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AT THE CROSSROADS

Washington, Utah
Michael Alger - Executive Director
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Visit By: Lon Woodbury, MA, CEP, April 2010

We started by meeting Michael Alger, Executive Director of At The Crossroads in the offices they maintain in an office complex a ways away from the boys housing, along with Clinical Director Dr. Norman Thibault and Program Director Brian Virgin.

At The Crossroads is a community based independent living program for young men ages 18 to 25. With up to 16 young men in residence. The program's main emphasis is to teach them whatever life skills they lack. Those skills might be a work ethic, how to get up in the morning, how to handle money, dating, handling checkbooks, time management, impulse control or whatever might be interfering with successful living. This is not a program in the sense that the residents have to live in a tight structure created for them. The housing is provided, and the staff function is to support the young men and help them make better and more responsible decisions. It looked to me like staff served basically as mentors. However there are a few basic requirements established to create learning situations.

First, every student must find a job. If they lose that job, that is treated as an opportunity for learning, and they have to find another one. They are responsible for earning the money for personal items such as food, transportation, movies, dating, etc. Without their own income, they are in a crisis, just as would any independent adult, and the staff are there to help them through it, not rescue them.

Each young man is also required to have a "Gym membership" to help them focus on physical health. In addition, if they have not graduated from High School, doing something to rectify that lack also is required.

Another way to explain what the program does is they teach executive functioning. Each student is helped to create realistic goals for themselves, and the program's job is to hold them accountable for the goals they had expressed.

All this is supplemented by each student participating in at least one individual therapy session a week and at least two groups a week.

We had a chance to meet some of the students, and they appeared like typical young men and all seemed to have a positive attitude. All approached us to introduce themselves, with good eye contact, firm handshakes and friendly conversation. Each student lives in apartments in a fourplex owned by the program which were comfortable and adequate, with some being better taken care of than others. However, all the apartments were clean and picked up for the most part, which was fairly impressive considering these were young men who at that age have a reputation for being rather slovenly.

The young men are taught to think in terms of where they want to be in their lives five or ten years in the future. In most issues, a perspective of thinking about their future is introduced and they are taught to balance the future

consequences of whatever it is they are thinking of doing at the moment.

Michael explained they are currently remodeling a house which will be used by young men who need a transition from their program before going out in the world totally on their own, and they are also considering the possibility of providing a similar program for young women in the not too distant future.

KOLOB CANYON RTC

New Harmony, Utah

Kent Tasso – Director/ Personal Leadership Instructor

801-755-8802

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www.kolobcanyonrtc.com

Visit by: Lon Woodbury, MA,

Kolob Canyon RTC is a program for girls, with a range of ages 14-17 and up to 12 girls. They are a CERTS program (Certified Educational, Recreational, Therapeutic Schools and Programs), under the same ownership as Moonridge Academy, La Europa Academy and Mountain Springs Preparatory Academy.

This program is way out in the country, and presents as a horse farm on 30 acres overlooking the entrance to the beautiful Kolob Canyon a few miles in the distance, thus the source of the program's name. Kolob Canyon RTC and Moonridge are supplementary programs in many ways. The two programs share administrators, and share teachers, clinicians and facilities. Kolob Canyon has numerous full sized horses with a full equine therapy and a horsemanship and equine therapy program that the Moonridge girls also use once a week.

While we were there the girls showed us around the grounds, much of which consisted of introducing us to the horses. Girls can bring their own horses to the program, assuming proper safety and appropriateness, of course. The girls were very attached to their horses and are very attuned to each of their horse's needs, which is an important part of the program.

Like the other CERTS programs, Kolob Canyon RTC is fully accredited by the standard accrediting agency for this part of the country, both NAAS and the State of Utah. Classes are taught in the academic building, which also houses the counselors' offices, and in the drama barn, where the girls' creative side can shine.

The dorms are in the main ranch house and like the other CERTS programs, were clean, bright and comfortable. The place was a buzz of activity with the girls cleaning up after working in the stables and preparing dinner.

Not only were dorms and buildings clean, comfortable and airy, but were well maintained. Even the horse barn was a model of cleanliness and organization, much better than most horse barns I have seen. This, regarding the horse barn, was a testament to the energy the girls put into their horses.

The scenery and activities would be very attractive to anybody having even the slightest interest in horses and nature, and this by itself would be a great and rewarding attraction to a girl struggling with personal issues.

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