Indeed, even at either Northern or Southern Center, the learning curve for providing proper care may negatively impact the residents' quality of care, quality of life, and may create undue hardship to these residents as they are forced into treatments that may be ill-suited for them.

The quality of staff, especially for those residents under age 22, (our son among them), is outstanding. As the current rules indicate that Central Center is the location of choice for the under 22 population, this singles out a particularly vulnerable age group, as the new caregivers, by the state's own current preferences, are not accustomed to the medical needs of this age group.

Our son, age 16, is of course unable to advocate for himself, thus, we in turn must be properly informed as to your reasoning for introducing this bill. As there is not much time before the March 11 hearing, we would appreciate a response prior to this event. Please include the reason for providing so little time to develop a transition plan for the residents, their families and their medical providers. Closure in July of 2004 could force residents and families to make medical support service decisions too quickly with potentially devastating effects.

03/10/2003



We are copying our local senator and will direct a separate communication to him as well. Lastly, we are copying all committee members should they wish to contact us prior to the hearing for a better understanding of the quality of the Center from a parent's perspective. We would offer any and all legislators a tour of the facility with us, so that they can see first hand that this facility is medically necessary, with a highly skilled staff, and meets the needs of society's most fragile individuals.

Sincerely,

Thomas and Karen Waldkirch  
1709 Day Ct.  
Wauwatosa, WI 53213  
414-774-7084

## Jermstad, Sara

---

**From:** Marcott, Susan  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 10:46 AM  
**To:** Jermstad, Sara  
**Subject:** RE: Closing of NWC

And good morning to you, too!

Sorry I didn't get to you sooner -- the phone has been ringing off the hook.

There have been no jobs cut yet. Dr. Ted Bunck, who has been the director at Central Center in Madison for the past six years, has been named interim director of Northern Center, effective March 24. He visited the center last week and has previous experience in closing centers down in Maryland. The department has said they do not anticipate that they will begin placing residents until June because they have to develop relocation plans. Because they can do it administratively, it is not known how many will be placed beginning in June, or if there will be some who will be placed sooner. Dr. Bunck being named interim director has union members thinking the downsizing will happen quickly.

Unfortunately, that is all we have at this point. The union has not been told when they will lose their jobs -- it all depends on what the department comes up with for relocation plans for the residents.

I hope this is helpful.

I will see you tomorrow. Thanks.

Susan

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Jermstad, Sara  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 8:10 AM  
**To:** Marcott, Susan  
**Subject:** Closing of NWC

Good morning!

Could you tell what downsizing has already started at Northern. In other words, have jobs already been cut? If so, how many? When is the next round of cuts going to be made? Etc.

Thank you,  
Sara

Sara Jermstad  
Office of Senator Carol Roessler  
Sara.Jermstad@legis.state.wi.us  
(608)266-5300 / 888-736-8720

Jermstad, Sara

---

**From:** Witkowski, Diane [dwtkowski@bussvc.wisc.edu]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 11:01 AM  
**To:** 'sen.roessler@legis.state.wi.us'  
**Subject:** closing Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled (NWC)

> Dear Senator Roessler:  
> Approximately two weeks ago it was announced that Northern WI Center for  
> the Developmentally Disabled would close due to low census of clients and  
> other intended use of the facility. Since this time Senators and  
> Representatives from this area as well as Southern WI Center in Union  
> Grove have presented Senate Bill # 57 to close Central WI Center for the  
> Developmentally Disabled (CWC) in Madison WI.  
> I oppose the closing of CWC for many reasons. The majority of residents  
> who reside at CWC are in the least restrictive environment as possible.  
> These individuals are profoundly retarded; many suffer from seizures,  
> cerebral palsy and have respiratory and gastrointestinal disorders. CWC  
> furnishes these people with education, respiratory, physical and  
> occupational therapies on a daily basis. CWC is affiliated with physicians  
> from University Hospital and Clinics and would not receive this care if  
> they were moved to another part of the state. These are chronically ill  
> children and adults who need 24-hour care with experienced medical staff  
> and hospitals in close proximity.  
> Other reasons for opposing closing of Central WI Center include  
> displacement of hundreds of employees.  
> I believe the senators and representatives who have drafted this bill are  
> acting on their constituents requests. I am asking for the clients who  
> reside at Central WI Center who can not speak on their own behalf. Please  
> oppose the closing of Central WI Center for the Developmentally Disabled.  
> Thank you for your time.  
>  
>  
> Diane L. Witkowski  
> Diane Witkowski  
> Program Assistant  
> UW-Madison Purchasing Services  
> 750 University Avenue  
> Madison, WI 53706-1490  
> (608) 262-6121  
> FAX: (608) 262-4467  
> dwtkowski@bussvc.wisc.edu  
> Visit our web page at: <http://www.bussvc.wisc.edu/purch/purch.html>  
>  
>  
>

**Jermstad, Sara**

**From:** Berg [berg@globaldialog.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 11:15 AM  
**To:** Sen.Roessler@legis.state.wi.us  
**Cc:** Mary Brynes  
**Subject:** SB 57 - Central Center Closing

I received information late Friday regarding the public hearing being held tomorrow re: this bill . I am not able to attend, but would like to submit these brief comments.

Under the proposed SB 57, as I understand it, Central Center would close effective 7-1-2004. I have used the Short Term Care Unit (STCU) several times for my daughter, Hannah, who is severely physically disabled and profoundly cognitively disabled. She is able to walk with assistance. She requires total assistance for her activities of daily living. This past summer she had surgery on her knees and feet which required casts on her legs up to her hips. I was unable to handle her at home. She stayed at the STCU for a recovery period and until the doctor applied short casts - she was still non-weight bearing at that point. I don't know what I would have done if this service was not available. Madison is only a one hour drive from our house so I was able to visit her often.

The STCU provides a valuable service of extensive evaluations which help greatly in caring for my daughter at home as well as helping her reach her full potential. There is no other place I know of that has such knowledgeable and caring staff, who are comfortable in dealing with individuals who are severely and profoundly disabled.

PLEASE DO NOT DO AWAY WITH THE SHORT TERM UNIT.

Thank you  
Cheryl Berg  
mother of Hannah Berg, Age 10

**From:** Brown, Shanin  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2003 11:42 AM  
**To:** Hess, Martha  
**Cc:** Barish, Larry  
**Subject:** Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled

Martha:

I have located the legislative history regarding the establishment of the Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled, which was originally called the Wisconsin Home for the Feeble-Minded. The institution was occupied on June 16, 1897 in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Around 1923, the name was changed to the Northern Wisconsin Colony and Training School. The name was changed again to its present name in 1977. This history begins in 1895 and continues until 1897. Following are synopses of each piece of legislation:

- **Journal of the Senate, 1895, January 10, 1895, Governor's Message:** excerpt regarding "School for the Feeble-Minded."
- **Chapter 138, Laws of Wisconsin 1895, April 6, 1895:** established a home for the custody, training and education of the feeble-minded, epileptic, and idiotic.
- **Chapter 12, Laws of Wisconsin 1897, March 3, 1897:** authorized the transfer of persons from any penal, reformatory and charitable state institution to another.
- **Chapter 16, Laws of Wisconsin 1897, March 5, 1897:** appropriated monies for the Wisconsin Home for the Feeble-Minded.
- **Chapter 360, Laws of Wisconsin 1897, April 27, 1897:** relates to the commitment, care and custody of epileptics, feeble-minded and idiots to the Wisconsin Home for the Feeble-Minded.

I am forwarding printed copies of all of this information. Several state statutes [Wis. Stats 51.06 (1), 51.06 (3), 51.20 (13) (c) 1, 51.20 (13) (c) 2, 51.20 (13) (f), 51.35 (1) (bm), 51.67 and 301.18 (1) (c)] all deal with the Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled. You may wish to contact Mary Green, Developmental Disability/Integration Services Planning Manager, Department of Health and Family Services, 267-7803, for current information.

I hope this information is helpful.

