



EMQ FamiliesFirst



**United Way
California Capital Region**

EMQ Families First
**Helping foster positive lives for children in our
community**

United Way California Capital Region is proud to have EMQ FamiliesFirst as one of its 142 certified agencies in our five-county region: Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo. EMQ FamiliesFirst's Residential Treatment Program in Davis provides a home for more than 60 males under the age of 18. More than 90 percent of them have been physically or sexually abused before making their way into the facility.

Those same youth are usually placed in 10-20 other homes or facilities before they make it to Davis.

"They have horrible histories before they come here," Associate Director of the Residential Treatment Program, Wendi Counta, said. "They have a lot of aggression, they have suffered great trauma and loss and they each act out differently because of those circumstances.

"When they come here, we provide an environment that will teach them how to grow up to be good, safe males in the community. We teach them to become good men."

Counta and her staff do everything possible to replicate a normal home life for the residents. The campus has a school, an arts and crafts facility, a gymnasium, an outdoor playground and several buildings that are built like dorms, only with more emphasis on being a home.

The campus opened in 1995 and has served more than 400 youth in the residential facility and nearly 100 more in the day program.

"We want them to know they are safe and they have a home," Counta said. "When they come here, we provide an environment that will teach them how to grow up to be healthy members of the community. We teach them to become good men."

The boys have a regimented schedule to keep too. They wake up at 6:30 a.m., are in school between 8 a.m. – 2 p.m., have specialized treatment, arts and recreation classes until 6 p.m. and then head off for dinner and homework in the houses.

Counta and her staff also makes sure they take time to volunteer and support local nonprofit organizations like homeless shelters, the SPCA and more.

"We want them to learn how to deal with everything life has to offer including giving back to the community, having a job, structure and dealing with authority," Counta said. "By the time the residents arrive here, there has been a massive escalation of crisis in their lives.

"They don't have trust in adults, or really any human beings because of what they have gone through. Our goal is to work with the residents, be more of a parent rather than a counselor and prepare them for lower levels of care, prepare them for adulthood and do that in a safe and caring environment."