PINNACLE WILDERNESS

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Pinnacle Wilderness, an outdoor therapeutic treatment program serving youth from 13 – 17, is located in Central Utah. Using the peace and serenity of the mountains and desert to help troubled kids move forward with "knowledge of past mistakes, lessons of the present and opportunities for the future." Using Native American imagery, the program uses the Circle of Courage as a guide for its teachings. Pinnacle uses quadrants of the Circle – Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity, universal needs in all youth, to develop self-confidence, respect and trusting relationships.

New students are integrated into gender-specific groups of up to 7 students, led by 3 staff. The average length of stay is 42 days. All students are eligible to earn 2.5 high school credits while on the trail issued through a fully accredited program, Blueprint Education. In addition to health, drug and hygiene education, students learn CPR and First Aid Training. Students participate in weekly individual therapy and the therapy/counseling staff members make weekly calls home to keep families informed.

Parents take part in a two-day orientation and parenting workshop at admission and return for a two-night, three-day trek with their teen at graduation. During the family trek, staff members explain Post-Pinnacle Planning, a year-long plan for continued support that includes resources in the family's home community. Alumni who may be struggling at home are welcome to return to the program for up to six weeks to reaffirm their new life skills.

The program founders bring their own life experiences to Pinnacle. The Clinical Director is a Licensed LCSW/Marriage and Family Therapist and the field staff have both experience and training in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. Several staff members are also certified EMTs. The program is licensed as an Outdoor Wilderness Program by the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing.

[This New Perspective was written by our Research Affiliate, Judith E. Bessette, EdD. Judi gathered this information through their website.]

BOOK REVIEWS...

LAST CHANCE IN TEXAS

The Redemption of Criminal Youth
By John Hubner
Random House:2005
ISBN-10 0375508090

Book Review by Karen S. Austin

Journalist John Hubner was given unprecedented access to the Giddings State School in Texas. This facility is known as one of the most aggressive--and most successful--treatment programs for violent young offenders in the United States. Giddings is home to "the worst of the worst": four hundred teen offenders convicted of crimes ranging from aggravated assault to murder. Hubner observed group sessions through a one-way mirror and also spent much time speaking with the teens. He checked the events reported and the narratives of the youths against police records, interviews with victims of the crimes and case files. Youths who fail to meet the tough criteria for parole from Giddings will be sent to adult prisons to serve out long sentences, hence the "Last Chance" in the title.

The underlying philosophy is that if youth offenders are simply put in a cell to "do time", all they have to do is sit there and feel sorry for themselves. This is "easy time". They convince themselves that they have been wronged. In contrast, Giddings looks like a prep school. However, the kids do hard time. They have to face themselves and deal with the events that got them there. They examine what they did and take responsibility for it. The result is the key: KIDS WHO GO THROUGH THAT DO NOT GO OUT AND REOFFEND. A three year study tracked graduates of the Giddings Capital Offenders program. After thirty-six months on parole, only 10 percent had been rearrested for a violent offense and only 3 percent were rearrested for a violent crime in the year following their release. In contrast, a California study showed a recidivism rate of 74 percent within 3 years for youth serving prison time.

This is not a comfortable book to read. These children have grown up to inflict on others the violence and abuse that was inflicted on them. At Giddings they participate in traumatic group therapy sessions where they recount their own sufferings and their crimes. The outpourings of suffering and anger lead to remorse and ultimately to empathy. An especially moving and effective part of the process is the participation by some parents of murdered children. These courageous parents share their stories--and their grief--with these young criminals, allowing the

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