

Study Shows Outdoor Behavioral Therapy Helpful for Teens Struggling with Substance Abuse, Depression

Adolescent participants of clinically based and licensed wilderness treatment programs report reduced substance abuse and greater willingness to take corrective action.

Mesa, AZ (PRWeb) March 12, 2007 -- Teenagers with substance abuse issues significantly reduced their frequency of use after participating in clinically oriented wilderness treatment programs, according to a report published by the University of Minnesota-based Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative (OBHRC). Teen participants struggling with depression, anxiety and stress also showed marked improvement, and 90 percent of the program graduates interviewed reported a willingness to work actively on the issues that brought them to treatment. The findings are part of an OBHRC longitudinal research study of young people who completed an average of 49 days in outdoor behavioral healthcare programs.

A total of 872 adolescents were interviewed for the study. Approximately 75 percent of these were diagnosed with a substance abuse issue. One-fifth received a mental health diagnosis, and one-half of the adolescents were dual diagnosed with substance abuse and mental health concerns. Three-quarters of the study participants had tried some form of outpatient counseling prior to enrollment in an outdoor behavioral program.

"The study demonstrates that state-licensed and nationally accredited private outdoor behavioral health programs can positively inspire or motivate adolescents to actively think about why they use or abuse drugs or alcohol," said lead researcher and OBHRC director Keith C. Russell, Ph.D. "While we acknowledge that there is no overnight cure for substance abuse, these programs can provide an important first step for adolescents to address and overcome the often serious emotional and behavioral issues underlying their actions."

ANASAZI Foundation, a non-profit behavioral healthcare provider in Arizona, was one of five OBHRC-member programs involved in the study. "We are excited to participate in the important and ongoing research conducted by Dr. Russell and his team," said ANASAZI president Mike Merchant. "The recent findings, and others to be published this summer, underscore the effectiveness of outdoor behavioral healthcare providers who can offer evidenced-based psychotherapy, drug and alcohol counseling, parent education, social-skills training and other proven interventions -- all in a nurturing and caring environment. When outpatient therapy is unsuccessful, these programs can help facilitate change, strengthen families and even save lives."

ABOUT THE OBHRC

Established in 1999, the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative conducts evaluative research to improve the safety, service delivery and outcomes of outdoor behavioral healthcare programs. A comprehensive summary of OBHRC research will be published in June 2007. For more information, or to obtain a complete copy of the most recent OBHRC study, visit <http://www.obhrc.org/> or contact Dr. Russell at 612-626-4280.

ABOUT ANASAZI FOUNDATION

ANASAZI Foundation is a nonprofit (501c3), nationally recognized, licensed, and JCAHO-accredited behavioral healthcare provider. ANASAZI's menu of services includes a 42-day wilderness-based treatment program for youths ages 12-17 (including those often labeled as "troubled teens") and young adults ages 18-25, as well as parenting workshops, leadership and marriage courses, outpatient counseling, and community drug awareness and education forums. Visit <http://www.anasazi.org> for more information.

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Contact Information

SEAN ROURKE

ANASAZI FOUNDATION

<http://www.ansasazi.org>

480-892-7403

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