



Places for Struggling Teens™

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“It is more important to get it right, than to get it first.”

September 2010 - Issue #193

HOW TO DESTROY THE BRAIN’S PLEASURE CENTERS

By: Lon Woodbury



Too much pleasure might be the way to destroy the brain’s pleasure centers. At least this is the suggestion of Trace Embry, Director of Shepherd’s Hill Farm, a Christian Therapeutic Boarding School for struggling teens, located in Georgia. He suggests, in an essay titled *Anhedonia Parts I and II* posted on Strugglingteens.com, that the overuse of technology by adolescents is creating a serious condition, which he and others have explained damage the pleasure centers in the brain. In *Anhedonia Part II*, he explains that Americans are becoming weary of pleasure even faster than they are becoming weary of pain. For example, look at how many teens say they are bored.

That probably needs a little explaining.

Anhedonia is a medical term, indicating a person has no variation of mood. Often associated with clinical depression, it describes the “inability to experience pleasurable emotions from normally pleasurable life events.” Recent brain research has found that a person with Anhedonia shows different brain activity than that of a normal person. Essentially, the brain’s reward system has broken down through a depletion of dopamine pathways.

Mr. Embry’s use of the term is broader than the narrow medical definition, but his expanded understanding is very intriguing and potentially very useful in understanding some aspects of human behavior. He observes that when a person finds some activity pleasurable, over time the activity has to be increased in order to maintain the same level of pleasure. Eventually, a person either realizes that activity is no longer pleasurable and they stop it, or they continue to extremes in a desperate attempt to experience more of the original pleasure. He makes the point that adolescents with all their technological toys sometimes get stuck in the extreme end of this process and continue with their toys (texting, computer games, etc.) with no balance in their life and do not enjoy anything anymore. He suggests that overuse of technology is depleting dopamine pathways in adolescent brains.

This pattern of course is well known in all the various addictions that need to be treated. One way of describing an addict is a person who desperately increases the amount of drugs, sex, computer gaming, etc. in an attempt to recapture the original pleasure.

It can also give insight into fads like fashion, language, etc. That is, something is pleasurable perhaps for its novelty, and once it becomes popular and “everybody is doing it,” the pleasure disappears and the fad goes away. At least this is the average person’s typical reaction.

A similar pattern seems to exist in relationships like marriage, a committed relationship or even dating. The initial attraction is very pleasurable so people want it to last by establishing some kind of committed relationship. But, inevitably, the initial rush of pleasure will fade and many are then tempted to break out of that relationship and look for the pleasure of another fresh new relationship. The person who continues to succumb to that temptation when in committed relationships cannot ever have a relationship that is very deep and lasting. It is evident in people like this that their lives are usually not very pleasurable, despite what they might claim. Awareness of this human pattern is the reason marriages have traditionally been taken so seriously, with a permanent commitment before God and/or the community, legally binding contracts, etc. All these were probably designed to combat the all too human temptation to put immediate pleasure ahead of providing an intact and stable family for the children, or take responsibility seriously and be accountable for the consequences of their actions.

Another thing about this expanded understanding of Anhedonia is the view that people are pleasure seeking beings, and to have a civilized society, pleasure seeking must be balanced with responsibility, accountability and the understanding there are deeper satisfactions than just seeking immediate gratification. Perhaps true appreciation of those deeper satisfactions is the mark of a civilized society.

A possible irony is that the person who puts pursuing pleasure ahead of all else is the person who is most likely to be destroying those pleasure centers.

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[Essays and articles appearing in this publication are the opinions of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the policy of Woodbury Reports, Inc.,™ or StrugglingTeens.com.™ We urge our readers to conduct their own investigation of the products and services identified herein.]

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ARE YOU PREPARING YOUR KIDS EMOTIONALLY FOR COLLEGE?

Rose Mulligan

We all know that there are many stages of parenting — infancy, early childhood, adolescence, and so on. And along the way, parenting styles should change to respond best to what kids and teens need most from parents.

By the time kids are readying for college, parents need to be sure they're playing the right role—helping their children leave the nest and begin life as a young adult.

