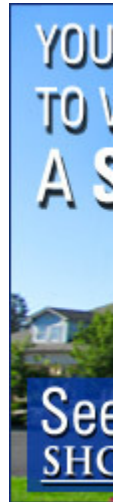


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## Mount Bachelor Academy Ordered to Temporarily Close



11/3/09

By Rachel Azevedo

A seven month investigation by the Oregon Department of Human Services finds nine substantiated findings of child abuse. Now the State has ordered a temporary closure of Mount Bachelor Academy, a therapeutic boarding school located 26 miles east of Prineville.

"We are asking parents to begin making arrangements for their children to leave, to be removed, from Mount Bachelor Academy," said Gene Evans, DHS public information officer.

The investigation began after DHS received complaints of abuse back in March. At the time, there were about 90 students from 14 to 17 years old. Mount Bachelor Academy is licensed as a therapeutic boarding school.

"A therapeutic boarding school, under the state license, can provide services for students who have a range of issues; behavioral issues or mental health issues," said Evans.

According to documents released by DHS, allegations initially stemmed from five students and focused on a mandatory program called "lifesteps." Some of the activities required students to reenact past traumatic events, including prior physical or sexual abuse. The investigation revealed all areas of instruction created an immediate threat to all students.

Mount Bachelor Academy issued a statement to KOHD, saying quote:

"We vigorously disagree with the state's findings... [The allegations are] not only erroneous but also create an unnecessary burden of distress and disruption for our students... We are quickly and aggressively pursuing legal options, including the possibility of a temporary restraining order."

The academy says it will request a formal hearing to contest the suspension. It has 90 days to implement new program guidelines in a dozen areas including behavior management and therapeutic services.

Mount Bachelor Academy is part of Aspen Educational Group which also runs SageWalk, the wilderness school based in Redmond that's currently under investigation for criminal death of a student who died while in the school's care.

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**November 2, 2009**

### **Background Information: Mt. Bachelor Academy**

#### **Children, Adults and Families Division, Oregon Department of Human Services**

Investigations conducted by the Oregon Department of Human Services at Mt. Bachelor Academy (MBA), a therapeutic boarding school located near Prineville, have resulted in nine substantiated findings of child abuse and neglect against the school's leadership and therapeutic program.

As a result of the abuse investigation and violations of Oregon's licensing standards, the state has ordered Mt. Bachelor Academy to temporarily cease all therapeutic, educational and residential services to children until further notice.

The abuse and neglect findings centered on the program as a whole, as well as the school's Executive Director, and involved five children who attended Mt. Bachelor Academy during 2007-2009. The results of the investigation are being provided to local law enforcement officials.

The investigation was conducted by the Office of Investigation and Training (OIT) at DHS. Investigators with OIT reported that all students at MBA were required to participate in "emotional growth" workshops, called Lifesteps, which included activities that were coercive, intimidating and humiliating -- including sexualized role play and reenactment of past traumatic events, such as prior physical or sexual abuse.

While the initial reports described concerns about Lifesteps, the investigation ultimately revealed serious safety concerns about MBA's curriculum and program as a whole. The experience of the five students was consistent with that of other children enrolled at the school. The report concluded that the experiences of "these five youth are exemplars of the program's treatment of its students as a whole."

As a result of the OIT investigation, DHS Children, Adults and Families Residential Treatment Services and Licensing found violations of state licensing standards for therapeutic boarding schools, and state officials will require MBA to cease providing therapeutic, educational and residential services to children.

The licensing program determined in its investigation that there are conditions present that immediately endanger the health and safety of the children enrolled at MBA. The program found that MBA's methods of educational instruction, emotional and behavioral intervention

and daily interaction with students create an immediate threat which places all children at risk of harm.

Further, the investigation revealed that MBA has subjected children to Lifestep workshops as a therapy technique that is harmful and damaging to their health or welfare. In addition, that MBA has not provided the therapeutic treatment necessary for children to overcome or improve with substance abuse issues, mental health issues, eating disorders and other issues, nor provided qualified staff to treat such conditions.

The substantiated incidents of abuse or neglect are shown below:

Mt. Bachelor Academy Executive Director neglected the care of four children by failing to ensure individualized and therapeutic treatment plans were developed to address past abuse and significant emotional and behavioral issues.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program abused a child in 2007 by requiring the child to engage in sexualized role play in front of staff and peers.

