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Camp E-Tu-Nake falls victim to state budget cuts

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BLAKELY, GA (WALB) - A youth alternative camp in Blakely is closing because of state budget cuts. Camp E-Tu-Nake will close March 27th.

Eckerd Youth Alternatives built the wilderness camp 14 years ago along the Chattahoochee river to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents.

Those on staff say they'll miss watching troubled teens transform their lives through their program.

Kids at Camp-E-Tu-Nake will be sent home early.

"The 27th will be our last day," says the camp director, Lou Barrington.

Since 1994 this youth alternative camp has changed the lives of more than 500 young men.

"E-Tu-Nake means "his other way"...we're looking for our children to find another way in their lives then what they've been doing," says Barrington.

For the past 14 years, the Department of Juvenile Justice has referred troubled teens from all across the state to the Blakely wilderness program here at E-Tu-Nake. Now, state budget cuts, are shutting the camp down.

But what will happen to the boys currently in the program? The ones that are ready will be sent home to their families, others will be transferred to similar programs in the state.

Those on staff say they understand cuts must be made. But continue to stress the importance of rehabilitation in our youth.

"Typically kids will come here and they will improve grade levels by two grades, change their behaviors, and go through a cultural change as well," says camp counselor Bradley Baker.

"We are in a situation in this part of the state where there aren't many programs parents can send these kids to. And we were that program and we all had the desire to want to help kids and families," says Director Barrington.

But they say even though their life in the woods is over, the relationships made will last a lifetime.

"Once you are an E-Tu-Nake camper or staff, you are always a E-Tu-Nake camper or staff. This is a family," says Barrington.

A family forced to split, because of desperate economic times. [Feedback](#)

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