

Life Development: Continued from page 11

School was in session when we visited and students were busy studying, researching online and working in small groups. Class sizes average 8-10 students, and each teacher keeps their students for the entire school year. Life Development Institute accepts both young adult, college-age students into their residential program and day students age 16 and up. The institute currently has 50 day and residential students. All students attend some sort of college or vocational classes in Phoenix and surrounding areas.

Life Development Institute is located in a professional park in Glendale, AZ, with the students living in an integrated apartment complex a couple blocks away. The students come voluntarily from around the country to work on independent living skills and college courses, specifically tailored to assist their special education needs and learning disabilities. Veronica Crawford met us after we watched classes for a bit, and explained the schooling process/ living combination for the students. She explained how each student is assigned a Program Mentor and Student Advisor who work together to help him/ her find all learning assistance needed. The Program Mentors are certified in their area and provide daily instruction and tutorial support to each of their assigned students. In addition, they help the more independent students find assisted learning

programs in surrounding colleges, universities and vocational training facilities.

The Student Advisors assist students in weekly menu planning, cooking classes, finances, budgeting and act as a support network for the students to learn to live independently. Advisors check the apartments sporadically to make sure the students are learning independent living skills and taking care of the living quarters responsibly.

We left the main building of the Life Development Institute and headed over for a tour of the apartment living part of the program. The Student Advisor who showed us around explained how the gated community apartment complex was considered more a supportive community than just supervised living. She also talked to us about teaching the students how to shop, budget, cook for themselves/ others, prepare for job interviews, etc.

After a few hours of visiting with the Crawfords and other staff at Life Development, we decided it was time to head out. We'd had a nice visit, said our goodbyes and drove off feeling impressed at what this independent living program for college-aged students with learning disabilities could offer those they serve.



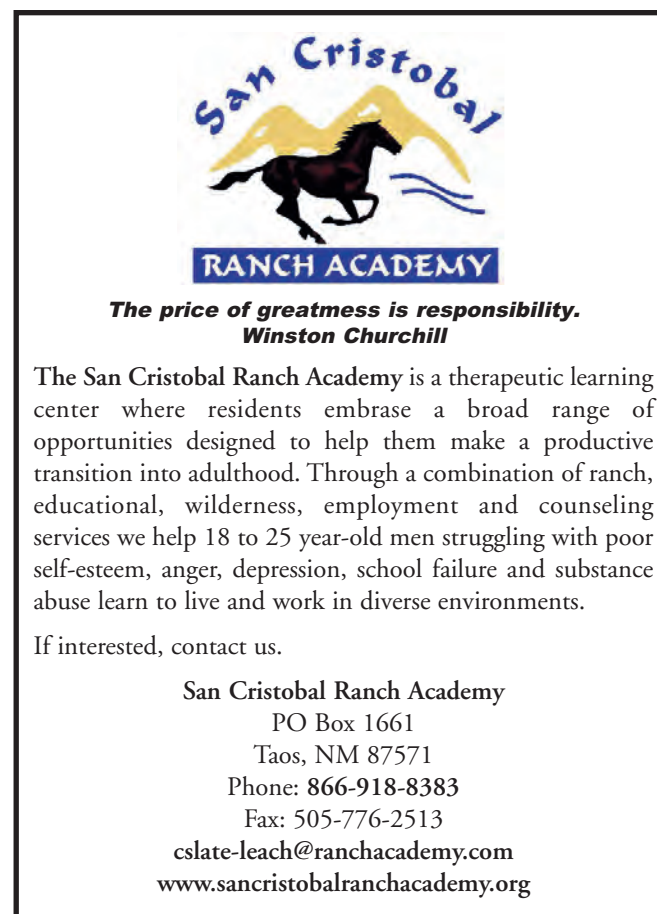
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