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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Out From Under The Radar

By: Lon Woodbury



Back in 2006, I wrote an essay titled "Under the Radar." My point then was that the days were gone where private parent-choice residential schools and programs for struggling young people operated largely unknown to the public. By 2006, states were struggling to develop oversight and regulations (often in collaboration with well known and effective programs) that were reasonable for these fairly new and unique schools and programs.

The media was noticing our existence by publishing an increasing number of articles about success stories and criticisms of the schools and programs in the network. The number of parents calling schools, programs and educational consultants to inquire if their child might be helped continued to increase. With the hearings in late 2007 by Congressman Miller, our growing network received national attention and the gaze of Congress.

The schools and programs in the network have responded to this changing societal environment in several ways:

There has been a significant increase in Research and Outcome Studies, and many more are being undertaken currently. I will publish them online as soon as I receive them.

There is a concerted effort throughout the network to require staff to be experienced and credentialed.

More schools and programs have fine tuned their screening process to screen out those students who were inappropriate so they could be served at a place more appropriate for their needs.

New techniques and philosophies are being tested by experienced staff that left their previous employment to establish their own school or program. As the needs and problems of young people change, this network is becoming a hotbed of determining what works best and sharing what they learn with others.

Professional organizations closely associated with this network are rapidly becoming more sophisticated in explaining the strengths and successes of this network.

The Independent Educational Consultant Association (IECA) has been increasingly active in statements to the press and communicating with other professional organizations.

The National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP) has learned from being blind-sided by Congressman Miller in 2007. They are now becoming increasingly effective by aggressively presenting their perspective to Congress and the public.

As an example of a NATSAP activity, I just returned from a trip to Washington DC in mid-June where I participated with NATSAP in presenting a positive perspective to the staff of several Senators regarding the Miller legislation. The Miller legislation passed the US House of Representatives earlier this year and has been received by the US Senate for consideration.

In anticipation of possible Senate action sometime this year or next year, we talked with key staff of about a dozen Senators. The representative of a Washington DC law firm was very efficient in setting our appointments and escorting us around the Senate Office Buildings. The staff politely listened, with some already quite aware of some of the schools in this network. For others, this was the first they had heard of this type of school and program.

With a similar exercise next month in Washington DC, NATSAP is aggressively making sure the Senators are aware of the need for this network in serving the needs of parents and their children with problems and the dangers of draconian regulation.

In addition, NATSAP is coordinating research efforts, increasing its public relations efforts and raising standards for membership.

As I said earlier, we are no longer "Under the Radar" but are actively engaging the public.

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> Education is the only profession where the providers' lack of confidence in their own product is used as a rationale for rejecting the alternative.
>
> – Joseph P. Viteritti

[Essays and articles appearing in this publication are the opinions of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the policy of Woodbury Reports, Inc.,™ or StrugglingTeens.com.™ We urge our readers to conduct their own investigation of the products and services identified herein.]

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Cherry Gulch Student Council Chooses Responsible and Mature Activities

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I just wanted to share a short inspiring story about our student council. This was only the third group of students that have been involved with Student Council here at Cherry Gulch. Elected for a three month term, the current group of officers had been motivated to be involved since the inception of the council but challenging behaviors and clinical complexities took first priority. Since their enrollments these young men have made huge progress here at Cherry Gulch, now demonstrating a readiness to be student leaders. During the students' first meeting with the management team I had expected them to ask for ice cream socials and pizza parties, but I was pleasantly surprised by the maturity of our students. They were thoughtful in their approach to requesting more funds for the council and intelligent in their ideas to raise the money.

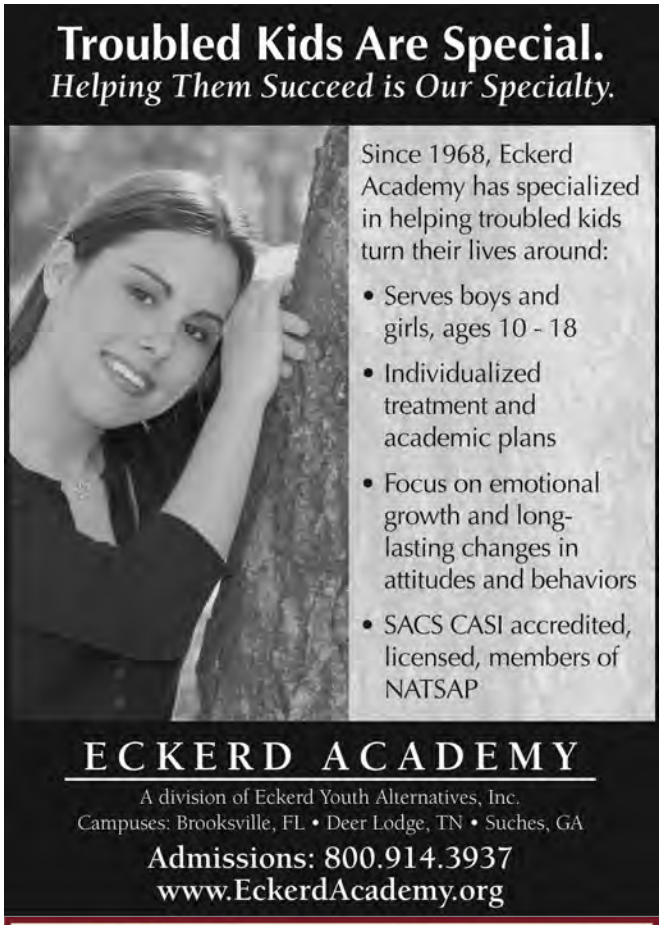
To begin, the council wanted to start a "Green" program, the central idea being that all students would be rewarded for recycling and conserving soap and paper products. Specifically the council sought to motivate and educate the entire student body on the importance of conserving household goods. Beyond the environmental reward, the council would profit from monies saved on future product orders. The boys also asked for more money for the council if, as a group, they could maintain a high GPA.

