OPEN LETTER: Continued from 15

- Is there consensus on current industry issues within your organization and if so, what is being done to promote and articulate that position?
- Speaking specifically to individual members, are you aligned personally with the views or positions being taken by your organizations?

We are presenting this partially as an indication of what we hope our professional organizations are aiming for, and partially as a gauge as to how far along we are in the process of accomplishing these objectives.

We would appreciate any feedback to these questions from any individual or network organization.

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A great business is really too big to be human. ~ Henry Ford

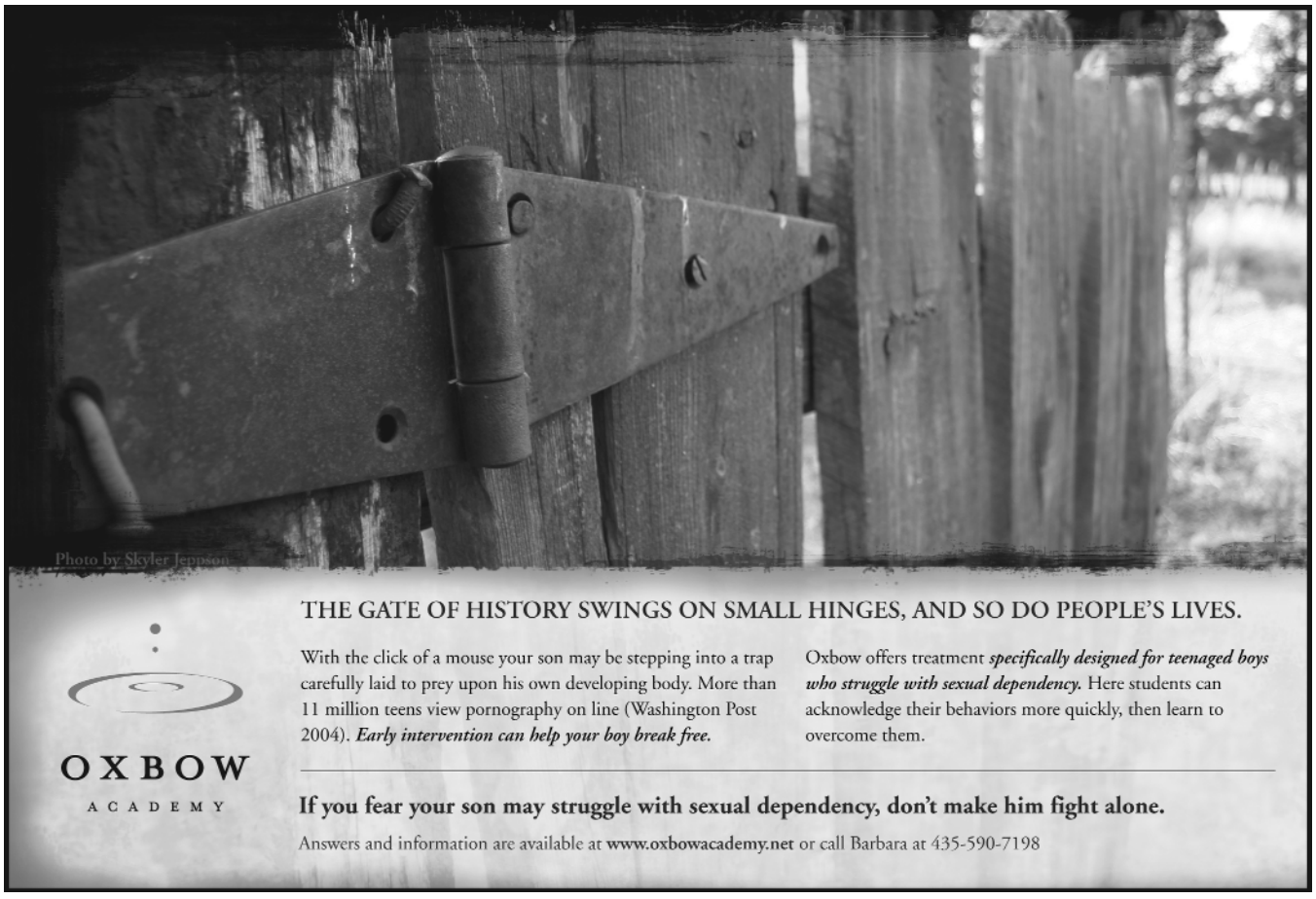
THE PRIVATIZATION OF ECKERD ACADEMY

Deer Lodge, TN; Suches, GA, Brooksville, FL
800-914-3937
www.Eckerdacademy.org

Visit by: Loi Eberle, MA, IECA, February 17-18, 2008

Eckerd Youth Alternatives (EYA) has helped more than 70,000 youth in public programs since they were founded by Jack and Ruth Eckerd in 1968. Eckerd eventually created 45 public adjudication programs in seven states. Currently EYA operates 18 Therapeutic Outdoor Treatment Programs and three recently privatized academies. Though I have visited Eckerd Academy in Brooksville, FL, in the past, this was my first visit to the Eckerd Academy of the Blue Ridge in Suches, GA, and Eckerd Academy in Deer Lodge, TN.

Founder Jack Eckerd, a civic-minded pharmacist and philanthropist, originally aimed to "turn tax users into tax payers" by teaching inmates job skills. He and Ruth soon realized they needed to reach youth before they got in trouble and became interested in Campbell Loughmiller's Wilderness Program for Youth, the first of its kind. Sponsored by the



Salesmanship Club, Loughmiller's program enrolled inner city children from Dallas, TX. Upon seeing it, Eckerd convinced Loughmiller and his associates, Ken Eggert and Buford McKenzie, to help him start one. This goal was accomplished in 1968 when they started the first Wilderness Education System in Brooksville, FL. Soon after that, Everett Lindstrom, also with the Salesmanship Club, came to Central FL to help Eckerd establish the girl's program. While the origins of many wilderness programs reach back to the Salesmanship Club, the Eckerd programs were unique in that they combined a wilderness program with a school.

