

VISITS... HIGH FRONTIER, INC.

Fort Davis, Texas
Barry Blevins - Executive Director
432 364 2241
semyhighfrontier@yahoo.com

Visit by Larry Stednitz, February 9, 2007

High Frontier is a coed, private, non-profit Residential Treatment Center, founded in 1976. High Frontier's emphasis is on building self-esteem through a systematic Positive Peer Culture (PPC) model. The program uses cognitive strategies and alternative challenges as the vehicle for change.

Many, if not most, Parent Choice Programs and Schools would say they have a program that supports a positive peer culture. Very few however, actually use and embrace the Positive Peer Culture model of treatment.

Barry Blevins, the executive director of High Frontier, met with me at length, and discussed the essence of this complex model of treatment. He said that several things occur prior to and during the enrollment of a new student. Before a student is assigned a group, the teen group is briefed about the new student's problems and the circumstances bringing him/ her to the program. In an attempt to develop empathy and problem associations, the students are asked; "How did the group view their problems prior to entering High Frontier?" "What is important for Johnny to know upon arrival?" The group associates their previous thinking with how the new member will likely hope and fear. "What can the group expect Sally to say when questioned why she is at High Frontier? Will she blame others for her situation?" The group's first goal is to determine how to engage the new member in simple group participation.

Upon arrival, the new student is placed solely in the hands of the peer group. The staff members only act in a third person capacity as needed, often inserting Socratic questioning. Group members collect and distribute the new student's bedding and personal hygiene supplies. They accomplish traditional administrative roles as they explain and produce the paper work necessary for the new member to understand. Each new student is given a tour by the group and introduced to all individuals and important aspects of the campus. Students quickly see that it is the peer group who shares important information, a significant deviation from most

Continued: **HIGH FRONTIER/** pg 12



Youth Care Residential Treatment Center for Troubled Teens

Youth Care is an adolescent, residential treatment center set in a home-like environment for youth ages 11 to 18 who are experiencing academic, emotional or behavioral problems including substance abuse.

Our intensive, therapeutic residential treatment for troubled teens is licensed to treat youth and adolescents with such issues as:

- ♦ Depression
- ♦ ADHD
- ♦ Social Withdrawal
- ♦ Self-Destructive Behavior
- ♦ Physical/ Sexual Abuse
- ♦ Thought Disorder
- ♦ Learning Disabilities
- ♦ Substance Abuse
- ♦ Poor Self-Esteem
- ♦ Family Maladjustment
- ♦ Pregnant Teens acceptable

Students live in a home-like setting, which includes living rooms, bedrooms and a large family kitchen. In this residential setting, students learn the value of chores, positive interactions with others, and developing family relationships.



For further details contact:

Youth Care, Inc.
PO Box 909, Draper, UT 84020
800-786-4924 or 801-572-6989
www.youthcare.com



The miracle continues.

The miracle that begins in rehab, a wilderness program, or emotional growth school shouldn't end when a recovering teen goes off to college.

Our safe, sober dorm offers young adults, 18-24, a caring, family-oriented environment, the support of like-minded peers, a Life Skills curriculum that incorporates 12-Step principles, guidance and mentorship, plus all the resources it takes to succeed in school.



BETTON HOUSE
On your own but not alone.

Michael and Roxanne Losicco
Directors-in-Residence
501 Madison Avenue, Scranton, PA 18510
877-723-8866, www.bettonhouse.com

Owned and operated by The Family Foundation, Inc.

HIGH FRONTIER: Continued from page 11

programs' approach. The new student learns, "The other kids put their pants on the same way that I do". Students also learn that the others take responsibility for what they need and are not directed by staff.

