I sat down with two boys – one there for nearly a year and close to graduating – the other having been at Island View for only a couple of months. Talking with students is always something I enjoy. They explained that every student is part of a team…creating a more intimate group for every student within the larger environment. There are two teams of boys and two of girls. Team members learn problem-solving skills, develop accountability and serve as mentors to one another. While Island View is co-ed, the teams are single sex and there are limited and highly supervised interactions between boys and girls.

The boys also talked about having individual therapy and family therapy weekly (more often if necessary) and about having group sessions with their team as well as specialty groups for substance abuse and other issues like adoption. Both told me that they had learned a great deal about themselves through therapy. One of them, who had come to Island View from a psych hospital, had extremely complimentary things to say about his interactions with the psychiatrist assigned to his team.

Speaking of learning, the boys told me they liked the small class sizes (about ten students on average) and the range of classes offered in the fully accredited school. The school offers a rigorous college-prep curriculum. Both of these boys have every intention of going on to college once they graduate. I was under the impression that many of the other students have similar intentions.

We ended our conversation with a discussion on the recreational offerings at Island View. Students participate in physical education every day. There is a weight room and a newly refurbished rock wall in the gym. Outside was an obstacle course. Many students participate in local 5K runs and half-marathons. In addition, off-campus trips are scheduled regularly to hike, camp, swim, ski and snowboard. The academic program mixes the beauty and wonder of Utah with recreation through an elective, Outdoor Classroom. Recently, a group of girls camped in Flaming Gorge, UT and learned about dinosaurs, astronomy, photography and biology.

My visit to campus ended with a walking tour through a pleasant and cheerful environment in the dorm areas, the school, the group rooms and the cafeteria.

I left feeling that the Island View Team is as strong as ever and remains an excellent choice for both troubled and more clinically complex teens. It is appropriate for kids who are depressed, bi-polar, abusing substances, suicidal, emotionally dysregulated, dealing with trauma, self-harming and/or dealing with other destructive behaviors, psychiatric disorders and other emotional issues. Call Laura Burt, Director of Admissions, to set up a visit and see just how solid this program is firsthand.

Extended Insights...

Lingering Perceptions About A Not-So-New Model

By Brian Church

While rapidly diminishing, industry perception (sometimes supported by our competition) is that Aspiro programs, including Aspiro, Kairos, and Vantage Point, are soft and "gimmicky," a handful of consultants have indicated that some of the FUD (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt) thrown out by admission folks is that high adventure activities "distract from the important personal issues at-hand." These comments are coming from folks who have not studied the research, those who have never visited our programs, and/or are simply misinformed.

The fact is that students in Aspiro Group programs experience all the benefits of wilderness living - they are always in the outdoors. When it snows on Second Nature kids, it snows on Aspiro Group kids. When it rains on Outback kids, it rains on Aspiro Group kids. When the sun is beating down on Open Sky kids, it is the same for Aspiro Group participants. The difference is that when kids aren't simply hiking, often in large circles, our students are engaged in clinically rich activities where serious growth occurs. Not only do our students have the benefit of the challenges of weather and hiking, they are also engaged in demanding high-adventure activities that consistently give us valuable information about how students handle novel environments and challenges. We believe these novel environments give us deeper information and a more accurate assessment about how the student may transfer into a new environment after wilderness.

For some who may not be as familiar with our programs, the perception might be that we simply do "recreational activities." The truth of the matter is that our activities are implemented with serious clinical outcomes in mind. Wilderness guides, who are experts in teaching and mentoring through powerful high-adventure activities, drive the change process in astonishing ways. A wealth of clinically rich information is communicated to therapists, who can process and plan for upcoming itineraries and individual and group counseling sessions.

One of the most glaring underlying characteristics in most of our clients is an unhealthy level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the basic internal belief that one can overcome any challenge with sufficient effort and drive. Those who lack a healthy level of self-efficacy believe they are incapable of finding success in specific areas of their life, and often in EVERY area.

One of the primary goals of Aspiro Group programs, are to significantly change the perception of one's personal abilities. We want students to understand just how capable they are, and

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to believe they can accomplish difficult tasks, overcome severe or even tragic life events. These challenges may include finding success in an algebra class, successfully graduating from a program or school, being able to communicate with a parent, or overcoming sadness as a result of grief and loss.

