



Scotts Valley School Rumor Mill

UPCOMING FAMILY SEMINAR DATES

The Nov 2011 Family Seminars will be held at the Big-K Guest Ranch and Lodge in Elkton, Oregon. For information about these Seminars and registration, please contact Dr. Thomas via email at david@scottsvalleyschool.com. Reservations for and information about the Big-K Ranch are available on the web at big-K.com.

Attendance for parents and siblings over 14 years of age is highly recommended. The skills learned and practiced in these Seminars are powerful in improving the way your family functions and living and inspiring life.

Family Quest Seminar: November 2, 3, 4

Family Focus Seminar: November 7, 8, 9

Seminar dates beyond the above will be announced after these seminars are completed.

Please note that these Seminars are not intended to provide an opportunity to visit students who are not ready and recommended for a family visit. Please speak with your Family Representative regarding student readiness before making any arrangements.

OUR STUDENTS ARE LIKE CHOCOLATE CAKE

*By David Thomas, Psy.D
Executive Director*

I have the best job in the world. I get to work with creative, inspiring, passionate, loving, giving teens and their parents. The families I serve are all so blessed with such powerful learning opportunities. Many other families seem to roll smoothly through life, and somehow those that I get to work with have chosen a higher, often more thorny, path. It's truly an honor to associate with families willingly taking the highest road they can find under adverse circumstances, often at a tremendous emotional and financial price.

And when their children who are enrolled with us show the beginning signs of choosing the high road, parents

understandably rejoice in the apparent turn-around. That's a situation I compare to baking a chocolate cake.

Chocolate cakes tend to smell so good and look so good well before they're ready to take out of the oven. The same holds true with our students. Long before they're ready to ply their newly rediscovered creativity, inspiration, passion, love, and giving traits, they will look ready to take home. It's so tempting to take the cake out of the oven just as it starts to look good and smell good. And like a perfect chocolate cake, students who look ready, but aren't, stand an extremely high chance of collapsing. They're in a phase we call "looks good, ain't good."

The courage to keep the greatness they've rediscovered is obligatory to a students' success at home. And it's virtually impossible to copy the safe boundary system at Scotts Valley, at home. Students with us aren't tempted to do the silly and dangerous things they will be tempted with when they return to their regular schools and neighborhoods. Our boundary system is specifically designed to protect our students and yet provide the flexibility and room they need to freely grow and clean up any messes they've made. Transition back into even the most observant home boundary system takes preparation. That preparation is found in phases 4 and 5.

We've had way too many situations in which parents have taken their child home only to have them collapse and return back to us. And almost every student who was taken home on a home visit before reaching the appropriate level has returned and moved back to wearing a red shirt. It feels like such home visits, or going home too early, are at the expense of the students rather than for them.

It may sound self-serving for me to emphasize that the work our students are engaged in often takes longer than parents would like because it may come across as my wanting to keep enrollment up. The truth is that if I were in this for the money I'd still be a practicing professional engineer, which meant a lot less stress, less hours of work, and more time playing with my own family. We tend to have more enrollment demand than we can handle anyway. We're picky about who we enroll.

Some home visits may be necessary to test for potential weaknesses in a student's courage, but those which are scheduled in order to match family vacation time, the

beginning of a school term, Christmas, or anything less important than the survival of the student, are not supported. I've had a number of students whose parents insisted it was time for them to return home break down and beg their parents to let them finished. They become passionate about owning their lives.

Our goals and commitment remain to honor the success of our students. Parents have the authority and right to take their children home wherever they wish.

If you insist on taking your cake out of the oven, you may do so. But just as a collapsed chocolate cake cannot be repaired by simply returning it to the oven, students who collapse when removed from the structure in our facility tend to return a month or more behind where they were when they left. If that sounds okay, then it's up to you.

The price I pay for doing what I love is that I get to tell people things they don't like to hear. I and my staff can always be counted on to stand for the greatness in our students, even if it doesn't feel good. Please honor the hard work your child has been doing with us by letting them complete this powerful and challenging task. They will look back on this accomplishment with justifiable pride which will help them over and over again when the going in life gets bumpy.

