

KIDS FOUNDER IS FLORIDA CANDIDATE

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Miller Newton, who runs a controversial drug-treatment center in Hackensack, is seeking the mayoralty in Madeira Beach, Fla., where he legally resides.

But his opponent in that election says he may make a campaign issue of a Bergen County prosecutor's probe now closed into Newton's rehabilitation program for teen-agers, KIDS of Bergen County.

Newton, who founded KIDS, has been a zoning board member for six years in Madeira, a beach community of 5,100 near St. Petersburg. He said he spends several days each month in Florida and attends the one zoning session held each month. He also keeps a residence in Hackensack.

Newton, 49, added that the five-member governing body in Madeira, which meets once a month, was "not like those up here.

"We're more concerned with community service than politics. "

He is being challenged in the March 8 race by Hugh Lamont, 51, a retired business owner who is seeking his first public office.

The sole issue in the campaign focuses on property that the current city commission purchased for \$1 million and plans to use for free parking for a tourist shopping area. Newton and Lamont both said Madeira's citizens should not bear the cost alone and have devised alternative plans for the lot, including lining it with parking meters.

Newton is backed by the outgoing mayor, J. Kenneth Jacobsen, and Lamont's supporters include a 300-member taxpayers group he founded.

Lamont has been researching KIDS and said he may raise the prosecutor's probe as an issue in the campaign.

A nine-month investigation by county Prosecutor Larry McClure ended last February, when officials said they could not substantiate claims by KIDS clients that they had been abused during treatment.

But the probe led McClure to call for state regulation of unlicensed treatment centers such as KIDS. In response, the state Health Department told Newton to apply for certification under a law that previously covered only nursing homes and residential treatment centers.

Matt Martin, chief of drug treatment for the Division of Narcotic and Drug Abuse Control in the state Health Department, said Thursday that Newton had applied for certification and that a decision in the matter was due soon.

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