



A National Program for Psychiatric
Treatment and Education of Adolescents

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Summer 2003

News from the Office of Admissions

Healthy Scoop of ‘Dairy Queen Therapy’ Melts Anger



All of us in the business of working with people need affirmation from time to time that our efforts—individually and collectively—can have a powerful and life-changing effect on the individuals we are trying to help. Along these lines, I would like to share with you the story of Jonathan, who was a brash and brazen 13-year-old when he came to CBR about nine years ago. Like so many cases today, he was adjudicated on a half-dozen status offenses, including truancy, defiance, aggression, running away, and other problems. On his first day at Colorado Boys Ranch, he made his presence known by using a rock to scratch a line across the entire length of my brand new car. Observing the scratch, I resolved that Jonathan had not seen or heard the last of me.

In the weeks and months that followed, Jonathan’s defiance took a new turn; he would simply not talk. Despite all my attempts, Jonathan remained mute. We knew, of course, that he could speak just fine. In fact, he frequently would voice his displeasure with a string of curse words. However, once he set foot in CBR’s counseling offices, he clammed up, except to mutter an occasional “I donno” and “huh”.

It was time to pull out the stops. I read and re-read Jonathan’s history, and I studied his behavior patterns. I watched everything he did and would listen to his fluid command of cuss words and deeply troubled angry responses. I consulted with our professional team and studied the effects of his medications. Finally, I hit upon an idea.

During our next meeting, I observed Jonathan, as usual, slouched in the office chair, giving me his occasional glance. After welcoming him, I announced that I was headed to the Dairy Queen in a neighboring town and offered to take him along. He readily followed me to my scratched car. Our first trip was essentially uneventful, although after slurring down his soon-to-be routine

double chocolate cookie dough ice cream shake, he seemed to gaze out the window in wonderment.

Our weekly “Dairy Queen Therapy” sessions continued throughout the remainder of Jonathan’s treatment. During our trips together, I learned a great deal about Jonathan. Not only was he hurt and angry—emotions evident in the vandalism of my car and in his verbal outbursts—Jonathan was desperately yearning for a sense of belonging, acceptance and recognition. It was during these trips that Jonathan found his voice. He began asking questions that reflected his wonder of life. He asked how birds fly and why water was blue. He wondered why he had been hurt as a child and why others picked on him. He asked about his parents and brothers and sisters. Aside from his delight in the double chocolate cookie dough ice cream shakes, Jonathan’s spirit was awakening. His behaviors eventually calmed down and his school grades improved. He learned to talk to, rather than argue with, his father.

In time, Jonathan successfully completed his treatment, was discharged from CBR, and returned to his father. I personally escorted him home—in the scratched car, which had become a fitting symbol of our journey together.

Nine years later and after a few too many Dairy Queen visits myself, I received a call

CBR “On Location”

This fall, Animal Planet cable television channel will feature separate half-hour documentaries on two of the Ranch’s animal-assisted therapy programs. CBR boys and therapists will appear in a new program, titled “Adoption Tales,” focused on the Ranch’s “New Leash on Life” dog-training and adoption program. A second documentary, which centers on boys caring for a mare and colt in the Horsemanship Program, will air on “That’s My Baby.” The production crew spent about 10 days at CBR in April, May and June filming the segments. Be sure to check your TV listings this fall for program air dates.

from Jonathan and his father. He told me he works for a roofing company and lives at home, taking care of his ailing father. I spoke to his father who is slowly succumbing to lung disease. Their lives together have not been without the usual ups and downs, yet the two have learned to help each other and to rebuild their father-son relationship. “You just made my Dad’s day,” Jonathan told me after receiving the phone back from his father. Toward the end of the conversation, I asked him why he had called in the first place.

“Remember when we would go to Dairy Queen and you told me you were glad I found my voice?” he asked. “In the days that followed, riding with you in your scratched car, with my double chocolate cookie dough ice cream shake, I also found my life.”

— Martin Masar, Director of the Office of Admissions and Clinical Affairs

Welcome to the Summer Edition

The Colorado Boys Ranch Office of Admissions Newsletter is sent to you at no cost as our way of sharing our news and views, and providing you with a glimpse of life at CBR.

As always, we love hearing from you! We appreciate your opinions, thoughts and comments. Contact CBR Director of the Office of Admissions and Clinical Affairs Martin Masar at cbrclinical@ria.net, cbradmission@ria.net or 1-800-790-4993.

About Colorado Boys Ranch

Colorado Boys Ranch (CBR) has been helping troubled teenage boys for more than 40 years. Located on a 320-acre campus in southeastern Colorado, CBR is a fully accredited, nationally recognized psychiatric residential treatment and education facility that provides 24-hour care. Each year, more than 120 boys, ages 10-21, from all ethnic, cultural, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds are admitted to Colorado Boys Ranch. Many come from caring families where the boy is troubled by a medical disorder, childhood trauma and/or negative peer group influences. Others are referred to CBR following years of abuse or neglect. What they have in common are behavioral, psychiatric, school and community problems that other, less intensive, settings were unable to treat.

A professional intake team reviews all referrals to determine appropriateness of placement at CBR. This thorough evaluation process helps referral agencies, parents and physicians identify those boys who will most benefit from CBR's intensive treatment and educational services.

CBR staff members include doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers, residential counselors, recreational counselors and support staff who are experienced, educated and well trained.

CBR's Treatment Approaches

Our approach to treatment includes:

Family Therapy. At CBR, family involvement in all aspects of a boy's treatment is extremely important. We encourage family members to accompany their child at the time of admission and, as clinically appropriate, welcome them to visit as often as possible. Our goal is to help the boy and his family achieve a healthy and successful reunion. At the time of discharge, we support families by assisting with the development of aftercare and "wrap-around" services, such as counseling, special education services, vocational training and medication management.

Intensive Psychotherapies. Individual and group therapies are a major treatment component. Psychotherapies are designed to match each boy's unique circumstance. Rather than using a standardized—one size fits all—treatment model, CBR therapists make sure treatment fits the specific needs of each boy. CBR also offers a wide range of animal-assisted therapy programs.

Education – Applied Learning. At CBR, academic learning occurs inside and outside the classroom, and in a variety of traditional and non-traditional ways. CBR concentrates on the principal that exposure to real-life experiences is essential for effective learning.

Relationship-Building. Our goal is to help boys and their families develop the trust, open rapport and compassion necessary for meaningful, healthy relationships. Programs are designed to promote caring relationships, which in turn promote successful treatment.

Leading-Edge Care. CBR treatment programs and activities continually are assessed to ensure that they reflect the latest in mental health research and findings.

CBR—Where Boys Grow and Lives Change.

In 1996, CBR completed its first *Performance Report*. Success for the youth was defined as completing the CBR treatment program and—for approximately two years following discharge—living at home in a stable relationship with his family, in foster care or independently while attending school or working. Based on those criteria, the report showed an 85 percent success rate.

In 2001, CBR completed its second *Performance Report* based upon a follow-up study of 202 boys discharged between 1996 and 2000. Once again, 85 percent met the criteria for a successful outcome at the time of follow-up, an average of two years and eight months following discharge.

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