The Mount Bachelor program abused a second child in 2009 by requiring the child to make obscene and self-degrading comments out loud, in front of staff and peers. In addition, the Mount Bachelor program neglected the same child during 2008-2009 by failing to provide adequate medical care and supervision.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program neglected a third child in 2009, by failing to provide adequate supervision during an international trip.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program abused a fourth child in 2008 by requiring the child to engage in degrading activities such as acting out sexualized role play and physical abuse, and by being subjected to obscene and degrading comments by staff in front of other staff and peers.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program abused a fifth child during 2009 by requiring and/or permitting staff to use derogatory names, phrases, ridicule and harassment.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program neglected five children between 2007 and 2009 by failing to provide individualized treatment to meet their diagnosed mental health needs.

The Mount Bachelor Academy program abused five children between 2007 and 2009 by requiring them to engage in activities that were coercive, intimidating, harassing, and/or humiliating.

The substantiated incidents meet Oregon's legal definition of child abuse because they were inconsistent with recommended and appropriate treatment or care, used derogatory names/phrases, profanity, ridicule, harassment, coercion, and/or intimidation that was likely to endanger the child's health or welfare. In addition, the activities subjected children to a substantial risk of harm to their health or welfare, and the adults failed to supervise or intervene when the child needed assistance or care, in an activity that was likely to endanger their health or welfare.

An expert in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry consulted by DHS as part of the investigation concluded: "In general, coercive, degrading and humiliating treatment is harmful to young people, especially those with psychological vulnerabilities. Young people (male and female) who have been victims of abuse often hold themselves responsible for the abuse, and develop sexualized behavior for reasons they often don't understand. To confront them and humiliate them about these behaviors in an effort to force them to see themselves more clearly and consequently change their behavior can be very destructive. It has the risk of reinforcing self-blame and self-loathing attitudes already present in traumatized individuals. It is essentially retraumatizing."

Today's report also includes a substantiated allegation of child abuse against the Executive Director of MBA as "the individual responsible for delivery of therapeutic care to MBA students." In that role, the Executive Director "administers through staff an 'emotional growth' curriculum in which all students must participate regardless of their emotional, behavioral or mental health needs, and regardless of their own trauma histories. This curriculum is delivered by staff who are not trained to treat the broad range of issues the children bring, and who routinely degrade and humiliate them." The report concludes that the Executive Director, "knew or should have known what happens to students in [the] program."

Mt. Bachelor Academy is a licensed Therapeutic Boarding School, located in a rural area, 26 miles east of Prineville, Oregon, licensed originally in 1988. The school admits both male and female students who are from age 14 to 17.5 at the time of admission, although some children are admitted pursuant to an exception as young as age 13. The total capacity is 125 students and the average length of stay is 14-16 months. Tuition is \$6,400 a month with an additional up front, one time \$2,200 enrollment fee. Other service fees are not included. In 2008, Mt. Bachelor was reorganized and became a program of Aspen Education Group. Aspen was recently acquired by CRC Health Group, Inc. In March of 2009, MBA had approximately 77 staff and 88 boarding students.

Last March, the state received reports of child abuse against Mt. Bachelor Academy, initially concerning the Lifesteps program at MBA. OIT is a division of DHS that investigates allegations of abuse by paid staff in various therapeutic or treatment settings, and OIT handled the investigation of the reports of abuse at MBA. There were two investigators primarily assigned to go to Prineville and interview people on campus. In addition, the office used three other investigators to conduct witness interviews of people in- and out-of-state. The investigators conducted interviews involving 65 witnesses, including MBA students and staff, along with licensed therapists familiar with individual students. Investigators consulted with a medical expert certified in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and they reviewed documents and photographed materials used as part of the MBA therapy program.

At the same time, the DHS Licensing program investigated standards for health and safety and looked at the school's compliance with Oregon Administrative Rules related to their license as a therapeutic boarding school. Licensing notified MBA that they were prohibited from conducting their own investigation into the allegations of abuse reported to have occurred; prohibited from destroying or otherwise concealing school or student records; prohibited from disciplining or threatening discipline to students interviewed during the investigation; prohibited from conducting Lifesteps activities until further notice. Parents of students were notified of the investigation.

