# Places for Struggling Teens™

*"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."*

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## 2007 IN REVIEW

By: Lon Woodbury



The year 2007 might wind up being a pivotal year for the network of private residential parent-choice schools and programs for struggling teens. We might have just gone through a paradigm shift in the environment we work in several areas. It is unclear at the present whether the changes might be good or bad for the needs of the children.

The main change is the visibility of the network. For years we operated "under the radar," partly due to the inability of the media and state regulatory agencies to fit the wide variety of approaches in our network into neat simple categories, and partly because of the relatively small size of this network. (Estimates are our private pay residential network brings in about $2 billion nationally, which as a comparison is not much more than the total public school spending in Idaho alone). We have gradually become more visible in recent years, but with the October 10, 2007, hearings by Congressman George Miller, we became a national story and are an object for possible federal national policy. The media and public scrutiny will only be increasing.

There are several distinguishing characteristics of the schools and programs in this network that in the past have made it different from traditional residential mental health, substance abuse, hospitals, Social Service and Law Enforcement programs. Those elements include private parent-choice, small student bodies, relatively easy entry for new programs, use of alternative education concepts, use of wilderness, personal relationships between staff and students and a strong influence from therapeutic community concepts (structure). It is these elements that make this network of schools, programs and consultants different from traditional programs for troubled teens.

Continued: **Review/** pg 3

## *INSIDE...*

**Essays:**
Managing For Safety /3
Ten Steps To Empower /6

**Visits:**
Cherry Gulch /8
Summit Achievement /10

**New Perspectives:**
Catalyst /13
Cirque Lodge /14
Discovery School For Girls /15
New Vision Wilderness /16
Safe Harbor /17

**Book Reviews:**
Price Of Privilege /18

**Extended Insights:**
Valuable Lessons /20
Horizon Academy /22
Christmas in the City /23
Today's NATWC /25

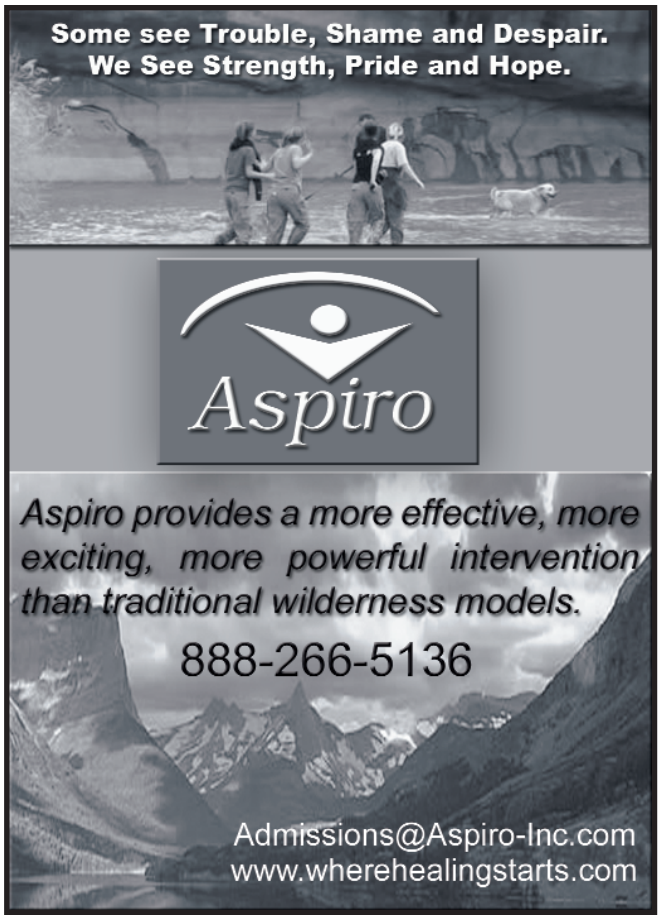
**News & Views** /27
**Seen N' Heard** /28

