



**TABULA RASA**

*A WE R H.O.P.E.  
TREATMENT CENTER AND ACADEMY*



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# Tabula Rasa

## *Welcome to Tabula Rasa*

On behalf of our founders- employees, volunteers, and community members welcome to Tabula Rasa. We recognize the difficulty in making the decision to come to our program and we take our responsibility to help you seriously. You have chosen a specialized adolescent anxiety, depression, and trauma focused program. This one-of-a-kind evidence-based program utilizes 5 separate modalities of Wellness. We utilize emotional CPR (eCPR), cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), Eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR), and our Daily Life model to conquer fear, gain mastery and take healthy risks through exposure to our surroundings.

At Tabula Rasa we provide a unique and effective solution to helping you overcome mental health struggles. During your time with us, you will be challenged to face your fears and learn new coping skills to overcome them. The individualized treatment plan developed by team of clinical professionals, coaches, and educators will serve as the guide for your specific care. The holistic approach to treatment here includes participating in all activities specifically designed for you and as regular components to our program. Adventure activities, environmental stewardship, fitness, mindfulness, and academics experiences are all designed to support progress in rehearse a new way of life that you can use after Tabula Rasa.

We will do our best in helping you and your family feel empowered to rediscover life. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need anything. I welcome comments, feedback and ideas and depend on them to continuously improve are special program. Again, welcome! We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,  
Sean Perry  
Executive Director



# Overview:



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As a comprehensive and holistic treatment program, our model of care emphasizes the whole person and not just his or her personal needs. Through our eCPR model, we can connect with residents and support them with approaches that have never been done in a residential setting. Emotional CPR (eCPR) is a public health education program designed to teach people to assist others and themselves through an emotional crisis by three simple steps: C = Connecting, P = emPowering, and R = Revitalizing. People who have completed the training consistently report the skills learned have helped them communicate better in all their relationships. We believe the broader intellectual, social, and physical health of our residents must be addressed, so they can graduate from our program with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to overcome and face life's challenges. The theme of eCPR is interwoven throughout our program and binds our wellness module curriculum together. Tabula Rasa encompasses the model of emotional CPR. It allows the residents to experience the ups and downs of every life while having supports at their side.

In a caring and supportive environment, treatment at Tabula Rasa gradually requires residents to face their problems head on through its Daily Life Model. The Daily Life Model embraces everyday life for each resident by supporting them throughout a natural school day. This allows residents to continue education each weekday instead of putting school on hold. Integrating school into treatment while receiving professional supports throughout their day allows residents to go back home without having a gap in education or a fear they cannot complete everyday tasks. Naturally, there will be days that the residents will struggle which is why we provide many different types of support to wrap around them. First, our clinical team provides each resident with 3 one-hour individual therapy sessions; family therapy, one hour per week; group therapy (Wednesday and Friday) one hour per day. Our groups are skilled based and rooted in CBT and DBT strategies. Another support is our Life Coaches. They carry a caseload of residents to support each student throughout the school day. Each coach sees their resident thirty minutes a day, five days a week. Within the coaching model, they help the residents create daily, weekly, and monthly goals to go alongside their treatment. These goals utilize two models. One model the coaches use is the foundations of CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy). Coaches using this model can help provide long lasting change and fulfillment in the resident's lives. The second model our coaches use is eCPR. This model can empower the residents to take their own power back over their mental and physical health. With the balance of Life Coaching and Clinical treatment, full wrap-around wellness approaches and challenges are made. These challenges include activities that are enjoyable but may be difficult for those challenged by daily activities. The week's activities alternate between hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, trips to cultural venues, etc.... Other weekly trips may include crowded places (COVID dependent), swimming, or rock climbing. Typically, students stay at Tabula Rasa for a duration of 10 months (roughly a school year), with the length of stay being predicted by the intensity of their struggles, the rate of progression through prescription as it pertains to their treatment plan, the presence of co-occurring conditions, and the establishment of collaborative discharge planning. Residents will receive a certificate of graduation from our program when they have completed their treatment plan and have achieved their treatment goals.

