

BUILDING BRIDGES

Thompson Falls, MT
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Visit by: Ron and Kristie Campbell, IECA, May 2013

In May 2013 Ron and I visited Building Bridges, a family-style therapeutic program for adolescent boys located in Thompson Falls, MT. Building Bridges offers Individual counseling, Individually designed Master Plan, REBT therapy, Group therapy, Reality based counseling, a strong 12 step modality, Public school enrollment, Individual and group tutoring, Wilderness trips, Vocational training, Work therapy, Recreational therapy and a Positive peer culture.

The office is located in a beautiful log building overlooking the town of Thompson Falls and the reservoir created by the Thompson Falls Dam on the Clark Fork River. The sign outside the building said Building Bridges and Bear Muscle 24/7 Gym. Because we had driven past the building once, Jill Fairbank, one of the co-founders of Building Bridges, came out on the balcony and met us to bring us into the office.

Building Bridges, Inc. is co-owned by the co-founders Steve and Jill Fairbank, and their son Kurt, Clinical Director, and his wife Sarah Fairbank. Once inside the office, we met Debby Sacchi, Office Manager and Sarah, Administrative Assistant. We chit-chatted briefly catching up on news and information around the network, and then began our tour through the office.

One component of Building Bridges is a mandatory exercise regimen. The basement of the office building has been built into a full-fledged 24/hour fitness center, open to the public only through paid memberships. The boys at the program, of course, have daily access to it as well, and in fact, if they aren't participating in extracurricular sports, they must use the gym every day after school. Boys are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, student government, etc.

Down in the gym we ran into Steve Fairbank, who was just finishing up his daily routine. Because of the type of program Building Bridges is, the staff doesn't just expect the boys to participate in the routines, staff model healthy life for the boys. We talked a few minutes before heading back up to Sarah's office to talk about the profile of the boys.

Building Bridges accepts students from 14 to 18 years of age who are struggling with chemical dependency, disruptive behaviors - both in the home and in the school - as well as behavioral and social issues, such as depression and anxiety. Typically, young men in these circumstances struggle academically, are acting out at home and in the community, are oppositional/ defiant, and may have experienced drastic

changes in their choice of friends - with positive peers being replaced by negative peers. The program is designed for students who have graduated from a short term residential or wilderness program and are willing to look at their issues in a serious and committed fashion.

We continued on our tour by heading over to Thompson Falls High School. Students at Building Bridges must be able to get to a place where they can attend the local public high school, after their initial phase. As we drove, Jill explained the school system at Building Bridges. Students begin in the home school on campus which is a packet style program. The local public high school only admits students within ten days of semester breaks, so if a boy isn't emotionally and programmatically ready to integrate into the public school, he stays in the home school program until the next break.

For the first couple weeks a student integrates into the Thompson Falls High School, he is paired with a student mentor to help show him the ropes and support him when he gets overwhelmed. The staff at Building Bridges is very involved with the school as "parents" and as Boosters for fundraising, school spirit and supporting all the students in the community. The academic director also works closely with the school counselors to make sure each boy has a tailored program to his needs.

Boys are bussed in to school each morning and then, after school activities/ gym time, they are bussed back to campus, where they live, do therapy, and play.

After seeing the high school we drove over to the campus, where the boys live in two houses, each house based on primary therapist. There were numerous projects the boys were working on for vocational experience around the property.

The first house we went into was the original house where Steve and Jill raised their children along with the program kids. The cabin is a cozy log home where the boys live family style. Each room houses two to four boys and those that we walked into were tidy but well-lived in, especially considering they were the rooms of adolescent boys. The cabin also contained a dining room, living room, den, kitchen and laundry room. Steve is a Nationally Certified Addiction Counselor II, a Licensed Addiction Counselor, and has over 25 years of experience in dealing with at-risk youth and their families. He runs all the groups in this home where he and Jill live half the week.

