

Local CYA camp will remain open

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SANTA CRUZ — The Ben Lomond Youth Conservation Camp will not be closed, the California Youth Authority announced Monday. However, the camp will lose one teacher, four youth counselors and one lieutenant due to budget cuts.

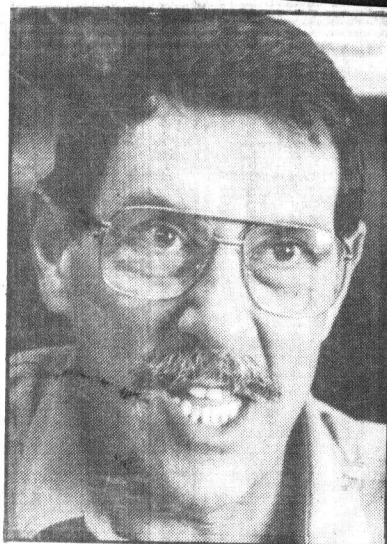
The Ben Lomond camp, along with four others statewide, was threatened with closure last month as the California Youth Authority struggled to trim \$8.9 million from

its budget — a 3 percent cut overall.

The Youth Authority is responsible for housing and rehabilitating youthful offenders throughout the state, and operates several large locked institutions as well as the minimum-security camps. The CYA had planned to turn its camps over to the state Department of Corrections to house adult felons. The camps have been operated by the CYA since the mid-1940s.

"We'll do our best to make this

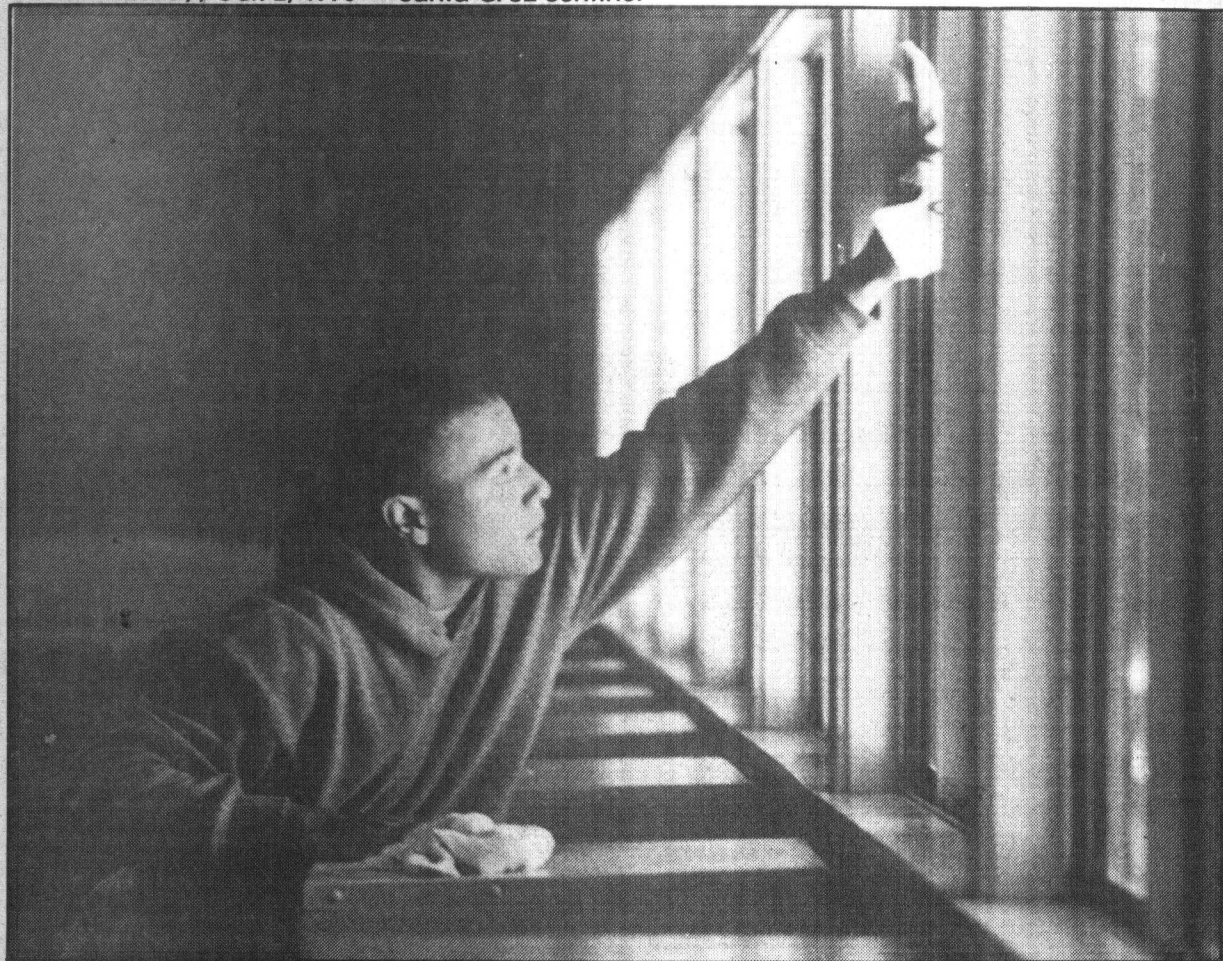
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Bill Zannella