Tabula Rasa uses cutting edge clinical models. Anxiety and depression are not the only challenges youth face. We are aware trauma is also a source of anxiety and depression and it can be debilitating. We will be utilizing Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR). Trauma is hard to talk about. Therefore, we chose EMDR as one of our main trauma treatment modalities. It requires little talking but is effective. Bilateral stimulation (activating the left and right hemisphere of the brain with different tools) helps residents process and then reprocess any trauma they have experienced. This will help our residents manage their day-to-day life by being able to recall the trauma but not have the same emotional response they would have had previously. This allows them less time being debilitated by their trauma and more time to focus on day-to-day life including their education. When people are fearful of something, they tend to avoid the feared objects, activities, or situations. Although this avoidance might help reduce feelings of fear in the short term, over the long term it can become even worse. The fear can become an obstruction to everyday life and well-being. The exposure to the feared objects, activities, or situations in the safe and nurturing environment of Tabula Rasa is conducted in a controlled, compassionate, and collaborative fashion. Our goal is to equip every resident and their family with a solid theoretical understanding of their disorder(s).



# Clinical Model:

Tabula Rasa utilizes CBT, DBT, and EMDR as our 3-primary evidence-based modalities for an array of mental health disorders. We understand youth can have multiple diagnoses and want to prepare them with multiple modalities for success based on their needs. CBT is based on the idea that how we think (cognition), how we feel (emotion) and how we act (behavior) all interact together. Specifically, our thoughts determine our feelings and our behavior. Therefore, negative and unrealistic thoughts can cause us distress and result in problems. When a person suffers with psychological distress, the way in which they interpret situations becomes skewed, which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take. The theory behind the DBT approach is some people are prone to react in a more intense and out-of-the-ordinary manner toward certain emotional situations, primarily those found in romantic, family and friend relationships. DBT theory suggests that some people's arousal levels in such situations can increase far more quickly than the average person's, attain a higher level of emotional stimulation, and take a significant amount of time to return to baseline arousal levels. Unlike other treatments that focus on directly altering the emotions, thoughts and responses resulting from traumatic experiences, EMDR therapy focuses directly on the memory and is intended to change the way the memory is stored in the brain, thus reducing and eliminating the problematic symptoms. Through ongoing education and repeated daily challenges, our residents internalize the necessary understanding and skills to reduce the impact from unwanted and debilitating disorders. They learn to effectively manage relapses, improve daily function and to move forward with increased confidence to achieve personal goals and freedom.



# Daily Life Model: A Unique and Holistic Treatment Model

Tabula Rasa Daily Life Model is both unique in its ability to enhance and support the work and other initiatives driven by our clinicians. It is built around our daily life model that reflect various life skills and activity focused philosophies.

Modules are clinically driven in individual curriculum design. Each module is built around two core goals: Healthy Risk and Mastery. Both of these goals speak to our connectedness with our clinical team as they work with residents to conquer life emotional challenges and replace it with strength and confidence. Ultimately the pace and structure of each day affords us all the opportunity to create a sense of “real” or an “academic day”. Both of these are what so many of our residents have avoided as a result of their person battle with mental health struggles.

Each of these modules affords you the opportunity to participate in a healthy and active lifestyle during your time with us. They also allow your therapist to design specific, individualized activities and assignments. The unique design of our Module programming is that each are connected and serves to drive the effectiveness of the other.

Our Mindfulness Module and cultural commitment to various forms of yoga, work hand in hand as we emphasize the connection between mind and body. While each resident journey is to conquer their mental health challenges they are also exposed to experiences that may serve to reignite passion and embrace new experiences that were missing from their lives.

Daily Life Model Includes:

- Farm to Table
- Mindfulness
- Adventure
- Fitness
- Academics
- Art



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## *Academic Overview*



What makes Tabula Rasa stand out from other schools? We recognize every student as a whole person, celebrating their unique individuality, and encouraging genuine curiosity of self and their place within the world. Our model of care provides an equal balance of therapeutic and academic support. In addition to a comprehensive treatment program, students attending TBR will also engage in a comprehensive academic program that emphasizes rigorous, real-world, place-based experiences that provide deeper level learning and engagement.