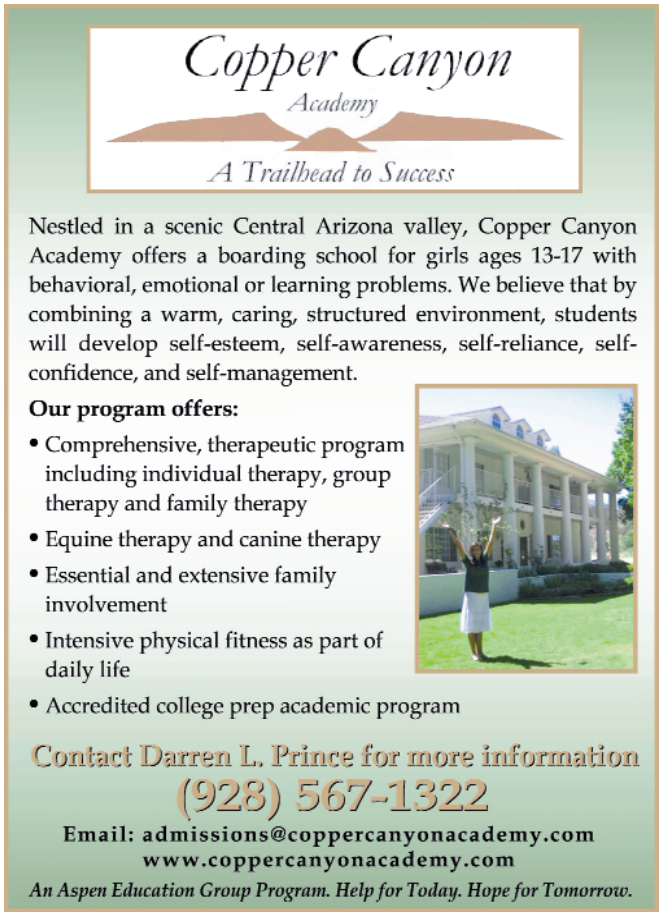
## *SEEN 'N HEARD...*

**Heartlight launches radio program...**
**2008 Parent Empowerment Handbook available...**
**Montcalm For Girls expands...**
**Conway leaves Gatehouse...**
**OnPoint celebrates first anniversary...**
**Elk Mountain Academy celebrates 14 years...**
**Schrom Therapeutic Home Care...**
**The Family Times wins gold...**
**Little Keswick Education Symposium...**
**Life Designs student runs half marathon...**
**Many Additional Staff Changes...**

Full **SEEN N' HEARD/** ***Pg 28***

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**CHERRY GULCH:** Continued from 9

The common room and bedrooms were clean and well organized, looking and feeling comfortable. There were many stuffed animals on the beds and throughout the area. On the wall of the common room were numerous charts reflecting several token economies that help the students visualize their progress and ability to earn special rewards. Behavioral and academic progress is measured in small steps making it easy to advance so each boy knows how they are progressing.

Of course there were no classes being conducted since we visited on a weekend, but I was informed that academic strategies are research-based, stressing experiential, hands-on learning, small class sizes and individualized academic plans for each student. The stated goal was to rekindle students' natural love for learning.

Being a relatively new program, just like the lodge is relatively new, it is in continuous development and refinement. It was obvious the boys were responding positively to the program. The major factors contributing to healing were a pleasant and beautiful environment, a program focused on the natural inclination of boys toward the outdoors, academics and an empirically-based approach by a staff very well tuned to the emotional needs of the boys.

## SUMMIT ACHIEVEMENT

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Visit by: Robert Kantar, December 2007

*(Robert Kantar has visited Summit Achievement many times. This report is a compilation of his numerous visits.)*

Summit Achievement is in Stow, ME, quite close to the New Hampshire border, on the eastern side of the White Mountains looking up at Bald Face and down the road from a beautiful federal park and Evans Notch. This land of mountains, ponds and notches is not only remarkably scenic, but prime space for young people to work out their troubles. The program is located near Fryburg, ME, and North Conway, NH. It is a reasonable ride from airports in Portland, ME, Manchester, NH, and Boston, MA.

No transports are allowed for this program, which combines a lot of experience, excellent therapists and a strong educational component into an excellent program for male or female adolescents needing structure, direction and a few months away from families, negative friend influence, cleaning up the less