

PARENT OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2005 SUPPORT NEWS



- ♦ WELCOME HORIZON ACADEMY
- ♦ HOLIDAY PACKAGE INFORMATION
- ♦ SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

WHAT'S CROSS COUNTRY?

AS I stood on the starting line my hands were trembling and my stomach was full of butterflies. This was it, the last meet of the season, Region. This was where it counted, this is what I had worked my entire season for...

I arrived at Cross Creek Manor on July 21, 2004. When I came here I wasn't what you would call a runner. I was 240 pounds and it was nearly impossible to even get me to get up to do something. Ron G., the program director, tried to give me lots of hope and encouragement. However, I told myself he was lying. Then it happened – I began losing weight. I was feeling great about myself, so I decided I'd start going to the running club.

For the first five months of the running club, I was consistently last. I had to fight so many beliefs while I was running. I told myself that I was slow, fat, worthless, and that I'd never be any good. Thankfully, I never gave up on myself although I wanted to and contemplated it several times. When I made Service Status, I decided to join Cross Country. I was also the slowest runner there. Although I felt stupid and slow, I stayed persistent.

As the season went on, I gradually got better and began to practice with the varsity team. Then came my first obstacle... an injury. After the first meet I was goofing off and tore my hamstring. I was out for two weeks. The rest of the season was spent getting back into shape. While doing that, I faced two more obstacles; my negativity and thoughts of giving up on myself. I used a lot of negative, sarcastic comments against myself, and there were a few practices I completely gave up on myself. I didn't know why I was doing Cross Country. Then it hit me, it all made sense...

"On your mark, get set, GO!" And with the pop of the gun the race was on. Right then, right there I decided this was my

race. About ten yards into the race I made my move and took the lead. After 400 yards I steadied into my pace, 200 yards in front of the other girls. Through the entire race I reflected on all that I had accomplished and what I had overcome. I was 72 pounds lighter than my weight coming into Cross Creek, I was in awesome shape, I had overcome an injury, but most of all I genuinely loved myself. And then came the best part of the race – the finish. With the support of my teammates and the Cross Country community, I ran through the finish line. Although winning the race felt so amazing, I realized I had won a greater race. It was the obstacles I had overcome.

With the Junior Varsity Region 13 Championship under my belt, I knew I had left my mark in Cross Country. It all started with "What's Cross Country?" and after sweat, tears and hard work, I realized it is my life; it is where my heart is.

I never realized until now how much Cross Country is like my life. Life will be tough, I will have struggles, but I have tools to pick myself back up. I learned that in life I would fall flat on my face if I decide to give up on myself. It is my life and I can't decide to quit. I learned that it is courage that pulls me through the hard times. I am living proof that ANYTHING is possible when you put your heart in it.



Erin G.
enrolled Cross Creek Programs

LEARNING TO BE MYSELF AGAIN

I came to Cross Creek with forgotten dreams and broken wings. I came with a lot of anger and hatred towards life. I had given up on myself and I had forced my parents to make decisions they did not want to make for me.

I look back on my old lifestyle now and it still hurts to see myself pretending to be someone who I was not. I had pierced my body, dyed my hair, and done everything I could to kill the real me. Many times I thought that I was happy and that I had it all, when in reality I was hurting so bad inside that I had attempted suicide. I was not living anymore; my whole world had



turned into black smog. My parents always tried to help me as much as they could. They were always there with

open arms and I in return stabbed them in the back when I could.

I look at myself now and I see a magical, courageous, loving, and worthy young woman. Now I can open my heart to the beautiful things that this world has to offer, and one of them is Cross Creek. I can walk with my head up high and a smile on my face without being ashamed. I have found myself here with the help of those who care for me, and I am not willing to lose it all again. Life has given me a precious second chance, and this time I am choosing life over death. Learning to be myself again is hard, but worth it!

Roxanna L.
enrolled Cross Creek Programs

NO BACKING DOWN

THERE have been so many times in my life where I have just completely backed down from accomplishing something I knew I wanted. It wasn't because of my family, my friends, or my surroundings. It



was my lack of commitment to my life. I think this program is the first thing I have come so close to finishing – it is something I want to finish. I want to be able to look back and be proud of the

fact that I did this – I have accomplished something that has saved my life.

There are a lot of days when giving up seems so much easier, but I have a constant reminder of where I would be if I did. I know that I am stronger than just throwing my hands up, saying "I quit." I have worked too hard to give up now, and it would not only hurt me, but also my family.

Success, and I'm not just talking about getting an A on a test, but a lifelong, healthy life, is something I have never truly experienced before. It is scary to feel like I am finally working towards success in my life, but at the same time it is awesome to look at the obstacles I have overcome and who I am today. I can now say I am starting to get a big glimpse of what success truly feels like. Why back down now when there is a whole world out there waiting for me? Giving up would be telling myself that I have no inner strength; that I have no faith. Backing down is not worth losing all that I have worked for, including the new life I am making.

This is just the beginning of my journey, and my family is waiting out there for me. That is something I don't want to give up.

Holly R.
enrolled Cross Creek Programs

FAMILY PORTRAIT

WHEN I first got to Cross Creek, my relationship with my family was far from perfect. It was chaotic. I kept telling people they did not understand; my parents were crazy. Everyone else would say, "Oh no, they love you, that's why they sent you here." I didn't believe them. I was so certain my parents sent me to Cross Creek to punish me, and to get rid of me.

Having that attitude kept me stuck for a long time when I first got here. I was having trouble graduating Discovery. My parents told me that if I didn't graduate Discovery the next time I would be switching groups and therapists. At that time I was really mad at my parents, but looking back, I see they were just trying to put some pressure on me to graduate.