A "Therapeutic boarding school" is a program that is primarily a school and not a residential care agency (as defined in OAR 413-215-0506). Therapeutic boarding schools are licensed to provide both educational services and care to children for 24 hours a day and hold themselves out as serving children with emotional or behavioral problems by providing therapeutic services or assuring that children receive therapeutic services.

#### **Statement from Sharon Bitz, Executive Director, Mount Bachelor Academy**

Mount Bachelor Academy is deeply disappointed by the ruling of the Oregon Department of Human Services to temporarily cease all therapeutic, educational and residential services at the program.

We vigorously disagree with the state's findings. This surprising action, following seven months of cooperative work by Mount Bachelor with the state since the allegations surfaced, is not only erroneous but also creates an unnecessary burden of distress and disruption for our students and their families.

As a result, we are quickly and aggressively pursuing legal options, including the possibility of a Temporary Restraining Order request. A TRO would at the very least give our families additional time to make orderly and appropriate arrangements for any child in need of immediate therapeutic services.

In addition, we are analyzing the details of the state report, and will request a formal hearing to contest the suspension order.

For over 20 years, Mount Bachelor Academy has enjoyed a solid reputation as a quality, accredited therapeutic boarding school for teens with behavioral, emotional or motivational problems or special learning needs.

We remain proud of Mount Bachelor's record of life-changing, positive results for young people in our care, and confident in the professional conduct of our staff and leadership who have committed their careers to making a difference in the lives of young people and their families. Mount Bachelor has been recognized for comprehensive therapeutic best practices and safety protocols, and has independent verification of its success through participation in third-party outcome studies with oversight by the Western Institutional Review Board.

Throughout the state inquiry, we have been heartened by the overwhelming support from Mount Bachelor Academy alumni and current students and families. More than 100 individual letters and a letter with roughly 200 signatures were filed with the Oregon DHS in support of our school.

Comments

Closing MBA

Tue, 11/03/2009 - 8:14pm — craigster

This is a travesty. The school has been kept in the dark about the allegations for months while the detractors have had a field day. It had died down in recent months, now it will start all over again. All parents with troubled teens should take heed that a few misfits can wreak havoc on your attempts to heal your child. These allegations were brought on at a time when Oregon DHS/OIT was facing budget cuts, now they have a new battle to suck up public funds. Oregon citizens should be ashamed and hold their government officials accountable in the next elections, oh how surprising that's today.

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Someone needs to remain vigilant.

Tue, 11/03/2009 - 8:37pm — RichardLWitt

I've never so much as set foot near MBA. But having witnessed firsthand the nearly tragic effects this school has had on at least one life, I can't imagine that a thousand or ten-thousand letters of support could or should make any difference. To that end, for a school that has been in existence that long with so many graduates to only have had that much support I say, why?

Please, like granddad used to say; "if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck and craps like a duck"...well you get the point. How many children, and this is about children, have to be damaged; either physically or psychologically before someone says enough?

It would appear from the various news stories and postings that the school does have extensive

experience in restraining, to that end they may be confused as to exactly what a "TRO" is. Their legal team should let them know that it is NOT a new type of student disciplinary measure.

It is my hope that the school is closed, too much harm appears to have been done, why should it be allowed to continue? As to the individuals responsible, sooner or later they will have to answer for what they have done. Anyone see the movie, Sleepers? Sooner or later your judgment comes. " I just wish I could shut my eyes, and not see the places I've been." For a good friend I hope this brings some closure, no one person should ever have to carry such pain in their very soul that you can see when you look in their eyes.

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Temporary Restraining Order? Are you serious?

Tue, 11/03/2009 - 8:58pm — seanturtledove

Any judge that would issue a TRO (against who, the DHS?) in the wake of nine substantiated child abuse allegations is, frankly, bought off. I don't think Aspen owns any judges in Oregon. I could be wrong.

"Sexualized role play"? You can guess what that means, as I won't describe it on KOHD's site. Think about the repercussions if an actual teacher tried that in the public school system. "Retraumatizing" is a gentle word here.

