

## Camp Fowler hits \$6 million funding goal

Money will expand programs in Orefield for at-risk youth.



Camp Fowler namesake Linny Fowler (left) and [Lehigh County Executive Don Cunningham](#) listen at the fundraising ceremony Wednesday. (DON FISHER, Allentown Morning Call / June 11, 2008)

By Ben Slivnick | Of the Morning Call  
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Child-welfare officials on Wednesday announced the end of a campaign to raise \$6 million to expand a camp for troubled youths.

For two years, Camp Fowler in Orefield has been used for retreats and banquets. But with the new money, officials from Valley Youth House -- the Bethlehem social services agency that runs the camp -- said they will be able to add overnight programming and better serve the more-than 8,000 youths they see every year.

"Before it was like, bring the kids out for a day and they could shoot hoops, run around and fish," Matt Galle, the camp's director said. "Now, we can extend that stay."

Previously, the camp has run programs for gang prevention and for children with disorders such as autism. This year, Galle said, the camp would serve many of the same functions, but on a broader scale.

Especially because the camp often hosts youths separated from their families, the ability to host people overnight is important, Galle said.

Ruby Marin, one of Valley Youth House's 400 clients in the agency's independent living programs, told of leaving an abusive family for foster care. She said the donations will make it possible for at-risk teenagers -- whether poor, separated from their families or embroiled in gang activity -- to live "normal" lives.

"This place helps teenagers realize that there is such a thing as positive recreation," the Bethlehem 17-year-old said.

The donations will also go toward creating an endowment for the camp of more than \$3 million, which will allow it to waive admission fees and ensure its long-term future.

"There's no point to all of this if you can't stay open," Galle said.

[Lehigh County](#) donated \$500,000 to the campaign and the state donated \$750,000.