EXTENDED INSIGHTS...

CRAMER CREEK GROUNDBREAKING

Part of Social Learning Environments (SLE)

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Report by Lon Woodbury, August 23-25, 2007

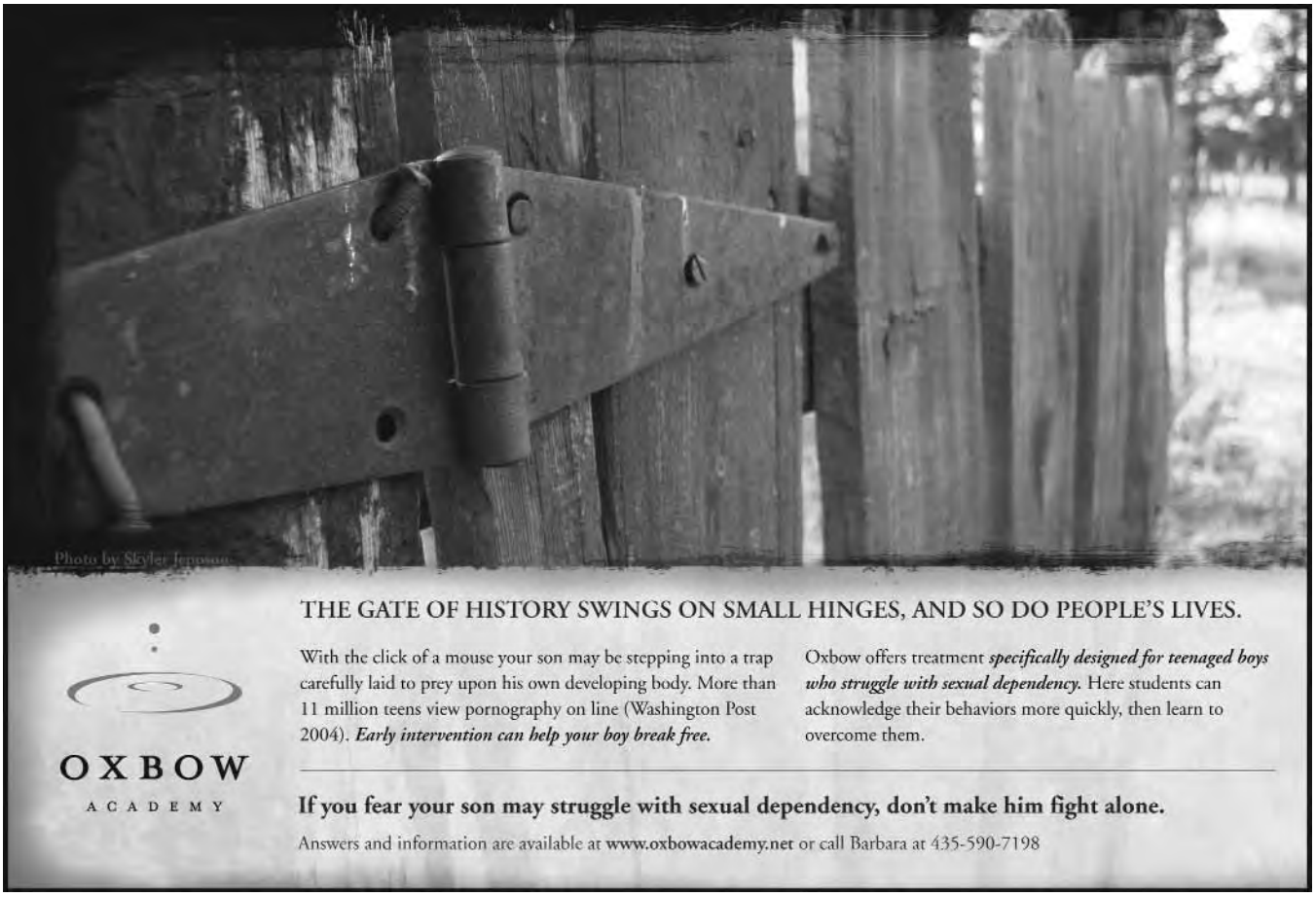
A group of consultants and Social Learning Environments (SLE) staff were invited to Missoula Montana in late August to be introduced to the planned new addition of a Social Learning Environments school. The original SLE schools are Rancho Valmora in northern New Mexico and High Frontier in west Texas. Plans for Cramer Creek have been developing for years, and this will be the third school in their collection of schools. Planning to open for students early in 2008, the first steps in laying the foundation were just starting during our tour.

Plans are for Cramer Creek to be very similar to Rancho Valmora and High Frontier. These two schools have been steadily modified to emphasize their similarities, and when Cramer Creek is open, plans are for the similarities of all three schools to outweigh any differences.

SLE President Bill McKay gave the introductory talk at the gathering, followed by SLE Vice-President Jonathan McKay who will administer Cramer Creek, and marketing head Elizabeth McGee. Also present was Barry Blevins, also a Vice-President of SLE and the head of High Frontier.

In a discussion of the philosophy of SLE, I was struck by some of the implications of its philosophy. It was pointed out that adolescents of today are the result of not having a responsible role in society. Whereas in

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negative results. The school asserts that good group work creates autonomous individuals, while bad group work creates group think. The difference is in viewing the students as humans rather than as objects.



They explained several other interesting concepts that were relevant to their philosophy:

- Their goal is to have the students practice what they will experience as adults.
- Moral development is learning to stop trying to control others.
- Students must learn how to differentiate between cognition and emotion, and
- The school approaches education by personalizing experience.

Cramer Creek is in a secluded valley close to Missoula, and if construction goes as expected it should be opening its doors for its first students in early 2008. Plans are to maintain the SLE culture by moving several students from Rancho Valmora and High Frontier to be the first students, who then can help orient those that are enrolled later as the school grows. This is the technique to ensure that the existing positive culture in High Frontier and Rancho Valmora is continued in Cramer Creek.

> We are raising a generation that has a woefully small stock of ideas and interests and emotions. It must be amused at all costs but it has little skill in amusing itself. It pays some of its members to do what the majority can no longer do for themselves. It is this inner poverty that makes for the worst kind of boredom.
>
> ~ Robert J. McCracken

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