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Breaking News



Posted: Jun 14, 2012 07:20

Catherine Freer Wilderness
Albany, OR

Cooley Retires... Catherine Freer Closes

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June 12, 2012

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Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy Programs is celebrating nearly 25 years of working with adolescents, the retirement of Founder Rob Cooley, PhD, and also announcing the closure of the outdoor therapeutic program.

"It has been a wonderful 25 years and a privilege and an honor to have helped so many teenagers and their families. I have also been blessed to have worked with so many dedicated and creative individuals over the years. The decision to close the company when I retired was a difficult one, but fiscally it was the right one," explained Cooley.

Cooley founded Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy Programs on the belief that combining therapy and outdoor experiences would offer troubled teens and their families a valuable

treatment option. Since then, he and numerous dedicated individuals have worked with thousands of adolescents and their families to address the issues that are causing them to struggle.

Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy Program was dedicated to helping middle class youth whose parents have run out of options for saving them from self-destruction. With the companies' state licensing and accreditation, up to 70 percent of the families the program served were able to receive some third party (insurance) reimbursement for their treatment, which is a critical factor for most middle-income clients. Due to changes in insurance regulations and policies, few insurance companies now pay for the program. That combined with the lingering recession, limited the number of families that the program could serve and contributed to the decision to close the program.

"The phones have been ringing and we have a lot of families that would like to have their child enroll in our program, but so few of them have the financial resources to pay for the program. Without the insurance support middle-income families simply can't afford our program," explained Candice Kroeger, Admissions Director who has been with the company for 18 years.

Catherine Freer has been a leader in the private outdoor behavioral healthcare industry. The company strongly advocated that Oregon develop regulatory rules for outdoor therapy programs operating within the state and had the honor of consulting on legislation and participating actively in helping craft the regulations. It was also the first wilderness therapy programs to become accredited by the Joint Commission of Accredited Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Moreover, it was a founding member of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP) and the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Industry Council (OBHIC) and held important board positions throughout the years. The company was also instrumental in facilitating the outcome research undertaken by OBHIC.

Santiam Crossing, a not-for-profit therapeutic school, operated by a Board of Directors and led by Executive Director Brian Rossiter, will not be impacted by the closure of Freer.

For more information, please call 800-390-3983.

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