I ended up graduating my next Discovery and staying with my group and therapist. I noticed that a lot of our fights on phone calls turned into discussions. We started to listen instead of just talking. Then, soon enough, my first on-grounds pass came with PC I. I was terrified. I hadn't been alone with my parents in such a long time. The last time I had talked to them without my therapist there was a lot of yelling and screaming. What if we got into a fight? What if they told me they wanted to leave, because they didn't like the changes I had made. Since it was on-grounds we could not do anything but talk. It scared me at first, but to my surprise it wasn't that bad.

As the phone calls and passes kept coming, our relationship slowly got better and better. We started to be more open to each other and our differences. My brother and I ended up writing a lot of letters and talked on many phone calls together. Since he is only 12, I don't go deep into issues and problems with him, but he knows I'm here to listen to him when he needs it.

My relationship with my family is still not perfect, but it is a lot closer to perfect now than it has been before.

Rita I.
enrolled Cross Creek Programs

THE JOYS OF GARDENING

“THIS is the most fun I’ve had in my life!” What activity at Carolina Springs Academy might provoke such a radical thought in a student?

Fishing? Not this time, though it has been done. Whooping it up at a talent show? Maybe, except that the “down and dirty” is literally true.

We are girls in the garden. There are up to fourteen of us at a time hoeing or pulling weeds or spacing the seeds we bless that they may sprout. If the sun has been hot for several weeks, we may be enjoying our produce.

“How long will it be before they bloom?” is asked of the zinnias, sunflowers and wildflowers that show green in May. “When will the watermelons be ripe?” They delight us at the end of the season. From July to September there are beans, cucumbers, muscadines, peppers and tomatoes to sample in the field. Even spiny okra gets rave notice when curious non-Southerners taste it raw. Serving watermelon, I ask if anyone wants to be



here still when the time comes to plant the black seeds for next year. Sometimes the girls seem wistful.

What makes this project popular? The reasons are as numerous as the benefits. Reserving the gardening privilege for students Advance Status and above,

loads it with status appeal. “I’m voting up next month. Will there still be gardening?” is an often heard question/plea from students working to advance in the program. For some girls the low-key activity recalls more pleasant times in country sides or suburbia. “Oh, my grandfather gardens and I used to love working with him,” one student says.

Curiosity of the best kind brings some girls out. “I just like learning to do new things.” This new thing often demands enough physical exercise to boost spirits much as playing sports does. A sense of abandon can take hold in the garden without rule compromise that would court trouble in other activities. By far the most often repeated comment goes something like, “It just feels so good to get out here and yank something up and throw it wherever I want to!”

Will there be gardening again? If the CSA administrators approve, there will be a garden as long as I’m here and the staff supports it. Parents can make a difference, too.



**Ms. Sarah K.
Science Teacher
Carolina Springs Academy**

WELCOME HORIZON ACADEMY!

HORIZON Academy opened in June of this year and is off to a great start. After a hot summer the weather is starting to cool down and the sunsets are beautiful. We have grown to over 20 girls and 30 boys. We just completed Orientation and Discovery and we are excited about the progression our students are making.

This area offers many unique opportunities that the students have enjoyed.



Everyone had fun on the slip-n-slide during the summer. The mud was flying at the Drag races and the students enjoyed hiking through Death Valley. We just had a bonfire to say our last goodbye to our second graduate - John H. Our latest activity was a remarkable tour of the 12,000-cow dairy, one of the largest in the U.S.

The Holidays are fast approaching. This is a special time of year when thoughts of family and friends are on our minds.

We are very sensitive to the Holidays and are providing a fun and festive spirit to this season with

activities and even a touch of festive decorations. We want to thank you for all of your support in the growth of our new school and wish you all a Happy Holiday.



Logan D.
Shift Supervisor
Horizon Academy

A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

POSITIVITY is a choice, it is an attitude, and a state of being. The mindset that you create for yourself is very powerful. Any experience can be positive if that is how you make it. If you make the choice to look at anything in a negative light, then it is indeed a negative experience for you. Here at Midwest Academy there are many events arriving each day and it is up to us as individuals how we look at it. It is the same with everyday life. To be an optimistic judge of mood, and a creator of change is the most in control state of human nature.

It was the first morning of my upper status career. As usual I was up at about 4 a.m., and I could not sleep at all. I figured out quickly that turning over a series of times does nothing but strip your sheets and awake you even more. I laid still. What was it about a 5:45 a.m. aerobic workout that got me so excited? At home I was less than enthused about anything that involved lifting anything other than my arm to the cookie plate. I guess it was the thrill of the early morning and the anticipation of music pounding in my ears. When the time finally arrived, I got up and quickly put on my shorts and tee. I practically skipped to the wicker where we were to meet. I sat with another girl and waited expectantly for more enthused faces to meet mine. About ten minutes later 23 dreary moaning bodies

drug around the corner. I did not let their negativity get me down. We were off to the gym. I could smell the dew from the night's rain and it brought me back to early morning basketball practice with my freshman coach, a man that



drastically changed my outlook on hard work and success. The gym was bright and welcoming. The music was pumping to a techno remix of old pop songs, and I believe there was even an Elvis remix in there. We all started moving and our instructor was chirping wildly. I must have been smiling quite broadly, because everyone had a lovely scowl to shoot at me whenever possible. I loved it. I finally had the privilege to move and be free in a new way. I let an experience that some find extremely bothersome, become a positive and energetic joy. What better way to start off a long hard school day than with music, laughter, and exercise?

It was when I was walking out the doors at 6:55 a.m. into the catwalk when the best part of the whole morning arrived.