Are we helping them to become emotionally independent, self-reliant young adults? Or do we have a tendency to hang on, clinging to our kids in relationships that keep them tethered, as studies suggest?

"It is common for a parent to feel a range of emotions, from loss to relief, when their young adult child moves out of the family home," says Susan Berlin, a psychotherapist in Washington D.C. "Ultimately we have to let our children fly and be independent and autonomous, make their own mistakes and separate from us, the parents."

"This transition is often the most difficult for a parent, even more than the transition of a child getting married," says Laura Gauld, parenting expert and co-author with husband Malcolm of the book 'The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have' and founders of The Biggest Job parenting seminars. "We advocate for our kids for so many years, raising them, shaping them, helping them develop their character, and teaching them to make choices.

"Then, in high school, we take them through the complicated process of preparing for college—the SATs, the applications, essays, financial aid paperwork, the harrowing wait for acceptance letters, the visits to campuses—it goes on and on! Then one day, we drop them off and leave them to it — confidently — in an ideal world."

That doesn't come easy for many of today's parents say the Gaulds. Leaders of Hyde Schools, a network of public and private schools located on the East Coast that specialize in leadership and character development—and parents themselves — they have experienced firsthand the dramatic shift in parenting over the past two decades, from the strict yet hands-off approach of previous generations of parents to the more lenient, micro-manager approach of today's parents.

"My parents were not interested in being my friend," says Malcolm. "Nor did they take my business, such as the business of applying to college into their hands. That was my responsibility, and I learned a lot from doing it all on my own."

Yet today, in addition to the classes and courses that aid teens in beginning life away from home, many colleges now have special classes for parents, even directing them on when to leave after they drop their kids on campus.

RTM College Consulting is an organization that helps students navigate the college search and application process. As part of this mission, they cover a range of topics that also includes "helping parents transition and 'let go'."

The Gaulds accept the view that most parents want what is best for their children. But they see how this difficulty in letting go does not serve kids well and may, in fact, be a factor in the college drop-out rate — even though college enrollment is up.

"Many teens are not being prepared emotionally for life on their own," says Laura. "For the first time, a student will have to balance the demands of rigorous academic coursework combined with myriad social opportunities and virtually no supervision."

"It's a combination of variables that can trip up even the most disciplined and, what we might call, 'well-behaved' students," Malcolm adds. "Initially, college can be overwhelming for any student, and many will struggle, particularly those who are accustomed to having parents manage some or all of their lives. Fact is, one in four college freshmen drops out."

The Gaulds believe there are three types of students generally heading for college:

MOUNTAIN SPRINGS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Cedar City, Utah
Jon Larsen - Admissions and Head of School
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info@mountainspringsprep.com
www.mountainspringsprep.com

Lon's Visit: April 20, 2010

Mountain Springs is a co-ed private transitional college prep high school which usually has about 22 students ages 14-18. It is located in two, two-story buildings on the outskirts of Cedar City, Utah. They are a CERTS program (Certified Educational, Recreational, Therapeutic Schools and Programs), under the same ownership as Moonridge Academy, La Europa Academy and Kolob Canyon RTC.

We were met by John Larson, Head of School, who also handles admissions. After a brief orientation, several students met with us to explain the school as they saw it and answer our questions. They acted like typical teenagers in every way, positive about their school experiences and proud of their grades, which they told us were better than before they had enrolled in Mountain Springs. From their comments they all were very busy with studies, community activities, doing things with their friends, or enrolling in college courses in the local community.

The students then took us on a tour of the buildings, obviously excited with the opportunity of showing off their school. Everything was clean and neat. As lunchtime approached, the smells from the kitchen were heavenly, although on this trip we ate lunch elsewhere. The dorm rooms were comfortable, clean and picked up, yet still had the comfortable feeling of being lived in.

Larsen emphasized that Mountain Springs is a private high school. They see themselves as a transition or step-down school that prepares students to return to mainstream society through their academics and community involvement. Almost all the students had come to Mountain Springs Prep from a wilderness program, therapeutic boarding school or an RTC. However, by design, there are no therapists on staff. If therapy is needed, the school helps parents contract with local therapists or psychiatrists who are familiar with the uniqueness of this school. The staff sees themselves as mentors, with one of their main functions being developing relationships with the students to maintain and solidify the level of stabilization achieved in each student's previous program.

