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Breaking News



Posted: Sep 3, 2007 20:23

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Ashby Academy Ashby, MA

Ashby Academy Closes

Contact:
Alfred Allen, Ph.D.
978-386-0055, Ext. 102
alfredal@worldpath.net

September 03, 2007

Regrettably, Michael and Lynn Beavers, the owners of Ashby Academy have announced that the school has closed its doors effective August 31, 2007. A less than expected enrollment for the fall of 2007 made it financially impossible for the organization to move forward. This occurred while the students were home on a scheduled vacation break.

The staff members have all been released, but former head of school Alfred Allen remains at the Academy tying up loose ends.

The shocked parents, in an outpouring of support and compassion have publicly acknowledged their respect and gratitude to the staff, administration and program. Several have expressed an interest in creating a transition fund to assist staff members who were displaced by the closing.

To date, about a quarter of the students have been placed in other schools, and referrals have been made for several more.

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September 05, 2007

I too am quite saddened, though not totally surprised, to hear of the abrupt closing of Ashby. Ashby was a program carefully crafted to fill an important service gap for younger boys with an NLD or AS profile who need therapeutic as well as educational supports but were still relatively vulnerable and naive compared to their higher risk peers.

Unfortunately, the quality and effectiveness of any private school or residential therapeutic program is not necessarily indicative of its financial stability, nor vice-versa.

As consultants, we must always remember that not only are private programs subject to financial/business realities, but private programs with a third-party "patron", silent partner or corporate backer are far more vulnerable than others. A further risk factor is that the very qualities that define many excellent educators and helping professionals make for poor business people so it is best to keep these roles separate and apart.

I formally advise my clients never to pay upfront in full, unless they can absolutely afford to walk away from the money and still fund another placement the same year if needed. My advice is that families stretch their payments over the maximum pay period, and consider the extra charge if any for so doing, a sort of "tuition insurance". Of course, if a school offers a tuition insurance plan (useful for midyear expulsions and sometimes withdrawals without refund as well), this is always the preferred route, especially for high risk learners.

The saddest part of all this is that even for those families who do locate and manage to afford another program this year, winning the hearts, minds and trust of these boys (and their folks) all over again will be a painful process.

Janyce Lastman LL.B.
Education Consultant, Case Manager
Toronto Canada
janycelastman@hotmail.com

September 04, 2007

I am heartbroken by the many tragedies that flow from the closing of Ashby Academy. The benefits that my son received from the loving care and instruction of each person at Ashby, from the headmaster to the school cook, cannot be valued in money. He has lost a refuge and he has lost his friends. I am saddened equally that some of the Ashby staff now find themselves in dire financial circumstances, including even eviction and application for food stamps, because no salaries have been paid in the last month.

It appears that we all are the victims of one person, the school owner Mike Beavers, who refused to share the school's financial affairs with staff and who evidently conducted those affairs in a slipshod and capricious, if not downright fraudulent, manner. I hope that the record remains clear that the failure of Ashby Academy lies squarely at his doorstep. Neither the school program nor any one of the school staff and employees failed my son in any way. If I had the resources, I would hire every single one of them and reconstruct the school closer to my home in Texas, where there is no comparable program of which I am aware.

I pray that someone who does have such resources will do just that. Ashby was a unique haven. I feel as if I have lost some of my family.

Etta Davidson
1107 Postoffice St
Galveston TX 77550
(409) 762-5813 home
ettadavidson@sbcglobal.net

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