I was walking by the window, and out of habit I did not look out of it. I was winded and looking at my feet, about to walk by the most spectacular feature of the day. Another student brought it to my attention by asking me to look out the window. I looked up to see a wave of pinks and oranges. There was a brightness of the rising sun layered on the inky blackness of the night's sky. The shadows of the horizon's buildings were illuminated by the sky's citrus. I could have cried right there. It was one of the most positive experiences that I have had in a long time. Sure there are the big things that everyone looks at everyday as a "good thing," such as achieving a new status, or a seminar; but I think there is true beauty in the little things in life. Lower statuses have little opportunity to observe a sunrise, and through my actions and choices I earned that privilege. It is the little things that we all take for granted; the little things that actually spoil us silly, that we should be constantly thankful for. So next time there is something little that you would never normally notice or be remotely thankful for, remember the positive feelings that one thing can flood you with. It is your choice how you look at it. Wouldn't you rather have a positive day?

Ariane S.
enrolled Midwest Academy

"Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same."

Francesca Reigler

"The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude."

Oprah Winfrey

THANKS FOR THE GEMS OF SUCCESS

I came into the program for drugs, gangs and also being very disrespectful. I did not want to do anything at all. I spent most of my time in Intervention. It took a while but finally I started working. Since then I had a rough ride. I have gotten dropped from statuses quite a few times.

I have had a number of experiences at Tranquillity Bay that I will never forget. Drawing

from all the experiences I have had and time I've spent here, there are a lot of things I can say to prospective graduates. The program itself can be difficult if you make it so, and if YOU give the staff reasons to lower your status. The rules are basic, but sometimes hard to follow. Even if you think a rule is stupid, follow it. They are only here so that you can learn discipline.

Also, I must say that my Family Rep. Ms. Senior did a lot for me. She got me to look at things from a different point of view. No matter how much trouble I gave her she would not give up on me. She told me things that were true and I did not like to hear once she started to tell me. It helped me out a lot to become successful so I want to say thanks to her. Also to Mr. E. Thomas, Mr. D. Evans, Mr. G. Bent, Mr. Archer, Mr. O. Stephenson and Mr. E. Bennett were all good Family Fathers to me even though we had lots of ups and downs throughout the time they have worked with my family.

Patrick M.
graduated Tranquillity Bay
August 2005



OUR experience in attending and participating in the Premier Program and Seminars has truly been beneficial.

These Seminars have enabled us to better understand and cope with the problems faced by Patrick. Through lectures and group activities we have learned various tools and methods that allow us to work in a partnership to support Patrick as he continues this positive journey.

The Seminars have given us an opportunity to

meet with and talk to other parents who face the exact same situations. The opportunity to meet new people has exposed us to new cultures and ideas. As we shared our experiences and empathized, we realized that we are all striving toward the same goals; to give our young people a better chance at life.

We have also grasped the knowledge that in order for the program to be a success, we will have to work closely to ensure that Patrick views

us as a support unit in times when he is facing difficult decisions. This program has rescued Patrick from the certain downfall that would have occurred had he not been placed in the program. It taught him how to accept accountability for his future as he strives to become a better individual.

We learned about certain issues that

we didn't even know existed prior to the program, while discovering methods of dealing with them. We are confident that the seminars have played a major role in encouraging us to work hard with, listen to, attempt to understand, and do our best to support Patrick. His journey has been a long one. It wasn't easy, and although he sometimes searched for an easy way out in requests to come home, we realized that in order for him to truly benefit from his experience he had to complete it.

We would encourage every parent who may have children in the program to hang in there. No matter how many times the young person may complain or bicker, there is a great reward at the end of the path. Obstacles only exist if we choose to let them stop us. There were sacrifices that had to be made. We often left our young children in order to attend the seminars but we knew that Patrick was important. The positive

role models and influences that he has encountered have certainly prepared him for a world where that self-growth and confidence are the gems of success. We are grateful for the opportunity and thankful for the lifelong

friendships that we have created. The journey is not an easy one; but for those who choose to make it and complete it, the benefits are immeasurable.



Debra R. (mother) & Donette M. (DCFS-Caymen Island)
Son, Patrick M,
graduated Tranquillity Bay
August 2005

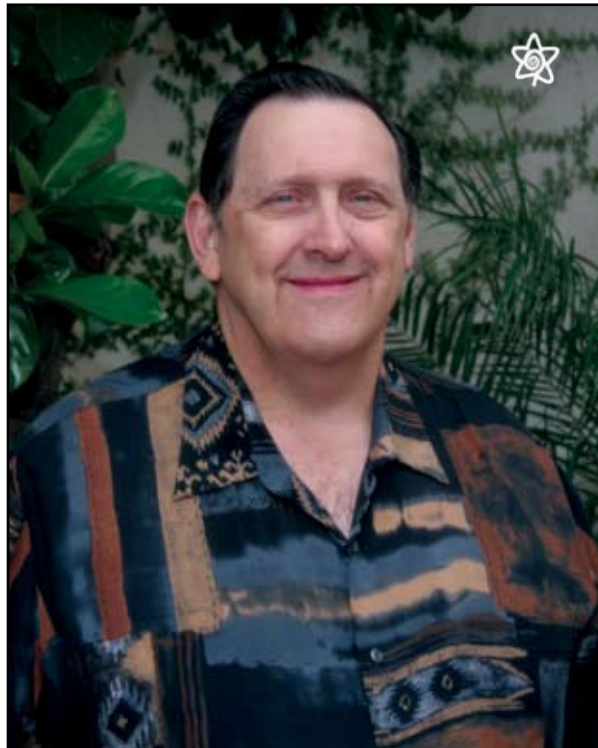
NO SHORT CUT IN THE PROCESS

PARENTS, I would like to share a few thoughts regarding pulling your child. Each family makes their own decision and it is not about right or wrong. It is about success i.e. the greatest possibility of success. Families come to the program because they are in MAJOR breakdown as a family. There are deep seated issues and dynamics that are in play. The program is just that “a program”. It is designed to address the various issues and dynamics at very specific points.

