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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In It For the Money?

by Lon Woodbury



No matter how ethical a good or service of quality may be, there will always be some people whose agenda is something less than righteous; enter the human condition.

This is also true of the network of private parent choice residential schools and programs for struggling teens. Sometimes these are downright scams, but usually the reduced quality comes from owners who have different priorities than are usually accepted by professionals working in the field. The commonality of these "less effective" programs frequently sets money making as too high of a priority.

Mike Watson has worked with adolescent treatment programs for 39 years and has learned a lot about what it takes to run a good quality program, as well as seeing what causes a program to be less effective, ineffective or even dangerous. He recently presented several suggestions for parents interested in checking out residential programs for possible enrollment for their child.

On each of these suggestions, a weak answer should be a red flag that the program might not live up to its potential.

The first suggestion he had was to study the staff for their credentials and longevity. While specific academic credentials are important, it is the experience they have that is the most important. He correctly asserted that all staff that has anything to do with the children (whether directly or indirectly) are important. A good staff person is able to make a good connection with the children, and many people with very little education do great at that. He has also seen psychiatrists, with all the academic credentials in the world, unable to make a decent connection with a child.

Watson wasn't disparaging of therapists, but recognized that effective staff is based on more than just credentials. You have to look at the experience behind the credentials.

To run a successful program there needs to be a good balance between financial staff and program staff. When people who are strongest in financial and administrative matters try to control the day-to-day activities of a school or program, all too often the program is damaged. At the same time, when program people are the ones that are making basic financial decisions, they might obligate the school or program far beyond what the program is able to afford, which is also very damaging.

One thing that is often overlooked by parents is to ask who financially owns the business. When the program owner is primarily an investor, he or she might overstep their knowledge resulting in a negative impact on the school or program. If possible, parents should find out if the person speaking for the school is actually the person who owns the business. Knowing who the real owner is could avoid some unpleasant surprises in the future.

We discussed the importance of good marketing, however with that comes the reliance on a school's website. Web pages are usually primarily used as sales tools. The most telling part of the site, however, is the staff page, indicating the names, credentials and experience of the key staff. If a school or program's web site does not indicate who the key staff are and their backgrounds, it is what I call an anonymous site, and a parent should be very wary of working with them.

All too often, schools or programs assert they can work with all kinds of problem kids. This network of schools and programs is very much niche oriented and effective programs have a very clear and

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Seen N Heard...

New Admissions Counselor at Family Foundation School: Jeff Brain, MA, CTS, CEP, Dean of Admissions at The Family Foundation School, announced the addition of Marian Curtis, M.Ed., to the admissions staff. Ms. Curtis has experience as a teacher and therapist and will do admissions outreach for the school. She is the mother of three boys, two of whom had ADD/ADHD. 845-887-5213

Greenbrier Recognizes Clinical Director: The administrators of Greenbrier Academy for girls located in Pence Springs, WV, wish to recognize and congratulate Ron Schwenkler on all of his hard work in pursuing training in Brainspotting. 877-788-8422

Back 2 Basics Residents Learn Spanish/Earn Certificates: The Back 2 Basics model is both therapeutic and experiential, and emphasizes established modes of recovery. One way of doing this is through real life experiences. Recently, several residents took a trip to Mexico for full Spanish Immersion program while others remained state-side and earned their Wilderness First Responder Certification. 877-339-4222

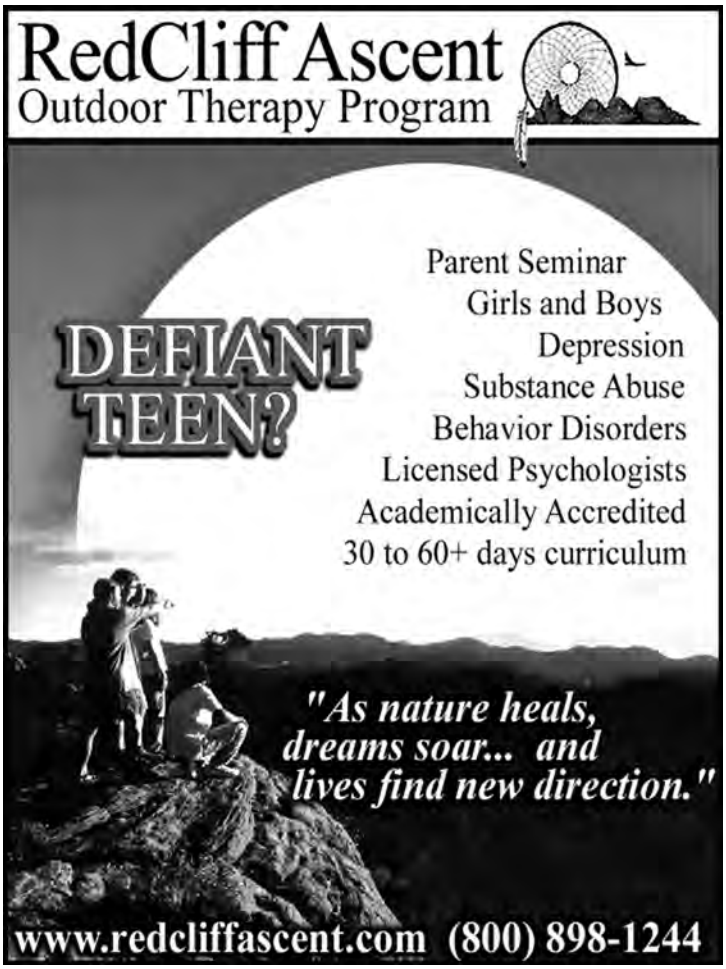
Parent Choices Hosts Blueprint Education: The Future of Online Education was the title on Lon's LA Talk Radio show, Parent Choices For Struggling Teens, September 26, 2011. According to Doug Covey, CEO of Blueprint Education, "There are six different types of models evolving in which online education is blended with face-to-face education to better serve the individual needs of the students. To listen to the podcast free, subscribe via itunes or visit www.latalkradio.com/Lon.php for the archive. 800-426-4952

