

Drug treatment center closes Series: OUTSIDE TALLAHASSEE

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Straight Inc., a drug treatment program accused of abusive practices against clients, has closed its Columbia facility. The program opened six months ago and its closure "was based primarily on the national economic recession," according to a letter sent to state officials Monday by Bernadine Braithwaite, Straight's national director. The letter said the program, based in St. Petersburg, will try to place clients elsewhere prior to its closure on Feb. 28. Straight continues to operate in the Tampa Bay area. The program, an adolescent outpatient program that emphasizes regimented peer pressure in its treatment, has come under fire in several states. In an interview at the Columbia center last week, Eugene J. Nieto, executive director of the center, said that negative publicity about the program was steering clients away.

CONGRESSMAN TO RETIRE WASHINGTON - Ten-term U.S. Rep. William Lehman announced Tuesday on the House floor that he won't seek re-election. Lehman, a 78-year-old Democrat, will complete his term before retiring to his Biscayne Park home. The former used car dealer, born in Alabama, has had the most liberal record in Florida's congressional delegation. He had recovered from a stroke and also had jaw cancer in 1983. He's the only person to hold the 17th District seat, created in 1972 from north Dade County with a stronghold of liberal, mostly Jewish, voters in condominium communities. The district, which stretches from Miami Beach west to Miami Lakes and Hialeah, is now more than one-third Hispanic, many of them conservative Cubans and Nicaraguans. But Lehman was unopposed for re-election in 1988 and won in 1990 with 78 percent of the vote. The district is likely to undergo changes in the redistricting being mapped out by the state Legislature. State Senate president Gwen Margolis, a fellow Democrat who has been laying the groundwork for a run at Congress, was the most immediate beneficiary of Lehman's decision. Toyota distributor sued MIAMI - Four North Carolina auto dealers have joined others across the Southeast in suing a Toyota distributor accused of pressuring them into purchases that resulted in higher retail prices. Jim Moran and six of his companies were accused of racketeering, fraud and federal antitrust violations in a class-action suit filed Monday in U.S. District Court. The Hillsboro Beach millionaire founded Southeast Toyota Distributors, the exclusive supplier of new Toyotas in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The suit charges he threatened to cut off car deliveries unless dealers agreed to do business with his other companies, which handle financing, leasing, insurance, warranties and accessories.

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