*Shanin*

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**DD CENTERS**  
- RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHICS -

	<b>CWC</b>	<b>NWC</b>	<b>SWC</b>
Current # long-term clients	341	152	248
Current # short-term clients (intensive behavior treatment)	2	19	18
# of short-term medical admission (Mar '02-Mar '03)	197	NA	NA
age of youngest client	2	20	18
age of oldest client	88	85	77
average age of all clients	39	49	50
# of male clients	184	107	186
# of female clients	166	64	80
# of clients with profound Mental Retardation	338	118	139
# of clients with severe Mental Retardation	11	37	91
# of clients with moderate Mental Retardation	0	11	21
# of clients with mild Mental Retardation	1	5	15
DD1A level of care - with most fragile, unstable health conditions	238	45	77
DD1B level of care - with threatening/risky behaviors	58	125	113
DD2 level of care - with some skill learning capacity	44	5	65
# clients with autism	2	18	86
# clients with cerebral palsy	259	7	37
# clients with uncontrolled epilepsy	213	43	44
# clients with controlled epilepsy	44	35	112
# clients who are ambulatory	65	118	190
# of clients who are mobile non-ambulatory	32	18	33
# of clients who are non-mobile nonambulatory	253	35	42
# of clients with speech or language impairment	350	126	229
# of clients who are hard of hearing	244	6	21
# of deaf clients	18	4	23
# of clients with impaired vision	104	6	71
# of blind clients	72	8	20
# of clients who need drugs to control their behavior	75	119	158
# of clients who require the use physical restraints	12	29	30
# of clients who require time-out rooms for behavior modification	0	0	13
# of clients with behavior treatment plans	85	136	182
# of clients who attend off-campus day-programs	61	0	27
# of clients who are totally dependent on others for eating	245	55	79
# of clients who are totally dependent on others for dressing	204	80	102
# of clients who are totally dependent on others for toileting	305	67	89
# of clients who are totally dependent on others for bathing	280	110	109
# of clients who are tube-fed	182	10	22
# of clients with tracheostomies	21	0	2
# of clients who have problems regulating their body temperature	50	4	16

Note: #'s may vary slightly, due to fluctuations in population

3/4/03

**DD CENTERS**  
**- RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHICS -**

# of clients with fragile bones

110	29	133
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*Note: #'s may vary slightly, due to fluctuations in population*

3/4/03

**NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
BY COUNTY, BY CENTER**

03/11/2003

<u>County</u>	<u>Center</u>	<u>NumClients</u>	<u>Total</u>
ADAMS	CWC	2	2
ASHLAND	NWC	1	1
BARRON	CWC	1	5
	NWC	4	
BAYFIELD	NWC	1	1
BROWN	CWC	8	13
	NWC	4	
	SWC	1	
BUFFALO	NWC	5	5
BURNETT	NWC	1	1
CALUMET	CWC	1	2
	NWC	1	
CHIPPEWA	CWC	4	13
	NWC	9	
CLARK	CWC	1	3
	NWC	2	
COLUMBIA	CWC	3	4
	SWC	1	
DANE	CWC	34	51
	NWC	1	
	SWC	16	
DODGE	CWC	11	14
	NWC	2	
	SWC	1	
DOOR	CWC	1	1
DOUGLAS			



**NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
BY COUNTY, BY CENTER**

03/11/2003

	CWC	1	
	NWC	5	
			6
DUNN	NWC	5	
			5
EAU CLAIRE	CWC	2	
	NWC	9	
			11
FOND DU LAC	CWC	3	
	NWC	3	
	SWC	4	
			10
GRANT	CWC	6	
	NWC	2	
	SWC	2	
			10
GREEN	CWC	3	
	SWC	5	
			8
GREEN LAKE	CWC	2	
	NWC	4	
			6
IOWA	CWC	2	
			2
IRON	CWC	2	
			2
JACKSON	CWC	1	
			1
JEFFERSON	CWC	2	
	NWC	2	
	SWC	1	
			5
JUNEAU	CWC	5	
	NWC	3	
			8
KENOSHA	CWC	11	
	NWC	2	
	SWC	33	
			46
KEWAUNEE	CWC	1	
	SWC	1	
			2

**NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
BY COUNTY, BY CENTER**

03/11/2003

LACROSSE	CWC	1	6
	NWC	4	
	SWC	1	
LAFAYETTE	CWC	2	2
LANGLADE	CWC	1	3
	NWC	2	
LINCOLN	CWC	1	7
	NWC	6	
MANITOWOC	CWC	4	8
	NWC	1	
	SWC	3	
MARATHON	CWC	5	14
	NWC	9	
MARINETTE	CWC	2	3
	NWC	1	
MARQUETTE	CWC	2	2
MENOMINEE	CWC	4	4
MILWAUKEE	CWC	98	209
	NWC	5	
	SWC	106	
MONROE	CWC	2	7
	NWC	5	
NONE	NWC	1	5
	SWC	4	
OCONTO	CWC	1	2
	NWC	1	
ONEIDA	NWC	2	2

**NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
BY COUNTY, BY CENTER**

03/11/2003

OUTAGAMIE	CWC	18	
	NWC	14	
			32
OZAUKEE	CWC	5	
	SWC	6	
			11
PEPIN	NWC	1	
			1
PIERCE	NWC	3	
			3
POLK	CWC	1	
	NWC	4	
			5
PORTAGE	NWC	2	
			2
PRICE	CWC	2	
	NWC	2	
			4
RACINE	CWC	14	
	NWC	3	
	SWC	33	
			50
RICHLAND	CWC	3	
			3
ROCK	CWC	15	
	NWC	1	
	SWC	8	
			24
RUSK	CWC	1	
	NWC	1	
			2
SAUK	CWC	4	
	SWC	1	
			5
SAWYER	NWC	1	
			1
SHAWANO	CWC	1	
	NWC	5	
			6
SHEBOYGAN	CWC	5	

**NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
BY COUNTY, BY CENTER**

	NWC	4	
	SWC	3	
			12
ST. CROIX	CWC	2	
	NWC	8	
			10
TAYLOR	CWC	1	
	NWC	1	
			2
TREMPEALEAU	CWC	1	
	NWC	3	
			4
VERNON	CWC	3	
	NWC	1	
			4
VILAS	CWC	1	
	NWC	1	
			2
WALWORTH	CWC	8	
	SWC	9	
			17
WASHINGTON	CWC	2	
			2
WAUKESHA	CWC	17	
	NWC	1	
	SWC	20	
			38
WAUPACA	CWC	5	
	NWC	2	
			7
WAUSHARA	CWC	1	
	NWC	1	
			2
WINNEBAGO	CWC	7	
	NWC	5	
	SWC	3	
			15
WOOD	CWC	6	
	NWC	5	
	SWC	2	
			13
	Grand Total		789



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Thursday, February 20, 2003

*In the News...*

## State secretary defends Northern Center decision

By Mark Gunderman The Chippewa Herald

By the time the community placement process is over, there will be only one center for the developmentally disabled in Wisconsin and it should be in Madison, the state Secretary of Health and Family Services says. But a state legislator is already preparing a bill to close that center in order to save Northern Center in Chippewa Falls.

The political battle over Governor Jim Doyle's decision to virtually close the Northern Center by June 2004, costing 470 jobs in Chippewa Falls, is just beginning. While state Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls) works in Madison drafting his bill, Secretary Helene Nelson and Doyle are heading to Chippewa Falls on Friday to meet with Northern Center resident families and employees.

In a telephone interview Thursday, Nelson defended the decision to downsize the Northern Center to a 20-bed intensive treatment program employing between 70 and 85 people. It was basically Nelson's decision.

"I made the recommendation to the governor and he approved my recommendation," Nelson said. "I examined Northern Center and Southern Center from a strictly cost benefit."

That some center would close was decided early, and is in fact part of a process that has been taking place for the past 30 years as the trend in the care of the developmentally disabled moves strongly in favor of community placement.

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fad diets



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"We believe we can care for the residents of the center very well in the community," Nelson said.

Organizations promoting proper care for the developmentally disabled have long called for the closure of the state institutions, and have praised the decision.

Still, the decision to target Northern Center raises questions in some people's minds, and has led Wood to charge that it has more to do with regional politics than logic. He plans to introduce a bill in the next couple of weeks to close the Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled in Madison instead.

