

VISIT REPORTS...

SUNRISE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER

Hurricane, Utah

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Visit by: Lon Woodbury, MA, CEP, April 2010

Sunrise Residential Treatment Center is a program for girls ages 13-17. Founded about six years ago, it has earned a good reputation for working with hard to work with girls.

We were warmly welcomed by several staff including Executive Director Dave Prior, Clinical Director Jack Hinman and Recreation Therapist Cory Hickman. They currently have 31 girls, almost at their maximum of 32. The average stay is 7 to 9 months, with a general description of their typical student being those who are emotionally deregulated.

They have had success with Borderline students, those with serious relationship/attachment problems and Asperger's. At the heart of their therapy is Dialectical-Behavioral Therapy (DBT) which has become quite popular in recent years for its success with difficult students with Borderline and Attachment diagnoses. Jack Hinman promised me an essay or two for my newsletter describing some of the history of the development of DBT, and more fascinating, the Zen Buddhist influences onto it.

As they explained, academics are integrated in with the therapeutic plans for individual students. Therapeutically, each student has a chance to practice her therapeutic insights in another type of activity (the classroom), while the staff can monitor how well she is progressing therapeutically by seeing how she handles the classroom. Classes are no more than eight students (usually less) and each student is working at her own level of achievement in that subject. The teachers have learned how to balance teaching a class as a group while maintaining each student at her own level of achievement. Each girl's curriculum is based on that of her home state so a transition to her school back home is smooth. Sunrise thus balances an individualized approach with a normal classroom experience. They are accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges as well as by the Utah State Board of Education.

Family work is emphasized, with parents invited to visit frequently, along with quarterly parent weekends. With the observation that the student will not work any harder than the parents at change, parents are given readings and a parallel program of their own to facilitate repairing family ruptures.

The decor in the main building is pleasant and upstairs where the girls' bedrooms are, are displayed art works by students produced in an art class. Some of the quality of the work was impressive. The girls I met were friendly, open to talking about themselves and the program, and seemed relaxed with a sense of safety. They met us with good eye contact, firm handshakes and a smile. The rooms were neat and comfortable.

Our tour guides were cute, in that they obviously were enjoying a break from the routine as well as a sense of responsibility by being selected as tour guides. It also was obvious from their manner and what they told us, that they had come a long ways from the negative self that had moved into Sunrise, but still had a ways to go. I sensed that these girls were some of the hard to work with ones, and despite obvious

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progress, they still needed to do a lot of work, though probably in some step-down or transition program.

They call themselves a community based program, based on how much interaction the girls have in the surrounding community. Volunteering is encouraged, and a few have jobs. All this is monitored by staff and the design is to help the girls get out of a focus on themselves and heal, by learning to focus on others. They have a chance to attend local sports events and other activities that give them a chance to interact in the community. When a student has earned level four or five, they are allowed to go into town on errands by themselves so long as they let staff know where they are, and of course don't abuse the privilege.

SUMMIT LODGE RECOVERY CENTER

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Visit by Lon Woodbury, MA, CEP, February 2010

The drive to Summit Lodge was just a few minutes from downtown Fairview, UT, up against the mountains surrounding the valley. I was informed that just continuing up the mountainside road beyond the Center would bring me to all kinds of fishing streams and fantastic views, where many experiential outings take place.

Summit Lodge is a co-ed Recovery Center for young adults ages 18 and older. Founded in 2007, I have been hearing a lot of good things about them and was looking forward to seeing it for myself.

Not only was the program located in a very rural part of Utah, but the spacious main Lodge was away from the community and gave quite an isolated feeling. Something away from all the temptations of modern society is exactly what the residents need and is what the location provides.

Approaching the main building, it looks like an modern upscale home. The interior gave even more of a sense of a home, with a living room with comfortable chairs and sofas, tastefully decorated, and a kitchen table adequate for a large family. With no more than 16 residents, every effort is made to make the residents feel that while they are there they are part of a family. The grounds were covered with snow at the time, but it had been landscaped with trees, bushes, pathways and little coves to facilitate meditating and outdoor conversations when the weather is suitable. They have six acres, which gives plenty of room for outside activities close to the home. A quick trip up the mountainside offers easy access to adventure and experiential activities like fishing, hiking, camping etc., which are equal parts recreation and therapy.

In my quick tour of the building I found all the rooms were designed for comfort and restfulness. The bedrooms were more utilitarian than the rest of the house but clean and neat. Part of the program is to get the residents interacting with the other residents and the staff. They don't want the residents to have much of an opportunity to hide and avoid others so basic bedrooms are part of the plan and the residents are discouraged from spending more time there than absolutely necessary. The staff take great pains in

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Past operations were for troubled youth. This is an excellent opportunity for the right user to have a full service facility in the middle of NW Montana.

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