stuffed animals, pictures, and personal effects. The rooms were very bright and colorful as well, bringing a cheerful feeling. Also in each dorm is a staff station that is manned at all times even while the girls are away at school. Staff members are able to organize each student's Residential program and be available to meet each of their individual needs promptly.



As we walked through the Residential Campus, I noticed there were stations for rewards for the girls and there were also areas where girls could request a time out. Time out is not typically used as a punishment; however girls learn quickly that it can be a great tool for their own self-regulation. And of course, before we left the Residential Campus, we visited the bunny houses that New Leaf Academy is known for. Each girl receives a bunny that she then learns all about and enters into the county fair each year. Recently the girls planned, designed and painted the bunny houses. They did a great job!

We left the Residential Campus and drove to the Academic Campus, less than a mile down the road. The girls attend school in the Angeline Young Historical School House. This small school is the perfect size for the girls at New Leaf Academy. At the school, girls were playing in the yard as lunch was being prepared. We met with Elaine Smith, MA, the Academic Director who explained the academic program at New Leaf. One of the most impressive aspects with New Leaf is their ability to get young girls to self-regulate their studies and their emotions. It's a whole child program that focuses on promoting independence and self-direction. The school has four main classrooms and quite an impressive library that has become a motivator in itself with positive peer pressure. Girls at New Leaf become avid and excited readers as they learn fairly quickly that reading is a "cool thing to do."

When a student begins her journey at New Leaf Academy, she is assessed in reading, writing and math skills to place her in a grouping of peers who share skill development. Each girl receives an Individualized Academic Plan (IAP) tailored specifically to her needs, based on her academic history, strengths and weaknesses, personal learning style, etc. Goals are set and then shared with each girl so she can prepare her educational program at New Leaf and actively participate in her next placement. This component was foreign to me in the younger programs.

We talked with one girl who had recently went on a school visit with her parents to determine which school she would attend after New Leaf. She had made a great decision on the school she chose, and was able to give direct pros and cons about the choices and reasons she chose the program she did. It was well thought out and she was confident she'd made the right decision.

I was completely impressed with the manner in which all the girls came up and talked with us that day. They walked up unprovoked, introduced themselves and then just started talking with us. They were curious about who we were and genuinely friendly with us. It was clear they "owned" this school and were completely at home in their environment.

New Leaf Academy appropriately fills a much needed niche in our world. The program is tailored to the developmental, social, emotional and academic needs of their girls. I recommend that if a girl seems appropriate for this program, go visit them and learn how they work. We left feeling a real sense that these girls were in a nurturing place that would help them learn to self-regulate every aspect of their lives and become active mentors for society as they grow up.

Kristie Campbell is the youngest daughter of Lon and Denise Woodbury. She has worked for Woodbury Reports, Inc. as an intern and a consultant since 1999, working her way up to Assistant Director of the company. Kristie graduated from Explorations Wilderness in 1993 and Mission Mountain School in 1994. She has written articles for the Woodbury Reports Newsletter based on her experiences, has visited numerous schools and programs, attended and presented at IECA and NATSAP Conferences and is the editor of the Parent Empowerment Handbook, Woodbury Reports Newsletter, and Strugglingteens.com. Kristie graduated with a BS in Psychology in 2011. Member: APA, IECA, Affiliate Member NATSAP. 208-267-5550, kristie@woodbury.com.

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.]

Vista Vocational and Life Skills Center

Westbrook, Connecticut
Helen K. Bosch, Executive Director
860-399-8080
admissions@vistavocational.org
www.vistavocational.org

Vista Vocational and Life Skills Center is an educational program which assists young adults 18 and over who have a neurological disability. Students accepted into the program must be motivated to work and have the potential to live independently. They must commit to the program and have the ability for basic self-care. The program can last anywhere from a few months to long term assistance.

Helen Bosch, M.S. is the Executive Director of Vista Vocational and Life Skills Center. The program is accredited by the National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES).

Vista encompasses 5 communities on the shoreline of Connecticut. The average Vista student has completed high school but due to neurological disability of some kind needs extra help to prepare for the "real world." The program uses a four level system to identify the amount of support each client needs in their daily life. The clients learn vocational and life skills to assist them in job market as well as in their personal lives. The program employs job coaches to assist the clients in locating and maintaining employment in the community. Other skills taught include money-management, self-care, food-management, household skills, and travel.

The program includes options for residential or outreach programs. Vista offers club and recreational activities to its clients including photography, sailing, tennis, crafting, bowling, painting, softball, basketball, and many more.

[This information came from the Vista Vocational website.]