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CEDU FAMILY OF PROGRAMS

CEDU FAMILY OF PROGRAMS:

Lawsuits Against CEDU Family of Services/Programs

"The Discarded Ones" by James Tipper is a novel based on actual events at a CEDU program. Psychology Today reviewed Tipper's book. The review is available at http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-teenage-mind/201211/the-discarded-ones. Check it out!

All of the CEDU Family of Programs are confirmedly abusive AND AS OF 3/25/05 were CLOSED!!! We've received word that some of the CEDU programs have re-opened. We have learned of at least two lawsuits brought against their entire "Family of Programs." The information regarding these lawsuits and detailed accounts of survivor testimony follow.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CEDU FAMILY OF SERVICES

In the case of STANTON LEWIS AND NANCY DARK, PLAINTIFFS-RESPONDENTS, v. CEDU EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, INC., AND ROCKY MOUNTAIN ACADEMY, INC., AN IDAHO CORPORATION; NORTHWEST ACADEMY, INC., AN IDAHO CORPORATION; ASCENT; AND BOULDER CREEK ACADEMY, DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS filed on March 31, 1998, Dark and Lewis filed a complaint for injunctive relief and damages, setting forth the following causes

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of action: (1) breach of contract; (2) common law fraud/misrepresentation; (3) violation of the Idaho Consumer Protection Act; (4) negligence; (5) violation of the Idaho Racketeering Act; and (6) breach of express warranty.

In the case of RONALD ACCOMAZZO AND MARSHA ACCOMAZZO, HUSBAND AND WIFE, AND KEVIN ACCOMAZZO PLAINTIFFS-RESPONDENTS, v. CEDU EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, INC., AND ROCKY MOUNTAIN ACADEMY, INC., AN IDAHO CORPORATION; NORTHWEST ACADEMY, INC., AN IDAHO CORPORATION; ASCENT; AND BOULDER CREEK ACADEMY, DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS filed on December 28th, 2000, the Accomazzos filed a complaint for injunctive relief and damages. The Accomazzos set forth the following causes of action: (1) breach of contract; (2) common law fraud/misrepresentation; (3) violation of the Idaho Consumer Protection Act; (4) negligence (5) battery, negligence and violation of Idaho laws relating to children; and (6) violation of the Idaho Racketeering Act. The Accomazzos fifth cause of action (battery, negligence and violation of Idaho laws relating to children) is based on allegations of negligent hiring and emotional and physical abuse of students by staff members, including an injury to Kevin, which occurred during a counseling session resulting from a physical confrontation with a staff counselor.

The truth is plain to see. CEDU batters children. They do not honor their contracts. They misrepresent their intentions and commit fraud against the consuming public. And much more... Please do not send your child to any CEDU program and work with us to help close these monstrous establishments down once and for all. Read on for personal testimonials...

THE ASCENT EXPERIENCE

(If you are a survivor of a CEDU program, please report your abuse to the authorities. You may contact this survivor by e-mailing JMG532@aol.com.)

Well at Ascent my experience was terrible. One morning at about 3am some men came into my room with my mother and told me I was going to a new boarding school located near Las Vegas. I was never told anymore then that, and arrived in Idaho several hrs later...When I got there I was embarrassingly strip searched which took longer then it should have because I was mouthing off. I was made to bend over several times while I was laughed at and ridiculed. My next several weeks would be nonstop mental torture.

We never showered, but once every six days were given a bucket of 3 inches of water in which we could clean ourselves. This was called the hygiene tent and besides this we never were able to clean ourselves. If we did anything out of line there we would be forced to sit on a stump in the center for several hrs at a time or we could be restrained. There was one specific time I was restrained for over 12hrs because I talked back to a staff. On another occasion I was rolled up in a tarp and forced to sleep outside as it snowed on me, this was what they called a burrito. All night I complained and was laughed at by the night-staff sitting next to me.