Every student is given an equitable opportunity to pursue their passions and interests. We achieve equity of access and opportunity by collaborating closely with students, families and the community to create learning experiences that match each individual and that values personal growth over time. Upon entrance, each student will be assigned an advisor and lead clinician who will work closely to identify their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and personal learning goals. Students will be guided through the process of exploring the world around us and what lies within us to help foster greater resilience, health, and wellbeing.

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## *Academic Overview - (Continued)*

At TBR, students are at the center of their own learning and are empowered to have “voice and choice” over what and how they learn. Literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education and the arts are integrated into each student's personalized plan and individual learning experience. Through curriculum built on inquiry, project-based learning, service-learning, entrepreneurial innovation, and internships, students will develop their skills in Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Citizenship, and Creativity & Innovation (TBR's 5 C's of Competency). Our program leverages the power of place by accessing local assets including parks, museums, public spaces, local agencies, and businesses. Local learning serves as a model for understanding local heritage, as well as global challenges, opportunities and connections. Students will be assessed on TBR's 5 C's through exhibitions and demonstrations of learning. Formal exhibitions and demonstrations of learning will take place at the mid-year and end of year points and will be scored with a proficiency scale. Students achieve success through stewardship by caring for our campus and each other, and by engaging in local and regional service-learning projects. Stewardship includes mentorship of younger students, assisting with our community garden, animal care, and helping with meal preparation.



# Residential Life:



Aside from clinical services and daily life model participation, students enjoy a small community with accessible adults and a home-like dormitory and facility setting. This is a staff secure facility that is supervised by residential support counselors at a 1:4 direct care staff to resident ratio during all awake hours.

Students reside in double or triple rooms. Room type is determined by the resident's clinical needs and availability. Rooms give each student personal space for journaling, quiet time, study time, and other similar needs. As appropriate, students will participate in cooking, cleaning, and other household chores within their living spaces.



The dormitory setting is like a large home. In addition to double or triple bedrooms, students enjoy a common area with television and areas for quiet reading, playing board games and participating in meetings. Due to the limited space in each room, students are only allowed to bring minimal personal items (see below).

Additionally, students are not allowed to enter a room that is not their assigned room nor are males allowed in female rooms or vice-versa.

Roommates are identified with a clinical perspective by the staff and this can be negatively impacted if residents participate in "dorm visiting."

## *Behavior Management System:*



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**We utilize a specially designed Behavior Management Program to assist students in the process of continuing their development of pro-social behaviors. The following are a list of interventions that staff may utilize to help a student reflect on his or her behavior:**

**Proactive Discussions** - When staff observes a student in the early stages of a crisis, they will proactively talk with the person to help deescalate/resolve the situation.

**Prompts** — These are verbal instructions, cues, and directions given by staff when a rule is broken, or behavior is inappropriate. Staff will give up to three prompts before giving a consequence depending on severity of behavior. Prompts are used early and are generally followed with the proposal to make a plan to have staff assist the students in better managing himself or herself.

**Taking Space** - These are five-to-ten-minute periods of quiet sitting away from the group in a place designated by staff. When the time is considered over by the staff member, he or she will approach the student to process (briefly discuss what happened and to make a plan about how to handle the situation if it happens again) and model appropriate responses to the said behavior.

**Property Replacement Contract** - If property is damaged, the value will be assessed, and the resident will do extra chores and/or pay for what was damaged. This is a primarily symbolic measure to allow student to give back to the group after disruption or damage to the environment. Students may also be expected to write a letter of apology for their disruptive behaviors and share the letter during a community meeting.

# Residential Life

## *Behavior Management System - Continued:*



**Taking Space for Ones Self** -This can be asked for by a student before limits are set, or a staffs encouragement. Taking space must be clinically indicated and not a student's attempt to avoid tasks or a planned exposure therapy.

