

## Dear Friends of Elk Mountain Academy

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December 04, 2006

Elk Mountain Academy is celebrating its 13th year in the service of drug and alcohol addicted teens. We are always at work to improve the quality of our program, but this year we have added some particularly exciting innovations that we are proud to share with you.

**Therapeutics:** We recently hired a new therapist. Louie Ladenburger received his Master's degree in Counseling through Oregon State University and a doctorate in spirituality from University of California at Berkeley. He is also a licensed marriage and family therapist. Louie joins us after 22 years in Las Vegas where he was the clinical supervisor at a treatment center for drugs and alcohol and where he additionally maintained a private therapy practice. During his career Louie spent eight years working in a hospital servicing both alcohol/drug addiction and mental health patients. He is a licensed alcohol and drug counselor, a certified addictions specialist, and he is a clinical member of the Association for Addiction Professionals.

We have always had weekly private therapy sessions for our students, multiple opportunities for recreational therapy, and parent/student therapy sessions with Carl Olding when parents check in for visits with their sons. Now, however, with the addition of Louie as a therapist, we are able to provide more therapeutic support for our students than ever before. In addition to the services we have always provided, we now additionally offer weekly group therapy, twice weekly therapeutic education courses, and Carl and Louie are working together to offer quarterly parent workshops. The group therapy that Louie offers is primarily designed to address the need for belonging and friendship. In these groups, students are challenged to provide and receive feedback from their peers on their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. The group therapy that Carl provides is primarily designed to address problems associated with recovery, utilizing the AA 12-Step approach.

**Academics:** Our academic program is fully accredited by the state of Idaho and the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. While we are proud of the academic program, we understand the need to be constantly improving. In order to stay current, our textbooks are replaced on a five-year schedule. Other changes in our academic program have been evolving over the last year. The first change that we made was to increase the length of our academic day. We went from a four-hour school day to a six-hour school day in order to accommodate class time for therapeutic education, group therapy, and to give our students more time to accelerate the pace of their studies. We have added advanced placement courses in English, World History, and Calculus to provide our students with college preparatory curriculum. Additionally, we have developed and will begin a new SAT/ACT preparation course in January 2007. Most of our students ultimately plan to enter college, but we are still devoted to those for whom academics is a struggle and who need significant help to master the basic skills necessary for a high school diploma.

**General:** In addition to the academic and therapeutic innovations listed above, we have also made other advancements to our program. We eliminated our orientation period, recognizing that most of our students were coming to us having been through the transition that a wilderness

experience provides. Thus, we now place students immediately in the classroom and expect that they will succeed in the program from the outset. Our orientation phase used to double as an outlet for students who needed behavioral modification assistance and discipline. Now, we use a new program that we call the therapeutic labor crew (TLC). TLC provides an intervention for students who are not responding to classroom, house, or program responsibilities. Students on TLC have direct staff supervision on work projects designed to improve the school or assist others in the community.

We hope that you are as excited about the changes in our program as we are. If you have any questions about our program after reading this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us.