Mountain Springs Preparatory Academy is also a community-based school where students are strongly encouraged to be involved in community activities as much as possible. Days are filled with academics, responsibilities around the school and joining community activities.

The constant activity we saw and the positive attitudes of the students were impressive.

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INSIGHT INTENSIVE AT GOLD LAKE

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Joseph DeNucci – Founder/ Executive Director
877-952-1444
www.insightintensive.com
jdenucci@insightintensive.com

Visit by Kristie Campbell, August 2010

I understand that Canyon Drive is a much more scenic route to go, however, driving up the “back way” was a peacefully scenic path to get to Insight Intensive at Gold Lake. Insight Intensive is a 90-day residential mentoring program for young adult men, age 18 and older. All the staff members have at least a bachelor degree and all senior mentors and therapists are Master’s level or PhD.

Traversing the back and forth curves almost straight up a mountain range, through valleys and a hillside village, gave me a chance to talk with Co-owner/ Founder Joseph DeNucci. Joseph first explained his background; that he has over 25 years combined experience in the “therapeutic” network and literally worked his way up from the ground level. A couple programs in his past include Sierra Tucson (where he served as COO and Executive Director, AIM House and Miraval, Life in Balance Resort, and he served as the COO of the Duke Center for Living in Durham, NC, where he worked to create the Center for Duke Integrative Medicine.

During the rest of the ride up the mountain, Joseph described how the idea for Insight Intensive came about and the basic philosophy of the program. The property the Intensive operates on was once used as a personal growth yoga retreat for corporations,

as well as a resort and spa. This serenity is apparent on every part of the 100-acre campus that I visited. The property was purchased by Joseph and his partners Bharat Mitra and Bhavani (founders of Organic India) and opened in June 2010 on the premise that many young men fail to launch into adulthood and many others often struggle with substance abuse and addictions as an escape or defense mechanism. To help them get back on track, Insight Intensive is a therapeutic community that uses a system of mentors to guide the young men. Each young man in the program has a peer mentor, a junior staff mentor and a senior staff mentor, and there are no more than five program participants per senior mentor, in addition to the two therapists who do evaluations, groups and individual therapy.

The first notable “landmark” of the campus we stopped at was the lake-front pavilion where the young men gather at times for campfires, drumming or other gatherings. The short path to stand inside it was well worth it. From the Pavilion looking back, it appeared that the 35-acre lake was on the edge of the mountain with nothing but sky beyond it. Lake trout were jumping everywhere.

Across the driveway from the pavilion was a large three level lake house where the guys have a workout room and an area for playing games. There is also a room where staff can stay and a large room upstairs that overlooks the lake with large screen TV. Group is sometimes held in this building. Being a flower gardener, I could picture that given time, the many flower beds surrounding the campus buildings could flourish like the young men this program works with. It was here that I met Jim Bailey, Director of Operations, who recently moved to the Boulder area. Jim participates strongly in every aspect of the program and teaches

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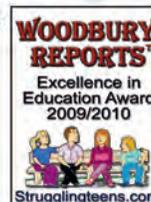


For many young men and women, leaving home and transitioning to college or the work world is a daunting and overwhelming challenge. Thrust into the real world alone, with few advocates, they often are overwhelmed by isolation and lack of structure and support. Robert Fischer, M.D., psychiatrist, co-founded **Optimum Performance Institute** in 2004 to meet the needs of these young adults, ages 17-25.



