

# Mountain Democrat

PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

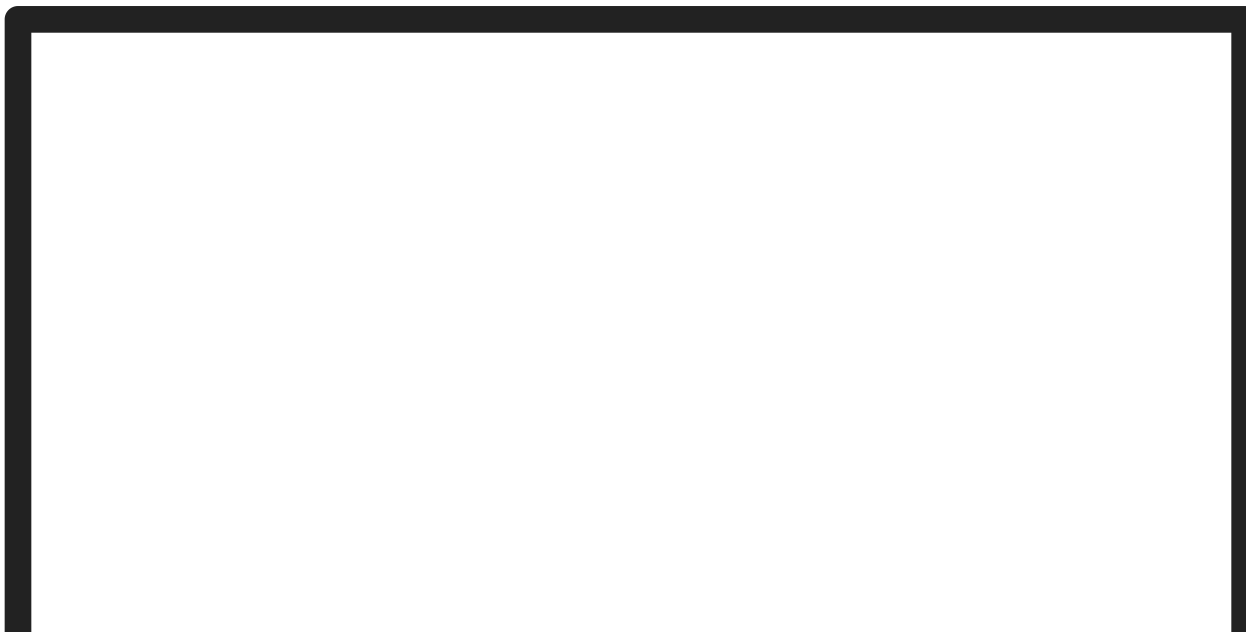


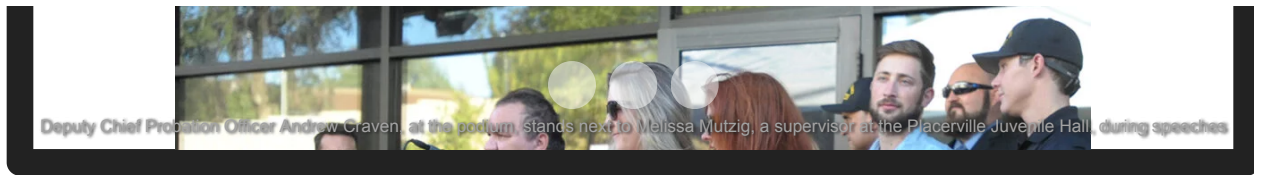
Deputy Chief Probation Officer Andrew Craven explains how a grading system for the school at the El Dorado County Juvenile Hall in Placerville works. Craven took visitors on tours of the 48-year old building as part of a farewell open house June 21. Democrat photo by Kevin Christensen

## News

### A 'bittersweet day' as juvenile hall decommissioned

By Kevin Christensen





El Dorado County Juvenile Hall staff formally marked the closing of its Placerville detention facility last Friday, welcoming the community for a farewell open house and decommissioning ceremony. In operation since 1971, the facility was shut down June 21.

“There are no words to describe the emotions I am feeling,” said Probation Supervisor Fernando Palomar, who lives in Diamond Springs. “We built a family here with staff and the kids and it’s hard to see it go.”

Visitors were able to tour the facility, mingle with staff and reminisce about the 48-year history.

Probation supervisor Melissa Mutzig, of Shingle Springs, has been working at the facility for the past nine years.

“There were a lot of unique people here and we found the right chemistry of staff here recently,” Mutzig said. “My best memory was seeing hopeless kids come through here and then seeing them overcome it all and graduate from high school in these walls.”

The facility was closed because of its age but also due to the decline in the number of youths housed there. The minors that were in custody there were transferred to the juvenile hall in South Lake Tahoe in May.

Some of the staff transferred to the South Lake Tahoe facility while others found different positions with the county.

“This is a very bittersweet day for many people here,” said Andrew Craven, deputy chief probation officer. “This building will be missed and has a lot of memories. If these walls could talk there would be some amazing stories but the building is outdated to serve modern needs for the juveniles and a new facility will in the end serve the county better.”

There are plans to construct a new detention building where the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office is on Fair Lane. There is currently no definitive timetable for the completion of the new facility.

“It’s really hard to break up this amazing team but they took my vision for change and adapted. The people that work here are amazing and some of the best I have ever seen,” said Brian Richart, chief probation officer. “We have to evolve and update to better serve the county. If I had to estimate on the new facility, I would anticipate that it will be three years until it’s finished.”

After the open house, a formal decommissioning ceremony led by deputy probation officer Joe Porter took place outside of the juvenile hall’s front entrance.

Craven, Richart and Superior Court Presiding Judge Suzanne N. Kingsbury spoke and former employees were recognized. The ceremony also included the presentation of an American flag to the family of former employee and veteran Matt Flager who passed away while working at the detention center in 2014.

“Matt was a very special man and one of the most respectful people I have worked with,” Mutzig said. “He always came into work ready to do whatever it took to help the kids in here. It was devastating for us all when he passed away.”

Attendees were then welcomed inside for appetizers and to view a 30-minute documentary about the detention center, produced by Shingle Springs videographer Joel Bringolf.