**Safety Plan** - A safety plan is developed by a clinical team member when a resident appears a danger to himself/herself or others. A resident on a safety plan will require constant visual supervision and may not leave the grounds of the program



**PRN Medications** (for anxiety) - if a resident is prescribed a PRN (as needed) medication by a licensed practitioner that is intended for immediate anxiety reduction in the early stages of the exposure process, the medication will be administered by a trained staff, as prescribed by physician's orders.

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# Residential Life

## *Community Interaction:*



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Tabula Rasa strives to develop and maintain positive relationships with the surrounding communities. We honor students rights to a well-rounded life experience with recreation, socialization, and educational activities, and will continually assess treatment progress to ensure therapeutic experiences occur in the community. We serve and act within the community in which we reside. For example, we deliver firewood to community members in need, volunteer at the humane society, and visit the local senior center. We feel these opportunities for "giving back" help foster a culture of service before self. We value strong local relationships and benefit from local community support ourselves.





# Residential Life

## *Daily Routine:*



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A daily routine exists for all residents participating in the program. The Daily Life Model serves as a foundation for programming and a platform for opportunities, skill acquisition, and mastery. Each resident is assigned to a particular grade level and will participate in programming with their Team. We also know that it is important for Tabula Rasa students to interact as a unified community, so within the Daily Life Model there will be ample opportunities (e.g., groups, meals, daily community meetings, evening activities, and weekend activities rooted in deliberate, thematic curriculum) where residents will engage in activities with their larger peer group. There may be days when the routine is modified to accommodate special events such as field trips and holidays. It will also be modified on a case specific basis in order to accommodate the special needs (treatment or otherwise) of a student's accelerated or delayed progression.



# Residential Life

## *Daily Routine - Continued:*



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### **Students should keep the following in mind when getting dressed each morning:**

- Dress for the activities and weather
- Clothing must be clean, tidy, in good repair, and in good taste, (i.e. no hole-ridden jeans).
- Excessively revealing clothing is not allowed
- Stomachs, chests, and buttocks must be covered
- Undergarments should not show. This includes see through mesh tops. Clothing with offensive printing/writing, representation of a negative counterculture or promoting tobacco, drugs or alcohol is not permitted (e.g. "420 Gear")
- Pajamas, and similar clothing, are not to be worn during the day.
- One-piece bathing suits are mandatory. If your female child is entering MV TRA during the "warm" months, please adhere to this request and discuss packing prior to intake.



# Residential Life

## *Electronics Media Policy:*



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Our goal is to ensure that residents are not viewing or listening to media that will interfere with treatment. We also recognize that listening to music or watching a video may be calming. Only videos that are rated for the resident's age may be viewed. We may restrict some media materials if clinical concerns arise around a resident's choices in this area, or they demonstrate an inability to manage themselves around certain topics (i.e., violence, profanity, etc.).



**"Unplugged" Campus** — Many of our residents have participated in unhealthy use of technology prior to their arrival. Tabula Rasa has determined to limit student's access to technology. This allows a residents to focus on his/hers' treatment without distraction and minimizes opportunities for isolating behaviors.



# Family and External Communication:

**Students are encouraged to develop and continue healthy family communication. These positive relationships will be important to each student's individual growth and ultimate success. Tabula Rasa will maintain a few guidelines relative to these contacts:**

**Mail** – Students may send and receive mail and email from all those persons identified on their "Approved Contact List." Should a package or letter be suspicious, the Residential Life Staff, or any other administrator, may ask the resident to open it in his/her presence. If the mail is inappropriate (i.e., age-inappropriate magazines, or contraband), then it will be forwarded to the student's therapist who will confer with the student's guardian to determine what to do with the item and how to best approach confrontation.

**Care Packages** – Students enjoy receiving care packages. The following are suggested items to send books, magazines, art supplies, new clothing, and healthy snacks. We ask that care packages do not contain medications, vitamins, sugary snacks, candy, or caffeinated beverages. Please do not send energy drinks such as "Monster" products, "Red Bull," etc.

**Cellular Phones** – Students are not permitted to have cellular phones during school hours, therapy, coaching, wellness, or scheduled events.

\*Tabula Rasa will not prevent a resident's attorney, clergy, or other professional advocate from contacting residents at appropriate times. Residents may also contact them during normal calling hours or at other arranged times.