They then went on to discuss how they wanted to spend the money that they earned. First the boys sought to purchase a flag pole and to strategically place it on a hilltop we call Declaration Point. They discussed how a lot of the students at Cherry Gulch are patriotic and take pride in their school. They envisioned a Cherry Gulch flag prominently flown where they can all see it and for the entire community to see our flag. Additionally they wanted each student to add a personal touch to the flag as a way of unifying our school. This was very touching from a group of boys that had come so far during their stay at Cherry Gulch.

This is the same group of boys who gathered close to 900 tokens from themselves and their peers to help fund the new multipurpose court. This effort to improve the school holds obvious meaning as they have also requested to have each student put his hand print in the court as a way of leaving a legacy behind and continuing to foster that sense of community.

Moments like this are so rewarding and it is an honor to have had a small part in their progress and to be confident that they will continue to positively contribute to their community, wherever that may be. Many of our students hope to work at Cherry Gulch when they are older and have asked if they could use the Positive Parenting with a Plan program at home with their children if and when they become fathers. We generally get several phone calls a week from our alumni and are delighted to keep this bond. Cherry Gulch plans to host an alumni reunion this summer.

Cherry Gulch is a ranch-style therapeutic boarding school designed specifically for 10-14 year old boys. Cherry Gulch's supportive, encouraging and respect-based approach is designed to build students up—rather than tear them down. Cherry Gulch is passionate about providing early intervention and prevention to help boys reach their full potential and become well-rounded, pro-social young men. We are dedicated to providing outstanding therapeutic and academic services to students and their families. This is accomplished in the context of a safe environment working toward "Building Brighter Tomorrows for the Boys of Today."





SNH:

has joined the team as the Head of the Art Department at Auldern. Lee most recently taught at the Cary Academy in NC, was head of the department at the Saint Andrew's School in DE and was a faculty instructor at Delaware State University. He has received awards from Rehoboth Art League, Elizabeth N. Bingham Award for Excellence in Pottery, the Kodak Photo Educators Scholarship and awards from the Santa Fe Workshops. Contact Jane Samuel for more information.

Little Keswick SEVIS Approved: (June 1, 2009) Little Keswick School, Keswick, VA, 435-295-0457, announced that the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has reviewed and approved their petition for certification and enrollment in the Student and Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which allows international students to enroll. For more information contact the school.

Clarke Joins Fulshear: (June 3, 2009) InnerChange is excited to announce that Dr. Norma Clarke has joined the Fulshear Ranch Academy team as their consulting Psychiatrist. Most recently, Dr. Clarke served as Medical Director of the Adolescent Treatment Program of the Menninger Clinic in Houston, TX. Dr. Clarke has expertise in diagnosing and treating bipolar disorders, personality disorders, PTSD, mood and psychotic disorders. For more information on Fulshear Ranch Academy located in Needville, TX, contact Ashley Auchterlonie, Director of Marketing, at 214-272-6880.

Arizmendi at Trails Carolina: (June 3, 2009) Jose Arizmendi, Jr. M Ed, LPC is now working at Trails Carolina, Lake Toxaway, NC, as a therapist. Previously, Jose was at Lone Star Expeditions. His new contact information is: 828-808-3642 (cell) or 828-885-5920 (office).

Newport Academy Opens New Program: (June 3, 2009) Newport Academy, Newport, CA, 877-628-3367, has opened in Orange County, CA, and offers a gender-specific, comprehensive residential treatment program for adolescent girls suffering from substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. It is led by addiction treatment icon, Dr. David Smith, past President of the American Society of Addiction Medicine and Past Medical Director of the CA State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. For additional information, contact Scott Sowle, Executive Director.

Statement by Alpine on Arrest: (June 4, 2009) Janet Mulitalo, Program Director at Alpine Academy, 800-244-1113, has issued a statement regarding the recent criminal investigation of a former employee and one of their students. To view this in its entirety, visit StrugglingTeens.com.

Knight Joins Clearview: (June 4, 2009) Troy Knight has joined Clearview Horizon, Heron, MT, as the Executive Director. Troy holds a Master's degree in Health Care Administration and has been in the behavioral health care industry for over 15 years, directing residential hospitals in 1999, and working with adolescents and young adults in therapeutic schools and wilderness treatment programs. For more information or to contact Troy, call 208-610-6868, or Mary Thielbahr, Director of Clearview, at 208-263-5894.

Clearview Offers Summer Program: (June 4, 2009) On June 1, 2009, Clearview Horizon, Heron, MT, started accepting applications for their summer program, an intense three month intervention to help students and families with the struggles, anxiety, and frustration surrounding today's lives. For more information on this program, contact Troy Knight, Executive Director, at 406-847-5850.

Cherry Gulch Wins at Chess: (June 4, 2009) Andy Sapp, PhD, Founder and CEO of Cherry Gulch, Emmett, ID, 208-365-3437,