Places for Struggling Teens™

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

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THE DIFFERENCES THEY DIDN'T GRASP

The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight
By: Lon Woodbury, Educational Consultant



In October 2007 and April 2008, we were treated to an amazing example of how the issue of residential treatment of struggling teens can be totally confused and obfuscated based on the Washington DC Beltway mentality, misleading drama and blurred boundaries. With the accompanying media feeding frenzy, it reminded me of the mythical corporate exercise program: Leaping to conclusions, rushing to judgment and covering your behind.

The lead witness in both hearings conducted by Congressman George Miller's Committee on Education was Gregory D. Kutz, GAO Managing Director, Forensic Audits and Special Investigations. His presentation was a prime example of the "one size fits all" mentality. There are significant philosophical, programmatic and dynamic differences in how various schools, programs and institutions approach working with teens making poor decisions and needing residential placement. Yet, despite hundreds of hours of his staff interviewing professionals working in the field and even visiting some programs, all were lumped together in the hearings into some bland generalization known as "Programs for Troubled Youth." The focus of the hearings implied private programs were the worst of the lot. This was accomplished partly by combining statistics from juvenile justice, mental health and parent-choice programs, which run the gamut from public to private. This presentation failed to analyze which were public or private, leading the media to mistakenly conclude that all examples and statistics were from private parent-choice schools and programs..

The resulting legislation voted out by the committee in May continued these confused and biased blurring of boundaries. First, public institutions that have had the most serious examples of incompetence and brutality are excluded from the legislation. These are residential programs that take children referred by courts and/or mental health professionals with parents having little or no say in enrollment decisions. What the legislation does focus on, however, is to regulate those private programs that are parent-choice, where parents can make the enrollment decision and choose to avoid their child getting sucked into the sometimes damaging public programs. This legislation would result in taking away or reducing the ability of parents to make their own decisions for their own children. It also has

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Pedal Pub at IECA...



(May 16, 2008) Lon Woodbury, President of Woodbury Reports, Inc., Bonners Ferry, ID, 208-267-5550, sponsored a Pedal Pub outing at the recent IECA Conference in Minneapolis, MN. The outing turned out to be great fun as many people gathered to pedal the pub around Minneapolis. Look for future outings by Woodbury Reports staff at upcoming conferences. **Photo Gallery:** www.woodburyreports.com/PeddlePubPix/

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