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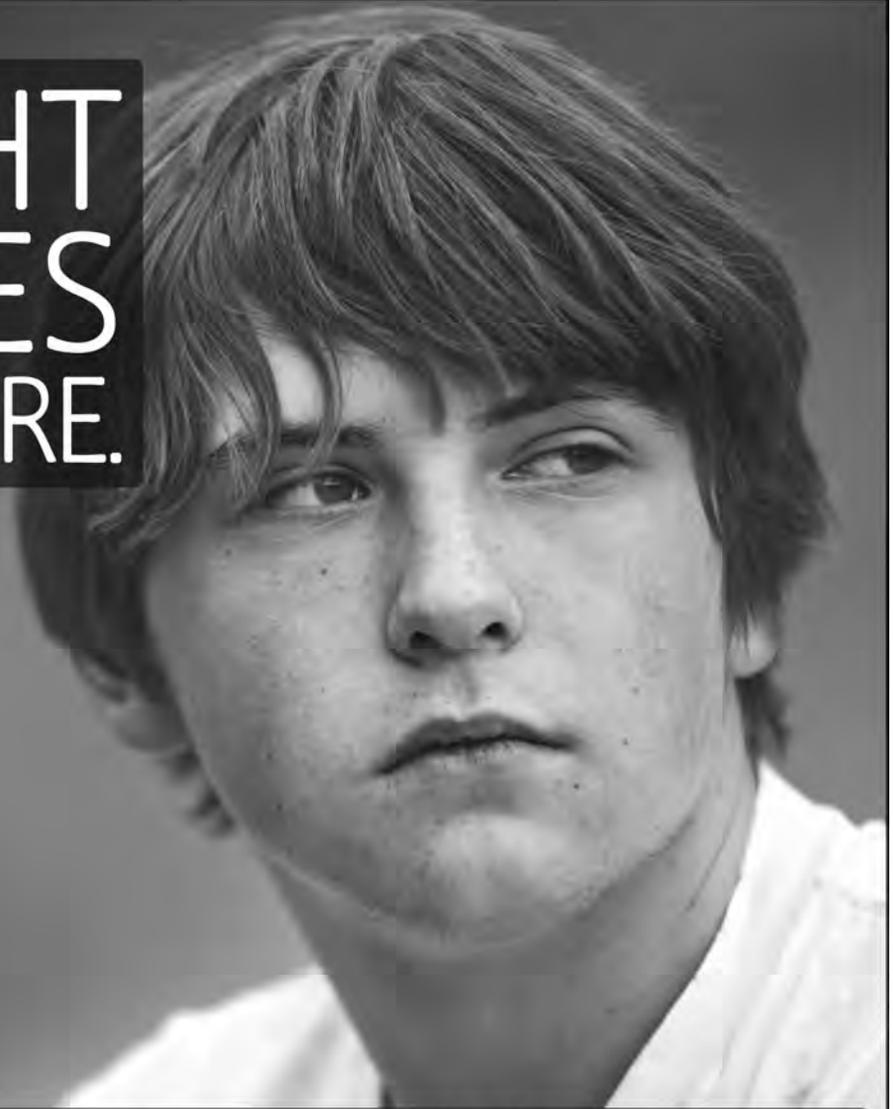
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INSIGHT INTENSIVE

the young men healthy living skills as well as culinary cooking and organic gardening.

Continuing on, we went over to where the newly renovated organic greenhouse and vegetable garden were. Joseph explained how the staff and residents worked together to tear out the old decaying remnants and rebuild them new. They had also recently refurbished the wood for the stable area and fences, where there are five beautiful and well-kept horses. The guys have two equine sessions per week; one being a walking/ handling therapy session, the other provides an opportunity to ride after therapy.

Another interesting tidbit I picked up while at the campus was that there are several Native American relics around, meshed with much yoga symbolism. No matter what a person needs spiritually, Insight Intensive will help them find it. The teepees are all poled from wood from the property and the drums are all authentic.

We pulled up to the part of the campus where the majority of the buildings are located and began the tour of buildings. All of the buildings on campus were beautifully rustic cabin-style structures. The first building we walked into was the largest of all. The "Great Lodge" is used for a dining hall, group and just hanging out. It reminded me of the great fireplace area in the original lodge of RMA back in the mid-80s.

All the young men were seated at a table in the middle of the large dining hall when we walked in. Joseph introduced them to me and then introduced David Chiarito, MS, Program Director. I almost couldn't tell the difference between staff and resident as everyone sat around the main table after breakfast, before the daily schedule got busy. David is the senior mentor for the first five guys and then trains any additional senior mentors as they are needed.