Child abuse is a crime for a reason. The executive director should be put in jail pending his own hearing. Front line staff involved should also be prosecuted. And any parent who knew that this was being done to their children should be right along with them.

Considering the recent death at Sagewalk, also owned by Aspen Education Group, a serious case could be made for RICO charges.

But what we're going to see, at least until the prosecution and permanent license revocation begins, is Aspen desperately waving the "freedom" flag (oh, the irony) and astroturfing like crazy to give the impression that everyone in the community believes that their vicious, pedophilic acts are normal and should be left alone.

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truth hurts

Tue, 11/03/2009 - 9:11pm — violet76

a thousand positive experiences do not take a way the pain of the few of us that were NOT treated equally or fairly, or dare i say, even humanely.

opinions do not change the law.

thank you for making this public.

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Due process

Tue, 11/03/2009 - 10:20pm — arc

When you are in the business of locking people up with no process whatsoever, you really do not have any right to complain that your business was shut down without as much process as you'd like. The police do not watch people commit murder, then go to court, and then make arrests; if they see a murder about to be committed, they intervene, make the arrest, and then go to court. The same principle applies here, with added irony.

Just be glad that you're not being locked away and made to re-enact the closure of your "academy."

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On some forgotten highway traveled by many & remembered by few

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 12:39am — John Denver

I remember.

I went to MBA from 1991 to 1993. I do not understand how the school can fight this. The nine incidents of abuse named by the DHS are exactly what went on when I was there. It wasn't all bad but I still have nightmares about the place.

I was a so-called leader in the school. That was part of the program, kids who had been there a while were often in charge of new kids. The older kids were expected to pressure the new ones. The staff called it "taking responsibility." How could I take responsibility? I was fifteen! Kids can't take responsibility. So I don't feel ashamed when I look back, I just feel helpless.

I didn't go home for over a year while I was a student there. The MBA staff were my role models. Effectively my parents. I learned some good stuff from them. I also learned an arrogant sort of self-righteousness I've had to try to unlearn. I thought of that when these allegations first came out in April. Sharon Bitz rushed to slander the student who first spoke up. A pamphlet by the Oregon Department of Health Services advises: "How do I respond to a child who reports abuse to me? ...Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child. Believe the child if she/he reports sexual abuse. It is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse." The director of a Therapeutic School should know that. Sharon's first



concern, whether the incident was reported to her or indirectly, should have been the child's well being—to act as the student's advocate. To call the child unreliable, a liar? That stinks.

Sharon Bitz should have the courage to take responsibility for what went on at MBA.

Sweet surrender, says the song.

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## Vindication

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 1:02am — oldmanmook

Having been a student at this school during its first 4 years of opening, it's hard to describe my reaction to this news. Elated? Relieved? Perhaps vindicated is the best word to describe it. Though I did learn some useful tools and behavioral modification techniques, those pale in comparison to the horrible memories I carry with me, suppressed for years until I began working through them very recently.

I arrived at the school a very young, scared, self-loathing, 12 year old girl, who had already attempted suicide 3 times. I was stripped of the drop of self-esteem I had there, in the school's process commonly known as "tearing the student down in order to build them back up". When I arrived at MBA, I was on very strong prescription psychiatric medication. I met with a licensed psychiatrist twice during my 3 1/2 year stay. Once in the registration process, and one more time 6 months later. There were many times where the staff were "unable" or "forgot" to refill my medication, which, among other things, greatly affects the brain chemistry, as well as induces withdrawal symptoms. During the "lifesteps", I was not allowed to take my medication, was only allowed 2-3 hours sleep, was forced to perform physical "emotional growth" acts to the point of exhaustion, was strongly encouraged, on a regular basis, to scream until my face was covered with purple spots of burst blood vessels, was consistently told I was "worthless, manipulative, a whore, a slut, a spoiled brat, unwanted by my parents" and other names I don't care to share. I was 12 years old. The staff allowed other, older students to call me similar names while I was on a "self study" for kissing a boy, who was 4 years older than I. During the 3 month self study, I was not allowed to look at or talk to anyone, sat in a desk facing the wall in the dining area, was given writing assignments, of which 90% were about the "negative" aspects of my "soul" and personality--I still have 3 of those journals.