A normal day consisted of hauling trees around, what they called a log haul. We then had PT's or physical trainings where we did a ton of physical labor. We never had access to any telephone and all our letters were read before they were sent to our parents and read coming to us from them...Because of this all letters had to thank our parents for sending us to Ascent and not tell them anything corrupt going on there. If our letters were deemed unfit to send they would be thrown in the fire

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and we would be forced to write another letter...the bathroom consisted of 2 disgusting outhouses and we were belittled every time we needed to go. The only way we were allowed to use the bathroom was if we went to a staff and said "potty please" the staff would then decide whether they minded walking the 15-feet to the bathroom and would either take you or tell you to hold it. T

The emotional abuse there was terrible as well. The staff would constantly belittle us and tell us our parents didn't love us. While not amusing at the time, Ii think back and laugh at the medline (medicine line) every meal. It was like nothing I had ever seen, every kid there would line up to get given the enormous amount of drugs that Dr Ulrich, the local doctor had put them on. There mouths would then be fully inspected to make sure the children had swallowed the medication. There were several kids that were injured during my time there by the restraints as well. Ascent is truly the worst place any parent could send there child...

SURVIVOR TESTIMONIAL: ASCENT & NORTHWEST ACADEMY

Dear Heal Online,

I went to the ASCENT wilderness program in Idaho in June 03. After completing the program flawlessly I was then sent to the related program Northwest Academy . I attended there for 9 Months, the worst 9 months of my life. I was only Seventeen at the time, I could not believe places like this exist. Their idea of therapy is sitting in a room with 25 people at a time and yelling back and fourth until they make the kids cry, I kid you not. They would often yell at kids until the children broke down in tears yelling at what a failure they were, this was referred as "running your shit". The therapeutic groups or "raps" as they called them were three and a half to four hours long, twice a week and sometimes Saturday. I often spoke out on how I saw this to be non-therapeutic and was actually punished for it. I refused to talk in the raps (I would still attend and sit through them) and for not talking I was punished with physical labor on the weekends. The workshops were even worse; it was just counselors yelling at you. Workshops ranged from 10 hours to Seven Days, Seven days of yelling in the same room is far from helping. Your freedom of speech was taken away, any negative talk and you would be punished, if they were suspicious of you and your friends they would put you on talking "Bans" meaning if they caught you talking to a person you were on bans with you would have to do labor on the weekends. For punishment you were put on "tables" which meant you sat in the cafeteria all day and did writing assignments, most of the time you were on all school bans meaning you could not talk to anyone else, the average time for a table was 1-2 weeks. Also if you were on a table that meant you automatically had to do labor on the weekends. When I turned 18 I was considering signing myself out and did not at the time, my punishment was I could not talk to anyone and I had to sit at a chair facing the wall all day. I was not even allowed to go to class, I had to go do supervised labor all day instead of learning, and this was commonly known as a Full-Time restriction. While I was there I also observed someone on a "jump suit" restriction, this person had to live in a tent outside and could not talk to anybody besides counselors or attend class, just did labor. This "jump suit" restriction you also got your meals taken outside to your tent and the only interaction with other people was having to go to the "raps".

Every Sunday morning consisted of 3 hours mandatory cleaning the buildings and dorms, and if they felt like it you were sent for an extra hour cleaning the Rap rooms.

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Animal Welfare Agenda

The only outside contact you were permitted was with your parents via monitored phone calls, a counselor would sit in the room with you and take notes. If you started complaining about the program they would quickly end the phone call or bring it up in raps having a counselor yell at you and taunt you with leaving. I had a counselor tell me “if you don’t like it here leave! I will give you an hour head start” taunting the fact that if you left they would send escorts and people to look for you and send you to assent again and most likely to a worse program. They then told your parents you weren’t “adjusting well” or this was “part of the process” and you were “just trying to get a free ride out of the program”. The parents ate this up, during my nine month stay only one person ever got pulled from the program and that was because of his parents were divorced and the other parent gained custody and pulled him. The raps were mentally abusive to many, I have heard a staff say thing like “You’re the most fucked up kid I’ve seen in the 15 years I’ve worked here” and “You’re the reason I don’t bring my children to work”. Also this same staff member had a feud with a child and said “The reason he goes to the weight room everyday is because he is trying to compensate for something” then waving her pinky at him, implying he had a small penis and doing so in front of 20 other kids.