The young men were all polite and appeared at ease, even

laughing and joking with each other as they relaxed. I felt no tension and no underground while in their presence, only a sense of brother hood and camaraderie. We visited with the group for a short time and then continued on through the buildings.

Insight Intensive has a full, industrial kitchen, staff offices, a required massage/ acupuncture spa, study and computer lab building, residence cabins, a full yoga studio, four hot mineral pools and the administrative office, and other cabins currently being used for storage. The campus is fully wired with fiber-optics so the residents can continue school and necessary fully-supervised projects. The cabins were cozy with three participants per cabin. They were also surprisingly tidy, considering these are all approximately 20 year old males, and they did not feel sterile or scrubbed for my benefit.

As for cost, Joseph explained that every part of the program is included in the daily rate, except clinical evaluations and medication management. Other necessary information can be obtained by viewing the brochure and website or contacting Joseph for a more detailed description of the program.

After my visit at Insight Intensive, I feel the people involved have a solid plan, plenty of experience and education, in addition to the right location to successfully help young men launch into a sober adulthood.

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. -Lon]

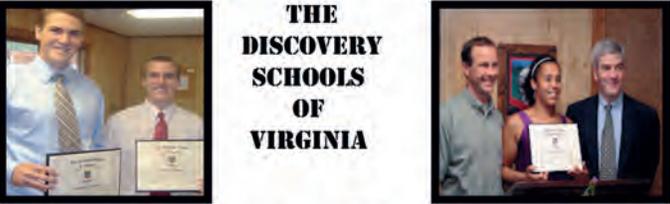
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CONTINUED: LAUREL SPRINGS/ 8



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Students who are ready to graduate are invited to a prom and graduation ceremony held each year in June (held on the same weekend). Students can meet other students and the faculty and participate in a full graduation ceremony complete with cap and gowns.

[This information came from the Laurel Springs website.]

I see psychoanalysis as a contractual conversation about a person's problems and how to resolve them.

~ Thomas Szasz

ODYSSEY WILDERNESS PROGRAMS

Joshua Tree, CA/ Bellingham, WA
Sarah J. Brockman, Admissions Director
360-671-4999/ 360-410-9541
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Odyssey Wilderness Program, which includes two locations, in the southwest-Joshua Tree, CA and in the northwest-Bellingham, WA is a co-ed wilderness program for struggling teens ages 13-18. These struggles may include behavioral issues such as conflict with parents, drug and alcohol use, manipulative and oppositional behaviors. Emotional issues include depression, anger, anxiety, low self esteem, self harm, grief and loss issues or attachment and adoption issues. In addition, Odyssey works with teens struggling with ADD/ADHD, academic issues and/or lack of motivation and direction.

Program director and founder of Odyssey Wilderness is Timothy Brockman, who specializes in working with teens that are oppositional defiant. Dr. Nate Reiss, PhD, is the Field therapist and Sarah Brockman is the Admissions Director. Odyssey's affiliations include the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, NATSAP and the National Association of Therapeutic Wilderness Camps.

Odyssey's treatment works on three program phases: Personal and family responsibility which includes a 40 mile backpacking expedition or a longboat sailing expedition and the students focus on communication and relationships; Reflection phase is facilitated by a therapist who assists the student into looking at their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships and past and current decisions they have made and create goals to reflect these insights. The final phase is Community, which includes another backpacking trip or longboat sail and focuses on gaining self esteem, better communication and acknowledging their personal growth.

[This information came from the Odyssey Wilderness Program website.]



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FOREST HEIGHTS LODGE

Evergreen, Colorado
Linda Clefisch, Executive Director
303-674-6681
lindaclefisch@forestheightslodge.org
www.forestheightslodge.org

Located in Evergreen, Colorado, Forest Heights Lodge is a small, residential treatment center for young boys ages 5-14 who are struggling with emotional behaviors that may include aggression, impulsivity, depression, and anxiety, obsessive behaviors or who do not trust authority figures or for those who care for them.

