

CCCS rehab program breaks ground near Anaconda

Montana Standard, 6/12/2009

A crowd gathered in support Thursday to watch a local agency break ground on its \$12.3 million facility just east of Anaconda.

Once built, the 118-bed project will house adult male felony offenders who have violated the terms of their probation in a program called "START," or Sanction, Treatment, Assessment, Revocation and Transition.

For Mike Thatcher, CEO of Community Counseling and Correctional Services Inc., or CCCS, it was a welcome turnout for the company's sometimes controversial plans.

CCCS had previously tried to move forward on a similar project in Anaconda, but what Thatcher called a "vocal minority" kept it from getting off the ground.

Not this time, however.

Local officials, state legislators and representatives from the governor's office were on hand for the first shovel-loads on a project that moved quickly to fruition.

"Sixty-seven days to put this together," said Thatcher. "That's got to be a record." The 40,000-square-foot facility will be located on Highway 48, about one mile north of Highway 1. Thirty-seven employees who staff START at the Montana State Hospital campus at Warm Springs will transfer to the new facility. CCCS will likely need to hire 15 more employees.

It will have a \$3 million payroll and purchase \$1 million worth of goods and services each year.

Thatcher said he hopes the project "kicks off a whole lot of activity in the area," especially the reclaimed land along Highway 48 between Warm Springs and Anaconda.

Joe Murphy, CCCS's board president, said "there couldn't be a better location for this project." CCCS has operated a START pilot project since 2005. It is run out of an 88-bed facility on the Warm Springs campus that is slated for demolition.

It is designed to give offenders a taste of incarceration, coupled with treatment to help raise the odds that they can successfully return to their communities, a news release said.

About 800 offenders are housed in pre-release centers in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena and Missoula.