We are seeking a change not only in one person’s behavior but the entire family. This is no small task. The highest probability of success comes from following, working and completing the program. It is not wrong to pull your child but the reality is most do not do well upon return home. Even with graduation, there are graduates which do not do well upon returning home. The percentage is very much in your favor if you complete the program. Sadly I see and hear it almost daily. We have many parents calling the office seeking coaching because the old dynamics are back in play after pulling out early. They had great “reasons” for leaving the program but the game has not really changed. Seeking coaching once the old patterns are in full play is not a workable solution. The only solution I know which works is return to the school and WORK THE PROGRAM.

Are families leaving the schools treated differently? Yes, they are. It is not that we do not love them or respect their decision but you cannot get the program outside of the schools. They have not completed the journey and do not have all the tools for the home phase. There is no way we can give these tools to the family once they leave the program. We build upon each step. If you don’t have steps 7, 8, or 9 there is no way to give

you step 10, it just won’t work. We wish them the best and point them in directions which may assist but we are committed to what we know works.



Second, most families (not all) leaving early have already begun to invalidate the coaching of the program to justify leaving. Is the program perfect? No way! It is made up of people and they make mistakes. I continue to see the schools work to correct and improve because of the mistakes.. Yet I hear many stories about the problems of the program upon leaving the school. It makes it very difficult to continue to offer some service or support to families which are not aligned with the program, especially if they are making the program wrong. If the school you are in is truly not doing the job for you, go to another Premier school. Each school has it own special flavor. I do not recommend transferring lightly. It should be taken with great care and much thought. However, if you feel (not your child) that a transfer is warranted, seek guidance and do it. Don’t use this as your reasonableness to

leave the school.

The issues which brought you to the school are not minor. Most of our families have done MANY, MANY things to break the pattern. I firmly believe that a major intervention is required to create lasting change. There is no short cut in the process. Each stage of the program is designed to move you towards a whole and healthy family. Even upon graduation, there will be struggles. If you have been practicing the tools, you will know how to handle these situations better than before.

I know money, time, missing your child and daily living continually challenge parents to stay the course. All of these are real considerations. The value of staying must outweigh the consideration or you will be overwhelmed. It is particularly hard when you as the parent have so little control over the progress of your child. You can impact your child’s program by doing your work and constantly reinforcing what must happen for your child to come home! Even then, your teen will do it their way but they do have more motivation if you are working and moving forward.

I ask you to really evaluate your purpose of entering the program? What is the real success you seek and what is going to create the greatest probability of achieving it? What is the value you as an individual are gaining from your program? What options are there for you to ensure you graduate the program? Do you want to go back to what was pre-program? Answering these questions and keeping this in front of you will assist in creating the consciousness necessary to stay the course.

**David G.
President
Premier**

I WANT TO BE SOMEBODY

I remember the first time I heard my dad tell me that he was proud of me. I was here. I remember crying too, but it wasn't because I was happy. Those tears fell because I didn't think that he could possibly have any reason to be proud of me. I have always wanted to be "daddy's little girl," begging for my hero's approval. Then in my seventeenth year of yearning for it, it didn't feel like I thought it would. It took me a while to figure out why it bothered me so much. Shortly before my eighteenth birthday it finally dawned on me. I wasn't proud of myself so my father's pride for me meant nothing.



I felt like I had spent the last few years in a teenage wasteland, accomplishing nothing, save for my own destruction. I never completed anything I started. I hurt everyone around me. I got in trouble with the law. I smothered myself in a pool of drugs. What was there to be proud of? Even after seven months of being clean, earning statuses, and graduating seminars I still hadn't forgiven myself, and there was no way that I could be proud of myself without forgiving myself first. So after I had been in the program for eight months and just before my "freedom day" I made the decision to stay.

Hey, I wanted to be somebody. I wanted to accomplish something.....be proud of myself. And I wasn't going to do it for anyone other than me. I realized doing it for my dad wasn't going to work anymore. In fact, it was just an illusion that it had worked before. Just because he was satisfied didn't mean that I would be. Besides, I wanted more than satisfaction. Someone once told me, "Be happy, not satisfied." I refuse to settle for the mediocre. I deserve happiness.

I have never been one to allow others to dictate my life, and leaving on November 27, 2004 would have been throwing my life

right in the hands of the world around me, directly into a square cell. I don't like the thought of others having power or control over me. It seems as though leaving would be the only release from that control. In fact, it is the exact opposite. Leaving would mean that they pushed me to it, that they made that decision for me. Staying means that I am showing the strength and determination that I have gained here. It doesn't take strength to sit on top of the world and look down on everyone below. It takes strength to lift, pull, hoist yourself up from underneath the earth and rise to the top.

I have dreams. I have goals. I have elaborate plans for my future. I know what I want, and there's no reason to give that away. Hey, I wanna be somebody.

Kasha S.
enrolled Academy at Ivy Ridge

Kasha S., Jennifer A. and Fritzie G. (on page 10) are formerly or currently students of Academy at Ivy Ridge that were involved in a 18 year old Program Completion By Choice Support Group. There are currently 22 members of the group. The students organized this support group by themselves and actively coach one another on how important it is to stay firm to their commitment to complete PC3 and graduate. All girls that are 17 1/2 years old or older can attend this group twice a month. They share stories about exit plans and about their struggles of staying to complete their program beyond their 18th birthday.

"I am very proud of what these young ladies are creating for themselves. I think that it would be encouraging for parents to understand that there is "life beyond 18." I also think that the most powerful graduates have become the students that have made the choice to stay because they have come to realize they are doing it for themselves!"

Heidi M.
Media Coordinator at Ivy Ridge

UPCOMING SEMINAR DATES

REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR ALL SEMINARS.

PLEASE VISIT YOUR SCHOOL'S WEB SITE FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION.

DO NOT MAKE AIRLINE RESERVATIONS UNTIL CONFIRMED BY YOUR SCHOOL

Do not show up at the training expecting to be allowed to enter without registering.