There was a lot of favoritism at this program. If you sucked up and ratted on other kids you were rewarded. In the winter they occasionally had ski trips to the local ski mountain. I never got in trouble during the winter period and did well in academics and never got to go on a single one. Meanwhile kids fresh off restrictions got to attend. It was a matter of how well you could serve the staff to get onto the trips. One week they took everyone from the school besides 12 people. I was one of the 12 and there were several other kids that were not chosen that was due to “not talking in the last rap”. So 50 kids left to ski or go on a week trip and twelve kids stayed back and did nothing. The night staff was also a terrible factor. It was go to the dorms at 9:30 and lights out by 10, No talking or lights on what so ever after 10 or you got written up. They also would shine the lights in the middle of the night to make sure you were there, several times a night. It was ran like a concentration camp, there was a night staff in every dorm then 1 roaming staff and one up in a “Observation” room in a building that looked over the campus like a guard tower.

I went there when I was seventeen, turned eighteen there and left. This was by far the worst nine months of my life; nobody could understand what these places are like until they attend one. I am now twenty and to this day I still have nightmares every once and a while regarding this place, I will have a dream I got put on a restriction or got in trouble there. My parents still refer to it as a school and are convinced I am over exaggerating the situation and were in disbelief when I told them it was shut down. I am happy CEDU the creator of all these “Emotional Growth” programs is shut down for good. Thank god for people like you and your website to let the parents and the world know the danger of these places.
Thank You
Drew Housman
goldencrates@yahoo.com

CEDU FOUNDATION–SURVIVOR TESTIMONIAL

I hereby, give HEAL Permission to use my statement, and I state that everything in my statement is True, regarding everything I say about the Cedu Foundation/& Staff.

I was Placed at CEDU Foundation In or about march 1973, when I arrived I had no idea, what so ever that the Dept. of Social Service was "dropping me off" I was told I

was just going to go for the day to see if I would like to stay there. Within 1 hour, I found myself standing in a room with Mr. & Mrs. Wasserman, and Michael Allgood. I was told that Michael would be my "family head" and if I had any questions or problems he would be in charge of it all. I then, was taken into a room, and was told to sit in a chair while they cut my hair. They cut my hair to where it was just a few inches short., They took my clothes and only left me with a few pair of pants and tops and sent the rest back with my social worker. The reason I told for this was to "break your Image". I was then taken into a room and a Nurse? examined me , and then I was told to shower. I had never been in any place like this before, so I was already afraid. I was told I couldn't write or see any family members for at least 3-6 months depending on if I followed the rules. I hadnt been there much more than a few hours and I was called into a "Rap" session, there was probably 20 people at least in there, they were all yelling and screaming at each other, and I sat there just startled. All of a sudden Michael Allgood started yelling at me, stating that I was not going to sit in these sessions and not speak, I told him, that this was all "new" to me, and he said if you want to make it here, you will do what you are told, I started to cry, and told him that I didn't want to stay, and he told me that my family didn't want me, that's why they dumped me there, and he said, the only reason why they took me was for the money they would get from the county. He called me a lesbian, at the time I had no clue, that I was, and he said he thought I would learn to like it there real quick. I was only 15 at the time, and just lost my mother, so all of this was pretty scary, considering this was just the first day there. I learned to adjust, to play the game. and prayed that I would not get in Michaels way. he was very verbally abusive with me and it never got better. I eventually somehow, figured out to ask for a different family head over time. I finally got John Stallone, he was basically the closest person there with some sense of caring. I dont recall bad times with john. They had these rap Sessions that would last like 2 days they were called "profeets" there would be a group maybe like 20 -25 people and they would lock you in this room with 2 or 3 counselors, and they would play very Loud music continously, this would go on and on, and they would yell, and tell you how fucked up you were, and you were useless, and would never amount to anything in life, a lot of the kids and adults there were either court placed some private placed, and most of them were drug abusers. I never did drugs, until after I left Cedu. they would continue this until someone would emotionally snap, once you did, they would move on to the next person, once in a profeet they made a black boy wash Michaels feet. Michael thought he was like God , he called him the N word while this person washed his feet. They would accuse the boys of performing beastility acts on the animals, I dont know for fact if that happened but I was told it did as a punishement for the boys. I was blamed for my mother's death. I actually grew up after that believing that my actions as a Teen caused her to die, when in all reality, I was acting out because when I was 5yrs old, i was in a foster home, and was molested continually. I never said anything, until it was too late. We would remain in these Profeets until everyone snapped and I never recall any food in there, we did get bathroom breaks and water breaks. They said the less we had in our bodies made it easier for them to "cleanse" our souls. I guess when you are that young you will believe anything. The Dorm Leaders, were usually someone who had been there for quite some time. Most of the female ones were lesbian. Well, a lot of the girls were Lesbians. That's where I had my first Lesbian experience, with my dorm leader. If you were straight, you could get what they called your "Fucking Privledges" if you were interested with someone at least 6 months, and if you got past that, you would be allowed to have your privledges at 1 year. However, that rule didn't seem to matter with the staff. I know of cases where Rudy Bentz? had his "special" or favorite girls, if you wanted special trips to town, or pribledges you just had to know the right person to get what you wanted. Gay or straight. They had this one punishement called "dishpan