So why virtually close Northern Center while the Central Center and Southern Center in Union Grove stay open?

Nelson said it is basically because the Northern Center is the smallest, and partly because of its lower number of residents, it has the highest cost per resident.

**State secretary defends Northern Center decision**

Workers at the center counter they have had a better record of placing residents in the community than either Southern or Central centers. They therefore became the smallest and highest cost.

**Rich districts blast loss of aid**

**Legislators rip Doyle's casino proposal**

"The people of Northern Center make that statement," Nelson acknowledged, but added she was not aware of the facts to either support or refute it. "I think all of the centers have making a good effort. We will continue to place people from Southern and Central in the community."

**State briefs**

Northern Center employees have said they feel like they've worked themselves out of a job, though.

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The Chippewa Valley  
Newspapers

"I'm sorry the staff feels that way, but I want to acknowledge the staff has done a good job in two ways. They have done a good job caring for the people of the center and they have done a good job in placements."

Nelson said she came into the job of examining the centers with an open mind, not knowing how many or which center might close. Because the community placement process will continue, ultimately there will be one center left that Nelson feels will always be needed.

"Central is the most logical to retain," Nelson said.

"Of course she's protecting Central. That's where she's from,"

said Wood, referring to Nelson's professional connections to the Madison area. "I think it's political games. There's no national reason to keep Central open and close Northern," said Wood.

He pointed out that if some residents are transferred from Northern to Central, their families will have to drive to the other side of the state to visit. It would be much less convenient if some of the Central residents were transferred to southern, which is still relatively close, Wood said.

Asked if why the state should have two centers in the southern part of the state and none in the north, Nelson said, "The decision was made looking at each institution's unique role."

Nelson denied any political motivation.

"Politics has not played a role in this, period. I say that because I know how the decision was made," she said.

Wood isn't so sure and finds it interesting that there was no consideration given to closing Central, which sits on extremely valuable land on Lake Mendota. Plus, services at Southern are linked with the veterans home there and services at Northern were supposed to be linked to the Highview Prison, which will not open until the 2005-2007 biennium under Doyle's proposal. Wood thinks that is specifically to weaken the case for keeping Northern Center operating.

"I was aware that there were opportunities to share services, but it wasn't a major factor," Nelson said.

State Sen. David Zien (R-Town of Wheaton) said he thought he had some assurances from the Doyle Administration to consider putting a boot camp prison complex on the Northern Center grounds if the center's role changed.

He said the cost per patient at the Northern Center was relatively high only because the state had downsized the facility in the past.

Zien said he will work to try to restore funding to open the Highview geriatric prison in Chippewa Falls and keep the Northern Center operating.

But, he added, "I feel very confident the geriatric (prison) is the easier fight."

Despite Wood and Zien's objections, the state is going ahead with downsizing the Northern Center - a process that can be done administratively without legislative approval.

"We don't underestimate that there is a real impact with the staff and the community. We don't know to what extent we can dampen the problems, but we will work hard to smooth the transition," Nelson said.

Some jobs will be kept at the location, and the state will continue to explore ways to cooperate at providing regional services. The money to care for the residents will stay in the 52-county region and will create job opportunities at the community based homes, she added.

However, it is not the state's role to keep the center open just to provide jobs for state workers, she said. A greater consideration is the service to the residents, and the state is following a nationwide policy with broad support among professionals who help the developmentally disabled.

"What is going on is a policy and a program that people with disabilities should be served in the most home-like setting possible," she said.

Reach Mark Gunderman at [mgunderman@chippewa.com](mailto:mgunderman@chippewa.com).

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# Blessinger to slash center's size

Northern Center director is now in charge of relocating residents.

BY ROD STETZER  
THE CHIPPEWA HERALD

For the next few weeks, Betty Blessinger will work in Madison to drastically cut the state institution, she has led since 1997.

Blessinger, the director of the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled in Chippewa Falls, is drawing plans to relocate most of the center's residents.

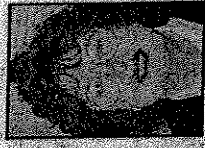
"I've been in daily contact with the Northern Center," Blessinger said. She has been responding to e-mails and letting deputy director, Jackie Rueden, run the place.

She said in her six years at the center she has come to know and appreciate the people who live and work there. But her job now is to figure out how to turn a large facility into a small one.

Blessinger was given the assignment last week, after Gov. Jim Doyle proposed eliminating at least 400 jobs. Doyle's administration wants to reduce the center to a 20-bed facility with 70 to 80 workers by July 2004.

She said she knew for 2 1/2 weeks before Doyle's speech in Feb. 18 that the center would be in for drastic cuts. She said on Tuesday it was extremely difficult to know what the Doyle administration had in mind and not be able to talk about it.

Also difficult for Blessinger



was a meeting Friday between herself, center workers and Helene Nelson, the state Secretary of Health and Family Services.

Nelson was the state official who decided to cut the Northern Center, rather than the Central Center near Madison or the Southern Center in Milwaukee.

Blessinger did not directly answer whether she felt physically threatened during that intense meeting. But she did say since she had known about plans for some time, she had a time for mourning before the session. The workers had no such time.

"People say things that perhaps they don't mean," she said. Still, Blessinger said it's likely she will move out of the living quarters she has on the center grounds to somewhere else in the community.

She said she is needed in Madison for now because she needs to consult with the department's central office in coming up with plans for residents. She doesn't know how long that will take because it is not far enough along yet.

And Blessinger said she hasn't decided on her long-term plans. She was eligible for retirement three years ago, but stayed on because she said she enjoyed the work and felt she had something to contribute.

Reach Rod Stetzer at [rstetzer@chippewa.com](mailto:rstetzer@chippewa.com).

# County: State plays shell game with cuts

Rynders says Wisconsin isn't saving any money by slashing center.



Four of the Chippewa County clients, however, would need additional services to meet their needs at a cost of \$124,096 a year.

The state is planning a shell game by claiming that it will save \$2.1 million by eliminating the Northern Center, Chippewa County officials said this morning.

While the state claims it will save \$2.1 million, Rynders said some 450 workers at the Chippewa County facility, counties will end up paying all of that — and perhaps even more.

"There's not saving anything," said Chippewa County Human Services Administrator Dave Rynders.

Rynders used a simple illustration to prove his point. Eight of the 172 clients now at Northern Center are originally from Chippewa County. The state is proposing a special fee of \$225 to any community-based facility that will accept these clients.

"Because of the severe handicaps most of these clients have, the fee is \$100 a day more than the state pays for others who have already been placed."

Of the state from Chippewa County, two could not be placed in community homes due to the severe nature of their afflictions. Of the six remaining, two clients would fit within the state's higher \$205 rate, said Rynders.

That higher rate will cover everything from custom-built housing, shift starting, day programming, and respite care for primary caregivers.

## STATE: Many criticize move

FROM PAGE 1

"We need to have them take a look at what it will cost too," said Rick Schaefer, the county's economic development committee chair.

State Rep. Jeff Wood, R-Chippewa Falls, said he doesn't understand the state's move to act unilaterally in downsizing the center. All of the discussion from the state evolved around the possible savings from closing the Northern Center, but no one has participated in the discussion, he said.

"If the state would see if it could do something or change its strategy or change its funding, that would be a lot better," said Rynders.

"If Chippewa County, with eight clients, would face \$224,999 in additional costs, imagine what it will cost for other 164 residents and the 51 counties they originally came from," said Rynders.

The supposed \$2.2 million in savings would quickly evaporate, or in this case, simply be shifted to local property tax payers.

"When you multiply it out, it comes to a couple of million dollars being shifted," said Rynders.

Chippewa County economic development committee members agreed that it is essential to conduct the center's closure that will be affected by the state's decision to downsize the Northern Center, and therefore the true impact on their budgets and property taxes.

meeting included.

