

The Andalusia Star-News

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SCAMH expands facilities

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With a little in-kind help from the Covington County Commission, construction is under way at the South Central Alabama Mental Health's main office for a playground and pole barn for its youth programs.

Grant-writing team member and HR director Sabrina Boddy said the plans include a half basketball court, a volleyball court and a pole barn with picnic tables, primarily for the children's program.

SCAMH works with children at the health facility, and in Andalusia, Covington County, and Opp schools. In the most serious cases, the therapist and case manager work with children in their homes. At present, there are more than 200 children in Covington County who are receiving mental health services.

Anna Courson said most of the children treated here suffer from depression, oppositional defiance, or AD/HD.

Oppositional defiance, she explained, is when a child has trouble controlling his behavior and is defiant with authority figures.

"He has trouble following the rules at home or at school," she explained.

Children who are depressed show some of the same symptoms, she said, adding that a depressed child is often agitated or aggressive.

In addition to the one-on-one programs for these children, SCAMH offers 10-week parenting classes through the Parent Project. The classes are offered at the center, and all costs except a textbook are covered by the Covington County Children's Policy Council.

This summer, 160 of the children under the care of SCAMH will participate in a summer camp. The camp for ages 4 to 17 will be offered at Andalusia Middle School and at the SCAMH main center.

SCAMH executive director Dianne Baugher expressed her appreciation to both the Covington County Commission for the in-kind work, as well as to Southeast Alabama Gas District, which is providing a grill for the new outdoor center. Others who wish to remain anonymous also have contributed, she said.

Parents who think their children might benefit from SCAMH's services should call 334.222.2523 or 877.530.0002.