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Whereabouts of missing Eckerd camp boys still unknown

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Six days have past since three teens went missing from Eckerd Youth Alternatives and authorities are no closer to finding the boys.

The search continued Tuesday for the teenagers who ran away from the camp last week. The Henderson County Sheriff's Office search began Friday after the teens were discovered missing.

The camp at 1079 Sky Valley Road is a private, nonprofit organization serving at-risk and troubled youth in the county. Interim Director David Boeke said it is designed to help the youths get back on the right path.

"We are all about helping at-risk youths," he said. "We do that through the ... wilderness."

Boeke said the teens were discovered missing at 4:15 a.m.

"Initially, we did an on-property search," he said. "After that, we turned things over to the Sheriff's Department. We are concerned for the kids and their safety."

The camp is a nonsecure voluntary facility, Boeke said.

"We are a voluntary program that is not always an easy choice, but being here at the camp is what the youths have chosen to do," Boeke said.

The number one goal at the camp is to keep the children safe, he said, but the camp is not managed as a detention center or boot camp.

"We do have a nightwatchman that visits the camp sites throughout the night," Boeke said. "We also have camp staff who are on duty 24 hours a day."

Tyler Collins, 16, was among one of the three boys who left the camp. Angel

Gonzalez, 15, of Hendersonville was another one of the teens. The third teen has not been identified by authorities or his parents.

Gonzalez's mother, Tammy Valle, said her son is about 5 foot 2 inches tall with black hair and a medium skin type.

"I don't know where my son is or if he is dead or alive," Valle said. "I just want my son to come home or be returned to me when he is found."

Collins was described as being 5 foot 10 inches tall, 140 pounds, with blue eyes and shoulder-length brown hair.

Collins was last seen with another white male and Gonzalez, who left the camp together. Family members of Collins said the boys were last seen in the Crab Creek area near Kanuga Road Friday night.

Anyone with information on any of the boys' location should contact the Sheriff's Office at 697-4911.