Founded in 1955 Forest Heights Lodge is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services. Academics are approved by the Colorado Department of Education and is a California Certified Non-Public School. Linda Clefisch, LCSW is the Executive Director for Forest Heights and Jim Orsund, LCSW is the Social Services Director.

The staff interacts with the children on a 24 hour basis and the lodge is considered the home of the program and the "heart of the treatment" is the daily one to one interaction between the staff and children. Forest Heights Lodge staffs their program with child psychiatrists, psychologist and clinical social workers who work with the child care workers and conduct individual and group psychotherapy. With simple basic rules such as: "You may not hurt another child and another child may not hurt you", children learn to feel safe with each other and staff. The treatment for the boys is covered through all aspects of the program including educational and recreational therapy and family therapies.

Academics are delivered on campus with an average class size of six students per class. Individualized programs are developed for each student with the main goal of a successful integration into another school when he is discharged from Forest Heights Lodge.

Utilizing the Colorado weather and the mountain surroundings, the boys participate in a wide variety of activities, from camping to snow skiing and backpacking to organized sports, all which help the boys learn sportsmanship and help in the development of physical skills.

[This information came from the Forest Heights Lodge website.]



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Past operations were for troubled youth. This is an excellent opportunity for the right user to have a full service facility in the middle of NW Montana.

For further information contact:

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SEEN N HEARD...

The following updates were sent to Woodbury Reports during the month of August.

NEWS:

Strugglingteens.com initiated the second phase of new advertising potential for clients, allowing Block Ads in the body of articles online. Academy at Sisters therapeutic boarding school will host an equine seminar in early October. Agapé Boarding School has added a new website to their current site. Deck House School successfully completed their first ever Summer Trimester program.

PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS:

Blueprint Education, a nonprofit educational organization, partnered with Explorations to offer an accredited option to their existing Big Sky Summer Adventures program for teens. Stone Mountain School was awarded the three-year CARF Accreditation; the report recognizes that "staff, management, and leadership are truly committed to quality and excellence." StrugglingTeens.com now offers Block Ads in the text of articles online. Optimum Performance Institute has added new components to the educational programming. In addition to an individual computer station where participants work and study, OPI has added a library component and a department of volunteer and career services. Also, OPI was accredited by the JCAHO. Shepherd's Hill Farm now offers a "40-hour work week" component to their Christian Boys Program, to teach the teens to understand how to earn and manage money. New Leaf Academy of Oregon was awarded the three-year CARF Accreditation. The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities International (CARF) has announced that Aspen Ranch has been accredited for a period of three years. Ponca Pines Academy extended admissions to 16-year-old girls. Center for Change now offers a short-term inpatient triage and stabilization program to address the changing needs of the eating disorder community.

ANNIVERSARIES:

Four years isn't a long time, but for Four Circles Recovery Center, an innovative wilderness rehab program for young adults ages 18 to 28, four years is long enough to change the lives of hundreds of young people and their families.

PEOPLE:

Nawa Academy in French Gulch, CA welcomed Dr. Wes Johnston as the Assistant Head of School. Montford Hall announces that Sally Westmoreland has joined its Board of Directors. OPI is pleased to welcome Kevin Bowe, CEO of MBSG, a business-consulting firm located in Westlake Village, CA as a new member on the Board of Advisors. Don Vardell joined Shortridge as Executive Director. In an effort to expand its community and referral relations outreach nationwide, Eckerd Youth Alternatives announced Greg Holeman will oversee Eckerd Academy's Referral Relations Division and Tuyet Abdullaj was promoted to Business Development Manager for the Southeastern Region. The Family Foundation School (Hancock, NY) announced recent changes and additions to the staff. The school welcomed Mary Burkart, MSW to the Counseling Department where she is part of the team now providing individualized counseling services to students. Special education teacher Greg Milunich also joined the staff. Milunich teaches English and will expand the special education services available to students. Jason Garnar, formerly History Department Chairman at FFS, moved into the Admissions Department as a counselor. Garnar continues to head up the school's college counseling services. Rick Reeve, Executive Director of the Family Foundation, Inc., assumed the additional responsibilities of Director of Development, guiding the school's overall marketing efforts. Kim McKee joined the clinical team at Vista Treatment Centers. Cumberland Heights Treatment Center announced Dean Porterfield, LPC, MHSP, NCC recently accepted the position of Clinical Coordinator for the Youth Program. College Excel



Photo by Skyler Jenson

THE GATE OF HISTORY SWINGS ON SMALL HINGES, AND SO DO PEOPLE'S LIVES.

