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11
12 *in pro per*

13 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
14 FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA
15

16 Kimberly R. Sweidy,
17 Plaintiff,

18 v.

19 Spring Ridge Academy, an Arizona
corporation, Jean Courtney,
20 Suzanne Courtney, Brandon Courtney,
Erin Smith, Leslie Filsinger,
21 Justin Zych, Kate Deily,
Veronica Borges, and
22 Does 1 through 20

23 Defendants.
24

Case No. CV-21-08013-PCT-SPL

**DECLARATION OF
MARGARET ANTONIA TURANSKY**

25 I, Margaret Antonia Turansky, under penalty of perjury, hereby declare that I am a former
26 Spring Ridge Academy (“SRA”) student. If called upon to testify as a witness, I would
27 and could competently testify, under penalty of perjury, to the following facts:

28 ///

1. I am Margaret Antonia Turansky. I attended SRA from May 2011–July 2012.
2. I attended Second Nature, a Wilderness Program, prior to attending SRA.
3. Due to my traumatic experiences at SRA, I have blocked out a lot.
4. Regarding the trainings/workshops at SRA, we were repeatedly told that we could not speak about what occurred with anyone outside of the trainings who had not already completed the workshop.
5. Trainings/workshops were part of “therapy.” I don’t know if parents were required to attend, but they were certainly strongly encouraged to attend. We could not “move up” if we did not complete each training. If you were kicked out of a training, it had to be repeated until completed successfully.
6. SRA was a “tattle culture.” Students were encouraged to tattle and rewarded for tattling on each other to SRA staff. I generally refused to tattle on other students, which caused me to be disliked by SRA staff.
7. A student asked me to confirm what her parents had told her about specific Action training details. I confirmed them.
8. Because it was so many years ago, some details are hazy. I don’t remember exactly how Kate Deily, my Community Life Director (“CLD”), learned of my “transgression,” but she did.
9. Kate Deily confronted me in a group meeting of 10 to 20 people in a conference room and said, “Maggie, did you tell?”
10. I was then subjected to a barrage of verbal abuse (also known as “feedback”) from Kate Deily and other students including:
 - “You make me sick”; and
 - “You’ve ruined everything.”
11. I was not allowed to explain or defend myself. I had to be unquestioning. I had to be compliant.
12. The first time I attended Action, I was kicked out.
13. Jeannie Courtney was leading Action. She conducted an exercise called

1 Giver/Taker. The terms “giver” and “taker” were never defined, and the exercise was
2 nothing more than a coerced popularity contest. I was in the middle in terms of
3 popularity. I really didn’t know which one to pick to decrease my chances of being
4 kicked out.

5 14. I was required to state to the group whether I was a “giver” or a “taker.” I said that
6 I was a “giver.” Slightly more than half, maybe about 55% of the group, disagreed with
7 me, voting that I was a “taker.”

8 15. Jeannie kicked me out stating, “You believe you are a ‘giver,’ but you are a ‘taker.’
9 You are not self-aware.”

10 16. The second time I attended Action, I managed to complete it without getting
11 kicked out.

12 17. During an exercise called “Stretches,” students had to perform a dance. I was told
13 that my dance looked too much like ballet. This was completely understandable, as I had
14 studied ballet.

15 18. The food control at SRA was extensive. Teachers weren’t allowed to give us any
16 food. Jeannie Courtney brought her favorite students into her office and gave them
17 chocolate. I was not one of her favorite students.

18 19. The Commitment training was offered whenever Jeannie Courtney felt like it.
19 However, if it was offered, students needed to complete it in order to graduate. It went on
20 for four to six weeks.

21 20. At the first meeting, we were given a dedicated bag, five to 10 pounds, industrial
22 covering, perhaps burlap, to carry everywhere with us. It was filled with sand.

23 21. We were required to have it with us at all times for the duration of Commitment.
24 This included sleeping with it.

25 22. On the final day of Commitment, we were put on “Introspection” for the whole
26 day. That meant we were not allowed to speak to anyone.

27 23. In the late afternoon/early evening, we were blindfolded, loaded into vans, and
28 driven 20 to 30 minutes.

1 24. By then, it was pitch dark, and we were in the middle of nowhere. We had no idea
2 where we were.

3 25. One by one, we were let out of the van. Our blindfold was then removed. Kate
4 Deily, my CLD, cut a small hole in my sandbag.

5 26. I was told to walk in a specific direction while the sand spilled from my bag. I was
6 to walk until I met a staff member in the distance.

7 27. It was dark. I couldn't see. I was supposed to walk by myself.

8 28. At this stage (June of 2012), I was so done. I was emotionally checked out. I was
9 counting the days until I could leave.

10 29. I had tried to leave when I turned 18 in May of 2012, but SRA convinced me to
11 stay to complete one class for high school graduation.

12 30. Walking alone, I realized that one of my friends was behind me. She was scared
13 of the dark. And we could hear coyotes howling.

