The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20171024120506/http://www.tampabay.com:80/faccca/gro…

In God's name: Unlicensed religious group homes in Florida

tampabay.com

- Facility profile

Marvelous Grace Girls Academy

Location

3111 Zepp Lane, Pace, FL 32571

Website

http://www.mgga.us/

Accreditation

Unaccredited

Children served

girls up to 18 years old

- Description

On the old grounds of New Beginnings, Marvelous Grace Girls Academy is run by a street preacher once photographed outside a bar holding a sign about Sodom with a fellow protester who was dressed like Satan. Girls describe a program similar to New Beginnings, where teens are expected to strictly follow fundamentalist Christian ideals.

Marvelous Grace does not have a state license, does not have a religious exemption through FACCCA and is not accredited as a boarding school.

By law, the school has three years to get accredited. The school's leader, Steven Blankenship, said the school would be accredited by January 2013.
In 2010, Santa Rosa County sheriff's deputies came upon two scratched and sunburned runaways who told them Blankenship had called them "faggots" and "bastards," forced them to street preach and shut girls who weren't "preaching hard enough" in a van. They threatened suicide if taken back to the school. DCF investigated and found no evidence to support their claims.

- Photo Gallery



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A sign on the road near the driveway of Marvelous Grace Girls Academy in Pace, Fla. The school used to be the location of New Beginnings Girls Academy.

- Former residents

Marissa Bates, 18

“We had to hold signs,” said Bates, who attended the school in 2010 and 2011 and said she was punished when she refused to street preach. “It was mostly Bible verses. Repent or you’re going to hell. I thought it was embarrassing... “Most of the time they told us our parents were going to hell and they were bad people... “One time, there was a little girl there and her bra strap was too loose. She asked me if I could tighten it for her. I just did it through her shirt. (Blankenship) looked over. He told everybody that we were lesbians and we were going to hell for being faggots.”

- Allegations

Records show the state conducted one investigation at the school for medical neglect and mental injury, but found no evidence to support the allegations.

DCF abuse or neglect investigations

1

None

Maltreatment types reported

- medical neglect
- mental injury

- History



[Visit the group home's website]

A removed site, www.truth4teens.org, says Truth for Troubled Teen Ministries was founded by Blankenship in 1993, to meet the spiritual needs of incarcerated young people across America, providing free King James Bibles. The site advertised Blankenship's radio broadcasts. It called hatred "a family value" and included the image of a brain scan purportedly of someone who was hearing voices. In the image, a blob appeared in the shape of a horned face, which the site claimed was Satan's. It has been validated as authentic! it says, signed "Bro. Steven."
An archived website, copyrighted in 2008, advertised "New Beginnings Girls Academy" with Blankenship as the executive director. His biography described his youth as one of "Alcohol, Drugs, Thievery, Lying, Immorality, Strange Music and Strange Friends." It said he found God "after years of living as a Satanist and a Witch."
The home was called New Beginnings Girls Academy in police reports until 2010, the first year it appeared as Marvelous Grace Girls Academy. Online property records show the compound was never sold after the previous home left; the property is still owned by the same corporation, with Pastor Bill McNamara listed as an officer.

- Director



Steven Blankenship

director

http://www.mgga.us/director.htm

from the website:

"Brother Blankenship was saved at 19 years of age in Skyland, NC.

Brother Blankenship began going into Juvenile Delinquent Facilities during 1993. He shortly surrendered to Preach during the same year and began a consistent ministry to Juveniles. Preaching, Teaching, and following up with Discipleship.

For over Twenty Years, The Lord has used Brother and Sister Blankenship in the ministry to Troubled Teens literally across America, into Canada, and Mexico too! After Several years of this unique kind of ministry, Marvelous Grace Girls Academy was established to rescue troubled teen girls.

The many years of dealing with troubled teens in Detention Centers, Rehab, Juvenile Programs, etc., has given great insight in helping."

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