LAST DAY OF THE SEMINAR ENDS AT 7:00 PM.

PLEASE SCHEDULE FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS ACCORDINGLY.

DISCOVERY

- NEWARK..... Jan. 27-29
- CHICAGO Feb. 10-12
- LOS ANGELES..... Jan. 13-15
- ATLANTA..... Feb. 3-5
- DALLAS Feb. 17-19
- BAY AREA..... Jan. 2-22
- SEATTLE..... Dec. 9-11

FOCUS

- NEWARK..... Nov. 17-20
- CHICAGO Jan. 12-15
- LOS ANGELES..... Jan. 5-8
- ATLANTA..... Jan. 5-8
- DALLAS Jan. 19-22
- BAY AREA..... Dec. 8-11

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- NEWARK..... TBA
- CHICAGO Jan. 7-8
- SAN DIEGO Dec. 10-11
- ATLANTA..... Dec. 3-4
- DALLAS Nov. 19-20
- BAY AREA..... Jan. 28-29

I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERYTHING

SIX months before I turned eighteen I was positive I was leaving; already checked out, already counting down the days. I didn't think that the program had anything to offer me. I had been in the program for eight months and had already learned everything

I needed to know anyway. It was kind of like how when I was in kindergarten I thought I knew everything there was to know about the world. So a few months went by, and I made Service Status. I was extremely proud of myself for achieving an status. I realized I had never been that proud in my entire life. That's the first reason why I decided to stay. If I felt

that great at Service Status, imagine High Honor status and graduating.

So my eighteenth birthday finally came. By that time it really wasn't a question whether to stay or to go. My exit plan was pretty simple: stay in the program or come home. It doesn't seem like such an easy decision, but it is when you realize that everything at home will still be there when you graduate. It makes things a lot less difficult when you stop working against the program and let it work for you.

Look at the reason why you want to stay and why you want to go. Make a list of pros and cons for leaving. If you are being honest with yourself, then you will probably see that the benefits of program completion outnumber that of taking the easy way out. Besides the emotional growth that you can do in this program such as, self-discipline, confidence, and knowledge, there are other benefits as well. If you haven't already graduated high school you can maintain at

least a B average. If you are already a high school graduate, start working on college courses. It looks great when you do apply to college or a job and you have completed a program at an academy.

So stop feeling sorry for yourself. You have the opportunity of a life time to make a positive change and actually stand up for what you believe in. It's the hard times that we go through that make us the strongest.

It's easy to use being eighteen as a back door. If it gets rough you can just walk out, right? Now you don't tell me that quitting, or selling out on yourself isn't a reflection of how you were before you

came to the program. Think about it. A few months to better yourself in comparison to the rest of your life is only as hard as you make it. Coming from Regular Status, zero points and hating myself and the world around me to being on student council and feeling better about myself than ever before, I am here to tell you that it's worth it.

You are capable of whatever you set your mind to. Take this opportunity and fly with it. It's a long, hard road but it certainly pays off and you'll be so proud in the end. From my experience, the program has given me so much and shown me endless possibilities. Remember, you don't have to make a decision right away either. Just because you turn eighteen doesn't mean that you have to know exactly what you want to do. Take the time you need to make the best choice and don't force it or let anyone decide for you.



Jennifer A.
graduated Academy at Ivy Ridge
March 2005

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Pros of Leaving at 18

- *"Freedom"
- *You can get a job
- *Don't have to be in a program
- *Go back to your old lifestyle
- *Run away from your problems, as you always have
- *The "easy" way out
- *Go to college...Move on in life
- *More time

Pros of Staying Past 18

- *Work on school with at least a 'B' average
- *Gain tools from seminars
- *Build *REAL* friendships
- *Three meals a day and a warm place to sleep each night
- *Supportive people available 24/7
- *Time to adjust for going home
- *Home passes and PC seminars
- *Not having to worry about "adult" things such as insurance, bills, and taxes.
- *Safe environment
- *Completing this program rather than moving on to the next one, such as jail
- *Feeling the sense of accomplishment that you finally finished something.

This Pros of Leaving vs. Staying list was compiled by the members of the 18 years old Program Completion by Choice Support Group.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

IF you think being 18 and in the program is crazy, try being 19. A year ago I was set on walking out. I wasn't open to the help my family and the school offered me. In my eyes, I was "fine". I had no confidence, I went out for acceptance, I wanted to go back to my boyfriend, drugs, sex, partying; all the things that had the word "dead" written all over it. I had no respect for myself or those that cared about me. I didn't understand why all these people were there for me. Did they not see what I saw? I didn't see a person worth their time. I was determined that I was going to make it out there with nothing. I'd say to myself, "I did it before why wouldn't I be able to do it again?" I felt that I was on top of everything, I was looking forward to all that came with being 18. I could stay out late without my mom on my back; I didn't have to live at her house. No big deal.

On Friday, September 10th 2004, I attended PC1. When I walked into the seminar room, I couldn't find my mother. When I saw who I thought was my mother, I had to do a double take. My mother did not

look happy, and I didn't understand why. She had lost so much weight and she looked like she was going through so much pain. I knew that I was a huge part of her unhappiness.

As I hugged my mother and cried my eyes out, I realized that she was the same on the inside. My mother always wanted to be strong for me. She put her problems on the side just to help me. I felt like a bad kid. My mother's words were, "Don't cry. Just know that I would do anything for you." As I



held on to my mother Ms. Lorie C., my family rep, was right beside me. Her presence let me know that she was there for me. That PC1 is what changed my life for good.

Right now, on October 19th 2005, I am on Honor Status, turning 19 in thirteen days shooting for graduation. I have made so many accomplishments over the last year. My mom and I still don't agree on a lot of things, but we have learned to respect each other's opinion. I have realized that my mother would die for me if she had to. My father died when I was 2 years old

and all I have is my mother. My mother is my biggest role model. She has remained standing strong even after I told her to go to somewhere the sun doesn't shine, after I would hit her, curse at her, and tell her I hated her. My mom believed in me. If it wasn't for my mother and Academy At Ivy Ridge, I would have been 6 feet deep. I have learned how to have fun still being myself. I have made awesome healthy relationships.