14 31. I waited for her so that we could walk together. I didn't want her to be scared. We
15 separated again before we got to the end. The sand continued to spill from our bags.

16 32. After the end of the hike, we waited for everyone. Then we loaded back into the
17 van.

18 33. When we arrived back on campus, we had to sleep in the basement under the
19 Office Building.

20 34. Throughout the entire night, we were repeatedly awakened to receive "gifts."
21 These were random trinkets with no value or significance. One of the gifts I received was
22 a "magic wand with a star on the top." I threw all the stuff away after I returned home.

23 35. By the morning, we were seriously sleep deprived. And we still had to attend
24 school.

25 36. We were subjected to physical labor and excessive exercise.

26 37. Every morning, we had to run track for one hour, starting at 5:30 a.m.

27 38. After school, we had one to one and a half hours of sports.

28 39. Whenever we got into trouble, a common punishment was to shovel rocks. There

1 were piles of rocks. It was very hot. (This was by no means the only punishment doled
2 out, simply a frequent punishment.)

3 40. We went on a retreat to a high ropes course. I am afraid of heights. Kate Deily
4 said that if I didn't participate in the high ropes course, I would go back to campus and
5 shovel rocks.

6 41. Whenever our "caseload" got into trouble, we had to do physical labor, including
7 weekdays and weekends. A "caseload" consists of the other students who have the same
8 "therapist."

9 42. My caseload had to assemble and install, including digging, an industrial type
10 swing set on the SRA property.

11 43. We would get into trouble for borrowing or lending things. We would get into
12 trouble for changing behind the closet rather than in the bathroom.

13 44. We would get into trouble for keeping secrets. We had to write down our secrets.
14 We didn't know what secrets other students would reveal about us. We knew we would
15 get into trouble if we didn't reveal a secret about ourselves that other students might
16 subsequently reveal about us. This scared us into revealing all sorts of private matters.

17 45. The SRA culture is "don't trust anyone" or, perhaps, "trust very few." SRA kept
18 us completely isolated and completely compliant.

19 46. One of the punishments used was "SnS." This meant Silence and Separation. The
20 student was silenced and separated from the whole community.

21 47. SRA culture was extremely homophobic. If we became friends with another
22 person, we had to be very careful that our friendship was not deemed "too close," or we
23 would be forced to stop speaking to the person.

24 48. Random punishments were doled out based on no evidence.

25 49. I am introverted. I like to read. I was told I was not "engaging with the
26 community." I was put on Book Restriction. That was a bizarre punishment for a school.
27 I was only allowed to read books that were assigned in a class. So I lied to staff and told
28 them that every book I was reading was assigned by a class. That's how I was able to

1 read classic novels. I said that they were assigned for English class.

2 50. In therapy, I was instructed to finger paint my feelings in an effort to “connect with
3 my inner child.” My “therapist” at that time was Janet Rinker. I dipped one finger in the
4 paint and painted some emotions that I was told to. After the exercise, my therapist
5 chastised me for only using one finger instead of my entire hand. This justified putting
6 me on the “Messy Assignment” to cure my “fear of being messy.”

7 51. During Messy Assignment, I was *forced not to* make my bed and comb my hair. I
8 was *forced to* wear my clothes inside out and wear mismatched sock and shoes. I was
9 told that I needed to look as messy on the outside as I look on the inside.

10 52. They came into my room and messed up my closet and all of my organized
11 belongings. I was not allowed to make my bed. This “assignment” lasted for weeks with
12 no clear instructions about how I could get it to end. To top it off, I would consistently
13 get called out of my classes in order to make my bed and, every day, I had to explain to
14 staff that I wasn’t allowed to make my bed. Not only was this assignment unhelpful (and
15 I don’t know what this was supposed to be addressing, I am simply a tidy person) but it
16 actually prevented me from attending my classes in full.

17 53. Punishments had no goal and no end date. They were vague.

18 54. At one point, SRA attempted to diagnose me with OCD, which I do not have.

19 55. I get migraines and I now know that they are especially triggered by stress. While I
20 was at SRA, I was on an as-needed migraine medication that I was meant to take when I
21 could sense a migraine coming on. I was consistently denied this medication and I was
22 told that my migraines were due to me being dehydrated.

23 56. Because of the extreme stress I was regularly under while at SRA, I did have
24 frequent migraines and I was instructed to simply drink water and go back to my
25 activities, despite the fact that the pain I was experiencing was close to debilitating.

26 57. They would even urine test me every time I had a migraine to prove that I was just
27 dehydrated and not experiencing a migraine (despite the fact that the symptoms of a
28 dehydration headache and a migraine are vastly different).

1 58. It came to the point where I was even dropped a phase because of it and forced to
2 drink a litre of water during each class period. I was required to have the teacher sign that
3 my water bottle (a standard-sized Nalgene) was empty after each class. Even during this
4 time, when I was arguably drinking too much water, I was still denied my migraine
5 medication when I would have an episode.

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7 Respectfully Submitted,



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9 February 10, 2023

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Margaret Antonia Turansky