Dishpan was for those who either did something really wrong, or if you tried to split, and got caught, or got away and had to re enter cedu, oh, and when that happened that meant the boys got their head completely shaved, the girls hair was whacked, all uneven. I got put on dishpan I think 2 or 3 times, the longest period I was on was for 2 weeks but usually it ws just a 2 or 3 day thing. When you were on dish pan you would work where ever they wanted to put you, I once had to clean all the bathrooms, with a sign around my neck saying " I AM POISON" that was Allgood's doing. When I did the bathrooms I had to use buckets of bleach, and a toothbrush. When someone would have to come use the bathroom, and Mike noticed, I would have to start all over. No one could talk to you and you could not talk to anyone. except family heads or counselors, and only if you were spoken to. The hours were like from 6am to 11pm you had to eat by yourself and quickly at that. there was NO breaks. One Dishpan I was on, I had to take all the trash out of one of those industrial size trashcans, climb in clean it with a tooth brush, then put the trash back in, another time I had to use a tootbrush on all the pool tiles and do the kitchen floors the same way, on your hands and knees. When I was on my last dishpan My hands were cracked and bleeding from all the bleach, and i would have to keep putting my hands in the bleach, I finally just couldn't feel them in the end. After that dishpan I got kicked out, and that was the happiest day of my life. They drove me in the middle of the night to some apt in reche canyon, we were there for about 1 hour, I dont know what they were doing they locked me in the car with a counselor, when they came out they drove me to my sisters in LA and just dropped me off in front of her house and left, it was like midnight. Thank God, they were home. When I was at CEDU Mel wasserman used to send probably like a van load of us down to anaheim, san bernaardino, and surrounding shopping centers, and have us all out in the parking lots approaching people asking them for money. We were told to them that we would be closed down if we didn't raise money for a new fire alarm system. I did this for a few months, we would give them a raffle ticket, to what I have NO clue, but I remember when we got back to the lodge we would have to count up all the money, and I remember it being thousands of dollars, and sure enough we would be out the next day, only at a new shopping center, i remember going close to Los Angeles, and once thought I was so close to home, but I think by that time, I was starting to believe in CEDU. In other words I was becoming like the rest of them....brainwashed. I never even noticed if they had a fire alarm system or not. The worst things I can remember is the verbal abuse, the sex acts, and if you even mentioned it was something that you didn't want to be involved in you were told you would get sent to Juvenile Hall, some faced prison sentences, or they would threaten you with somewhere much worse. The Wassermans would eat in the living quarters at the time overlooked San Bernardino, I remember how they would order steak dinners and we would have to serve them, while we ate food which was donated, from the places we were out begging for money from. This is just a touch of what I went through at Cedu, I know so much more, and went through so much more. I know of one kid who lived in Las Vegas that actually took his life when we went home, because they said he couldn't deal with life anymore after CEDU. They ran CEDU from what I understand a lot like the old Synanon in Santa Monica, CA. In fact some of the older people who were there were from Synanon, and even the counselors, we had one guy who was a Sniper from NYC He was hired as a counselor. Nice Huh? I ended up living with a counselor who was fired eventually, she was the one who turned me out into the Lesbian lifestyle. So much to tell, I could go on and on, this is just minor things. I would really be interested in that documentary, I would think it would be interesting to have someone who was there in 1973 comparing what they went through with the same people all the ways into the late 1980s & 1990s and better yet, find out why these people who are still alive an well are allowed to continue to work and arent behind bars, where they deserve

to be for totally destroying kids lifes for the past 30 plus years. I would like to know how they got away with this? I would like to know who is going to help all of these people they mentally messed up? I know my life has never been the same. I cant imagine the younger kids how they must be coping. Please keep in contact with me, I want to see this through to the end!

