

Local charity forced to close its doors

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. --A charity in North Central Florida has been forced to close its doors.

"We were in debt six years ago," says Kipp Hayes. Staff at Big Brothers, Big Sisters say that previous mishandling of money has put them further into debt. "We got notice two weeks ago that big brothers, big sisters was out of compliance with national and state agencies."

Kipp Hayes - president of the board of directors for Big Brothers, Big Sisters - says the agency has not been able to pay employees for almost two months. "The funds were not allocated to pay the staff and the minimal bills at the time."

He's been with the agency for four years and says previous board members and CEO's mortgaged the building and leased out equipment - leaving the current board without a way to foot the bill. "And whatever they did with the money, nobody knows."

He says the funding and the grant money stopped coming from the national organization due to previous non-compliance issues. The organization did not have a CEO with the proper degree to run the charity, and failed to return calls and proper criteria - just to name a few.

Problems - Hayes says - carried over from previous management. Hayes says by the time the organization hired a new CEO. It was already too late. "Ever since I got here we've been able to plug the patch, but not stop the leakage."

Hayes says the organization is more than 200-thousand dollars in debt. In order to remain open, the organization must prove they can sustain the funds. "To be in compliance we would have to take care of the past payroll, have enough in the account to take care of the upcoming payroll, and then we'd have to have staff hired on to assume the duties this foundation requires."

Hayes says the charity serves more than 120 families in the area. He says he still has hopes to raise the money but if not, the organization will close. I reached out to the national organization numerous times but they were not able to return my call.

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