Camps are effective

A-4—Tuesday, Oct. 2, 1990 — Santa Cruz Sentinel



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

James Christian cleans up at Ben Lomond CYA camp

CYA

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decision fly," said Bill Zannella, superintendent of the Ben Lomond camp. "We're going to do it because we believe in this program. We believe, from a professional standpoint, that this is an effective weapon in the war on delinquency."

"The 400- and 500-bed institutions are cost effective, but in my opinion a large institution is not as effective in teaching and training as a small camp," Zannella said. "It's no secret that small is better, but big is cost effective."

Under the current plan, Zannella will lose four of his 11 youth counselors, and one of his two teachers. The camp's 17-member work crews, now managed in the field by one captain and one counselor, will be cut to 15 youths managed by one captain.

Skeptics in the CYA worry that the cuts will weaken the camp program, making it an easier target for the next round of budget cuts.

"It's like comparing a station wagon with one driver and eight kids in the back with a wagon that has one driver, seven kids and one adult in the back," said one CYA worker who asked not to be named. "Who's going to have better control? And if this plan doesn't work, it won't be long before they sound the death knell."

Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Car-

mel, was gleeful at Monday's news. Farr and a coalition of county officials led a drive to keep the Ben Lomond camp open, resulting in a public meeting with CYA Deputy Director Frank Alarcon 10 days ago. Alarcon said he was impressed by the breadth of local support for the CYA.

"It's pretty exciting, isn't it," Farr said. "I think the community really convinced the deputy director that we're really supportive of the mission of the CYA."

While other communities have rallied to keep corrections facilities out of their neighborhoods, Santa Cruzans surprised CYA officials by rallying to keep one in their backyard, Farr said.

CYA officials said repeatedly that the camp closures were just one of the budget-cutting options being considered, but reliable informants within the agency insisted the closures were "a done deal" and only loud public outcry from several counties forced the CYA to reconsider.

News of the plan leaked out after camp employees were "given their marching orders" in early September, according to numerous CYA workers.

Of the five camps, only one in Los Angeles will be turned over to the DOC, CYA spokeswoman Sarah Andrade said. Two camps will be reserved for the CYA's older

wards, and two — the Ben Lomond camp and one in Amador County — will be left as they are.

Reserving the Mariposa and Nevada County camps for older wards will save money by requiring fewer workers, Andrade said. Changes in organization and staffing at the camps will save \$7.3 million, and the remaining \$1.6 million in cuts will be spread across the agency's executive office, parole services, prevention and community corrections, she added.

It is possible that the CYA will face more budget cuts next year. The agency has seen its budget shrinking steadily for the past nine years, Andrade said, and nobody knows when the cuts will stop.

"We really don't know what will happen next year," she said. "But given the track record, there's a chance there could be more reductions."