



Scan, Find &
Update All Drivers

- ✓ Windows 7
- ✓ Windows Vista
- ✓ Windows XP/2000



Start Download

St. Petersburg Times
tampabay.com

May 26, 2011

Long overdue end to Dozier School for Boys' legacy of abuse

By Times Wire

The news comes decades too late for generations of abused young men. But the state of Florida finally has stopped defending a culture of horrific abuse and will shut down a North Florida school for boys at the end of June after more than a century of looking the other way. The courage of former students who recounted the abuse they endured, renewed public scrutiny and a state financial crisis combined to force a decision that should have been made years ago.

The Department of Juvenile Justice announced Thursday that the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys - recently renamed the innocuous North Florida Youth Development Center - will be shut down and its 63 detainees will be sent to other facilities. The state will save more than \$14 million and focus more on forward-looking prevention and community-based services. Gov. Rick Scott's administration deserves credit for finally putting a stop to a pattern of state-sanctioned abuse that governors from both political parties refused to address.

The shameful history of this facility and the failure of the state's leaders to deal with it leaves a permanent stain. In the early 1900s, boys were kept there in irons and beaten with a leather strap. By the 1950s, it was the largest boys' school in the country even as the reports of beatings continued. In 2008, a group of men who were confined there in the 1950s and '60s filed a lawsuit claiming horrible abuse. An investigation by the *St. Petersburg Times* uncovered evidence of mysterious deaths or abuse in nearly every decade of the institution's existence. *Times* reporters Ben Montgomery and Waveney Ann Moore described the permanent physical and emotional scars the experience left on generations of boys who left the facility worse off than when they arrived.

Florida has a long way to go in protecting and caring for children. In the last week, headlines have focused on the death of a year-old baby under state supervision in Tampa and the common drugging of children in state juvenile jails with powerful antipsychotic medications. The investment in pre-kindergarten is too low, and the high school dropout rate is too high. On a shoe-string budget, the state over the years has overhauled state agencies, created and shut down juvenile boot camps, toughened criminal penalties and paid lip service to early intervention programs. Despite the best of intentions by many public officials and advocates for children, Florida still falls short.

But amid those familiar challenges, today offers renewed hope. The state finally has acknowledged the sins of the past at a facility that embodied state-sanctioned abuse, and it will be shuttered forever. That will be little comfort to the men whose lives were shaped by the torture they suffered there as boys, but it ensures that no one else will be hurt in what one survivor called "a house of horrors."

St. Petersburg Times



2011 St. Petersburg Times. Permission granted for up to 5 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.8618?icx_id=1172007 into any web browser. St. Petersburg Times and St. Petersburg Times logos are registered trademarks of St. Petersburg Times. The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.