We walked out a sliding glass door onto the back porch and crossed over the yard to the second cabin. This cabin is mentored by Kurt, a Licensed Addiction Counselor, who carries a Master of Science Degree in Mental Health Counseling. It also houses the home school classroom. We walked in and were met by Andy Burwig, the Academic Coordinator. Andy is responsible for ensuring all the students are set up for academic success. Over the years he has developed a close and well-respected relationship with the administration and teachers at Thompson Falls High School, a relationship which is a key factor in getting students enrolled in the right classes and caught up if they are behind. For those students enrolled in the home

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school, Andy is their teacher.

We then met the home school boys as we continued touring the second home. They were all at school working on their own packets, at various levels in various subjects. These young men ranged in length at the program from a few days to four to five months. They were very interactive with us and seemed glad we had interrupted their studies, as any adolescent boy would be.

As we drove back into town, Jill talked a little about some of the non-school activities the boys participate in. They often hunt and fish, go hiking, biking, skiing, kayaking and rafting, camping, and backpacking. On Sunday, the boys attend the local

community church as a family unit.

At last the time had come for us to leave. We had spent a few hours visiting, but this is the type of place you feel comfortable enough at that you could just hang out all day and lose track of time, if there wasn't other work to be done. It was clear to us in all aspects of the program, from therapy, to groups, to academics, to the vocational education, to the family community that Building Bridges is a place where boys can learn to be young men and learn to work through their addictions through positive mentorship. For more information, call Jill or Sarah in admissions to schedule a visit.

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.]

YOUTH HEALTH ASSOCIATES

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Youth Health Associates is a residential care and therapy services organization. The company operates six campuses in the state to treat both males and females from 12 to 18 years old. The programs are designed to treat sexual issues.

Clinical Supervisor for Youth Health Associates, Mindy Nance, LCSW, TRS, received her Master of Social Work in 2003 and a BS in Therapeutic Recreation in 1998. She has been employed with the company since 2001. She is very active with the youth in the programs through outdoor activities. Clinical Director and company Owner, Brian Garlock, LCSW, has been working with troubled youth since 1993. He oversees all functions of the company and its programs. The YHA programs are licensed by the state of Utah.

Youth Health Associates programs all use a Clinical and Behavioral Levels system. This system helps track the client's progress through the recovery process. The Clinical levels include concepts such as Accountability, Behavioral Cycles, Relapse Prevention, Skills for Success, Relationship Skills, and Empathy. The Behavioral Levels are used to evaluate the student's behavioral performance and the accumulation of "points" for good behavior determines visitation and other privileges for the student. Treatment plans unique to each student determine the types of therapy and counseling used.

The six programs operated by Youth Health Associates are all located in the state of Utah and include: Draper Youth Ranch, Stepping Stones, Cedar Valley Ranch, Lakeview, Eagle Academy, and Lakeside Academy.

[This information came from the Youth Health Associates website.]

COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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College Internship Program, which was founded in 1984, will open a new center in Long Beach, CA this August, 2011. This program is designed for young adults, ages 18-26 with Asperger's, nonverbal, PDD-NOS, ADHD, dyslexia and other learning differences, yet are emotionally and behaviorally stable and have the potential to live independently, attend college or a career program.

Susan Levy is the Program Director of CIP-Long Beach and is currently the President of the Los Angeles Autism Society, where she has been an active member for the last three years. Prior to CIP, Susan was the principal of Gilbert Hall School and also spent a number of years as a behavioral consultant specializing in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. Her interest in autism started on a personal level when her then, 3 year old son was diagnosed with autism. Aishani Patel is the Head Student Advisor and Aubrey Green is the Residential Coordinator at CIP-Long Beach. Each student receives individual therapy, and for those on medication, a Medication Supervision program is provided.

Students enrolled in the CIP program are each assigned an advisor who serves as both managers and liaisons with the families, keeping students on track, mentoring and assisting with teaching basic life skills. Students will learn to try different career internships, work in the community by volunteering their services, and receive individual career development instruction in which students participate in mock interviews, job coaching and portfolio development. Students reside in fully furnished, 2 bedroom apartments, in a gated community, with access to pools, laundry services and fitness room, all ideally located minutes from CSU Long Beach and public transportation.

Week-end and recreational activities include trips to the beach, local museums, whale watching and shopping and movie trips.

[This information came from the College Internship Program website.]