

VISIT REPORTS...

FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOOL

Hancock, NY

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Visit Report by Judith E. Bessette, Ed D,

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Do you know how to get to Carnegie Hall? It's an old joke...and the standard answer is practice, practice, practice...but here's another...join the chorus at the Family Foundation School!

It's true — this past December, 21 voices from the Family School were invited to perform with students from 10 other schools at this famous venue — the dream of many young musicians...but one that is seldom realized at the high school level.

Just before the holidays last December, I visited the school and had an opportunity to observe the mid-year graduation of about 20 students and learn about the chorus trip. It was an amazing experience and I refreshed my memory about the

school.

The FFS is a college prep boarding school that has been working with at risk teens for more than 25 years. The school incorporates the 12-step approach to recovery and its spiritual principles for all its students. While in many ways, FFS looks and feels like a traditional high school, the 12-step emphasis and the group and individual counseling that leans heavily on cognitive restructuring, allow FFS to work with students with a variety of difficulties including ADHD, ODD, mood disorders, addictive behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse, computer and internet use, sexual promiscuity, cutting and disordered eating.

The wide-ranging college-prep curriculum includes calculus, earth science, biology, chemistry, and physics, four years of Spanish, and standard four-year sequences in history and English as well as several college-credit classes. Some of the extra-curricular activities have an arts emphasis — like chorus, drama, and woodworking. Other offerings include debate, journalism and a wide variety of inter-scholastic sports. Academic support is available as needed and, recently, the school added a Special Ed teacher to the faculty.

While the Family Foundation School sets individualized emotional growth goals for each student, their character education goals for all students are the same: to become responsible for themselves and considerate of others, to grow in self-respect and self-esteem, to mend relationships, develop a spiritual life and begin to discover and use their

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Photo by Skyler Jepson

THE GATE OF HISTORY SWINGS ON SMALL HINGES, AND SO DO PEOPLE'S LIVES.

With the click of a mouse your son may be stepping into a trap carefully laid to prey upon his own developing body. More than 11 million teens view pornography on line (Washington Post 2004). *Early intervention can help your boy break free.*

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FAMILY SCHOOL

talents. Since its inception, the school has embodied “The 4 Absolutes - Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love.” The 12 Steps of AA are actually an expansion of the Four Absolutes of the Oxford Group, an organization that started in the early 1900s.

The school is divided into four houses of about thirty students each. Everyone from the president of the school to the maintenance staff is assigned to a house. Each house has two family leaders who serve as “mother and father” for the house.

One of the hallmarks of FFS is a unique form of group counseling called Table Topics...structured interactions that take place in each house at lunch and dinner every day. Students are able to discuss both good things are happening as well as issues they are dealing with in a format that offers help and guidance from staff as well as the other students in the house.

But enough about the facts at FFS...let’s talk a bit about heart. My tour guides included a student I placed at the Family School about 18 months before my visit. While at the school, she literally discovered her voice...and made the trip to NYC. She was ebullient about the trip...about the performance at Carnegie Hall...about her parents being able to see her perform...and now, she was about to graduate.

There was a beautiful Baccalaureate ceremony on Friday night. Graduation was Saturday morning. Each of the graduates had a few minutes to tell a bit about themselves — both why they wound up at FFS and about how they had changed. There was not a dry eye in the room as the handsome captain of the boy’s basketball team talked about moving from pain and despair to finding hope and love. Beautiful young women said things like I didn’t know who I was before I came here...and I didn’t care. Several other students talked about learning who they could be from constant, shared insight from both staff and peers.

Graduation was a moving experience...made even better by my student’s parents thanking me for helping them find a place that gave them their daughter back.

If you are looking for a therapeutic school with a traditional feel and with a wide variety of classes as well as extra-curricular activities, and a place that values the spiritual side of its students, consider the Family Foundation School!

Judith Bessette, Ed D, has a private consulting firm, Compass Consulting, LLC, which she founded in 2003. Her primary focus is working with families with teens and young adults with emotional, behavioral and/or learning issues. Judith can be reached at: 414-581-9146 or by email at: drjudib@me.com or through her website at: www.compassconsultingwi.com.

Wisdom is that exercise of the reason into which the heart enters.

~ Albert Pike

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NEW PERSPECTIVES...

[New Perspectives schools and programs are those new to Woodbury Reports, Inc., and are presented to expand your knowledge, with the disclaimer that we know little more about them at this time than what appears here. Inclusion in Places for Struggling Teens™, of course, does not imply any endorsement by Woodbury Reports, Inc. -Lon]

RAYMOND ESTEFANIA LMHC, CAP

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Raymond Estefania offers therapy for adolescents, adults and families, specializing in the treatment, intervention and placement of those struggling with substance abuse and chemical addictions. Placements include residential treatment, wilderness programs and therapeutic boarding schools. Other services and treatments Raymond specializes in include: conflict resolution, stress management, parenting support and family counseling, life coaching and crisis and case management. In addition, Raymond Estefania works with individuals with depression, ADHD, Oppositional Defiance disorder and other diagnosed disorders.

With over 15 years of experience, Raymond Estefania, who received his graduate degree from Nova Southeastern University, is a licensed Mental Health Counselor and a certified Addiction Professional in the state of Florida. His other accolades include: Internationally Certified Alcohol and Drug counselor, is qualified as an expert in substance abuse by the Miami-Dade County Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court; is a provider for Professionals Resource Network and a provider for Intervention Project for Nurses. Raymond is a member of the American Counseling Association, IECA, NATSAP, the City of South Miami's Drug Free Coalition and a board member for Informed Families, the Florida Family Partnership.

Before starting his own practice, Raymond Estefania was the Director of two different chemical dependency programs in Florida, one of which was South Miami Hospital's Adolescent Program, where he had worked for over 10 years.

[This information came from Raymond Estefania's website.]

CINNAMON HILLS YOUTH CRISIS CENTER

St. George, Utah
Sherry Shake, Admissions
435-674-0984
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