

meals accordingly. Depending on the program phase for each patient, their food is either plated for them, or they are on “family style” or the “intuitive eating” phase of the dietary program. For those who may struggle to eat the necessary calories, they have the option to receive a liquid supplement called “boost,” to give them life sustaining nutrients.

Mealtimes can sometimes be difficult for patients at the Center, a very different atmosphere from other programs I’ve visited. We witnessed a couple of girls in the cafeteria crying as they struggled to eat their snack.

After the cafeteria, we walked over to the inpatient wing. Rooms looked a little more typical of a residential treatment center and again I forgot I was in a hospital. That is until we walked through the acute ward. Here the girls are very sick. They are pale and weak with thinned out hair. Their eyes are sunken and sad. A couple had to use walkers because they were too weak to support themselves, though they had recently graduated from wheel chair to walker, indicating improvement. In this area, girls may have feeding tubes if necessary. Even with the condition of the girls in this ward, it was clear to us that the girls were comfortable with the staff as they interacted and even joked with them.

We returned to Tamara’s office after touring the facility to address any questions we had or give any feedback. It was hard to go through this tour knowing there are girls out there who hurt so badly on the inside that they have created this acute sickness in their lives. It’s most difficult for me to understand how someone so skinny can view themselves as overweight.

Reiterating what was said earlier, the facility at Center for Change was warm and inviting. As emotionally hard as it was for us to visit, the ladies are in a safe and healing environment, without distraction, where they can work therapeutically on their issues with compassionate support. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are serious, life threatening conditions. If appropriate, Center for Change would be a viable option.



REJECTION OF THE CLASSROOM IS
AN INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON
AND HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH
WHETHER THE SCHOOLS ARE
PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, SECULAR OR
CLERICAL, OR WITH THE
PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING
EMPLOYED IN THE VARIOUS
SCHOOLS.

~ VICTOR & MILDRED GOERTZEL
CRADLES OF EMINENCE



IN BALANCE RANCH ACADEMY

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Visit by: Lon Woodbury, MA, March 20, 2013

In Balance Ranch Academy is located outside Tucson, Arizona and was founded by Patrick and Betsy Barrasso about nine years ago. The Barrassos had originally started an outpatient clinic in Tucson serving mostly adolescents with substance abuse problems. The clinic is still functioning but they soon learned that outpatient services were just not enough for many young people. In 2004 they founded the Ranch Academy on a ranch property an hour or more outside Tucson close to Tombstone AZ working with adolescent males with an emphasis on substance abuse. They now have about 50+ students in this residential program. In 2006 the continuum of care was expanded to establishing the In Balance Transitional Living program in a suburb of Tucson for young men ages 17-24. All are thriving as indicated by both the Ranch and Transitional Living doing very well in the most recent Woodbury Reports annual survey.

I started the day at their downtown offices which also operate as the center for the outpatient clinic. It was a comfortable and modern suite of offices where I met with clinical director Shannon Petrovich and admissions director Betsy Barrasso who described the overview of their continuum of care programs. I got the picture that this is a very sophisticated program with a lot of thought and experience going into all the elements of the program to give a total healing experience for the boys. Everything the staff does is oriented toward healing substance abuse problems and learning sober living, while being able to also handle many co-occurring disorders.

My time was too short to get a full understanding of all they do but I can outline some of the major elements. They use several treatment modalities in order to ensure that the individual needs of each student are met. One important element is their use of Positive Peer Culture (PPC). They were trained in this by one of the gurus of Positive Peer Culture Larry Brendtro. This takes peer pressure which in mainstream society is too often negative, and turns it around to where in their programs the peer pressure is positive. From this, they emphasize that the students are “agents of change.” This also encourages students to take personal ownership in the programs and their own recovery.

They use twelve-step recovery throughout their programs. Part of the reason is for the future, wherever in the world they might go, they will be able to find a recovery

INBALANCE/ Continued pg 8

INBALANCE

group to help them. They also build on the spirituality found in twelve-step recovery. This takes form in a number of spiritually based ceremonies such as frequent camping trips to learn to connect with the lessons from nature as well as for similar purposes the use of sweat lodges, medicine wheels, and use of drums, masks and shields helping to symbolize their spiritual journey brought down to concrete activities.

Experiential activities are extensive. I was told they have about 120 expeditions each year, and frequently do rock climbing, fun runs, snowboarding etc. These are usually framed in a narrative of metaphors to help each student grasp a lesson(s) they need to learn. Their equine-assisted therapy and horsemanship is often an important part of this, again learning lessons valuable to gaining control over their own lives by learning boundaries, relationships and the multitude of lessons that can be learned through interactions with horses.

They have eight clinicians who conduct specialty groups. The boys are grouped into four of what they call milieus with each assigned a therapist. This grouping brings the boys experience down to a smaller number that is a little more intimate as well as having the practical advantage of being able to better keep track of every boy, especially in how he is doing.

