

Difficult Decisions Validated

When our two boys were young, my husband, Larry and I checked everything out before involving our children with someone new. This included baby-sitters, schools, teachers, and friends. That is why it seems so amazing to us, that we sent our son off to Samoa and twelve months later to Spring Creek Lodge in Montana, without ever being to either facility.

Our faith and trust in the program was just reinforced after our first visit to Spring Creek Lodge. It was a working visit, to work with the therapist and our son. When we arrived that morning, all the staff that we met seemed to be as excited as us that we were finally going to see our son, after 15 months of being separated. After our surprise, joyful, tearful reunion, I looked up to see that so many of the staff were crying right along with us.

As Brent took us around the grounds and introduced us to staff, it was very obvious how much everyone who worked here cared. Most hugged us, all told us they were happy for Brent. Later as we started meeting some of the other students, you could see how pleased they were for Brent. The hugs, supportive comments to Brent like "this is what you need", thumbs up, and smiles everywhere. The bond that these students have is so strong, it is awesome.

As for the 'physical' setting, Spring Creek Lodge is a beautiful place. The classrooms and dorms are all separate buildings so the kids get lots of clean fresh air. Everything is clean and neat. The mountains are gorgeous. It is a calming atmosphere.

We were able to spend all day with Brent the first day, working with the therapist...just the three of us sharing, and healing and growing. Brent was so anxious for us to meet everyone and I could tell that he really felt loved by the staff. Everyone took a few minutes to welcome us, and share honestly of their feelings for our son. The second day Brent was in seminar. So we roamed around the grounds visiting and observing. Any question we had, was answered. One of our concerns, of course, was Brent's education plan. We were shown right where Brent stood and what he needed to do to graduate. We had lunch with the Legend family, and it was a very good lunch (this is for the parents whose children complain about the food). As we listened to the motivational tapes, we were given food for thought, as well as food for our bodies. We had the chance to visit with Cameron (Facility Director), who was up to date on Brent and had definite ideas on how to motivate and challenge him. Later, as we sat on a wall, watching a family play basketball, there was 'work' going on around us everywhere. There was a Family Rep having a deep conversation with one of her boys. There was a 'father' and another staff member working with three boys. There was a Jr. Straffer giving some coaching to another student while they walked laps and discussed some very deep topics (one of which was the negative aspects of leaving at 18). And all this in the short span while we were sitting there. Later we walked up to the Hungary Horse and met with some upper level girls. They shared so openly their experiences and growth.

Our overall impressions of Spring Creek Lodge would be described in three words: Caring, Hard Working, Supporting. Everything that we saw and experienced in this visit reinforced to us what a great program this is and that Spring Creek Lodge is a terrific facility.

By Marsha Thiele (Mother)