- Why is Chippewa County sustaining such a large percentage of state employee layoffs? The state is cutting up to 600 medical specialty positions. Workers will have a difficult time finding employment in their profession due to more members losing their jobs at the same time.
- The Chippewa Valley is being hard hit by bad economic news compared to the rest of the state. Yet this proposal is targeted at one of the most vulnerable areas. "We're in for kind of a rough ride here in the next few months," said Rynders.
- Is Northern Center being punished for its efficiency? Over the past few years, it has placed many more clients in community homes than the state-of-the-art Northern Center. Rynders said the cost of care at Northern Center is higher than the cost of care at other centers. Center employees argue that they are more efficient at placing clients and bringing Highley geriatric prison clients as it shared services with Northern.

Other points raised at the

# Debate needed on proposal to close Northern Center

ECLT  
2/26/03

By Rep. Jeff Wood

The governor's recent budget proposals to fix the deficit were necessary to reduce a deficit caused by a decade of runaway spending.

However, considering the time constraints, I believe some of the governor's proposals may have been made without the benefit of all the facts.

I do not believe the decision to close the Northern Center is the best option. I agree with the governor that most developmental disabled people can best be cared for in a more homelike setting.

However there is a need for highly trained medical staff to care for those with the most severe behavioral and developmental disabilities, often only for a temporary period.

The need for large institutions has passed, but we must take great care how we approach placing patients, downsizing and/or closing a center. That is why many areas legislators have been meeting with the Northern Center employees for some time.

Last week, Rep. Larry Balow, myself, Department of Corrections Secretary Matthew Frank, union leaders, Chippewa Falls City Planner Jayson Smith, and several members of the business community and the Doyle administration met to discuss the center's future. We discussed a plan to sell buildings, land, share administration and services with Highview and Stanley correctional facilities, and refocus the services provided at the Northern Center. Frank made no mention of the closings.

Just hours before the governor's budget address, I was shocked to get the news. With only weeks on the job, Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Helene Nelson informed me that she had made the final decision to close Northern Center. This decision was made without consulting the center's employees or any local legislators. Nelson even admitted to the media she had no knowledge that the Northern Center had the best record of placing patients in the community.

Nelson informed me that Southern Center in Milwaukee would not be a good choice because of its ties to the VA Center, and that Central Center in Madison served a unique juvenile population that could not be served at Northern. I later learned that Central began that service last month and only has three patients to date.

I believe such a decision should only be made



Wood

## It Seems to Me

after open discussion and with all viewpoints considered.

Consider the following facts:

1. Northern Center serves 52 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin. Meaning many families would have to drive hours to visit loved ones.

2. Madison, with a much higher population, the lowest unemployment rate and a much higher concentration of medical facilities could absorb the economic impact and place hundreds of dislocated medical staff, where as Chippewa Falls could not.

3. The \$4.6 million savings is only a fraction of what could be saved if Central, which sits on the shores of Lake Mendota in the heart of Madison, were sold.

4. The money will follow the patients to their home counties, which would be spread across 52 counties in the case of Northern Center. While in the case of Central, the majority of patients would be placed within driving distance of the dislocated workers in Madison, creating a local demand for medical staff in smaller homes.

5. When you include the 300 jobs cut from Highview last month with the 2,900 job cuts announced last week by the governor, about 22 percent of the state cuts are within 1 square mile in Chippewa Falls (not exactly sharing the pain).

6. The future of any center resides in its ability to place patients in a residential setting, and employees at the Northern Center have a 20-year track record of being the best in the state.

Bottom line, we have to scale back government and do more with less, but we have to do it thoughtfully, in the open, and with the long-term interest of our most vulnerable as well as the taxpayers in mind.

We face an uphill battle, as the Doyle administration has said that they will act unilaterally without discussion. They cannot close the center unilaterally, so they plan on cutting back to 17 beds without any discussions with the people involved.

This will make it more difficult for legislators to reverse course and will only lead to dragging out the budget process. Please urge the government to not supercede the Legislature and allow for an open debate on all the issues involved.

Wood, a Republican from Chippewa Falls, represents the 67th Assembly District, which includes Northern Center.

Firefighters worked on the roof of the Greenwood Health Center in Hartford, Conn., today after a three-alarm fire swept the facility. The blaze killed at least

10 people and sent 23 to hospitals, authorities said. One person was arrested, and fire officials said the fire was considered suspicious.

The injured were taken to hospitals around the state, and many had respiratory injuries and burns, officials said.

# Center/Residents need homes

from Page 1

three state centers, would shrink from 550 to 75 people as it became a short-term treatment facility for people with severe developmental disabilities.

While the initial announcement indicated the downsizing would begin in July, Wood said Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Helene Nelson since has told him cuts would start in March.

"I believe the reason is to empty Northern Center and get rid of the employees as quickly as possible so that it would be a moot point by the time the Legislature could vote on it," Wood said.

Nelson, who could not be reached for comment, said Tuesday on Wisconsin Public Radio that her department doesn't need legislative approval to further shrink Northern Center. She said the latest announcement is just an acceleration of the administrative downsizing that has shrunk the population of Wisconsin's three state centers from a peak of nearly 4,000 to 789 in the past four decades.

No Northern Center employees would be laid off before July, said Laura Flood,

administrator of the department's Division of Care and Treatment Facilities.

The pace of cuts would depend on how fast counties can find alternative living arrangements for Northern Center residents in communities, she said.

Wood said he understands Wisconsin no longer needs three state centers but argued it would be fairer to keep a northern and southern center open than to maintain a facility in Madison and one near Milwaukee. That would be more convenient for family members in the 52 northern counties that Northern Center serves, he said.

He blamed the decision on regional politics. "It's dumping our most vulnerable citizens to protect and add 150 new jobs to Madison," said Wood, who plans to introduce legislation soon calling for the closing of Central Center instead.

However, the large number of counties Northern Center serves may have been another reason it was identified for the near closure.

That allows the responsibility for community placement to be spread over much of the state, said Lisa Mills, administrator for People First Wisconsin, a statewide advoca-

cy group for the developmentally disabled.

Outagamie County, with 15, has the most residents at Northern Center, and many counties have just one or two people to place, said Mills, who was pleased to hear about the downsizing because her organization believes developmentally disabled people live richer lives in communities than in institutions.

East Claire County officials are operating under the assumption that the proposed changes will happen and that they will have to move the nine county residents who still live at Northern Center in the next 14 months or so, said Don Chrystal, a case manager for the East Claire County Human Services Department.

"It will be a major challenge because it will be the most difficult population we've ever worked with," Chrystal said, noting that the department once arranged community placements for 18 residents over three years.

Chrystal said the department likely would start with residents whose guardians support community placement and then try to work with guardians who oppose it to find the best individualized solution possible.

Linaquist can be reached at 833-9309.

said. He advised it.

One of his hobbies was

making him, Scammell

referred. He was survived

by his wife, one of his

...ants to local hospice organizations.

Powers can be reached at

(715) 235-9018 or

pamela.powers@ecpc.com.

# Legislator: Center cuts on fast track

By Eric Lindquist

Legislator/legislative staff

All state Rep. Jeff Wood wants is a chance to debate the proposed downsizing of Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled before it's too late.

But the Chippewa Falls Republican charged Tuesday

that Gov. Jim Doyle's administration plans to begin cuts at Northern Center as early as

next month to preclude legislators from rejecting that portion

of the governor's proposed budget.

"I'm being rainbowed through to prevent the

legislature from bringing it to open discussion and hearing all

viewpoints," Wood said.

Doyle last week called for cutting Northern Center's 106

year staff as a long-term care

...ants to local hospice organizations.

Powers can be reached at

(715) 235-9018 or

pamela.powers@ecpc.com.

■ Betty Blessinger,

Northern Center's director

since 1997, began working

temporarily at the state

Department of Health and

Family Services office in

Madison this week to help for-

mulate plans for the facility's

downsizing.

facility as part of his plan to

close the state's \$3.2 billion

budget hole. The proposal

would eliminate 300 jobs and

offer transfers to Central

Wisconsin Center in Madison

for up to 142 workers.

Employment at the

Chippewa Falls institution,

which officials said was target-

ed because it had the lowest

population and the highest

daily cost per resident of the

See CENTER, Page 2A

2-26-03

s to l

Janel Soppeland after UW-Eau Claire's 83-70 win over the Blue Devils Wednesday night at Zorn Arena. For more on the Blugolds' WIAC tournament win, see

N

# Doyle: Center should close

ECC 2/27/03

## *The 'moment has come'*

**By Tom Giffey**  
Leader-Telegram staff

In his most explicit statement yet on the fate of the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled, Gov. Jim Doyle said Wednesday that the "moment has come" for the institution to be closed.