CEDU: ASCENT SURVIVOR TESTIMONIAL #3

By P.E.

Everything in my statement is true. I give HEAL permission to use my statement.

ASCENT-TESTIMONY
- ADMITTED 4 YEARS AGO THIS SUMMER -

-AT ASCENT THEY FIRST TOLD ME TO TAKE OUT MY EAR RING OR THEY'D DO IT BY FORCE. I DID. THEN THEY TOLD ME TO STRIP DOWN IN FRONT OF THEM.WHEN I SAID NO AND REACHED FOR MY ONLY PROTECTION, A KNIFE, THEY HAD A GUY, THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WAS BEHIND ME, TACKLE ME AND PRY THE KNIFE FROM MY HAND. AT THAT POINT USING EXCESSIVE FORCE THEY TOOK OFF ALL MY CLOTHES. THEY THEN REPLACED THEM WITH DIFFERENT CLOTHES. (THEN AT AGE 15 AND ALREADY QUESTIONING MY SEXUALITY I WAS SCARED, THESE WERE GROWN MEN) -THEY FORCED ME TO SLEEP IN A TENT WHERE I'D WAKE UP WET AND COLD EVERY MORNING SEVERAL TIMES. THESE TENTS KEPT ALL THE MOISTURE FROM MY BREATHING IN.

-THEY WOKE ME UP TO YELLING EVERY MORNING I WAS THERE. (FOR SOMEONE WHO ALREADY HAD TRAUMAS THAT WAS HARMFUL ENOUGH)

-THEY HAD "GROUP THERAPY" SESSIONS WHICH CONSISTED OF YELLING AT ME FOR EVERYTHING THEY CONSIDERED A FLAW. (AGAIN I ALREADY HAD TRAUMAS)

-THEY LIED TO MY PARENTS ABOUT HOW THEY TREATED ME

-THEY SUPRESSED ALL MY ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. (THIS INCLUDED POETRY AND DRAWING)

-THEY REFUSED TO LET ME DO POLITICAL WRITINGS.

-AFTER THEY FINALY OFFERED ME A VEGITARIAN DIET, STAFF RIDICULED ME ABOUT IT. SAYING THAT I'M NOT A TRUE ANIMAL LOVER. WHO ARE THEY TO JUDGE ME?

-THEY UNDER FED ME AND DID NOT ALLOW ME THE RIGHT NUTRIENTS.

-I ATTEMPTED TO RUN AWAY WHEN THEY CHASED AFER ME AND TACKLED ME IN THE WOODS WHICH WAS RIDDLED WITH SHARP STICKS AND STONES.

-THEY HAD ME DO MANUAL LABOR. (WHICH WAS NOT SO BAD PER SE.) WHAT WAS BAD WAS WHEN THEY YELLED AT ME FOR "NOT WORKING HARD ENOUGH" BECAUSE I WAS SMALLER, SKINNIER, WEAKER AND MORE

MALNURISHED THAN THE OTHERS. (I HAD LOW SELF IMAGE AND THAT WORSENED THE SITUATION)

-THEY MADE ME SAW LOGS, (EVEN THOUGH I WAS A CUTTER.) THEN WHEN I CUT MY ARM, THEY HAD ME CONTINUE TO WORK THE SAW.

-THEY ALLOWED SOME OF THE OTHER KIDS TO GET AWAY WITH CALLING ME HOMOPHOBIC SLURS. SOME KIDS STOOD UP FOR ME.EVENTUALY I WASN'T BOTHERED ANYMORE.

