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Nation's First Therapeutic Boarding School for Overweight Teens, Academy of the Sierras, to Open in September

Aspen Education Group to Offer Comprehensive Program to Address Growing Crisis of Overweight and Obese Adolescents

(Cerritos, CA – June 30, 2004) Aspen Education Group today announced the establishment of the nation's first therapeutic boarding school exclusively devoted to helping overweight and obese teenagers change their lives.

The Academy of the Sierras, scheduled to open in September, has been designed as a college preparatory residential school that combines diet and activity management with behavioral therapy and a rigorous academic program to prepare adolescents for a healthier future. Located on a 68-acre campus near Fresno, California, the Academy of the Sierras will enroll boys and girls ages 13-18 who are at least 30 pounds overweight and have been struggling with overweight or obesity for at least two years, and who may have attendant psychological or health issues.

"Obesity and excess weight are the most serious health issues facing American teenagers," said Elliot Sainer, CEO of Aspen Education Group. "Up until now, treatment options for obese young people have been limited, often risky, and rarely effective. Academy of the Sierras will provide the first comprehensive solution for adolescents who are struggling with their weight."

Living year-round in a controlled boarding school environment, students will participate in a diet and activity management program to achieve immediate and dramatic weight loss, and an educational and therapeutic program to ensure long-term behavioral change designed to keep the weight off.

“Over time, changes in weight and activity levels improve mood and self-esteem and resolve health issues stemming from excess weight,” said Sainer. “A happier, healthier teen is much more able to focus on academics and achieve success than a child with low self-image and debilitating health problems.”

“The Academy’s approach to changing the behavior and lifestyle of students has a long and solid scientific basis,” said Academy of the Sierras Executive Director Ryan Craig. Craig is also President of Healthy Living Academies, the division of Aspen launched in March 2004 to establish boarding schools and summer camps to address the teen obesity crisis in America. “The cognitive-behavioral therapy program at Academy of the Sierras incorporates every major concept and technique demonstrated by research to be effective in treating excess weight in adolescents,” he added. Key components of the therapy program include stimulus control, goal-setting, self-monitoring, decisional counseling, relapse prevention training and positive focusing. These techniques, conducted in individual and group sessions, help students develop the skills and behavior they need to master long-term weight control.

Leading Healthy Living Academies’ clinical program is Daniel Kirschenbaum, Ph.D. Dr. Kirschenbaum, a professor at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, has developed a number of successful weight loss programs for hospitals across the country. He is a past president of the Division of Exercise and Sport Psychology of the American Psychological Association and has authored over 100 scientific articles and books, including *Treatment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity* and *The 9 Truths About Weight Loss*, which was endorsed by the American Council on Exercise.

“In 32 years of researching and treating childhood and adolescent obesity, I’ve seen that environment and lifestyle are powerful barriers to weight loss,” said Dr. Kirschenbaum. “By living and working within a controlled, positive environment 24/7 for several semesters, overweight teens can achieve dramatic results and genuine lifestyle change.”

The Academy of the Sierras also features an individualized, rigorous academic program. “Academy of the Sierras is recognized as a private school by the State of California Department of Education,” said Craig. “Students can be expected to leave the Academy and return to their former school well ahead of where they otherwise might have been. Credits earned at the Academy are transferable and recognized by colleges.

Healthy Living Academies boasts an advisory board that consists of leading experts in pediatric and adolescent obesity, including: Kelly D. Brownell, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of Psychology at Yale University and Director of the Yale Center for Eating and Weight Disorders; Georgia Kostas, M.P.H., R.D., Director of Nutrition at the Cooper Clinic, Dallas, and author of *The Cooper Clinic Solution to the Diet Revolution*; Melinda Sothorn, Ph.D. of Louisiana State University Health Sciences and Pennington Centers, and author of *Trim Kids, The Proven 12-Week Plan That Has Helped Thousands of Children Achieve a Healthier Weight*; Dennis Styne, MD, Rumsey Chair of Pediatric Endocrinology at the University of California Davis, a pediatric endocrinologist who specializes in pediatric obesity and its complications, and Jarol Boan, M.D., Physician Nutrition Specialist and Assistant Professor of Medicine and Surgery at Duke University who specializes in the multidisciplinary approach to the treatment of obesity.

Aspen Education Group is the nation's leader in providing educational opportunities that improve the quality of life for troubled children, teens and young adults and their families. AEG offers a wide diversity of programs, settings and solutions that match youths' needs with the right learning environment. Through Aspen's 41 programs in 13 states, parents can choose from long-term residential treatment to community-based outpatient services, with a variety of therapeutic interventions that include boarding schools, special education day schools, outdoor therapy and wilderness programs. AEG was named among the top 100 education companies in 2003 by Eduventures, a leading independent research firm dedicated to learning markets.

To learn more about AEG's other therapeutic schools and programs or about Healthy Living Academies, visit www.aspeneducation.com or www.healthylivingacademies.com, or call (866) 364-0808.

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