

APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2008

TESTIMONY OF MS. KELSEY SNOKE

Kaysville, Utah

Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

HEARING ON

*“Child Abuse and Deceptive Marketing by Residential Programs for Teens”*

My name is Kelsey Snoke and I am 18 years old. I am writing this to give you a brief feel of my story.

When I was in about eighth grade I started having bad mood swings, depression, and anxiety. When I was feeling down, I started cutting and burning myself to forget about what I was feeling. It never got any better, just worse.

I started going to a therapist regularly. It was hard because I couldn't find one that I connected with. The end of my ninth grade was the beginning of the worst of the problems I was having. I started going to day treatment during the day and at night would go home. I also spent two separate weeks in acute treatment. After I was finished with these programs, I was doing well for a few months and then fell back into the same behaviors. My parents and I began to realize that it was only a short term fix and didn't really do much for me long term. I started hating school and refused to go any more. I was way behind on my work and honestly never thought I would ever finish high school.

Things started getting severely out of control. My parents weren't sure how to help me anymore and started looking for other options. I knew I needed help and agreed with my parent's decision to find a long term residential program. They researched the different options and found a program in Spanish Fork Utah called New Haven.

The three of us were able to visit the campus to take a tour and got to meet with some girls that were in the program. I knew right then that it was a place that could help me. My parent's took me to New Haven right after Thanksgiving in 2006 to start the program and I ended up staying for nine and a half months.

It was very difficult at first being in a new place and not being able to see my family every day. I was very nervous and didn't want to participate in activities and groups. I soon realized that I needed to open up and start working on my issues. There was a lot of work involved in progressing in the program that included me and my parents.

There were many group activities such as tasks for recreational therapy, equine therapy, as well as group therapy on specific topics that helped me learn to trust my peers and people around me.

Every six weeks New Haven held a family weekend for parents to come and participate with their girls in activities around campus. On the second family weekend, some things happened that was a turning point in my treatment.

There was a rope course in the field that was about thirty feet high with a rope and log ladder and a suspended log beam at the top. I always looked at it and hoped I would never have to do any activities with it. When it was our family's turn for rec. therapy, the therapist told me I needed to get over my fear and climb the rope course. I was overwhelmed and scared to death. They helped me put on a harness and other equipment and then we got started. I was to climb the ladder that was swaying with each step and had to say something that I am capable of with each step. It was very difficult and scary, but I did it! At the top I walked across the beam and stood there reflecting on what I had done before I came down. I was very proud of myself for accomplishing this task. This is only one of the many things I did that taught me that I can do anything I put my mind to do.

New Haven has been a very positive experience for me. I don't know where I would be in my life if I hadn't completed this program. I have learned so many things. I can go to my family when there are problems and need support. I have learned to build positive relationships. I have learned to be independent and do things on my own. I have learned to accept responsibility for my actions. I'm finishing my senior year of high school and will be graduating on time. I can do things I never thought I could do. But most of all – I learned to love myself!