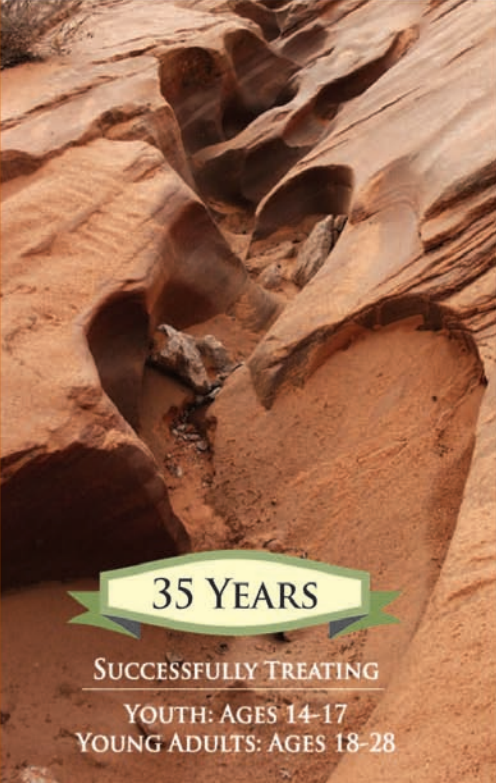
After being in the program for a few weeks, the new student completes a "life story," and then discusses potential goals with peers. For example, it is common for a student to want to "do his or her own thing", and to achieve autonomy. A student can achieve these goals through acceptance of personal responsibility. No one else is capable of doing it for him/ her.

New students often act out in a way that interferes with achieving goals, and invite adult staff members to step in to "get him back into line". Peers react to this gesture by asking "If you want independence, why do you act so childish and immature, requiring adults to intervene?" This type of behavior is no longer respected by peers and negative behaviors will not help in achieving these goals. For example, concepts that may have been considered "cool" at home are no longer respected. Behaviors are re-framed, and the student begins to understand that negative behaviors go against true values and goal achievement. This concept is reinforced throughout

the program. For example, if a student sees drinking and doing drugs as demonstrating manliness and bravery, the peer group may suggest that instead of bravery and manliness, it is a foolish way to attract authoritarian control. If a student glorifies fighting, peers may ask if that means the student enjoys hurting people. The student may be told by peers that it is brave and takes courage to be able to manage harmful actions and not hurt others.

If students refuse to get out of bed in the morning, staff does not give consequences, put them on a lower level or take away privileges. They are reinforced that the goal is to be independent and have freedom from adults trying to control them. Instead, peers may ask, "Why do you make other people be your boss, why are you making others parent you?" Students learn that the way to be free and autonomous is to give up childish behaviors and get on with taking responsibility for life.

Students at High Frontier experience a shift in their paradigm of how to look at life. What was cool (and destructive) before, is now immature and childish. What was avoided previously is now embraced. As students learn to understand this, they are able to address these issues with new students. Using the concept "that what you teach, is what you retain the



Understanding the nature of change.

**Clinically driven,
Wilderness Quest leverages the experiential process with
co-occurring populations, capturing the therapeutic process
of change in the wilderness.**

Six to Nine Week Primary Treatment

•

12-Step Model

•

Optimizes therapeutic exposure with licensed
therapist & substance abuse clinicians

•

Dual Diagnosis

•

JCAHO Accredited

35 YEARS

SUCCESSFULLY TREATING

YOUTH: AGES 14-17
YOUNG ADULTS: AGES 18-28



**WILDERNESS
QUEST**

Call 888-929-2225
www.wildernessquest.com

best", teaching others becomes a powerful tool to further help the young person make a shift toward what they value in life.

The goal of PPC is that when students finally "get it", they become the master of their own fate and that they are truly in charge of their own lives. It is no longer "cool" to go against their goals in life.

High Frontier is not eclectic in their approach. All interventions at High Frontier are intended to support the PPC model. Each peer group goes to school together, recreates together, works together, eats together and plans their free time together. The core structures are formal groups, run by the students, and spontaneous team groups throughout the day. Although spontaneous, the groups are orchestrated to address themes and behaviors within the group.

I spent over a day with High Frontier, attending a formal group facilitated by the adult mentor, Tom Homrighaus, and talking to students, including one girl I had placed there. The PPC model was fully operating with eight groups of nine students walking together around campus participating in the program's schedule. I spent over an hour in a formal

meeting which was run fully by the students, with staff sitting outside the group, occasionally inserting questions designed to re-focus, re-label and reverse while reserving any significant input for the summary of the group meeting. All students I spoke with clearly understood their work and were very happy with the progress they had made. The father of the girl I had placed there was also on campus. He was ecstatic about the progress that his daughter had made. The students were fully engaged and appeared to be happy at High Frontier.

