

OVERACHIEVERS: Continued from page 7
more than two decades ago, they need and should have, in place of the harried lives they lead. They have only one shot at a childhood. Make it one that accepts who they are and encourages their ultimate independence

About the Author: Judy Zodda is an Educational Consultant specializing in working with high school students and their families to simplify their college search and maximize their educational opportunities.

Character cannot be developed
in ease and quiet.
Only through experience of
trial and suffering can
the soul be strengthened,
ambition inspired
and success achieved.

~ Helen Keller

VISITS... RIVERVIEW SCHOOL

Cape Cod, Massachusetts
Jeanne Pacheco - Admissions Director
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admissions@riverviewschool.org
www.riverviewschool.org

Visit By: Larry Stednitz, PhD, November 16, 2006

Riverview School is an independent coeducational residential school that provides a caring community for adolescents and young adults with complex language, learning and cognitive disabilities. The school's focus is to develop student competence and confidence in academic, social, and independent living skills. Riverview places great importance upon the whole child.

Riverview is located on 16 acres on Cape Cod. The campus is well maintained and designed to provide a campus like environment. Ample structures include classrooms, dining facilities, dormitories, fitness room, gymnasium, dark room, lighted athletic field, green house, science and computer labs, and an industrial arts lab. The campus offers a pleasant environment providing numerous choices and educational opportunities for the students. There are 115 students in grades six through twelve. There are 85 students in the



For many young men and women, leaving home and transitioning to college or the work world is a daunting and overwhelming challenge. Thrust into the real world alone, with few advocates, they often are overwhelmed by isolation and lack of structure and support. Robert Fischer, M.D., psychiatrist, co-founded **Optimum Performance Institute** in 2004 to meet the needs of these young adults, ages 17-25.

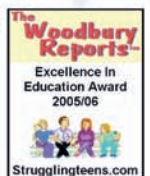
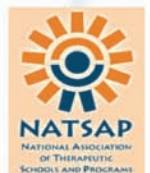


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GROW program (Getting Ready for the Outside World). GROW students are over 18 and refining their life skills. The program is celebrating its 50th anniversary. A critical aspect of the program, according to the school, is to educate parents as well as students as the Riverview students will likely require continued support when they leave. To that end, parents participate in workshops that are given several times yearly.

Riverview students can be described as gentle, friendly and naïve, and do not have significant emotional and behavioral problems. This description was very accurate when I met with the students. IQ range is 70 to 100 with those on the higher end struggling with non-verbal learning disabilities. Approximately 20 percent of the students are diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. The school is international in scope, serving students from nine different countries.

Riverview provides 24-hour supervision for all students and offers a full range of opportunities that all adolescents should have. Students often have not had these opportunities in the public school systems so Riverview attempts to fill this void. The wide variety of activities assists the students in gaining self-confidence as well as achieving a feeling of belonging. All activities are directed toward fostering independence and self-determination through the development of life skills,

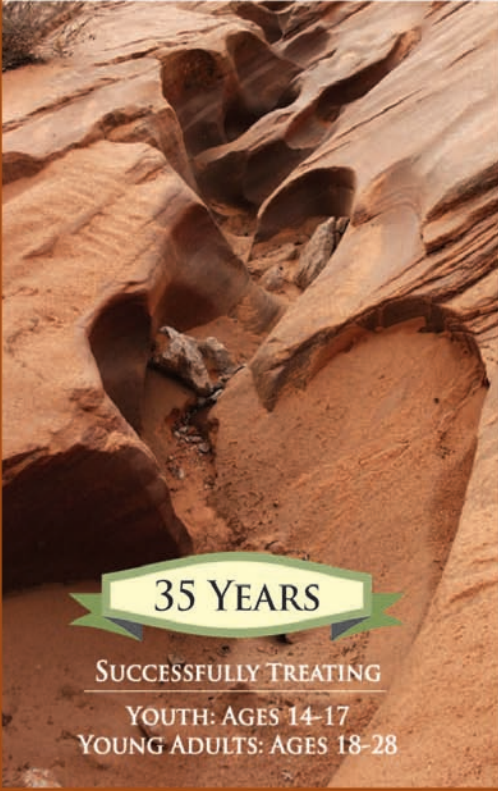
social skills and an increase in self-esteem. Middle and secondary students are provided the opportunity to develop woodworking skills, make candles, produce stain glass art, work in the greenhouse and develop computer skills. The GROW students live in on-grounds apartments and are expected to purchase and make their own food, keep their apartment clean, and learn how to handle their own laundry. They learn life skills through meeting practical living experiences.

The school has five advisors who serve as the liaison between the family and work with the students on an individualized basis. The advisors discuss the student's progress and educational planning during these conversations. The advisors help each student advocate for him/herself and learn how to become assertive in order to get his/her needs met.

I visited several classes throughout the campus. In every class, the students were attentive and working hard. They seemed to be very excited about talking about what they were doing in the class and were very proud of the work they were doing. Although fluency was difficult for some, they made efforts to express themselves clearly.

Academic instruction is administered through a thematic integrated curriculum with an emphasis upon

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high expectations and researched instructional approaches. An example of a thematic, integrated approach provided was the theme immigration. The class would study turn-of-the-century immigration and assume the identities of Irish immigrants traveling to America during the potato famine. Students would document their journey in a detailed diary, incorporating historical facts written during English Language Arts. In reading, the students would explore immigration from the later part of the 12th century using historical fiction. Present day immigration issues would be discussed in Current Events classes, and history classes would involve experiential learning by a simulated steerage crossing. Further learning would consist of off campus trips to historically important locations.

Students receive two hours of Language Arts instruction daily. Speech and language pathologists and reading specialists offer in class and pull out services. Recreational activities were taking place in several locations on the campus and the involvement of the students I saw was impressive.

Riverview is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and is approved and licensed by the Commonwealth of MA and the Department of Early Education and Care.

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Visit by Larry Stednitz November 17, 2006

My visit to Stevens began with a presentation by three students. The first, a young man who had been at Stevens for over four years discussed the programs and his experience as a student of Stevens. I was told prior to seeing the students that they had been practicing hard for a few days. The first student gave an overview of Stevens and discussed the Stevens emphasis; Education, behavior and therapy. He stressed how important safety was at the school. During the tour, he pointed out cameras located in most buildings underscoring the importance of safety. Other safety features included 24-hour supervision along with bed checks twice every 15 minutes. Safety also plays a major role in how the physical plants are constructed. For example, there is only one student per room and the bed rooms do not have doors, again stressing the importance of safety.

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