With the click of a mouse your son may be stepping into a trap carefully laid to prey upon his own developing body. More than 11 million teens view pornography on line (Washington Post 2004). *Early intervention can help your boy break free.*

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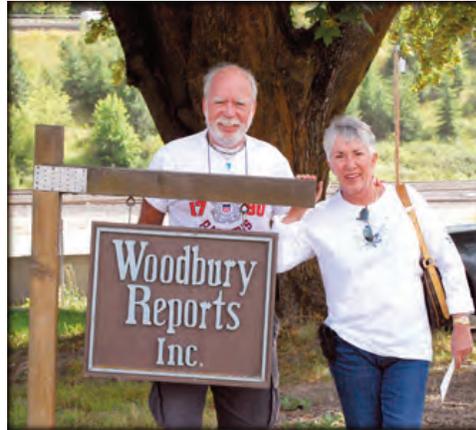
Answers and information are available at www.oxbowacademy.net or call Barbara at 435-590-7198

introduced new staff: Brendan Bigos, BA, Director of Student Life, Alisha Wiater, MSW, Academic coach, Brighton Fowler, BA, our Student Leadership and Activities Coordinator, a former College Excel student and a recent magna cum laude graduate of Lawrence University and Kellyn Smythe, MS, and Director of Marketing, a coach at College Excel for the last few years, who will continue to support students with his expertise in math and science.

VISITORS:

Shayne Gallagher, Executive Director, and Brad C. Matheson, Admissions Director of WinGate Wilderness Therapy in Utah, stopped by the Woodbury Reports Office.

Jayne Longnecker-Harper, Executive Director of Benchmark Transitions in Redlands, CA, and her husband Don Harper, Dean of Work Education, stopped by Woodbury Reports for a visit on their way through North Idaho on personal business.



UPCOMING AT A GLANCE:

SEPTEMBER

- National Conference on Addiction Disorders, September 8 - 11, Washington, DC
- Northeast Regional NATSAP Conference, Sept 16 - 17, Kennebunkport, ME
- 17th Annual NATWC Conference, September 19-21, Nashville, TN
- Summit For Clinical Excellence National Conference, September 22 - 25, Scottsdale, AZ
- 21st Annual ATTACH Conference, September 23 - 26, San Antonio, TX
- 68th AAMFT Annual Conference, September 23- 26, Atlanta, GA
- 8th Annual Wilderness Therapy Symposium, September 24- 26, Boulder, CO
- 16th Annual Counseling Skills Conference, Sept 30-Oct 2, Las Vegas, NV

OCTOBER

- OK Corral Equine Seminar, October 7- 9, 2010, Bend, OR
- 19th Annual Texas Autism Conference, October 7 - 9, Corpus Christi, TX
- Conference on Medication-Induced Violence, October 08, Chicago, IL

To view these articles in their entirety, visit www.strugglingteens.com.

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- Peer group counseling
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 - Eating disorders
 - Anger management
 - Grief and loss
 - Social phobia
 - Sexual abuse/trauma
 - Adoption

Our new Director of Counseling, clinical psychologist Mark Vogel, Ph.D., leads a staff of four master's level therapists and five substance abuse counselors who provide daily therapeutic counseling to students. Our consulting psychiatrist spends several hours on-site each month meeting with students being treated with psychotherapeutic medications. And with a staff-student

ratio of almost one to one, students can always find a teacher, sponsor, family leader or coach available for a heart-to-heart conversation.

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Mark P. Vogel, Ph.D.

provide the experiential therapy that builds self-confidence and independence.

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