

VISITS... ÉLAN SCHOOL

Poland, Maine
Connie Kimball, Admissions
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www.elanschool.com

Visit by Louise Kreiner CEP & Amy D'Uva, May 17, 2007

Upon entering Poland, ME, we first noticed Shaker Village, a picturesque working town surrounded by rolling hills. A few minutes later we drove into Elan's driveway. At first glance (on a very dreary day), the school looked less than inviting; a trailer type building showcased the administration building and the grounds looked a little barren (this due to mud season) waiting for life to begin. This is where the dreariness ended.

We were met in Portsmouth, NH, by Elan's driver, a woman named Teresa. Teresa was a lovely, upbeat, dedicated employee of Elan who educated us for the hour and a half ride. Her cheeriness and commitment to the students was our first clue that Elan would be a solid program.

A no-nonsense approach to learning both in the classroom and socially is what both students and staff on every level conveyed to us. The system at Elan deals with reward based on a military style pyramid.

Students are all playing on an equal field starting out with various problems including substance abuse, family and social issues, academic failure, truancy, promiscuity and other defiant behavioral issues. Good behavior is rewarded by being given more responsibility in the two main houses. Poor behavior means demotion back down to the bottom of the pyramid. This school is run by the theory that each student is to be respectful of the others. In other words when a situation comes up, student input is weighed heavily in determining discipline, therapy and consequences given to their peers. Recommendations for group session topics are also suggested by the students and reviewed by the staff. To our amazement, some of the students we spoke to privately had been in other programs, were 18 or older and had chosen to stay at Elan until completion of school and graduation. This in itself is a remarkable feat. We believe students recognize the dedication of staff and teachers to their cause. We love to see a



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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strong academic component with solid courses a “real education”. Elan has it. Each student who was closing in on graduation was going off to colleges in various locations across the country including “name schools”.

When asked, the students spoke quite highly of all of the different facets of their lives in Maine. The program is meant to be co-educational and takes students from age 13. On our particular visit the youngest students there happen to be 16. Elan is not a clinical program nor do they pretend to be. Don't look for the Ritz here. The accommodations are cramped but spotless maintained by the worker bees (lowest on the pyramid). There is little TV or movie watching and only homework or college search can be done in the computer labs. Meal times are done in each house and run by top level students. Elan has a five-week rotating menu which is approved by a certified dietician to ensure that students receive proper nutrition. The food looked edible but again it's not a five star menu.

Quite simply Elan is down home Maine. The bonds with teachers, staff and each other are what drives and motivates these kids to become caring, responsible adults. The foundation given at Elan should catapult each student into college, work or back to family successfully.

ROSECRANCE

Substance Abuse Treatment Centers

Rockford, Illinois

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Lon's Visit: September 26, 2006

Rosecrance has been around for a long time but only moved into its adolescent primary care center in August 2004. Located on 50 acres, its design was the result of interviews of past students, asking them for ideas of what, in their view, an ideal facility would be like. The result is a high-end 78-bed expansive facility, complete with a gymnasium, classrooms, conference and group rooms, and everything that might be needed to supply adolescent needs, both personal and treatment wise. On the other side from the entrance, in the back, they have landscaped what they call the Serenity Garden. Following walkways over the pond, students can spend time in the Serenity Garden, which consists of wandering paths through landscaped areas and a waterfall and stream running into the pond. The garden includes a lot of little semi-

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Adolescent Treatment Programs

- Beyond Parental Control
- Abusing Alcohol or Drugs
- Defiant
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- Suffering from Attention Deficit
- Resistant to Outpatient Therapy

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Sommerville Young Adult Community has been built from the ground up on current research and best practices for people with multiple diagnoses and neurobehavioral characteristics. Somerville staff has been trained by—and will continue working with—leading professionals to understand the link between brain function and behaviors, establishing and strengthening relationships that are essential for healing and successful community life.

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private turn-offs where the students can sit to talk with each other and their therapists while enjoying the natural beauty of the garden. The garden is very peaceful, and is an impressive and unique addition to the facility. It is obvious that no effort or cost was spared to make the facility top quality.

I had the opportunity while there to attend a student assembly in the gymnasium. The occasion was a student talent show for which they had been preparing for some time. It looked like a student gathering you would see almost anywhere with a coed assembly. The excitement was high; they were cheering on and supporting their friends, encouraging those that had trouble overcoming their nervousness and of course enjoying the humor and talent of the performers. The important thing, I think, was that it was a bit of normalcy the program purposely was bringing into their lives in the center. The main difference I could see from a comparable public school gathering of that type was the absence of the usual negativity you might see from a few malcontents, which of course fostered a positive experience for all the students.

Rosecrance is a 30 to 90-day primary care treatment center with the primary diagnosis being chemical dependency, and students come from all over the country. The center also is equipped to work with dual diagnosis students, while remembering that the chemical dependency is primary. For example, when a student has both a chemical dependency and eating disorder diagnosis, they can enroll that student only when the eating disorder is stabilized. If it is stabilized, then they are capable of working with that diagnosis. The program is 12-step based, with a few elements of Positive Peer Culture added and with very gender specific programming for boys and girls. The ages range from a low of 12 years old up to 18 years of age with separate housing for boys and girls, of course. The Center is independent, not affiliated with a hospital, and they tell me they have good success with Insurance companies.

Each student is in academic classes four hours a day with course work being coordinated with their home school. Part of the academic curriculum includes outdoor activities and experiential education.

At about the third week of a student's stay, families are invited for three-day family sessions. This consists of family-only sessions along with sessions with multiple families and is an important part of their goal of re-integrating families.

For those girls who would benefit from a longer stay working on their chemical dependency issues, Rosecrance maintains two Monarch Recovery Homes, the Hillman House and the Sullivan House. Both are marvelous well-kept structures with lots of charm and character. The structure at these houses is not as intense as that of the primary care center so the girls have more freedom. However, the structure is still tighter than most halfway houses or living out on their own. On occasion, when a girl doesn't make it at a Recovery Home, she might transfer back to the Primary Care Center for a refresher experience. A Recovery Home is an option for only some of the girls since each house can take only a maximum of 14 girls for periods ranging from three months to two years. The Recovery Homes will also accept girls who have successfully completed any Primary Care program other than Rosecrance so enrollment is not exclusively from the Rosecrance Primary Care Center. The ages enrolled there range from 15 years old up to 20 years of age.



In the past, about 90 percent of their graduates would return home for local treatment. However, as the staff has become aware of the existence of wilderness therapy programs and therapeutic boarding schools, that percentage has reduced to 60 percent returning home. Most of the rest continue on to wilderness and/or therapeutic boarding schools.

The program has also been intensifying its efforts to catch the attention of professional Educational Consultants believing the quality of its program is the match of any of the better known Chemical Dependency Centers.

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Betton House helps young adults (18-24) connect these dots and so much more. Recovery efforts (begun elsewhere) are strengthened by every aspect of life at Betton House. In this family environment, students learn from and experience real life but are fully supported with guidance and mentoring, like-minded peers, and an effective 12-step based lifestyle curriculum. At Betton House, making connections between thought, attitude and behavior, between hearts and minds, and between people is what we are all about.

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- ♦ 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.
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