We know of no better way than to have students participate in activities that challenge one as they have never been challenged before. Participants in Aspiro Group programs will climb and summit high mountain peaks, or hike to and access a massive rappel -pushing the limits of one's comfort zone, and so on. These climactic activities are referred to as Overwhelming Mastery Experiences (OME).

These targeted, specific activities are life-changing events that require a great deal of time, training, effort, and the overcoming of fears and doubts. OME's are critical to changing one's belief system about one's abilities to succeed in specific environments. As students find success in these challenging activities over and over and over, and with the help of skilled therapists and field staff, self-efficacy increases. Students begin to believe in themselves. Thoughts within a student's psyche change from "I can't," to "if I can summit a 12,000 foot mountain peak, I can plan and work hard… I am capable of passing my geometry class."

Without the influence of a clinically sophisticated team processing activities, the connections back home most likely, would not take place. Aspiro Group programs have committed, savvy therapists who are as good as it gets in our industry. Our field teams are second to none in facilitating safe, exciting, clinically rich itineraries that provide students with the best possible opportunity for long-term change. You simply cannot find a better, more committed group of people with a sincere desire to help facilitate change and improvement in students and families. "My experience of Aspiro vs. other programs is that the field leaders are very compassionate, and relationship based. The guides deeply care about the students," said Clinical Wilderness Therapist, David Hillstead, PhD, "I think the combination of deep care and connection by the guides, and discerning, experienced therapists are the perfect combination. Too much of one over the other can get a program out of balance. I guess it's the old parenting themes of relationship and boundaries. The guides have great relationships."

We believe strongly in our ability to reach kids and young adults. We believe in our powerful, unique model. Aspiro Group offers a fresh, healthy alternative to virtually all other programs in the country. Our success with students and their families have been consistent and strong. Our cutting-edge family systems approach is second to none. Our family workshops, mid-program, are interactive and extremely effective. Our workshops consistently draw rave reviews from parents. Aspiro Group Programs have grown into one of the premiere organizations in the country. One might say that our company "self-efficacy" is high!

We sincerely thank our supporters. For those who have not worked with us recently, amazing things have taken shape at Aspiro! We invite you to experience our programs again.

About the Author: *Brian Church is the Vice President and Founding Partner of the Aspiro Programs, headquartered in South Jordan, UT. To contact Brian, call 801-979-6301 or email bchurch@aspiroadventure.com. For more information on the Aspiro Programs, visit www.aspiroprograms.com.*

What Happens at Graduation?

By DB Palmer

To any and all students who are applying to Alaska Pacific University and are looking into the APU Student Leadership Council:

You are making a great choice by choosing APU. In my own professional journey, I began as a wilderness instructor back in 2000, moved into senior staff positions across the western states and I've also directed programs, domestic and abroad. My doctoral dissertation is on Parental Factors within Wilderness Therapy, and I regularly present at the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) conferences on Wilderness Therapy.

In my current position as Director of Counseling & Wellness Center at Alaska Pacific University, I've developed a Wilderness Therapy Retreat Series here at our university and have enlisted staff and students who want to make it clear that APU is a great place for students who are transitioning from wilderness programs and therapeutic boarding schools. I am available to all students for traditional counseling services, at no cost and my office specializes in Active Sessions. In fact, I am featured in the (December 2011) Counseling Today magazine of the American Counseling Association for my work in this field.

Students coming to APU have a wide range of academic opportunities, the best retention of all Alaskan schools, the lowest teacher to student ratio, intentional course design, simple access to academic accommodations for learning disabilities, alcohol-free dorms, a robust Outdoor Program and Wellness Center, and faculty who you'll see rafting and climbing as much as you see them in class!

In my own experience at Alaska Pacific University, I find it is an amazing place. People come to APU for adventure, whether that's the "outside" kind, engaging and discovering Alaska's vibrant Native cultures, tackling environmental issues and research through our Environmental Science/Marine Biology or Environmental Studies departments, engaging young learners through education, studying philosophy or creative writing within Liberal Studies, developing non-profit or corporate business ventures, researching Alaska's human service and psychological needs, or learning to lead epic adventure treks in our Outdoor Studies department. One thing is clear to me. APU students have come to the right place!

My own journey brought me from adventure leadership,

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