Doyle made his remarks in Eau Claire barely a week after announcing his budget included "significantly downsizing" of the center in Chippewa Falls.

"When we're facing a \$3.2 billion deficit and ... you're down to 178 residents, it is going to close at some point very soon," Doyle said.

"Whether we don't do it in this budget, and it goes down to 100 residents or 75 residents or 50 residents, it's going to close, and that's going to be a very difficult moment. And I think

given where we're at, that moment has come."

Doyle's 2003-05 budget called for shrinking the center from its present population of 172 residents to a 17-bed "intensive treatment" program. Many residents would be moved into the community, while some may be transferred to the Central Center in Madison. Three hundred jobs would be eliminated and another 142 could be transferred to the Central Center.

Doyle's use of the term "close" instead of "downsize" represents a semantic shift, not a policy change, said Department of Health and Family Services spokesman Jim Malone.

"You can think of the facility closing in terms of its

See CENTER, Page 2A

have 600 many deer, but public lands are over-hunted and man-

# Center/Bill would cut other facilities

from Page 1

long-term care mission, which is a significant portion of what they do," Malone said. However, the center's intensive treatment program will remain, he said.

Still, the suggestion that the life-span of the short-term treatment services also may be short came as no surprise to Carolyn Kaiser, secretary of Wisconsin State Employees Union Local 116, which represents a majority of workers at the facility.

As much as they disagree with the downsizing decision, Kaiser said employees recognize that the handwriting is on the wall for the facility. Kaiser suggested that Doyle initially proposed a downsizing because he could do that by administrative rule and bypass the Legislature.

"It's a way of being authoritarian-

board means officials will have to solicit very hard," he said.

ian," she said.

Ruth Gullerud, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy of West Central Wisconsin, agreed that the region needs a facility offering short-term care for the developmentally disabled or respite care for their families.

"Short-term treatment doesn't have to be there, but it needs to be somewhere in the community," said Gullerud, whose Eau Claire-based agency has supported the Northern Center downsizing.

State Rep. Scott Suder, R-Abbotsford, said Doyle has "danced around" his specific plans for the center.

"Once he uses the word 'close,' clearly his intentions are not just to downsize, but to close the center permanently," Suder said.

He and other Chippewa Valley

royal handyman in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe and owner of "Negri's Music Shop."

Negri said Rogers refused to accept shoddy ad-ribbing by guests who may have thought they could slack off during a kid's show.

But Rogers

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility," he said in 1994. "It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' They there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

parents how to help their children deal with the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. "If they see the tragedy replayed on television, they might think it's happening at that moment," he said.

Rogers show won four Emmy Awards, plus one for lifetime achievement. He

employee.

Halmstad had met with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials before he met with the clerk.

Tatur, of rural Rice Lake, and Meiseger, of Bruce, were issued checks for \$1,656 and \$670, respectively. Tatur's check was voided and never cashed, while Meiseger returned hers to the county.

Lovely, former director of the county's social services department, cashed his check of \$3,701 but donated the money back to the county. Weiler endorsed her check of \$795 back to the county.

Halmstad was issued a check for \$4,883 after taxes and cashed it on Oct. 25.

There is no record of Halmstad returning the money.

The County Board did not authorize the hiring of Halmstad, Tatur, Meiseger, Lovely or Weiler as employees, nor did the board authorize payments to them, according to court records.

according to court records.

# Rogers/Show earned four Emmy Awards

from Page 1

donned sneakers and a zip-up cardigan.

"I have really never considered myself a TV star," Rogers said in 1995. "I always thought I was a neighbor who just came in for a visit."

His message remained simple.

Leader-Telegram reporter Eric Lindquist contributed to this report.

comes out of bread.

2/28/05

Friday

**Weather**  
 Cloudy  
 Tonight Sat.  
**16 33**  
 Details Page 12A

# LEADER-THELE

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## Center's last hope by closing state facility in Madison

**By Chris Vetter**  
 Chippewa Falls News Bureau

**CHIPPEWA FALLS** — The state should eliminate the Central Center for the Developmentally Disabled in Madison, rather than the Northern Center in Chippewa Falls, area legislators contend.

State Rep. Jeff Wood, R-Chippewa Falls, and Sen. David Zien, R-Eau Claire, said today they will file a bill Monday that would close the Central Center.

"We didn't want to do it this way, but the governor has forced our hand," Wood told about 20 people at the Northern Center. "But if the governor is looking for a fight, we'll give him one."

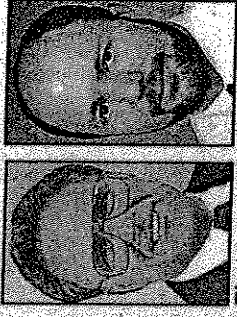
Gov. Jim Doyle announced in his state budget address earlier this month a plan that would severely downsize the Northern Center, leaving the Central Center and the Union Grove-based Southern Center open.

The proposed legislation

would close the Central Center in Madison by July 1, 2004, and relocate all residents. Some of those residents could go to the Northern Center, the bill states.

The state Department of Health and Family Services would be required to submit a plan by Jan. 1, 2004, on how to close the center.

Zien said the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau must compare the economic impacts of closing either center, along



**Zien** with the potential resale value of the land.

**Wood** "We're going to show with numbers — economically, fiscally, you cannot argue against our proposal," Zien said.

The Central Center is along a

See CENTER, Page 2A

### CHIPPEWA FALLS CHURCH PROJECT

## FROM PAGE ONE

# Center/Legislators say they won't make promises

from Page 1

lake in Madison and would have a significantly higher resale value, he said.

Doyle and other administration officials were unavailable for comment.

Zien said the bill has a good chance of passing both houses because legislators in the Milwaukee area don't want the Southern Center closed, which eventually could occur.

"We have an awesome coalition, and that's the North and the South," Zien said. "The destiny of the Southern Center is tied to the Northern Center."

By eliminating the Central Center, it ensures the long-term life of the two remaining centers, Zien said.

The bill will be referred to health committees in each house,

and Zien said he anticipates the measures will reach the floor for a vote in March.

Rep. Scott Suder, R-Abbotsford, and Sen. Ron Brown, R-Eau Claire, also spoke at the press conference about the need to preserve the center.

"People understand we have a budget deficit," Suder said. "But they want fairness. It's about protecting our interests in northern Wisconsin."

Zien said the Central Center has 353 residents with an operating cost of \$53 million.

By comparison, the Northern Center has about 174 residents with a \$29 million operating budget.

Wood said the governor's preliminary figures show closing the Northern Center would save \$2.2 million, but Wood disputed that number.

Suder said he wouldn't make any wild promises that the Northern Center would stay open.

"We did not try to make this a regional fight," Suder said. "We were forced into it."

### Police called to scene

While legislators were discussing plans to save the Northern Center from closing, Caroline Thompson of the Northern Center called the

Chippewa Falls Police Department, saying the press conference was occurring on the grounds without permission.

Police officers arrived at the scene shortly before the press conference ended, Police said they were checking this morning with the district attorney's office on the legality of holding a press conference at the center.

Friday, February 28, 2003  
LEADER-TELEGRAM

# Iraq/Bush wants full disarming

from Page 1

be one with political aims."

Al-Saadi said he agreed "in principle" to destroy the missiles, but the sources in Baghdad provided the first word that Iraq would comply by the Saturday deadline.

U.N. inspectors estimate Iraq has between 100 and 120 of the missiles, diplomatic sources said.

The United States dismissed the Iraqi decision.

"This is the deception the president predicted," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

"We do expect that they will destroy at least some of their missiles," but President Bush won't settle for anything less than full disarmament, he said. "The Iraqi regime is a deception wrapped in a lie."

Al-Saadi asked Blix to discuss the "framework and timetable" for carrying out the

# Organ/Repair takes months

from Page 1

Tuesday. It will have about 2,000



## NWC employee says heart will go on

Thumbs down to Gov. Doyle and Secretary Nelson.

