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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