I am getting good grades in school. I am sober. And I have people that will be honest with me even when it hurts. I feel that I deserve the best in life. Sometimes I wonder why I have to lose something important to



me before I make the right decision. I have caused my family and myself so much pain.

I have learned so much about myself through seminars. One thing that I have learned is that I AM A GORGEOUS, UNIQUE AND TALENTED YOUNG WOMAN. My purpose is to be loving and real to myself and others while flying through the galaxy of stars towards success. So stop acting like you don't want to do something different for yourself. It isn't easy. We all know that. But do you want to wake up not knowing where you are going to sleep? Do you like it when your mother doesn't believe anything you say? Do you like the way the drugs are taking over your life. Take action. This is your life, whether you like it or not. What are you going to do? All I want to say is that my life before this is history, thanks to all those who care so much about me: my mother, peers, and staff. Thank you all.

Fritzie G.
enrolled Academy at Ivy Ridge

REWARDS OF MY PROGRAM

FINALLY! I never thought I'd be here. Two years later, here I am at PC3. This is a thank you to the program, because where I would have ended up otherwise is not preferable. I would not be graduating; I would be using drugs and the biggest what if, would I even be alive? Now, today I am a high school graduate with an above 3.5 GPA. I've been invited into the National Honors Society, and I am a program graduate as well.



It is true at home that I knew what I wanted to do with my time and my life. I planned to go to college, get a job and I wanted to be successful. The catch is that I was a dreamer and my plans were never acted upon. I had no solid goals. I could not even see where I was, let alone the direction my life was going in. Things were happening around me and I sat and watched it all go by. Casa by the Sea, my first program, and Spring Creek Lodge have taught me to be aware and gave me the opportunities to pick up skills and tools for creating the life I really want. Seminars empowered me. My family and I can work through things and talk. I can see where I am, what I want and how my own choices lead me by natural results and consequences. My life is actually moving forward and I am driving.

When asked what the most important things I've learned or gained in the program are, I could give a million answers. Friendships, communication, trust...but somewhere along my "adventure", I realized that all of the things I've learned and mastered depend upon two main changes in my mind-set or behavior: self-love and honesty. Without love for myself I had no reason to change for the better, because I didn't believe I deserved anything better. Without honesty nothing can change or be accomplished, even if you want it to be. There is no available solution to a problem you won't admit to and people cannot accept you for you if you don't let them see who you really are.



The most noticeable change, is the family dynamics at home. The way my family interacts is very different from before. My sister, Joelle, is twelve. Prior to the program, I wanted her to end up doing the things I was doing because I thought it was fun. At the time Joelle was only nine. Despite my behavior at home, my sister loved me and looked up to me. Today I am overwhelmingly glad that she didn't follow my example and I am proud to be a worthy role model and to return the unconditional love she shows me.

Communication with my mom can be sighted as the main failure at home that resulted in my program enrollment. I did not talk to my mom and when I did, anything coming out of my mouth was a lie. Now communication has opened up. We talk, we are honest with each other and I feel supported by my mom. I've learned to trust Chris, my dad, and I can open up to him as well. Our family is unified now and I am a part of it.



Throughout the last few months at Spring Creek, I've gained confidence in my own judgment. I trust myself and I know it is ok to feel however I feel. Along with this growth, I've developed an important skill: leadership. I believe everyone leads in their own special way, and like fingerprints, no two leaders are quite the same. I see myself as a leader by example and prefer a quiet, honest and hard-working example position to the demanding, in the spotlight, "in charge" deal most people think of when the word leadership is spoken. I still actually feel intimidated by some leadership roles, because I see a leader as perfect - in that they practice what they preach. I fear being labeled a hypocrite and I fear leading people in the wrong choices. This is a big issue for me because I want to eventually get involved in some large-scale organization

or movement to help people, and that will definitely be a responsibility. I've worked on this just recently, on a wilderness trip I did. For one of our activities I was actually voted to lead the whole group and it is things like that, which allow me to challenge myself.

I have my mom to thank for my overall experience over the last two years, including everything I've learned. She has held out through over a year of me practically begging to be pulled, and then some hard times. I can honestly say I was the most resistant Honor Status around February and March; coincidentally I went to PC2 during that time... My mom backed her firm belief in program completion and supported me even when I wasn't so keen on having support. She believed I could succeed from the get go and I cannot thank her enough.

I also have the Casa and SCLA staff to thank for their direct involvement in my growth, daily struggles, and joys. I especially want to thank my Family Representative, Mrs. Darcy R. Through thick and thin Mrs. Darcy stood by me, loved me, and was sometimes brutally honest. Without Mrs. Darcy, I would not have fully incorporated what I learned and I do not know what effect that would have had on my success at home.

Last but definitely not least, I have to thank all of my friends at Casa and SCLA. They put up with me every day and were there for me to talk to at any time, including 2 a.m. They literally had to deal with me 24/7, and for that I am indebted to them all.

I want to say anyone can succeed in life. I believe that an honest person can do anything if they have the motivation, passion, and can judge the difference between supportive people and those people who just want to bring them down. I encourage every one to go for their wildest dreams and remember anything is possible. I am excited to start my life and I have so much to look forward to!