-EVENTUALLY I USED THE CHORD TO MY RAIN COAT TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE BY STRANGLING MYSELF. THAT WAS WHEN I WAS SENT TO NORTHERN IDAHO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH. I AM NOW A SURVIVOR. I NEVER WENT BACK TO ASCENT. BUT THE TRAUMA STILL HAUNTS ME TO THIS DAY.

CEDU ASCENT SURVIVOR TESTIMONIAL #4

By Kevin M.

I went to Ascent in 1999. Here's my story:
I was 16 years old and being treated for bipolar disorder and drug abuse in a short term behavioral health hospital in my hometown. This was my second hospitalization, and my parents decided I needed longer term treatment. They told me that I would be going to an outdoors facility in Idaho. I expected this to be a calm, soothing environment where I could get plenty of rest and express some of the difficulties I was having. So did my parents. Upon my arrival to Ascent, I was told that I would not be allowed to say goodbye to my parents, and that I had to remove all of my clothes in front of 3 male and 1 female staff members. I resisted and was physically intimidated and threatened with force until I complied with the demand, but not before pointing out that this seemed like a part of Schindler's List and calling the director, Steve, a nazi. Once I got to the camp, I was told that we weren't allowed to call the toilets toilets, or the girls girls. We weren't even allowed to refer to ourselves as males. I had been placed on Lithium and some other psychiatric medications by my psychiatrist back home, and was immediately ridiculed by the staff and other, more senior residents for "being weak." I was told that there was no such disease as bipolar disorder and that the symptoms were derived from my unwillingness to "accept accountability." If I said that my first week was hell, I don't know of a word that I can use to describe the next several weeks. I was yelled at constantly for anything I did. I was even once yelled at for not yelling. We were given group punishment, which I later experienced wasn't even allowed in the Army after basic training. I recall being forced to perform excessive physical exercise for needing to urinate, by a staff member, Jamie Navarro. This same man later forced half of the camp to eat, surrounding the uncleaned port-a-johns because he heard someone talking at the dining tables, and no one would admit to it. Every letter I wrote my parents was pre-screened by the staff, and if it mentioned any sort of ill treatment, it was deemed manipulative, and would not be sent.

After about a week and a half, I began to vomit excessively. I was told that I was making myself throw up, and that they weren't going to let me see a doctor. A few days later I began to have hallucinations, and told a staff member, James. I was quickly confronted by 2 staff members and a senior resident, and verbally abused to the point of panic. My symptoms worsened, quickly, until finally after a night time staff observed me having a seizure, I was taken to the hospital. Lithium is a very

dangerous drug. My psychiatrist told me that my blood level needed to be checked frequently, and maintained at a level of 1.0. When I was admitted to the ICU, my level was at a 3.4. I was so sick that the doctor ordered me unable to eat or drink for 3 days. I was then sent to NIBH, a behavioral health hospital in cahoots with CEDU for a couple of weeks, continuing to hallucenate for about half of that time, until I was declared "fit" to return to Ascent by a psychiatrist employed by CEDU.
I returned and completed my 6 weeks there, allowing myself to be verbally abused, and beaten into submission before being returned to my parents, who had been brainwashed and lied to by the liason and staff. They were also quick to inform my parents about how I would benefit from one of their "emotional growth" boarding schools. Thank God they took me home. They eventually realized what a nightmarish mistake it had been to send me, and even though I have long since forgiven them, I truly think they are still haunted by feelings of guilt. With select few exceptions, the staff at Ascent were criminally negligent, emotionally and physically abusive, and exploitative of private medical information. I believe my experience caused me to experience PTSD, and if I could, I would put most of these people in prison for what they did. -Kevin M. Everything in my statement is true. I give HEAL permission to use my statement. Please do not include any of my contact information except Kevin M.

CEDU ASCENT SURVIVOR TESTIMONIAL #5

By Alex

I guess the most common way for kids to end up at Ascent was by "escorts". Escorts were people that surprised you in your sleep with handcuffs and told you that you were going to the middle of nowhere. But, since "escorting" is illegal in Canada, and I am Canadian, I ended up getting escorted from Miami, on my way back from Jamaica. From my friends' perspectives, I went on vacation and never returned.

