

From: M.S.

Sent: Tuesday, September 07, 2004 6:38 PM

To: heal@heal-online.org

Subject: My rights were violated by Aspen Achievement Academy

I am 26 years old and was held prisoner at Aspen Achievement Academy for 2 and a half months in the winter of 1994. I had no idea that this program was still operating, as I had heard while at another program that a child had died there, but apparently that is not the case.

While at Aspen, I was forcibly deprived of food and made to hike long distances for the first 72 hours of my stay. At one point, I threw myself in a ditch and tried to cut my wrists with a mildly sharp rock that I found, during which time I was laughed at by my "counselors." Also, during this period I was suffering from extreme heroin and cocaine withdrawal, that had left me at a weight of only 130 lbs, and was never allowed to see a doctor, or provided with any medical treatment for my extreme pain and nausea; I collapsed almost unconscious on the second day, and was dragged by my "pack" strap for almost a mile, while being constantly derided by my "counselors." We were made to carry packs weighing up to 100lbs, which were made of only a camping tarp tied together with a seatbelt strap. After my two months without drugs, I had gained no weight whatsoever due to the lack of nourishing food.

The horror that I and my fellow captives suffered over that hellish period is more deserving of a treatment by Solzhenitsyn than by me, but for the sake of brevity I will tell anyone thinking of sending their child to this program to consider that I still, 10 years later have nightmares of Aspen, and what they put us through. My childhood effectively ended that day in my fifteenth year, when I arrived at Aspen Achievement Academy.