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**By Peter Hall,
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Jerry Sandusky's The Second Mile charity closing

The Second Mile wants to shift programs, \$2.5 million to another youth organization.

The charity for troubled children Jerry Sandusky founded in 1977 — where prosecutors say the retired Penn State football coach met boys he is charged with molesting — asked a judge Friday for permission to transfer its programs and millions in assets to another youth organization.

Facing a precipitous drop in donations, a loss of volunteers and a reluctance among agencies to refer children to its programs, The Second Mile concluded that its best option was to transfer operations to a similar organization and close its doors, according to court papers.

If its plan is approved, The Second Mile would give more than \$2.5 million to the Pennsylvania chapter of Arrow Child and Family Ministries, a Texas-based organization with a mission of helping at-risk children, according to papers filed in Centre County Orphans Court.

Arrow would operate The Second Mile's key programs and open an office in State College. The Second Mile, which is named as a defendant in at least three lawsuits by Sandusky's accusers, would close all of its offices but continue to exist as a legal entity.

Acting CEO David Woodle said the transition will allow The Second Mile's programs around the state, including those run by the group's offices in Harrisburg and King of Prussia, Montgomery County, to continue under Arrow.

"What we've done is taken a very solid period of time to figure out all of these services for thousands of kids that have gone on for years can go on," Woodle said.

To lawyers who represent Sandusky's accusers, the move appeared to be an effort to shield some of The Second Mile's assets from pending and threatened lawsuits.

"That is a highly suspicious and sinister action that will have to be scrutinized given the fact that they have been sued by our client and others," said Jeff Anderson, a St. Paul, Minn., attorney who has sued Sandusky, Penn State University and The Second Mile in Philadelphia County Court on behalf of an unidentified accuser.

Even if the proposed transfer is a good-faith effort to continue the group's work, it will not be a brief or easy process, said Philadelphia attorney Tom Kline, who represents one of Sandusky's accusers.

"This entire controversy involving The Second Mile is under a microscope, and I would be very surprised if a judge didn't put this attempt to transfer assets in the face of a score or more claims under the same microscope with a high-powered lens," Kline said.

Woodle said the transfer proposal has been reviewed by the state attorney general's office. He added that the orphans court will hear from anyone who opposes the plan.

Lehigh Valley donors to The Second Mile said the move to dissolve the charity is unfortunate but was foreshadowed in the organization's public statements in the weeks after Sandusky was charged late last year with molesting 10 young boys.

"It's a shame, for the most part, because outside of the accusations about Sandusky, they've done a lot for a lot of kids," said George Ahart of Walnutport.

The Ahart's Markets owner said his financial support for The Second Mile grew out of his love for Penn State football.

Ronald Lewis of Emmaus said he and his wife, Deanne, withdrew their decade-long support for The Second Mile when Sandusky was charged because they feared their money would no longer go toward programs for children.

But Lewis, a retired fundraiser for the Kutztown University Foundation, said the situation is sad because Sandusky's alleged abuse affected only a minuscule percentage of the children served by the organization.

"The other 99 percent had a tremendous experience," Lewis said. "It's extremely regrettable that this has happened, because it affects all of those kids and their families."

Sandusky, 68, founded The Second Mile in 1977 as a home for foster children. It grew into a statewide organization to provide development, support and athletic opportunities for more than 6,000 at-risk children each year.

On house arrest under \$250,000 bail since December, Sandusky faces a trial on 52 counts of child sexual abuse scheduled to begin June 5. Grand jury presentments recommending charges against Sandusky say he met many of his accusers, who ranged in age from 11 to 17, during events put on by The Second Mile.

At least three of Sandusky's accusers have filed lawsuits or notices they intend to sue, with each naming The Second Mile as a defendant. Court documents suggest there may be as many as 17 accusers.

The Second Mile is also engaged in litigation with its insurance company, which sued in federal court seeking a ruling that it doesn't have to pay for claims stemming from Sandusky's alleged misconduct.

Arrow was founded in 1992 in Houston and has grown into a \$36 million-a-year operation that serves more than 1,700 children in Texas, Maryland, California and Pennsylvania. The organization has Pennsylvania certification to provide child welfare, foster care and adoption services, according to court papers.

The Second Mile's directors selected Arrow to take over its programs after a review of more than a dozen organizations that extended offers to help after Sandusky was charged, Woodle said.

Under the proposed transfer of assets, The Second Mile would give about \$2 million in cash and an endowment of about \$500,000 to Arrow-PA, based in Altoona. According to court papers, the cash transfer would come from a capital campaign intended to build a \$12 million recreation center and outdoor athletic facility in State College.

Donors who contributed to the campaign have given their consent to the transfer if it is approved by the court, the filing says. The Second Mile is also working to sell its real estate assets, which include its State College headquarters and the 60-acre site of the planned recreation center.

Woodle said The Second Mile will continue to exist with only a handful of part-time employees until its real estate has been sold. At that time, the organization will file a second request in orphans court to dissolve entirely.