**Telephone** – students may receive or make telephone calls to all persons listed on their Approved Contact List. It is suggested that phone calls occur primarily with immediate family, and close friends who will be supportive of a person's treatment. From time to time, based upon treatment needs, the amount of time or frequency of phone calls may be limited. This is a very common theme as our family support piece takes effect. As indicated by the evaluation and in collaboration with individual therapists, it may be indicated that limited, increased, or minimally controlled communication is critical in promoting the therapeutic process. If this determination is made, there will be very open dialogue as to the reasons why this is being suggested, and why this may have a positive impact on our students' progress. Calls may be made during journal/downtime in evenings from 8:00 to 9:30 pm. Interrupting, school, therapy, wellness, and enrichment programming to accept calls will be limited to special considerations or emergencies. Limits set on telephone calls by guardians (i.e., calls must be supervised, on speaker phone, or exclusions of persons) will be clearly documented on the Contact List. Guardian access will not be denied to a resident for any reason. If the said resident is in a state of emergency related crisis, he or she will be afforded access to the phone as soon as resident and staff safety is established.

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# Family Involvement:

The program attempts to balance the needs of the students and his or her family. Part of the intake process will entail developing the appropriate level of involvement of any family members. For example, developing a schedule of phone calls, if needed, during the intake process, or scheduling the first on campus visit may occur during the intake process. Typically, we ask families to wait at least two weeks before visiting, which allows a student time to adjust to their new setting.

Additionally, members of the administrative team are available to answer questions if needs arise and the primary therapist is not available.



# Family Involvement - Continued:

## **Grievance Protocol for Student and Guardians:**

Residents/guardians have the right to due process regarding grievances against the program and/or its personnel. If a resident/guardian has a grievance about the program, the procedure for resolving that grievance shall be as follows:

1. The staff person receiving the grievance shall immediately refer the grievant to the Executive Director, or designee, who shall inform the grievant of his/her due process rights under the law and explain the informal and formal grievance processes available.
2. The Executive Director or designee shall document the grievance in writing and attempt to resolve the issue to the resident/guardian's satisfaction in a timely manner. Full documentation of this shall appear in the resident's record. When successful resolution cannot be achieved at the program level, the grievant shall be provided information and assistance, if desired, in filing a formal grievance with the Department of Health and Human Services in Vermont.



# Medical Care:

Health Services at Tabula Rasa includes collaborative medication management, evaluation of illnesses or injury with an assessment by a trained faculty member, and coordination of off-site medical care. Medical care is overseen by a certified nurse and under the direction of our medical supervisor. Our nurse is on campus Monday – Friday to address health care needs and oversee the administration of prescribed and OTC medications. Tabula Rasa coordinates, through consulting and independent providers of care, dental, medical, psychiatric, emergency, and other necessary services to ensure that the residents health care needs are met. In case of illness or emergency, a student will receive services at a local health center. Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible when resident presents with an injury or serious medical illness. If a child has a health condition such as severe allergies, diabetes, physical handicap, etc., we will fully engage parents in transparent dialogue as to the level of care we can or cannot provide.



# Nutrition Policy:

As an evidenced based treatment program, we are informed of information on the impact of diet and mental health disorders. Our goal is to provide healthy, locally sourced, and sustainable food for the enjoyment and nourishment of our residents and staff. We have determined that a culinary program that is free from processed foods, uses locally grown vegetables and locally raised meat, poultry, and dairy/eggs, does not use refined sugars, high sodium and only serves wild caught seafood is better for overall health.



Junk food is minimized, although there are special occasions such as parties, awards dinners, etc., at which exceptions to this policy are made with the approval of administration. Serving portions are appropriate to each student's nutritional needs. We model and promote healthy choices. All menus are adjusted for age, gender, and activity; and to make sure the needs of students with special dietary restrictions are met. If the menu does not address an individual student's special dietary needs, provisions will be made to accommodate these needs.