Outback Therapeutic Expeditions Announces Powell As Executive Director: Outback Therapeutic Expeditions announced that Andrew Powell was promoted to Executive Director following the appointment of Rick Meeves to Director of Clinical Services for Adolescents at Outback's parent company, CRC Health Group. 949-589-1765

Benchmark Transitions Celebrates 18-Years: Benchmark Transitions is proud to announce its 18-year anniversary. Founded in September 1993 by Jayne S. Longnecker-Harper, Benchmark has remained a pioneer in the industry of emotional growth schools and treatment programs for troubled young adults and is now one of the longest running programs of its milieu. 800-474-4848

Pacific Child Welcomes Dorenfeld As CEO: Pacific Child & Family Associates, LLC a provider of Applied Behavior Analysis ("ABA") therapy and ancillary services announced the appointment of Mark Dorenfeld as Chief Executive Officer. Mark brings 14 years of behavioral healthcare experience in various roles with the Aspen Education Group out of Cerritos, CA. 818-241-6780

SUWS Reintroduces Therapeutic Programming For Young Adults: SUWS, the nation's longest continually operating therapeutic wilderness program for struggling youth, is going "back to the future" with a new program that harkens





at a residential treatment center. Most recently Mary served as the Admission Director and Assistant Head of School at Spring Ridge Academy, where she was employed for 12 years. 928-308-2672

Levine Joins Pacific Quest: Pacific Quest Wilderness Therapy Program announced that Erin Levine recently joined its team as Clinical Admissions Director. Erin comes to Pacific Quest with an extensive clinical background and many years of experience in admissions and outreach with therapeutic programs. Erin is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist with more than 21 years of experience treating individuals and families who are struggling to overcome behavior, relationship, mental health and addiction issues. 949-940-6068

Rosecrance Merges With Janet Wattles Center: Rosecrance Inc. has acquired Janet Wattles Center, a community mental health services agency, in a formal merger. The innovative merger makes Rosecrance the state's most comprehensive network of behavioral health services, delivering treatment for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. 815-387-5605

Tomes At Glen Willow Academy: Bryan Tomes recently accepted the position as Academic Director of Glen Willow Academy in Weaverville, NC. Bryan has been designing and implementing educational environments for this specific population of young girls for over 7 years. He really understands the unique challenge they present. 828-808-8356

Family Foundation School Students Perform Fall Musical: "She Loves Me," a Broadway musical about two Budapest shop employees who are unaware that each is the other's secret pen pal, was this fall's stage production at The Family Foundation School. The Family School Players, including more than two dozen student actors, singers, dancers, stage technicians and crew members, participated in the show. Tom Kovaleski was director and choreographer with musical direction by Paul Geer. A free performance for the public was presented on September 23, and a special Family Day showing for parents on September 24. 845-887-5213

Improved Academic Program At Greenbrier Academy: Greenbrier Academy for Girls has made several changes to their Academic Program to bolster the high school education program. Kim Morgam, Academic Director, announced they have worked hard to ensure the teachers are all qualified and certified allowing for dual enrollment college courses and three-prong academic preparation plan with a physical fitness component called SPARK. SPARK is an exploration of the connection between exercise and the brain's performance, linking even moderate exercise and supercharged mental circuits to beat stress, sharpen thinking, enhance memory and improve academic performance. Greenbrier also recently hired several new teachers and has contracted with New River Community College to allow for the dual enrollment opportunities. 877-788-8422

Personalized Help For Parents In Crisis

Woodbury Reports Educational Consultations help parents think through the out-of-control behaviors their child is exhibiting and suggest appropriate placement options. All of our consultants have raised teenagers and helped hundreds of parents professionally. We believe parents should be in charge of decisions regarding their children so we research options to make educated suggestions rather than telling our clients what to do.


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