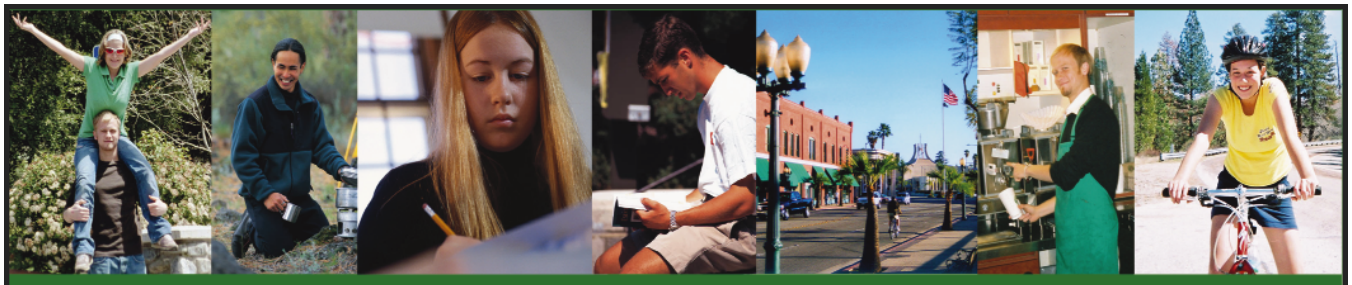
Recently the decision to privatize the three academies was facilitated by Richard Wentworth, Director of the Eckerd Academy at Deer Lodge, TN. Eckerd Academy at Brooksville, FL, was then privatized under the directorship of Patrick Curley. Most recently, Tim McMahon, Director of Eckerd Academy of the Blue Ridge, led their re-opening as a private program.

EYA's privatizing process involved three strategies according to Richard Wentworth, and "every step of the way they emphasized the nurturing, relationship based, reality therapy, non-confrontational accountability-based Eckerd Model." Conversations with staff members at the TN and GA programs attributed their program effectiveness and positive staff morale to this model.

EYA's first privatization strategy involved re-configuring the staff, adding clinicians even to the FL program which was already JCAHO accredited. Adding teachers certified in special education and more direct care staff enabled all three programs to achieve a 1:4 staff to student ratio, and provide remedial through AP courses. The three academies are accredited through COA [Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children], SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] and their state Departments of Education. They are members of NATSAP.

The next privatization strategy involved further development of their original goal of "roughing it easy." Previously the camper/students worked together to build their living structure, a tactic used to improve the group process. When they privatized, they built semi permanent camp sites that better satisfied basic housing needs and re-focused the group work towards chores and therapeutic processes. Charming community "pods" were created for each of the 5-6 groups. Each pod accommodates

Continued: **Eckerd/** pg 18



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