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A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING NEWSPAPER

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EDITORIALS

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Cost vs. savings

EDITOR: I read that Sonoma County may close rehab programs to reduce costs. This time the 20-bed residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation program at the county's Orenda Center is targeted.

The question that the county supervisors should be pondering is whether the closure will reduce costs or cost money. Saving a few dollars now is penny-wise and pound-foolish. It will cost more money later on down the line when peoples' lives will be ruined because of drug and alcohol addiction.

Many of our clients for whom we find alternatives to jail depend on this excellent facility, especially low-income clients. If the courts can recognize that sending drug- and alcohol-addicted people

to rehab is best for society, so should the Board of Supervisors.

Taxpayers save money by providing an alternative to more expensive warehousing and incarceration at the county jail.

The number of untreated criminal defendants who harm and kill members of the public in automobile accidents alone is staggering. Accurate cost benefit analysis, which takes into consideration the quality of life for those affected by addiction, together with the potential harm to the victims, will never justify the short-term savings.

MICHAEL A. FIUMARA
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re February 28, 2008 Press Democrat

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