This is the kind of sneaky, lying, underhanded politics I hoped never to be involved with. But as a proud employee of Northern Wisconsin Center, I will fight against their decision to close us with all I've got.

This new government has stabbed us through the heart (the heart will go on). When I say us, I mean: the employees of NWC and their families, Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire businesses, and the Chippewa Valley in general, but most important of all our residents who can't speak for themselves and their families. They will suffer the most from this outrageous, cold-hearted, slap in the face disguised as politics.

At a meeting with the families of our residents, Doyle said, "I reluctantly came to the decision I did," and "This was a decision that was gut-wrenching and painful for everybody."

How can this be so when Secretary Nelson, just hours earlier at a meeting at NWC, stated Doyle left the decision of which center to close up to her and he just OK'd her decision. Who's lying??

I attended the meeting where Nelson spoke. She admitted her decision was based solely on numbers (money). Crucial facts about the centers were not considered. When NWC presented her with some of these facts, all she could say was, "I was unaware of that." This was the most uninformed woman I have dealt with in a long time.

Crucial facts she did not seem to know (or care) about include:

1. Hardships to the residents and their families who live in the northern part of the state.
2. The scope of the area NWC supports (52 out of 72 counties).

## YOUR VIEWS

3. The impact of losing jobs in the hard-hit Chippewa Valley.

4. Poor survey results at another center.

5. The excellent job performance of NWC employees.

Nelson also praised community placement and in the same breath mentioned a private facility that was closed down because of unfit living conditions for 150 residents. Will our residents suffer like those? Will they be deprived of the basic necessities (coats, shoes, other things)? Will they be neglected and abused?

NWC employees are some of the most caring, professional people I've had the pleasure to work with, and because we do care so deeply for our residents, this poor political decision has hit us in the heart.

I do not salute you, Doyle and Nelson. I give you two thumbs down. And a friendly reminder: The heart will go on.

Cindy Ladd  
New Auburn

## Is Doyle living in the real world?

When elected, Gov. Doyle said he had to make some tough decisions to pull us out of our state's budget deficit. Then he made two decisions, which for him were incredibly easy: Close the Northern Center and don't open the geriatric prison.

His argument for closing Northern Center is because it has the lowest number of residents. He makes it sound as though the center can't get more people to add to its population.

The truth is the state would rather send new residents to the Central and Southern facilities. They are trying to use numbers they and their predecessors created to bolster their argument. Don't let yourself be fooled by the governor's use of numbers. They are numbers he likes, but they should be explained.

The geriatric prison was just a crumb tossed to us because of the "down-sizing" of Northern Center. Now, if Doyle gets his way, there's no need to dangle that before us any longer. That was \$7.5 million our state government could probably use about now.

Finally, Gov. Doyle made tough decisions because he "has to live in the real world." If getting paid by the people of Wisconsin for as many years as he has and now living in the governor's mansion is the real world, move over Doyle. There's at least 525 of us who want to join you.

Estelle Robinson  
Chippewa Falls

Chippewa  
Herald 3/4/03

# Is door to center's future still open?

A big part of the strategy of people fighting to save the Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled is to slow down the process, according to statements made at a Monday night planning session.

Advocates fear if they don't slow down the state's plans, then nothing else they do will matter. They may well be right.

But the area should keep up the fight and hold Gov. Jim Doyle to his word that there will be an opportunity for legislative review of his administration's decision to close the Northern Center.

*Doyle's track record as attorney general for many years justifies taking him at his word. But deeds, not words, will matter most.*

When Doyle announced the 'significant downsizing' of the center in his budget message, he made it clear that the process could be accomplished under existing law. In other words, no action by the Legislature to actually close the center would be necessary.

Plans for moving the residents into community-based settings were to begin immediately, with

actual placements to follow. The 17-20 beds that were to be left at the end of the process would allow the state to get around a law that required legislative approval for the complete closing of a center.

In a meeting with the Herald editorial board last week, Doyle was asked why not allow broader input on the closing decision and subject the matter to legislative review. He replied that though plans to close the Northern Center would proceed, there would be opportunity for broader input on the matter. He said the Legislature would be approving a budget before Northern Center closing plans were too far along to matter.

That is encouraging news to supporters of the center, who are nevertheless skeptical.

There is now fear that plans to place center residents in other locations will be accelerated in a rush designed to deflect any plans to save the center.

Doyle said that was not his administration's intentions. His track record as attorney general for many years justifies taking him at his word. But deeds, not words, will matter most.

The people of this area deserve the chance to make their case for Northern Center. State Rep. Jeff Wood's bill to close Central Center as an alternative deserves a fair hearing.

It is bad enough that the decision to close Northern Center was made without all of the facts being gathered first. The error should not be compounded by pushing the closing plan through without the opportunity to consider whether it really is in the state's best interests.

## Woman dies at center

CHIPPEWA FALLS — A 42-year-old woman who lived at the Northern Center in Chippewa Falls died in her bedroom Tuesday morning.

Chippewa Falls Police Department Capt. Wayne Nehring said the death is under investigation.

"We're investigating the circumstances of the death of the patient," Nehring said.

Beverly J. Frawley was having trouble breathing in her room when Northern Center employees called 911 at about 8 a.m. Tuesday. Employees tried to resuscitate her.

Frawley, who was living in the Parkview facility, was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

Her body was taken to Ramsey County (Minn.) for an autopsy.

From staff reports

2/26/03 ECLT

Alma

## Close state centers

I am president of People First, a self-advocacy group for people with disabilities. I work at Access To Independence, an independent living center that assists people with disabilities.

I am a self-determination advocate. The members of People First support closing the state centers. I lived at Southern Wisconsin Center for eight years. I know from my abusive experiences there that institutions are not where people with disabilities should be. I was physically and emotionally abused at Southern Center. More than once, I was forced to remove my clothes, after which the staff restrained me on a bed. Many people say that these stories of abuse are from years ago, and this kind of thing doesn't happen anymore. Well, I lived at Southern Center from 1990 to 1998. I can tell you, these things were still happening in 1998.

When I came back into the community, I found I had a lot more freedom than I was allowed to have in the institution. I have more

recreational time, too. Nobody restrains me — they respect me, and I am allowed to make choices and live my life.

My new-found freedom allows me to have a career and contribute to the community. I am back with all of my friends and family again. This is how the members of People First believe that life should be lived. Love and respect is what everyone needs and deserves, whether they have a disability or not. We hope Gov. Doyle shows the courage Wisconsin needs to stop institutionalizing people with disabilities. They were the worst years of my life.

JEFFREY JOHNSON

President, People First of Dane County  
Madison

## No longer a need for Central Center

The news stories of Gov. Doyle's proposal to close Northern Center have moved me to write a few of my thoughts on the subject.

To be fair, the reader should know that I was an employee of Northern Center for 35 years and spent a career working to downsize the institution. From first-hand experience I know that a great job most staff here did to prepare the many individuals who left the center for placement in the communi-

Thus, needless to say I am a proponent of keeping the Northern Center open.

However, having been a part of de-institutionalization history in the state of Wisconsin, my reasons differ somewhat from those you have been reading in the local daily press.

To support the closure of the centers, and I support the closure of Central Center in Madison.

When one takes a look at the history of Central Center, it was built in 1956 to care for infants, children and individuals with multiple medical problems who needed institutional care.

In 1956, there was nearly a lack of medical, educational and support programs in communities to meet the needs of individuals with multiple handicaps.

At that time the medical needs of those who were to be placed in Central Center could not be met from the medical

## YOUR VIEWS

resources that were only available at University Hospitals in Madison.

One needs to remember that those individuals who live at Central Center came from all over the state.

I thus feel that Central Center's population should be divided between Northern and Southern centers. This would make family travel to see loved ones something within reason.

I also believe that today the medical care required can be provided "up north," at Northern Center in Chippewa Falls, just as well as it is provided in Madison.

A lot of medical expertise has been added to the Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire area with the addition of the Mayo and Marshfield clinics to our area's medical providers.

Such a plan would make care at a center still available to those needing it in the northern and southern parts of the state. Such a plan also returns the care of individuals needing institutional care to the two original sites.