Azalea G.
graduated Spring Creek Lodge Academy
Honored Graduate October 2005
She presented this speech to the
graduating class

EXCELLENCE Vs. PERFECTION

I attended my first graphic art class on the day my son, Sam, was escorted to Spring Creek Lodge. I knew that April 2nd, 2002 would be a date that marked a major turning point for Sam, but I had no idea that it would also be the beginning of a fabulous journey for myself. Weeks before, I had signed up for full time classes at the local community college. I was dabbling in web page design and wanted some formal training in order to pursue this as a career. It was no accident that class for the quarter began on the day Sam was escorted. I balked at taking an art class; I am no artist I told myself. The computer art class I enrolled in was solely to improve my web page building skills. I never imagined that I would abandon web page design totally and concentrate on art, much less exhibit and sell my art, or be writing this piece.

I am "good." That's my image. I could not just be a mom; I had to be the best darn parent class taking, cookie baking, and room mother, PTA president mom I could muster.

Having a drug addicted, pot dealing, truant, sent-off-to-a-program son truly messed with my image. I threw myself into my class work, and once again, I could be "good." I spent the quarter churning out web pages, data base sheets, and technically perfect graphic art projects to earn As and prove that I was a "good" student. Then I got stuck. My assignment was to create an abstract self-portrait. I had no idea who I am. To top it off, I had to take a day off from my classes to drag myself to Discovery so I could be a "good" program parent.

The feeling that stuck with me when I walked into the Discovery seminar room for the first time was that of plunging

into a sea of people in pain. Throughout that weekend, I felt my need to be "good" beginning to slip away. I realized that it was an image that I fooled myself into believing I was projecting to the world. In reality, it was transparent. I began to remember who I once was, and began to reclaim it as who I am. Upon returning home, I no longer felt that creating an abstract self-portrait was insurmountable. I found after Discovery that my art changed. It became less controlled. On

the last day of Focus, I brought in my self-



portrait to show Lou. It was the first time I

showed my work to anyone aside from my husband, my art teacher, and the little thumbnail prints mailed to Sam.

What struck me most during Focus, and especially later in Visions was how much my desire to appear perfect had paralyzed me. I had closets of unfinished projects that I had never completed because they were not perfect. The concept of excellence vs. perfection is one that I am learning to embrace. Excellence instead of perfection frees me to take risks, both in my life and in my art.

During Spring of 2003, my husband retired. We sold our home in Seattle,

and found our way to Thompson Falls, Montana. He created music and wrote poetry; I did my art, and we both traveled. It was the answer to the question: "What would you do if you were not afraid?" Sam completed PC-3 in December 2003, and he has joined us here in Thompson Falls.

I am now a Family Rep at Spring Creek Lodge Academy. Last week, while sitting in Reflections, I suggested to Jaime, a young man who had just voted up to

Advanced Status, that I would like him to consider becoming family leader. The expression on his face was so familiar to me -- horror, fear, (or was it excitement?). It was the same expression I had on my face

when Jon R. suggested that I apply to Spring Creek as a family rep; it was the same expression I had on my face when I was approached to write this piece. I laughed, and then explained to the family that I was recently in a similar situation. Miss Jacqueline asked me to write a

piece for *The Parent Support News*, and I have been going through the same feelings that were now coming up for him. Jaime and I are now in a mutual challenge to stretch. I tell people that Discovery opened the

door, Focus changed me, and through Visions I changed my life. In my head, I hear Bill asking me if not now, when? I hear Lou telling me that it's not fear I feel, but excitement. I hear Barbara asking me what I would do if I were not afraid? Jaime became Excel's family leader on Friday, and here I sit at my computer.

Debbie W.
Family Rep. SCL
son Sam graduated Spring Creek Lodge
Dec. 2003

HOLIDAY PACKAGE INFO

PLEASE READ: With the purpose being a meaningful holiday experience for your child, keep in mind when considering gifts, the focus of self worth, family values, and service versus material possessions. Remember: **LESS IS MORE.**

Below are the package guidelines of your school. **If additional information is needed please contact your Family Rep.** **NOTE: THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY VARY PROGRAM TO PROGRAM. On outside of package note STUDENT'S NAME, FAMILY REP, EITHER CHRISTMAS OR CHANUKAH AND PROVIDE ANY TRACKING INFORMATION TO YOUR FAMILY REP. REMEMBER TO MAIL EARLY.**

We appreciate your support, cooperation, and adherence to these guidelines.

ACADEMY AT IVY RIDGE - Limit one shoebox size package per student (12"x12"x8"). Send gifts for your student only.

CROSS CREEK PROGRAMS - For Christmas, Hanukkah, Holiday limit one package (12"x12"x12") per student. Wrap smaller presents individually: place inside box. Gift ideas for all statuses: slippers, socks, coloring books, crayons, PJ's, underwear, hair barrettes (no metal), scrunches, self-help or religious books, stuffed animals (3 max. per student at school), gloves, stationary, hat (no logos), picture album of childhood pictures (no metal or wire), sunglasses. Gift ideas for statuses: Achievement - colored pencils, crochet supplies (yarn, metal crochet hook size H or larger), electric razors (girls), blow dryer. Advanced-1 set of markers. Service - jewelry. Honor/High Honor - perfume/cologne (plastic bottle only), 1 small bag of makeup.

CAROLINA SPRINGS ACADEMY - Limit one shoebox size package per student (12"x10"x3"). Send gifts for your student only. Provide package tracking information to your Family Rep. Mail packages by December 1st, to assure your child receives gift by Christmas. **Packages must be sent to CSA, student/family rep., 86 Green Acres Lane, Donalds, SC 29638 via FedEx, DHL, or UPS (not to the PO Box).** Include an inventory list of the package. This is especially important if you gift wrap the items.

Gift ideas: All Statuses: crayons, coloring book, gloves, socks, underwear, journals, inspirational/self help books, stationery, family letters/photos, and personal hygiene items. Achievement - yarn, crochet hooks, crossword puzzles, colored pencils, pocket calendar, "smelly" lotion. Advanced - slippers, PJ's, a watch, markers, glitter glue. Service - backpack, hair accessories, jewelry,

make-up, jeans, long sleeved shirts. Please limit food items to no more than two items which can be consumed within the day.