When I attended MBA, NONE of the staff were licensed in any mental health/child welfare/psychological areas. In fact, Sharon Bitz, now the Executive Director of the school, was hired as a Drama teacher in my second year at MBA.

I understand that others have had positive experiences at MBA, and I think that is great. The mental, and physical, abuse, the stripping down of my self-esteem, the pure negativity of my experience, however, has haunted my for over 15 years, and shaped me as a person for much of those years until I began to work through the issues brought on by MBA. For a few years after leaving MBA, I reached out to the staff for guidance and support in the very rough transition back into the "real world". On MBA's website, it is stated that every student who leaves MBA has "24 hour" access to staff support, and that the staff make it a "priority" to be available for the students. Not one of my calls were returned, not one of my letters were answered. It has been said by both professionals and fellow students that perhaps the staff were aware and "ashamed" at the way I was treated. That would be fine, except the main focus of the school is to take responsibility for your actions, but it seems that does not apply to the staff who enforce that. I also do not think it is a coincidence that more than 10 former students, 3 in my own peer group, have committed suicide or fatally overdosed on drugs.

My experience at MBA may be unique, and unlike any other student there. Yet reliving what I have not completely blocked out is incredibly painful; even as I write this, I have a lump in my throat and knots in my stomach. I was young, probably too young to be there. Yet I was accepted, and was subsequently treated as if I was similar to the other students, the average age being 16.

There is more to tell, unfortunately, but I think this entry has made my point sufficiently. I have stayed silent for far too long. I am more than willing to testify, under oath, and tell my story. Someday, I may even write a book, in detail, of my experience there.

So yes, I do feel vindicated.

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## I also went to this school

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 1:21am — cborgeson

I also went to this school from June 2001-August 2002. While there were many great people who worked for this school, I can honestly say that none of the allegations are false... I too had to take part in these "Lifesteps," and was forced to watch some of my best friends be made to do strip teases in the infamous "french maid costume", while the staff had all the other students yelling out derogatory comments... while the school has helped many children, at the same time, they also gave them plenty more complexes to worry about after the program. I can admit to being a difficult child, however, it does not warrant the different "methods" they use to "fix" problematic children, or at least this is what they lead the parents to believe. I've had this conversation with my own parents thousands of times, who sit there and claim that it saved my life... in some ways it did, in others, NOT SO MUCH--considering that I ended up in another program less than a year later. The thing that saved my life, was maturity... not always doing everything that I feel like doing. staying out of trouble... turning 18 definitely saved my life. the one thing I took away

from that experience was that I am not a VICTIM. I'm a SURVIVOR. They couldn't take my spunk, passion for life, nor my dignity... no matter how hard they tried... I don't know how to feel really, but I think that a temporary closure is at the very LEAST a step in the right direction.

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### EXPOSE THE MBA CULT !!!

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 2:55am — wdtony

Way to go Oregon Department of Human Services!!! Another brainwashing camp has been exposed. Thank God the government is getting involved, Thank You for your intervention! I can see how someone not familiar with these types of programs might not understand how damaging these programs are. I can attest that programs that use the type of "therapy" that MBA claims to use is damaging and is not rooted in science.

So many kids are crushed by these programs secretly and the fact that some people vehemently support these programs only shows the cult-like nature of the program and the very real effects of brainwashing that occurs when the child's environment is controlled and is constantly in a state of torment, pressured to conform or submit.

I was brainwashed in a program called Kids Helping Kids, originally a STRAIGHT INC. program. That program damaged me for life. Don't let these scammers like MBA damage your kids like I was.

Stop The Hidden Abuse! Shut down MBA and take Sharon Bitz to Jail!

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### Lifesteps on Trial

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 5:42am — blombrowski

"The experience of the five students was consistent with that of other children enrolled at the school. The report concluded that the experiences of "these five youth are exemplars of the program's treatment of its students as a whole."

Translation - they were only able to substantiate (i.e. prove beyond a reasonable doubt likely through interviews with the victim and first-hand witnesses) cases of child abuse that would stand up in court to a legal review. They probably suspect that every student at the school was abused, but they have solid evidence on these nine counts. Don't buy for a second the angry kids with a vendetta line, it was probably the staff at the school who mistook what was really abuse for what they were told was therapy that gave DHS all the evidence they needed.