Perhaps such a plan would also provide a means of continuing placements from the two centers most successful in making them in the first place. Thus, Northern and Southern centers could help with Gov. Doyle's professed goal of the continued downsizing of the centers.

David Jankoski  
Stanley

## Director says facility in Madison could take extra workers, residents

By Chris Vetter

Chippewa Falls News Bureau  
The director of the Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled says his facility is capable of handling the additional staff and residents that would be relocated from the Northern Center if it closes.

Ted Bunck said the Central Center could see an additional 142 workers and perhaps 50 to 60 transferred residents if the Northern Center is closed by next summer — as proposed by Gov. Jim Doyle.

However, Bunck said he is not preparing for any changes yet.

"I think this is projected to be a year or more out," Bunck said.

"In the short run, no, we have not been told to prepare for additions."

Bunck said his center has about 341 long-term residents and a staff of about 940 employees. The center, built in 1959, once had a population close to 1,200 in the mid-1970s.

The center in Madison does have enough licensed beds to

take on the additional residents should they be transferred from Northern Center, he said.

A legislative bill introduced in the Senate Monday would close the Central Center and keep the Northern Center open.

"I knew it was coming out," Bunck said. "I haven't seen it, but I knew it was coming."

Bunck declined to comment on the proposal until he's read the legislation.

The three state centers work as partners, he said.

For instance, the Central Center has a stronger medical emphasis and is the home for developmentally disabled children.

Any residents transferred to Central Center probably would have "more sophisticated medical supports," he said.

Bunck said the center has been fully staffed for about a year, and turnover is down. He said he would welcome employees from the Northern Center who would be willing to transfer.

<b>Weather</b>	
Frigid	
Tonight	Wed.
<b>-3</b>	<b>19</b>
Details Page 10A	

**50 Cents**

# Closing center will be costly

## County Toll could be \$55 million

By Chris Vetter  
Chippewa Falls News Bureau

**CHIPPEWA FALLS** — Kim Benzschawel of Boyd said losing the Northern Center would have a vast economic impact on Chippewa County.

Benzschawel, an employee at the Northern Center, said she knows how the loss of jobs would hurt dozens of families in the region.

In Boyd, 34 families are employed at the Northern Center, Benzschawel said. Another 84 families in Cadott have a family member working in the center.

Throughout the county, 206 families would be affected, she said.

Preliminary figures suggest closing the center could cost the Chippewa Valley \$40 million to \$55 million a year, said Rick Schafer, president of the Chippewa County Economic Development Corp.

■ The director of the Central Center discusses the possibility of additional staff and residents. Page 2A.

Benzschawel was among 150 people who packed a room at the Chippewa County Courthouse on Monday, discussing ways to fight for the center's survival.

Gov. Jim Doyle announced plans last month to essentially close the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled in a cost-saving move, relocating residents into group homes or into the two remaining centers in the state.

Carolyn Wantsh, a Northern Center employee, said losing the center would affect not only employees in the region, but businesses, too. For instance, Wantsh said, the 178 residents at the Northern Center translates into 178 birthday cakes purchased each year at local grocery stores.

Bob Sommerfeld said his daughter, Lisa, is among the eight Chippewa County residents at the Northern Center. If the center were to close, the county would be responsible for most of the cost of her care, which Schafer estimated at about \$124,000.

Sommerfeld is 75. His daughter is 41 and has lived in the Northern Center since she was 18. The Sommerfelds moved to Chippewa Falls to be close to their daughter.

"We bring her home every

See **CENTER**, Page 2A

# Center/Debate intensifies

from Page 1

week," Bob Sommerfeld said. "For the last two weeks, I've only been able to eat and breathe this (issue)."

Sommerfeld said he likely would move to whatever community his daughter were transferred to.

Schafer, who also serves on the Chippewa County Board, said the board will pass a resolution next week opposing the reductions and send it to the governor.

"We have a responsibility as a County Board to keep the Northern Center jobs in our community," he said.

State Rep. Jeff Wood, R-Chippewa Falls, said there are about 525 jobs at the center.

Under Doyle's plan, the center would be scaled back to 75 workers; about 300 jobs would be lost, while about 145 jobs would be transferred to the remaining centers in Madison and Union Grove.

Wood plans to introduce legislation in the Assembly to close the Central Center in Madison and keep the Northern Center open. Similar legislation was introduced Monday in the Senate.

"We're going to force the governor to the table and at least sit down and talk about it," Wood said.

Doyle and administration officials were unavailable for comment.

Wood said he disagrees with

center would save the state \$2.2 million. He encouraged the crowd to write letters to their representatives and the governor to save the center.

"I really think this battle will be won or lost in the next week," Wood said.

Schafer agreed, saying the letters would help.

"The best thing we can do is slow the process down," Schafer said.

Schafer said he was impressed with the turnout and comments from the crowd.

"It's pretty obvious that the employees care about the residents and care about their jobs," Schafer said.

Vetter can be reached at 723-

# Zien, Wood: Close Central instead

Area lawmakers aim at saving Northern Center

BY ROD STEITZER  
THE CHIPPEWA HERALD

In the showdown over the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled, four Republican legislators think they have the political clout to close the Central Center instead.

Gov. James Doyle is targeting the Northern Center in Chippewa Falls for drastic cuts, eliminating about 450 jobs and turning it into a 20-bed facility by next summer.

"We didn't want to do it like this, but the governor has forced our hand," said state Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls) at a news conference Friday morning. "If the governor is looking for a fight, we will

give him one."

Wood, along with state Sen. Dave Zien (R-Eau Claire), is introducing a bill to close the Central Center in Madison by July 1, 2004, and relocate the center's residents.

Wood and Zien were joined at the news conference by state Rep. Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford) and state Sen. Ron Brown (R-Eau Claire).

If the bill is passed, the state Department of Health and Family Services would need to submit a plan by next Jan. 1 on how it would close the Central Center.

Zien said the chairmen of the Assembly and Senate health committees have agreed to hold hearings on the bill this month. He claimed the bill has won the



ROD STEITZER / THE CHIPPEWA HERALD  
State Sen. Dave Zien (R-Town of Wheaton), left, speaks to one of the 20 people gathered to hear a news conference Friday morning in a parking lot of the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled.

SEE CENTER, PAGE A2

THE CHIPPEWA HERALD



ROD STETZER / THE CHIPPEWA HERALD  
Sen. David Zien (R-Town of Center) points during a news conference Friday at the Northern Center. Listening to him are, left, state Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls) and state Sen. Ron Brown (R-Eau Claire). Not pictured is state Sen. Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford).

FROM PAGE A1

backing of legislators representing the Southern Center, near Milwaukee.

"The south is with us," Zien said. "The destiny of the Southern Center is tied with the Northern Center."

Zien cautioned, though, that the governor could veto a bill to close the Central Center, forcing legislators to try to override the veto.

Last year, it cost \$53 million to operate the Central Center, which has 353 residents. Zien said it cost \$29 million to take care of the 174 residents of the Northern Center.

"No one can argue with the numbers on this or (its) common sense," Zien said. He won cheers for the 20 people gathered at the news conference by saying, "Could you handle another couple of hundred residents here?"

Wood said he disputes Doyle's estimate that closing the Northern Center will save the state \$2.2 million. Wood said selling the prime lakeshore property where the Central Center sits would fetch the state more money than would selling the Northern Center property.

Brown said Doyle challenged legislators to come up with alternative plans that would save the state money if they didn't like the ones he was proposing.

"This plan saves greater amounts of money," Brown said.

Suder said people supporting the Northern Center should write, e-mail or call their elected officials, showing support.

"This is about fairness. This isn't just a regional fight," Suder said.

He added: "We're willing to talk. Our doors are open to everyone."

Wood and Rick Schafer, chairman of Chippewa County's Economic Development Committee, will hold a town meeting next week to save the Northern Center and to

## Center calls cops

A center worker called Chippewa Falls police because lawmakers were holding a news conference on the grounds of the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled.

One center employee, who did not give her name, asked the lawmakers and news media to leave before the Friday morning news conference began. State Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls) said the employee was concerned about maintaining patient confidentiality.

