

# News

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## **NEW JUVENILE CENTER TO OPEN SEPT. 22, WHITEHEAD NAMED INTERIM DIRECTOR**

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. – Macomb County’s new Juvenile Justice Center facility is scheduled to open for business on Wednesday, Sept. 22, under the direction of a 21-year veteran employee.

Robert Whitehead will serve as interim director of the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) while a nationwide search is conducted for a permanent director, Chief Circuit Judge Peter J. Maceroni announced today. Whitehead, who began working at what was formerly known as the Macomb County Youth Home in 1983, has been assistant superintendent at the JJC since December 1994.

“For the sake of the children at the facility and the staff, it makes sense to have stability as we make the move from the old facility to the new one,” Maceroni said. “We are fortunate to have someone with Mr. Whitehead’s qualifications and dedication available to make this transition as seamless as possible.”

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## Page 2

Whitehead, 45, has been working closely with Sheriff Mark Hackel and other Sheriff's Department officials for more than six weeks to identify staff training, logistical and facility issues that should be addressed before moving to the new facility. The Sheriff's Department will continue assisting with JJC operations.

"Our assessment team has been working very closely with Mr. Whitehead and agrees that he is the right person to facilitate the opening of the new building," said Sheriff Mark Hackel.

The opening of the new \$19 million JJC facility was scheduled for Sept. 22 after the Michigan Bureau of Family Services gave the county approval for the move, said Nancy White, chairwoman of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners. White said the new building is not just good for Macomb County, it will be a better environment for the children and a powerful new tool for the staff.

"Everyone is eager to get into the new building, and now that reality is close at hand," White said. "It won't be long before people think of 'state-of-the-art' instead of the words 'beleaguered' or 'troubled' when it comes to our Juvenile Justice Center."

The new JJC will open with the capacity to hold 90 male and female residents. When the new facility opens on Sept. 22, the old unit will be shut down and renovated. When the renovation is complete, the JJC will be equipped to house 190 youth, including 20 in shelter care for abused and neglected children.

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