"In that role, the Executive Director "administers through staff an 'emotional growth' curriculum in which all students must participate regardless of their emotional, behavioral or mental health needs, and regardless of their own trauma histories."

Translation - The entire Lifesteps curriculum at MBA has been found by DHS to be on its face abusive.

Frankly, DHS has done their job where so many other licensing agencies have either turned a blind eye, or have been intimidated by the legal action that they're about to face. So kudos to them, and frankly and properly the advocacy community has been kept in the dark about this investigation as much as MBA claims they have. DHS did their professional duty, plain and simple.

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### MBA

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 12:38pm — truthhurtsmba

My son was there during the same time you were. Could you contact us at [seginc@cox.net](mailto:seginc@cox.net). His name is Houston and he ran away to avoid returning to MBA....his father had put him there against my wishes. I made complaints with DHS at the time and spoke to Sharon Bitz about the problems in the school. Houston came home to us as soon as he was of legal age to do so. Please let us hear from you.

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### responsibility

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 1:03pm — anonymousgraduate

i went to mba. in my experience most of the staff there, the ones responsible for these abuses, were trying to help. if what was going on was abuse it was out of pride and ignorance, not cruelty. intent matters. none of the staff were getting rich, most of them were over-worked, several have made this their life works. i def saw these abuses go down in the lifesteps and can also say that the staff responsible for them were compassionate and loving people, just misguided. i hope that understanding is reflected in any related criminal investigations. and that the company and CEOs behind mba are held accountable too. and that someone investigates how this went on for so long, the school was committing these kinds of crimes before Sharon Bitz got there.

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### commendation and correction

Wed, 11/04/2009 - 1:49pm — hurleygurley

I am enormously relieved that the DHS in Oregon was able to understand that severe child abuse can happen without visible scars. I've been investigating Aspen Education's 30 odd behavior modification



"troubled teen" programs for 5 years. I was prompted to do this when a friend of my son's was sent to one of their programs in Utah. Being in the mental health field with a background in business reporting and research I dug in and found that all of their programs operate in a cookie cutter fashion regarding their so called treatment. Mount Bachelor's treatment happens to be called "Lifesteps" (I believe Aspen bothered to trademark this process.) Other programs refer to their treatment protocol as the points and level system. The levels change names but the abuse is the same.

I want to insert a correction here which may seem petty but I believe it is significant. You reported that MBA opened in 1988, reorganized in 2008 as an Aspen Ed. program and the acquired by CRC. Actually, MBA was Aspen's flagship program. I quote from MBA's website: "MBA History

1988-1989 The Pioneers: In 1987, educator Linda Houghton was approached by Barry Weiss, of College Health Enterprises, who, owning several health facilities, understood that adolescents in crisis were often unsuccessful in making lasting life changes in traditional treatment centers. They agreed to create a learning environment, which would educate the whole person, academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

With continued support from CHE, Linda Houghton brought her vision of education, excellent dedication, and a team of committed pioneers: Dennis Crowell, Academy Director; Jeannie Crowell, Dean of Academics; Jane Stewart, Director of Admissions; Steve Houghton, Wilderness and History Teacher; Alexandru Bitz, Theatre Arts Teacher ; Pat Brown, Science and Math Teacher; Cec DeClerk, Teacher; Kathy Carter, Executive Assistant; Judy Burgen, Bookkeeper. All were mentors, drivers, cooks, builders; wilderness scouts and in a word - pioneers.

After a few difficulties with permits and the local community of Powell Butte, Linda Houghton decided to build at Mark's Creek Lodge in the Ochoco National Forest. Skilled workers like Clint and Jodi Brooks, Brook Hilton and others began dismantling the old hunting lodge and commenced the process of building classrooms, kitchen, dining room and dorms. With the arrival of our first student, Tori Clark, others soon followed in time for our first Summer Leadership Intensive, which included: Theatre, Biology, Wilderness, English Composition and more.

Under the direction of Linda Houghton, Executive Director, the founding members established the fundamentals of MBA: Mission, classes, schedules, the first emotional growth workshops (Lifesteps), rules and agreements, etc. Educational Consultants like Alice Jackson, Virginia Reiss, Miriam Bodin, Anita Targan, Martha Kolbe, Diane Albrecht, Teri Solocheck, Ann Carol Price, Paula Feldman and others were of tremendous help with visits, advice and referrals.

