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Open Sky Wilderness Therapy Celebrates 10 Years of Helping People Thrive

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This year Open Sky Wilderness Therapy celebrates its tenth anniversary. The Durango, CO based organization assists teens and young adults struggling with difficult challenges and unmanageable dynamics by providing life-changing experiences and long-term skills enabling them to thrive. Through its success, Open Sky has grown to employ over 150 staff, making it one of the largest employers in Durango and the only wilderness therapy program in Colorado.

From the beginning, the vision of CEO and founder Aaron Fernandes has been to offer the premier family-centered wilderness therapy experience. The company innovated beyond traditional wilderness therapy models by incorporating comprehensive family involvement, holistic treatment, and outcome-based research. As the first Accredited Wilderness Therapy Program through a partnership of the Association of Experiential Education and the Outdoor Behavioral Council, Open Sky continues to be at the forefront of wilderness therapy.

Open Sky chose Durango as home because of its proximity to the spectacular beauty of the San Juan Mountains and canyon country of southeast Utah, where it operates its field operations in the summer and winter months, respectively. The entrepreneurial and business-friendly atmosphere of Durango actively welcomed Open Sky as a prospective employer. Region 9 Economic Development provided the organization with its initial start-up capital. "Region 9 supports job creation in Southwest Colorado and CEO Aaron Fernandes came to us with a bold vision," said Region 9 Director Ed Morlan. "Open Sky's success over the past decade has been significant for our region."

Our results have been profound and are proven by research. With an average admission score of 98, our students arrive at acute inpatient levels. While a statistically significant drop is 13 points, on average, our students drop 62 points bringing them into "normal" range after 70 days. This significant level of improvement is typically seen in 12 months of residential inpatient treatment. Open Sky clients achieve this growth in two to three months of intensive immersion therapy in the wilderness.

"Open Sky's success has been directly related to sticking to our vision," states CEO Fernandes. "Our staff is committed to providing the most innovative, holistic, clinically sophisticated, and family-centered wilderness therapy experience in our field."

Through Open Sky, our students and their families develop skills for lasting success. Everyday our organization is driven by why we do what we do: to activate the potential of the human spirit knowing that all people have the capacity to thrive. As we enter our second decade, we remain inspired by our vision.

About Open Sky Wilderness Therapy

Since 2006, Open Sky Wilderness Therapy has been providing the premier family-centered wilderness therapy experience through its programs in the mountains of Southwest Colorado and canyonlands of Southeast Utah. The Open Sky approach transcends traditional wilderness therapy by emphasizing treatment for the whole family, in addition to the individual, and the application of evidence-based modalities with innovative, proven, holistic healing practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness. When a family partners with Open Sky, they embark on a rewarding adventure of self-discovery and acquire a range of tools that promote lasting success.

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