PHASE 3 PITFALLS FOR PARENTS

*By Mary Warren
Director of Admissions*

Phase 3 is that magical phase when your child is looking and feeling REALLY GOOD!! This is the phase when us as parents start feeling like...hmmm....maybe he/she IS ready to come back home. He/she is doing great ...not asking to come home anymore, saying all the right things, being very accountable for their former behavior that got them sent to Scotts Valley in the first place. They are writing amazing letters to their family and friends...The staff is telling you that they are seeing a lot of great progress in them. It seems to you that they have GOTTEN IT!!! When in fact....they are just STARTING to get it....This is the phase where the child is really coming into their own and really learning about themselves...Who they really are and what they really want. They have gotten past all of the negative feelings and behaviors that they were hiding behind and have finally gotten to the point in themselves that is REAL! Sure we want them home...however, the pitfall is that they simply aren't ready for the "real" world yet. They have just attained an important milestone in their program (Phase 3) and can now start to see themselves as leaders and really start feeling a sense of accomplishment and pride in what they have achieved. They are really learning coping skills, self-respect, self love, accountability, and have become very humble. It is an amazing phase to see them get to.

They are now really looking at the upper phases and are driving hard to reach them. This is a very difficult time for us as parents because we miss them and want them home so bad, but it is the most dangerous time to bring them home. I look at it like taking out the Christmas turkey just an hour or so to soon...It sure looks pretty but when you cut into it and isn't fully done yet.

I have been where you are as parents with two of my own children and I felt the same way when they reached phase 3. I wanted them home in the worst way. I told myself all of the stories about how I wanted them home for the holidays, birthdays, etc, and I will say that I am very thankful that the staff talked me out of it. And, after my children were home for a few months I did ask them what they would have thought about me bringing them home early and here is the statement they both made to me:

"we would have loved to come home at first but then we would have been mad at you for not allowing us to finish and would have wondered why you didn't believe in us enough to allow us to stay."

If you find yourself at this point...first know that it's very normal...we all love our kids and want them home...just try and keep the bigger picture in mind. They will have many, many, many holidays and birthdays in their lives, this is a very short period when you look at how long they will be on this earth.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT BEING ACCOUNTABLE

By Jesse, 18

Hello! My name is Jesse and I've been out at the school here for quite some time now. I came here half way through my Junior year and did not have any credits for it. Besides being far behind in school, my relationships with friends and family were only getting worse. I cannot even describe in words what this program has done for me and will continue to do for me long after I return home.

Coming to Scotts Valley has set the foundation for the rest of my life. I am no longer depressed, I am almost graduated from high school, and I have simply chosen to live my life to the fullest. It's not because Scotts Valley has actually changed me, it is because I have gained many tools that have made me very strong emotionally, which is the complete of what I was before. I am now able to openly talk to my parents about what is going on in my life and what I am planning on doing in my future. I turned eighteen around six months ago and many newer kids asked "why do you not just go home?" It is simple. I have made goals for myself that I would never give up on no matter what, and the second reason is one that crosses my mind daily.

Of course I'd love to go home, but this is not just about me. I am an only child, and it was a very hard choice for my parents to send me here. At first, I did not even want to talk to them, but as I progressed in the program, I saw that they were only caring about me more than anybody had my whole life.

This program is just like everything else in life. If you put all your effort into it, then it will change your life, but if you hesitate and are not willing to make the commitment, then life will pass you by. I simply got tired of watching life pass me by and made the choice to put all my effort into everything that I do.

Something I'd like every parent struggling with their child to look at is this: Think of one word that you would use to describe them. Unloving" Hurtful" You might even tell yourselves sometimes that you do not have the same kid that you had when they were younger. I can only say this because these are the feelings that my parents had when I was at home. It is never too late to take the higher road. My parents had tried many things before. I attended a wilderness camp, I have been admitted to a mental rehabilitation center twice, and even had counseling for over two years. My parents could have easily thought I was just a lost cause and not have tried anything different, but thankfully they did. Scott's Valley has changed my life, as well as my parents lives for ever, and it can do the same for you. Thank you for your time.

FEEDBACK PLEASE!!

Please give us your feedback about any articles, clarification, or information you would like to see presented in future newsletters. We will be creating a new newsletter monthly, with the purpose of improving what we do, improving communication, and in creating success for the families we serve. Please post requests by email to newsletter@scottsvilleyschool.com.

Thank You!!!