With the Summer Intensive Graduation, parent workshops, five high school graduates, new staff joining the school, first edition of The Looking Glass, more referrals and visits from professionals, new buildings completed and many other historical firsts, Mt. Bachelor Academy was established. The long exciting hours of work, the commitment and talents of staff members and the forming of a strong student peer group culture resulted in a warm and close-knit community where learning and personal growth flourished.

1990-1993 The Builders: This period of MBA's evolution was characterized by the continuous building on campus, a metaphor for the development of the Emotional Growth Curriculum which occurred simultaneously. This process of readjusting, reevaluating and establishing and identity was constant. Linda Houghton and Alex Bitz (Academy Director) were the team behind the creation of one of MBA's very unique aspects the second year of the Emotional Growth Curriculum Lifesteps. These workshops are specifically created to provide opportunities for students to apply their skills and knowledge outside of the MBA campus and to assist them in understanding their role and generalizing their skills to the larger community. These intensives focus on each student's responsibility for the present and preparation for his or her future. The Academy graduated its first class in December 1990.

In the three years from 1990-1993, people like Jane Stewart, Jeannie Crowell, Jeff Johnson, Sarah Koalkin (Persha), Bill Hoffman, Sharon Hunter (Bitz), and Janine Riehl (LePere) were also instrumental in refining and maintaining the quality of the Emotional Growth Curriculum.

The Academics Department grew under the supervision of Jeannie Crowell. Teachers like Jeem Peterson, Science and Math; David Miller, Political Science and general studies; Terilynn, English and Drama; Harold Brasington, English; Steve Houghton and Dave LePere, Wilderness; and others brought creativity and a higher level of integrity to experiential academics. All of this expansion was supported by the people who fed the machine: Naty Zamora, Kitchen Manager; Alvin Jones, Maintenance Manager, Susie Carroll, JoDee Welty (Fitzgerald), Kelli Hoffman, and so many others dedicated to the service of children's needs.

1993-1997 The Keepers: Until 1997, under the leadership of Tim Brace, Executive Director, who joined MBA in 1993, the school became a dynamically functioning program. We sailed through our accreditation

process, developed training for staff members and refined procedures for how things should be done in all areas to ensure the safety of students and staff members.

1997- NOW The Learners: In May, 1997, Sharon Bitz became Executive Director and for the past 11 years our commitment has been to continually enrich our curricula and services through reassessment and the infusion of evidence based practices.

In 1998, with the active involvement of the President, Elliot Sainer, our parent company College Health Enterprises formed a separate company, Aspen Youth Services (whose name was changed to Aspen Education Group), which has provided us with a partnership of support and services for adolescents, families and educators. While we continuously strive for the school to remain vital and dynamic and to evolve where it is warranted, we never lose sight of the need to hold fast to the original vision, philosophy and mission of this school community."

I also refer you to Oregon's Secretary of State Corporation Division website record for MBA:  
[http://egov.sos.state.or.us/br/pkg\\_web\\_name\\_srch\\_inq.show\\_detl?p\\_be\\_rsn=...](http://egov.sos.state.or.us/br/pkg_web_name_srch_inq.show_detl?p_be_rsn=...)

I emphasize this point because MBA seems to have served as the template, being their first program and that they are implicated in this disgusting exploitation of children for extraordinary profit from the get go.

Thank you so very much for covering this story. I hope it gets an even wider audience. I thank those who came forward to testify. I hope the same happens regarding other programs Aspen's and lots of others. So many abused children from these programs don't bother reporting emotional abuse because of the pervasive attitude that if there aren't scars there wasn't abuse

Thank you so very much for covering this story. I hope it gets an even wider audience. I thank those who came forward to testify. I hope the same happens regarding other programs Aspen's and lots of others. So many abused children from these programs don't bother reporting emotional abuse because of the pervasive attitude that if there aren't scars there wasn't abuse. They are not believed and/or they have been brainwashed to believe that they are inherently bad kids and deserve what they get. Some naively believe that what they experienced was appropriate treatment.

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