# Personal Belongings:

Residents are allowed to bring their non-valuable personal belongings to the program. The following is a list of some typical approved items that residents bring:

- Electric Fans (June-September)
- Alarm Clocks
- Personal Radios (with headphones and battery operated only)
- MP3 Players/i-Pod, without wi-fi capability
- A reasonable number of framed and matted pictures and posters, if they are appropriate and in good taste and condition may be placed on the walls under staff supervision.
- Extra-long twin sheets, towels, and comforter (linens are provided, but many residents prefer their own linens)
- Hygiene supplies are provided, but residents may bring their own. Non alcohol-based products please.



*Any electric item must be in good condition and we recommend battery powered items only. Broken, worn, or other items that appear to have been "worked on" or tampered with, shall be confiscated pursuant to the program's confiscation policy. Please keep in mind that each room has limited electrical outlets and no extension cords are allowed.*



# Personal Belongings Continued:

Due to limited space, policy, and health, safety, and hygiene concerns, the following items that are not allowed:

- Due to safety (fire/spark) and electrical consumption concerns, camcorders, multi-component stereo systems, heaters, humidifiers, electric blankets, and refrigerators are not allowed.
- Items including clothing, books, magazines and music which promote violence, profanity, smoking, drugs or banned substances, deviant sexuality, objectification of women or men, sexual themes, and hatred and intolerance of others, are strictly prohibited.
- Pets are prohibited.
- Please do not bring any furniture to the program.
- Weapons such as knives, arrows, guns, etc. are prohibited. This includes air soft, paint ball, or any replica or toy weapon.
- Food and drink shall not be permitted to be stored in the resident's room.
- Alcohol, tobacco, controlled substances, medication (including aspirin, cough syrup, cough drops, etc.), drugs, lighters, and matches, etc. are strictly prohibited.
- No items shall be placed on the ceiling, or over electrical outlets and switches. The program may, as necessary limit or supervise the use of other personal items. In such cases, we shall inform the resident of the reasons for the decision, which shall be recorded in the resident's treatment plan.

# Personal Care and Hygiene:

The residents in our program are provided with the necessary materials to enable them to maintain their personal hygiene, care, and grooming needs so that they may present in an appropriate manner for their age, sex, and culture. Where necessary, staff provides supervision and training to address these issues. As part of the program, the residents are encouraged to perform the necessary hygiene routines to maintain good health, dental care, and cleanliness.





# Personal Items and Clothing:

Residents are encouraged to label all personal belongings, especially items of value. It is also recommended that residents leave expensive or sentimental items at home to ensure safe keeping. Pictures of family, etc., are encouraged, but valuable jewelry, etc., are discouraged. Clothing that is inappropriate or in poor taste or condition, or that TRA considers to be, is not allowed. This means that "spaghetti string" tops, "short shorts," cleavage or lower back revealing clothing, and sports related tank tops (just to name a few) are not permitted. We request that female residents adhere to our "hanging fingertips rule" (skirts cannot be higher than the end of a resident's fingertips when arms and down near the side of the body) relevant to skirts and shorts. The care and security of personal items that are brought to the program are the responsibility of the student who owns the item(s). TRA is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged belongings. To maintain a culture suitable for resident growth and healing, we expect each resident to adhere to sensible and appropriate standards of dress.



*All residents will be required to wear the school uniform daily and can change after school.*

# Physical Contact and Dating Policy:

While at Tabula Rasa, the focus shall be on a student's treatment. Dating or Intimate physical contact between residents is not allowed.





# Recreation:

Through our therapeutic recreation program, we seek to challenge students to participate in activities that they normally might be reluctant to pursue. Our therapeutic recreation program offers similar incremental challenges. Beginning with on-campus activities that include hikes, mountain biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing; residents will be incrementally challenged by routines that include hiking in the White and Green Mountains, canoe and kayaking excursions, skiing, and snowboarding, and rock climbing. Whether in the House, on the farm, or in the local community, each day is filled with a range of structured and purposeful activities that complement each resident's treatment. In sum, we use the challenges of "outdoor therapy" to reinforce the goals of "indoor therapy." This cannot be achieved in a hospital setting. We are pleased to offer our residents.

