OPI is a community based program rather than a residential program. All the students live in apartments and the program is designed to transition them toward successful independent living. The program is very individualized. Staff base activities and experiences on the participants' interests, so in a real sense each participant has their own program, goals and experiences.

The basic outline of the program is two phases, with apartments dedicated to each phase. In Phase One, staff members live with the participants' 24-hours-a-day. There is a curfew and the participants' lives are about as structured as they can be within the context of apartment living. Participants stay in this phase at least three months based on the recommendations of the staff. Phase Two apartments are in a different area and the participants are more independent, but still have significant staff contact. This Phase also lasts for at least three months, with staff making the final decision as to when a participant has progressed enough to complete. After the two phases, if a participant chooses, their relationship changes to what is called Aftercare, which includes a higher degree of independence but still with a lot of staff involvement. The staff becomes more of a role model and mentor to the participants. Another follow-up option is called Outpatient, where participants see therapists on a scheduled basis, but the therapist plays more of the role of mentor and role model. Overall, the program works very hard to balance the differing needs of running a program for all the participants, while meeting the individual needs of each participant.

Executive Director Robert Fischer, MD, explains that the program is not diagnosis based. That is, they work with the participants from where they are mentally and emotionally, rather than working from some more abstract diagnosis that might or might not be accurate. Their three main focuses are academics, therapy and what might be called "Life."

The program provides whatever support and help is necessary to help the participants' complete high school, attend college or establish themselves into a career.

Therapy is an integral part of the program for each participant. This can include participating in AA or other specialized community groups and OPI's Residential Chemical Dependency Solutions Group. Since working in this field is always high stress, OPI has just started a regular staff group to help staff process the stresses that go along with working with young people with problems.

Continued: **OPI/** pg 16

Rancho Valmora

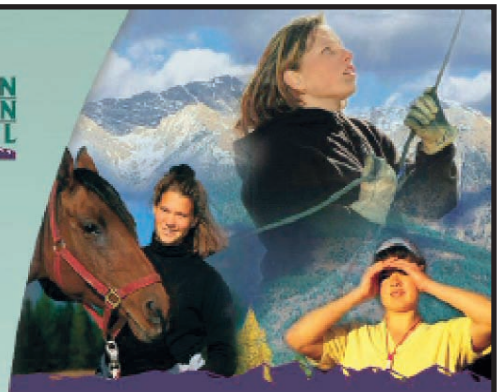
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