I guess it should have immediately occurred to my parents from the escorting that this place was not normal, but I guess they were in such a panic about what to do that it is hard to think rationally. I would urge other parents to try to think rationally.

The only contact that I had, as other people will tell you, is through writing letters. Of course, the letters were read by the staff and they were not sent if they disapproved of anything written in the letter. The only letter that they don't "edit" is the first one, but unfortunately, in my first letter, I spent more time trying to convince my parents that I was ok and trying hard to get better, and less time telling them about how messed up the place was. Honestly, I read the website and they make it seem like camp. They boast this "climbing tower" that the kids "conquer" and in doing so build trust and confidence in themselves. What a load of crap. I climbed that tower one time in two months. The rest of the time I spent getting emotionally beaten.

Some of the things we did included "log hauls" which involved collecting trees from the woods, cutting the logs into perfectly sized pieces of firewood, and stacking the wood perfectly. If there was even one log out of line, then the entire pile would be knocked over, and we would do it again, which would take hours.

Garbage hauls were also lots of fun. We had to haul large garbage bags from the base camp about 750 metres to the garbage dumpster. The trick was we had to do it in five minutes without talking. The bags were heavy and leaky and there were more bags than people. It was basically impossible to do. And when we couldn't do it, we would have to take them back and try again. That meant that even if some bags were in the dumpster, someone had to climb in and get them out, and we would carry them back, and try again.

Another thing we had to do was cutting the grass. Of course, a normal person would think that we would have some kind of utensil to cut the grass with, but not at Ascent. There would be, like, 15 of us, on our hands and knees, cutting the grass to an even length with our fingers. The things we had to do were basically impossible. But I think that was the idea.

One time I got in trouble for talking in the tipi at night, and I spent the rest of the next day cleaning rocks from a drainage hole in the ground. The hole was about 2 feet in diameter and 5 feet deep, and it was filled with rocks the size of my fist. I emptied about a thousand rocks and cleaned each one with a toothbrush using soap and water. It actually took about 12 hours. They claimed it made the water drain better, but that was obviously a lie.

All this fun stuff is in addition to what other people have said. I mean, the four or five hour PT's were common (7 to 10 times a week). Common PT activities included "pyramids" which was when you start at 20 push-up's, 20 sit-up's, and 20 jumping-jacks. Then you do 19 push-up's, 19 sit-up's, 19 jumping-jacks. Then 18, etc. If we didn't "sound off" loud enough, we had to start again (what a surprise). But of course, we had to start again from 25. We also did these things, I think they were called "bear runs". We ran on our hands and feet back and forth across a dusty field. Oh man, the stuff that came out of your nose after when you picked it was amazing. Like, large black rocks of stuff. Power runs were common, too. Kids would often run until they threw up, but you weren't allowed to stop.

They woke us up by screaming "FIVE MINUTES" and you had five minutes to get dressed, pack up all your things neatly, and be standing in a circle outside. If you didn't make it, of course you had to do it again, in four minutes (we repeated a lot of things).

Anyways, there are lots of stories, but the truth is, I didn't even have it all that bad. I mean, compared to other kids that I saw, I was at club-med. Some kids had to do crazy stuff. I think the staff there actually liked me, so my worst stories are cleaning

rocks and picking grass with my hands. But, some kids had to spend days in a tent in solitude doing writing assignments, or sitting on stumps that were too narrow, so it got horribly uncomfortable. I mean, try to picture sitting on a log that is about a foot long and four inches thick (like a normal fire-log). It is basically impossible to do for any length of time, and kids had to do it for hours.

One time I had to sing the Canadian national anthem while lowering the American flag, with everyone staring at me silently. But, by that point it really didn't bug me. I thought it was messed up, but I had been through worse than that.

Anyways, the stories could keep coming, so I will stop here. But let me say this. I left that place emotionally abused and worse off that I had arrived. I had nightmares for a long time and resentments that I am still dealing with to this day. That place was messed up, and I am glad that CEDU closed down. I understand that Ascent was bought by another company and re-opened and I can only hope they are running it differently.

Everything I have said in my statement is true and I give HEAL permission to use my statement. Please don't give out my contact information.

Alex (June 30 to August 20, 1999)

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