DARRINGTON ACADEMY - Limit one shoebox size package per student (12"x10"x3"). a package exceeding those measurements cannot be accepted, and will be returned at your expense. Send items for your child only. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Gift ideas: Regular-Advanced Status: socks, underwear, uplifting book or journal, PJ's, sandals, family pictures. Service-High Honor Status: Consider on or off ground visits to provide your child with necessities or choose from lower Status gifts. Approved clothing items and jewelry for the appropriate status can be sent. **ITEMS MUST EQUATE TO STATUS PRIVILEGES.** Snack/candy - do not send more than one pound of candy or treats.

HORIZON ACADEMY - Limit one shoebox size package per student. Status appropriate items only. Any questions contact your Family Rep.

MAJESTIC RANCH - Please limit your Holiday package to one package per student (12"x12"x12"). Suggest carriers for shipping to the Ranch are UPS, FedEx, and U.S. Postal Service. Please allow 3 weeks for delivery, as we do not want anyone to be left out.

Gift ideas for all statuses: shoes, warm socks, slippers, conservative PJ's, stationery, journal, inspirational/self help books, family photos and letters, calendars (calendars with family photos are great!), or a disposable camera. Please **DO NOT send candy, cookies, or other food items.**

MIDWEST ACADEMY - Limit one shoebox size package per student. Please send to Midwest Academy, Attn.: Christmas Box/Name of Family Rep./

Your Child's Name, 2416 340th St., Keokuk, IA 52632. Please limit treats to what can be eaten on the Holiday.

Gift Ideas: family photos and letters, PJ's, hygiene products, sheets, socks, towels, journals (no spiral), chapstick, watch (Advance Status and above).

SPRING CREEK LODGE - Limit one package per student (12"x12"x12"). Carriers delivering directly to SCL are UPS, FedEx, and U.S. Post Office. Please ship three weeks in advance, as we do not want anyone to be left out.

Gift Ideas: Regular - Advanced Status: toiletries, shoes, socks, stationery, self help books, journal (no spiral), daily devotional, twin size sheet set, towels, family photos/letters, calendars, sketch pads, and zipper binders. We ask that you **send no food.** The facility will be providing plenty of food and snacks for the celebration. Service-High Honor Status: may also have limited amount of non-perishable treats, backpack, cologne/perfume, simple jewelry, make-up, watch, hats, and gloves.

TRANQUILITY BAY - Limit one shoebox size package per student (12"x10"x3"). The best carrier to use is FedEx, as they will deliver directly to the Facility. Other carriers will merely notify TB by mail that a package has arrived, which delays delivery. Packages must also clear customs, a lengthy process as well, so **mail very early.** E-mail your Family Rep with Air Bill # information so TB has record in case package needs to be tracked on their end - frep@cwjamaica.com - FR - male students, freps@cwjamaica.com - FR - female students.

Gift ideas: T-shirts, shorts, thong sandals, school supplies, inspirational books, stationery, family letter/photos, limit food item to 1-2 items - must be consumed in the same day.

MY PROGRAM AT AIR

WHEN I first got here, all I wanted to do was leave. Now that I am graduating, all I want to do is stay. Leaving this place is going to be one of the hardest things I'll probably do, but at the same time, it will be one of the happiest moments of my life. On April 8, 2004, I was transported to Academy at Ivy Ridge. At age 16, I was a young teenage girl who only cared about the boy I thought I loved. I felt lost. My Mom told me she sent me here because she loves me and didn't want my life to end. I told myself she sent me here because she didn't want to deal with me. The feelings of resentment began in my heart. I hated her for sending me here. I hated myself for the feelings I had towards her. So I did the only thing I thought I could...

I worked. At first, it was for the wrong reasons – my family, my friends and just wanting to get people off my back. I fell. I stayed at Achievement Status for over three months. I told myself I couldn't do it. I told myself I was never going to make it home. I wallowed in my own misery, until I completed Discovery. Walking through the doors, I thought seminars were silly. Discovery changed my whole perspective.

After graduating Discovery, I changed my whole way of thinking. I changed my attitude towards the program. What I didn't do was change my "fakeness."

I earned Advanced Status four months after coming here. I graduated Focus with flying colors. I looked like I was succeeding in my program when really all I was doing was putting on a smile so people would leave me alone. Then PC1

came. It was the first time I'd seen my Mom in five and a half months. It was rough, but I did the only thing I didn't try yet, I told her how I truly felt. After two days with her, I knew I wanted to be home. I also knew that to get there, I had to do things differently. I had to be me!

So I found what I was missing and I worked. I achieved Service Status in eight months. I was real this time. I struggled as an upper status student, but I pushed to do my best in all different



ways. Finally, I pushed myself to Honor Status. Now I am working for High Honors Status. Graduation is just around the corner. I know I can't start over when I go home, but I know I can make a new beginning and ending. I know by looking back on what I have done at Academy at Ivy Ridge, it's had a huge impact on me. It's given me a second chance. I've given myself the opportunity to live!

Chrissy S.
enrolled Academy at Ivy Ridge

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Please email articles to editor@parentsupportservices.com, please include your name, your student's name if applicable, and the school he/she attends. When submitting articles, please submit a photo as well. You can email a high resolution photo or mail the photo and it will be returned. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us.



If you desire information on any of the Schools mentioned in PARENT SUPPORT NEWS, please contact us at any of the numbers listed below. We would be happy to answer your questions and send you informational and enrollment materials.

TEEN HELP ADMISSIONS

1-800-637-0701

CROSS CREEK ADMISSIONS

1-800-818-6228

TEENS IN CRISIS

1-877-865-9935

TEEN SOLUTIONS

1-800-429-6099

PARENT RESOURCE HOTLINE

1-800-793-5156

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1-800-247-1696

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