The approach with each participant is individualized, working on what each needs to learn to become responsibly independent. Their emphasis is more holistic than therapeutic, and thus is action oriented. The interactions focus on specific actions the participant should take in various situations, referring to basic principles only as they pertain to the issue at hand. Staff members are available any time the participant needs help, but the minimum contacts are eight hours a month with mentoring activities, and four hours a month working with the parents. Of course, much more time is spent at first with a young person who has moved into the area from elsewhere to attend college.

Vive! does not do crisis intervention since most of their participants have completed an intensive residential program and are ready for transition back to mainstream living. For the rest, which are usually the teens, they work with families who do not yet need residential placement.

In addition to supporting the participant in learning responsible independent living, Vive! works with the whole family to help resolve family issues such as teaching parents how to set boundaries, working through enmeshment problems and helping parents learn how to be supportive when their child makes progress.

The program is very well aware of what kind of young people they can help, and those they cannot help. The admission process consists of a family meeting with the mentor and the parent coach to have the program and expectations explained, then the mentor and young person split off to spend time together. Many families will then go home to discuss the options among themselves prior to making a decision. If the family fits the Vive! client profile and their decision to engage Vive! is based on a real desire to change, then the family is accepted and staff set up a routine with specific expectations based on the needs of the young person and the family.

The program basically works with the participant in the participant's own environment, whether it be an adolescent living at home, or young adults just starting out in their own apartments and going to college or joining the workforce. It parallels to a large extent the supportive environment young people had when this country was more rural and they had the benefit of support from an extended family or everybody in the community knew the young person. However, instead of having the benefit of an uncle or grandmother or family friend living down the street they could call on in times past, they have the benefit of Vive! staff to turn to for help, support and advice in the process of learning how to handle the problems that go with growing up.

NEW LEAF ACADEMY NC NEW TRANSITION PROGRAM

Hendersonville, North Carolina
Cat Jennings, Executive Director
866 479-5323
www.newleafacademy.com

By: Kathryn Huffman

To better serve girls, parents and families as a whole, New Leaf Academy of North Carolina (NLANC) has implemented a comprehensive, family-intensive transition program to help ensure a more successful and seamless conversion from program to home. As a program designed expressly for middle school girls, the NLANC team felt it imperative to create a dynamic, interactive and family-friendly process in which entire families could properly prepare for life post-New Leaf. Executive Director, Cat Jennings explains, "New Leaf serves young girls. These are not children who will be moving on to college or into the workforce. They are young ladies who will still need hands-on parenting for two, three, even four and five years following their graduation. If we do not provide our families and our girls with real and workable skills and tools to help navigate those tough high school years and the host of bigger and better issues that those years contain, then we have not properly served our clients to the best of our ability."

To help facilitate the development of stronger, healthier family patterns, parents are encouraged to address their own, personal issues immediately upon a student's enrollment. Using such tools as the online program Family IQ and recommended individual and/or couples therapy, parents begin the process of healing damaged familial relationships that have resulted from the chaotic and stressful environment that has been their life for often many years. "We believe that it is critical for our parents to attend to the collateral damage that has occurred," says Cat. "Siblings and spouses have often been neglected due to the need to manage the chaos of one child. Facilitating the healing and growth of the extended family system ensures everyone involved is properly prepared, emotionally and parentally, for the new child who will be returning home."

With their New Leaf counselor serving as a guide, families begin readjusting their skewed parent/child relationships by learning how to set new "rules of engagement" with their daughters. Very often, it has

Continued: **NLANC**/ pg 26