

Youth home finds backer

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A glimmer of hope for Discovery House, a cash-strapped home for troubled youth, has arrived in the form of Butte-based Community Counseling and Correctional Services, officials said Tuesday.

"They're interested in helping us," said Carole Kovacich, director of the 32-year-old non-profit organization that fell into dire financial straits in November. "We need to go with somebody or it's not going to be here."

Kovacich asked the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commission Tuesday to lease the nine-bed Discovery House building — on South Main Street behind the county courthouse — to CCCS. The organization operates treatment and correctional facilities, including the Butte Pre-Release Center.

"I'm cautiously optimistic it's going to happen," Mike Thatcher, CCCS's administrator, said in a phone interview Tuesday night. "We think it falls within our mission. In our opinion, it's a critically needed service." In coming weeks, county staff will draft a lease and present it to commissioners for a vote, Chief Executive Rebecca Guay said.

While Discovery House has always struggled financially, it fell deeply into the red this winter, partly because the cost of housing kids far exceeds the state's reimbursement rate, Kovacich said.

Pleas for financial help brought in \$20,000 from the community, but it would take far more to keep Discovery House operating.

"Without CCCS's intervention, the home will not likely survive," said Kovacich, who wears several hats at the home. "I'm getting older, and I don't have the energy I used to have, but I want Discovery House to stay here."

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"Discovery House is very important for kids in the Butte and Anaconda area," Lucich said in a phone interview. Also, he said, the 13 jobs Discovery House provides are important to the local economy.

If CCCS takes over, existing employees would keep their jobs, but would receive better pay and benefits than currently, Thatcher said. The size and focus of Discovery House also would stay the same, he said.

His organization has the resources, experiences and connections to market and manage Discovery House until it reaches financial stability, he said.