The employee was ignored by the lawmakers, who held the news conference in a parking lot across from a Northern Center building. Someone from the center called Chippewa Falls police, and an officer responded. The officer watched the proceedings, but took no action.

"They do have the ability to regulate who is on their property," Police Chief Joseph Coughlin said of the center's administrators.

Coughlin, who did not know the name of the woman who called police, said the center workers and the state Department of Health and Family Services will decide what happens next, if anything.

— Rod Stetzer

open the Highview Prison. The session will be at 7 p.m., Monday in Room 302 of the Chippewa County Courthouse, 711 N. Bridge St., Chippewa Falls.

Area residents are invited to share their concerns and give their ideas on how to save the Northern Center.

Reach Rod Stetzer at [rstetzer@chippewa.com](mailto:rstetzer@chippewa.com).

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# Head of Central to take over here

*Dr. Bunck will be the director of both centers during Northern Center downsizing process.*

BY MARK GUNDERMAN  
THE CHIPPEWA HERALD

The head of the Central Center for the Developmentally Disabled in Madison has been appointed interim director of the Northern Center in Chippewa Falls, effective March 24.

Dr. Ted Bunck, who has been director of Central Center for the past six years, is expected to visit Northern Center today or Friday, according to a document from the state Department of Care and Treatment Facilities (DCTF) made available to certain Northern Center employees.

DCTF Administrator Laura Flood denied that Bunck's appointment was related to political efforts underway to close Central Center and keep Northern Center open.

Flood said that while Bunck will head Northern Center during the downsizing effort, he will not personally be in charge of placements of Northern Center residents into community settings as planned.

"His duties are to keep things stable and running," Flood said.

Actual placements of residents, the core process involved in downsizing Northern Center, will continue to be handled by the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services, headed by Sue Jones, Flood said.

Some Northern Center workers learned of Bunck's appointment Wednesday. He replaces Betty Blessinger, who has been reassigned to new duties within the new Division of Disabilities and Elder Services. The new organization will soon absorb all duties of the DCTF, which is being discontinued.

The announcement of Bunck's appointment came just two weeks after Gov. Jim Doyle announced plans to downsize the Northern Center. The move, to be accomplished through an administrative procedure rather than legislative action, would result in the loss of about 450 of the 625 jobs at Northern Center.

SEE DIRECTOR, PAGE A2

## **DIRECTOR:** *Bunck in charge of daily operations*

FROM PAGE 1

Flood disputed allegations made locally that the downsizing of the Northern Center was being rushed through for political reasons to deflect efforts to save it.

"We have been up front with people all along that we were going to use an administrative process to downsize Northern Center," Flood said. "That was our decision. That was not Dr. Bunck's decision."

Flood said the nature of the process of placing residents of a center for the developmentally disabled into the community prevents a rush job.

"It takes an average of six months to develop relocation plans. We're not even going to be relocating residents until June or July," Flood said.

She agreed with statements that Doyle made in a visit to Chippewa Falls last week that there would be opportunity for the Legislature to review decisions and plans spelled out in the budget message. But like Doyle, she stated that plans for the downsizing of Northern Center are proceeding at this time.

"The characterization that this is being rushed isn't accurate. That's not the planning process we use," Flood said.

She said Bunck would be responsible for day-to-day operations, not the placement of residents. He will

## Bunck has downsizing experience

Dr. Ted Bunck, who has been named interim director at the Northern Center, brings with him experience in downsizing a center for the developmentally disabled.

"He is a seasoned director and has over 15 years of director experience in several Centers for the Developmentally Disabled in the state of Maryland and here in Wisconsin.

He has seen a previous center through significant downsizing and is familiar with the kinds of dynamics and needs our care operations and staff will have during this time." Laura Flood, director of the state Department of Care and

Treatment Facilities said in a message to some Northern Center employees.

Bunck has headed the Central Center in Madison for the past six years.

Flood said this morning that Bunck's experience had much to do with his selection to replace Betty Blessinger, who has been reassigned to other duties.

"He's quite familiar with the kinds of dynamics and services you need to provide care and to support staff in transition," Flood said.

Bunck's duties at the Northern Center will deal with day-to-day operations.

— Mark Gunderman

continue to head the Central Center as well, splitting his time between both places, with the help of deputy directors at each location.

Bunck's appointment clarifies Blessinger's status.

Just days after an emotionally-charged meeting with employees about the downsizing plan, Blessinger was transferred to Madison, and the Herald reported Feb. 23 that Blessinger was no longer at Northern Center.

Flood said last week Blessinger was given new duties in Madison, but was also continuing in her

duties as director of Northern Center.

Flood said this morning that she stands by that statement of Blessinger's status at the time, and the decision to appoint Bunck was a recent one.

"Betty was reassigned because I found her very valuable to me in the past week. I wasn't sure if we were going to have enough management expertise in this office," Flood said.

Blessinger will still have some role in the Northern Center downsizing, and also in providing transitional services to Northern Center staff.



# Overflow crowd plots strategy for saving Northern Center

BY MARK BUNDERMAN  
THE CHIPPewa HERALD

It felt as if someone had turned up the heat by the time a meeting at the Chippewa County Courthouse broke up Monday night.

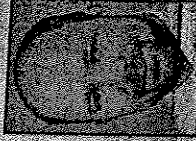
The feeling came partly from the fact that the building's largest meeting room was packed with people interested in learning what they could do to save the Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled. The crowd spilled out into the hall as state and county officials led the discussion on how the center could be saved and why.

And how to save the center and about 450 jobs that come with it involves turning up the heat.

"Please, write all your (state) Assembly people and senators. Also write the governor about it," said State Rep. Jeff Wood (R-Chippewa Falls). "We hope we can force the governor to at least sit down and talk about it."

Wood predicted that Northern Center's fate would be determined in the next week as Gov. Jim Doyle decides whether to fight the Legislature over the issue.

Doyle announced Feb. 18 plans to close Northern Center, keeping the Central Center in Madison and the Southern Center near Milwaukee open. Wood has introduced a bill to close the Central Center instead and is confident it will pass.



"The Assembly can pull the funding for the Central Center out of the budget and fund Northern, but the governor can veto that. Sooner or later it's in the governor's hands," Wood said. So it's time to apply political pressure. A list of the 52 counties that place residents at the Northern Center, and which state representatives serve them, was distributed.

The address and phone number for contacting Doyle's office was also shared. "We can plan for the whole process, but politically you have to write the letters now," said Dick Rettke, district field representative for the Wisconsin State Employees Union. He urged letter writers to focus on needs, most especially

*'We have a responsibility as a county board to support the Northern Center and the jobs here.'*

**Rick Schafer**  
County Board supervisor

the needs of the center residents. Rettke also spoke of support for a petition drive organized through the 52 counties.

# MEETING: Closing center to give big economic impact

It looks really grim if they close (Northern Center)

Kim Benzschawel  
Boyd cabinet

People is really interested in seeing how they will be affected. If it's really a problem, we will appear. If Wood reassigned. Although it did not appear that anyone present at the meeting needed to be asking that the Northern Center should be saved, much time at the nearly 90-minute meeting was spent on comments supporting the center. Senator said analysis showed an economic impact of closing the center at between \$40 and \$55 million a year.

Kim Benzschawel of Boyd noted how it would affect the small towns of the county. Citing data gathered from center records, she said 206 families in Chippewa Falls gain income from the center. In Boyd there are 35 families, with 64 in Cadott. "It looks really grim if they close it," she said.

Speakers challenged whether community placement really were better than institutional settings, especially for the extreme cases remaining at Northern Center. It was suggested that there was a higher mortality rate in community placements. But no one had hard data to back that up.

Some speakers defended the center on the grounds of consistency of care. Northern Center employees stay a long time. The Central and Southern have higher staff turnover rates. One woman said she worked at Southern and could have her pick of jobs after five years.

Now with 29 years seniority at Northern Center she lacks authority to get on a day shift. Another speaker told a similar story about working at Central. **React: Mark Gauderman** at [mp.southcentralmississippi.com](http://mp.southcentralmississippi.com).

...the state would we even more money. Closing Central Center if there's that. North...