Barry made a point that in no way do the staff members relinquish their responsibility to ultimately be in control. Indeed, the group's role is to help, while staff will make no apologies for their authority. A very high staff to student ratio reinforces this. The program has 115 staff members for 84 students. In order to successfully operate a complex PPC model, a program must have a highly experienced staff. The administrative team has an average of 16 years experience in the model. Barry has been working at High Frontier for the past 20 years. The direct care staff averages 1.5 to 2 years and some have worked for 5 or 6 years. The program's clinical team of psychiatric consultation, nursing, 3 clinical psychologists and 5 other master level therapists, represent an average longevity of 12 years.

Books have been written by Larry Brentro and Harry Vorath, the founders of PPC. Those parents thinking of High Frontier and other interested parties could benefit from reading these books to further elucidate the subtleties of a well respected, but poorly understood model of treatment. The review of the Positive Peer Culture book that High Frontier is highly influenced by is located online.

The program is licensed by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, Child-Care licensing Division.



SSSHHHHHH...LEARNING!

**ACT and SAT scores above the
National Average**

**27 out of 28 students who turned 18 years
old while enrolled in the program last year,
stayed enrolled...voluntarily.**

**DISCOVERY ACADEMY...
QUIETLY MAKING A DIFFERENCE.**

www.discoveryacademy.com



**Four Circles
Recovery Center**

828-891-2221

www.fourcirclesrecovery.com

We take the best of traditional substance abuse treatment and wilderness therapy to create a uniquely powerful program that facilitates a sustained recovery. The pristine wilderness allows you to connect with the most essential and basic elements of self – allowing you to then rebuild your life through the transformational power of nature.

SecondNature Wilderness Programs

Second Nature is a licensed treatment program that uses the wilderness setting in a clinically focused intervention to teach students accountability, communication skills and healthy emotional and behavioral habits. Treatment plans are individualized for each student and include flexible lengths of stay, single gender treatment, daily groups and individualized therapy sessions with doctorate level therapists weekly.

Second Nature works with students 13 to 17 with a range of emotional and behavioral issues including: Depression, Learning Differences, Oppositional Defiance, Attention Deficit, Attachment and Substance Abuse Disorders. Typical students fail to respond to limits and rules, act entitled, choose the wrong friends, underachieve, have low self-esteem, experience a decline in performance and may be experiencing parent-child conflict.

For Additional Information
Contact us at:

801-947-1338
www.snwp.com



“True learning stretches the intellect, challenges the body, and encourages healthy emotional expression”

- * Wilderness Experience
- * Emotional Growth Curriculum
- * Family Workshops
- * Academic & Achievement Seminars
- * Accredited College Prep Academy

Located in the forested wilderness of Central Oregon, Mount Bachelor Academy guides youth, ages 13 to 18 through a 14 to 16 month program. For more information call or see our website:

Mount Bachelor Academy
33051 NE Ococho Hwy
Prineville, OR 97754
800-462-3404
www.mtba.com

OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE

Woodland Hills, California
Anne LaRiviere, Admissions
888-558-0617

anne@opiliving.com
www.opiliving.com

Visit by Lon Woodbury, February 5, 2007

Optimum Performance Institute (OPI) is a coed community based program for young people ages 17 to 25. In the process of my visit I met several participants; all looked pretty normal for that age group, including the girl rushing off to a college class with spiked hair and eyes blackened with makeup. I met several residents in their apartments, and although the apartments looked lived in, they were cleaner and more picked up than those of most young single people of the same age. I presume that being cleaner than typical young people on their own was a reflection of the influence of OPI staff who keep regular and frequent contact with the participants.

There are currently 26 participants in the program, with about 25 staff. OPI treats a very diverse population and mixes young adults with situational difficulties and depression with others who may have been unsuccessful in school due to family dynamics, anxiety or posttraumatic stress. About a third of the present participants came with serious drug abuse problems, and approximately one third have been diagnosed with Asperger's. The staff informed me they are very successful with Asperger's participants because they have enough staff to provide the support and training in social skills to help those participants and can offer one-to-one assistance as needed. The participants I met were friendly and rather outgoing. They appeared comfortable in their apartments because it was their own space. Had I met them in any other context, I would not have been able to tell they were in a program, working on issues that caused them serious troubles.

The common denominator of all participants is they realize they needed some help. Before enrolling, the applicant must convince admissions they want to do something different. If admissions is convinced there is at least some element of acceptance they need help, and have some commitment to change, then the application is accepted. A six-month commitment is required although the average stay is ten months. At least one participant has been there for three years.