Working with the family is important with parents frequently coming to the ranch and participating in weekly phone or skype calls with parents interacting with their sons. This allows the staff to work with the whole family getting them all on the same page so far as supporting and validating their son's progress in recovery.

They are making significant changes in their academics. In the past they had been working from the high school curriculum provided by Keystone and the University of Nebraska. However, they are dropping those two services and are developing their own multimedia classes which can not only appeal better to the young student, but can allow them to focus more precisely on the specific academic and emotional needs of the students.

After this introduction, Betsy took me on the long drive out to the ranch. It is out in the middle of nowhere, and the first sight is rather unique. The property the Barrassos bought had been a dude ranch of some kind, and the owner had built a old style western town, something like you might see on a western movie set. The inside of most of the buildings had been converted to offices, dorms, etc. All the old style western buildings had been renamed to the function they served in the school, and had been cleaned up, painted etc. Other than that, it looked much like the old almost ghost towns dotted around the West with false fronts and wood boardwalks. One exception was the new academic building, something more than 4,000 square feet for offices, classes, and an extensive cafeteria. In addition there were several utility buildings and a large riding arena.

The buildings were more or less clustered around the

graveled driveway with an impressive giant sculpture in the middle - a medicine wheel on top of the twelve steps.

A couple of students toured me around the facilities, showing off the dorms (they were clean and neat), the function of the various buildings and talking about their experiences and what they had learned. The students were articulate, well dressed, positive about the Academy and being older students, talked some about their plans for the future as well as shared their stories of how they came to be enrolled at the Academy. While we were touring, a number of students returned from a several day horseback ride looking very much like they had been on the trail several days. Tired, dirty and they had a top priority of getting a shower, but not until after they had cared for the horses. Despite all that, they looked like they had the self-confidence and satisfaction from an adventure well done.

I had lunch with the staff, and from their introductions I learned most of the staff had been with the Academy for a number of years. Longevity is always a good sign of quality work in a school. The group sounded dedicated, confident and satisfied.

That afternoon we returned to Tucson to visit the Transitional Living program in a modest suburb. The collection of buildings were designed to blend into the neighborhood so it looked like just another residential home. It is close to the University of Arizona and several other colleges that the students might take classes at. It was a very comfortable collection of a house and a few other buildings that had every appearance of being a home. The boys I met with were open about their story, their plans, and seemed to be participating in many of the same activities as their peers not in a program (music, non-violent video games etc.)

The young men graduate through three phrases in their time in the program, each designed to enhance their ability for success for living independently. They do many of the similar things the boys at the Ranch do in experiential outings, physical fitness, snowboarding, counseling and service activities. A highlight for the young men are several trips to annual weekend 12-step retreats called Fellowship of the Spirit (F.O.T.S.), and Regional meetings of the Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (YPAA). These are fun and rewarding experiences that seem to be a highlight of the young men.

I felt their reputation they had earned among Independent Educational Consultants as shown through the results in the Woodbury Reports annual survey was well earned. Good things are happening in both programs.

SO FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER,
THERE IS NOT ONE WORD IN THE
GOSPELS IN PRAISE OF
INTELLIGENCE.
~ BERTRAND RUSSELL

THE ART OF BECOMING SMART

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The Art of Becoming Smart is an academic coaching program for high school and college/ university students designed for struggling students who are feeling hopeless and have a negative self-image due to low academic grades, which affects their relationships, career path and personal health, in addition to their feelings as a disappointment to their parents and others. This small coaching program only selects ten students per month.

Aleem Nassar, founder and president of The Art of Becoming Smart created this coaching program after overcoming his own struggles while attending college. Aleem spent months on research: talking with top mark students and instructors, attending educational seminars and studying books on academic success which resulted in learning that to achieve the success he was looking for, his first step was to change his beliefs about school and focus on his personal views and thoughts.

In his coaching program, Aleem teaches and mentors students with tools that he has created, including an eight part module system all designed to bring up the student's academic grades, increase motivation, enhance communication and listening skills, create self-confidence and perform in group study groups effectively, all guaranteed to improve the student's grade levels or if grades do not improve, they can re-take the entire coaching program at no cost until their grades do improve.

Also available to students are personalized 2-week Intensive Smart Shops in a wide area of topics that include: improving test and exam writing, time management, eliminating text anxiety and much more.

[This information came from their website.]

LA PALOMA TREATMENT CENTER

Memphis, TN

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Paige Bottom, MBA - CEO

www.lapalomatreatment.com

La Paloma Treatment Center is a residential and outpatient facility, formally known as Foundations Memphis, and one of four programs under the Foundations Recovery Network that works with young adults, 18 and over who are struggling with chemical addictions and dependency coupled with co-occurring mental health issues.

The leadership team at La Paloma Treatment Center consists of Paige Bottom, who is the CEO and has had extensive experience working with adolescents with addictions and psychiatric problems in addition to working

LAPALOMA/ Continued pg 10



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