

AIM HOUSE
ADVOCATE
WHERE ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS MERGE

CONNECTION!

The Greatest Wealth is Health

by Nick Nouri

AIM House is happy to announce a new partnership with the Wholeness Center. The Wholeness Center practices Integrative medicine, which is an approach to medicine and wellness that attempts to treat the whole person, body and mind, by using a blend of conventional and sound-scientific evidenced alternative modalities, naturopathic remedies and traditional pharmaceuticals when needed.

Integrative medicine takes a symptoms based approach and blends that with the emphasis on complete health that is instilled in holistic healing. The results are amazing, and with the addition and substitution of natural vitamins, and minerals, participants have markedly higher energy, better moods, and an overall more positive and productive emotional cycle. The hope in teaming up with the Wholeness Center is to put an emphasis on the prevention of illness, by building up all of the individual parts of the body, while working to find alternative solutions wherever it is safe, productive and possible.

The Wholeness Center has over a dozen doctors, a handful of which work with AIM House participants. Each doctor holds expertise in their selected realm while working as a team to foster Integrative health. While they are each exceptionally talented individually, the collaboration of them all on each individual's health is creating results many of our participants thought impossible.

"Holistic medicine has done wonders for my mood, energy, and optimism. In the past I tried to heal all of my medical problems with western medicine, which left me even more confused, and feeling hopeless. For the last 3 years I have battled depression, ADHD, and lack of energy. I took Adderall, and Lexapro but still had a problem focusing, and felt more depressed than ever. There was no combination of ADHD medicine mixed with an anti-depressant that could make me feel happy, and focused. Due to my unsolved medical issues I was worried more about my happiness than my grades in college, which sent me into a downward spiral. After coming to AIM House, my energy, focus, mood, and motivation has increased tenfold all thanks to Dr. Shannon's recommendations of vitamins, and supplements. While being here I have been taking numerous vita-

mins and supplements. This way I feel like I can be healthy for the rest of my life without many of the long-term side effects caused by my medication.

Like many people that come to AIM House I also was not in peak physical health when arriving at AIM House, I had high cholesterol, and was not at the weight I would've liked to be at. With the help of Dr. Mary Rondeau at AIM House I lowered my cholesterol, as well as gained muscle and lost fat by following her amazing nutritional plan. She helped me understand how certain foods affect me differently than others. By following her recommendations I realized what foods provided beneficial, healthy, fuel for me, and what foods would eventually lead me to become ill.

While working with Dr. Steve Rondeau, using neurofeedback I began to learn how to increase focus, and energy output in my brain. Dr. Rondeau views our brain as a muscle, one that can be worked out, and developed to become stronger, and more disciplined. He begins treatment of clients by scanning the brain, and figuring out what brainwaves are overactive, or underactive. Believe it or not just by studying a person's brainwaves you can declare many of the psychological disorders they have, as well as problems they may have with attention or energy.

The collaboration of Dr. Shannon, Dr. Steve Rondeau, and Dr. Mary Rondeau has left me feeling as healthy as I have ever felt in my life. The combination of Mary's nutritional plan, with Scott's supplements, and Steve's neurofeedback has led me to feel completely capable of accomplishing all of my goals and aspirations that once felt completely out of reach. I no longer feel hopeless, and out of control, not only did their treatment cause me to be ten times healthier I also feel empowered, and more knowledgeable about overall health."



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AIM HOUSE GETS BOLDER (BOULDER)

by Michael Darer & Carmen F.



As a city, Boulder Colorado is an especially and dynamic specimen, teeming with an unmistakably unique energy that permeates

each and every sector of its character. From the host of artists that call the area home and studio, to the thriving academic culture of Colorado University, and extending through the ethic of wellness that erupts from the streets and parks alike, the uncommon verve that emanates from Boulder Colorado is, in a word, infectious.

It is, then, a thing of special excitement, when all of these separate intensities converge, as they did (and do every year) for the Bolder Boulder, a 10K hosted annually on Memorial Day, attracting thousands of participants and spectators from around the state, nation, and globe. The event, which draws massive crowds each year, vibrates with that exceptional Boulder flavor that so many citizens (and visitors) know and love. While many professional runners participate in the Bolder Boulder, the event is also host to a great deal of amateur athletes, as well as attendees who are just there to enjoy the atmosphere. A few patrons even arrive decked out in costume—Colorado State flags billowing like capes behind them, brightly colored athletic shoes polka-dotted the tarmac, like buoyant neon stars—their enthusiasm shared by even the more conservatively dressed of guests. The race, which ends in Folsom Field (Colorado University's stadium), is certainly more than just an athletic event. It's an experience of all things Boulder, populated by street performers and artists of all varieties—musicians, jugglers, and even a belly dancer or two.

For the past few years, participants at AIM have taken part in the event, which, with all its vivacity and community, nicely emphasizes the tenants of the programs implemented at both the Castle and Earl House. The day of the race, participants wake up early to be dropped off. Once at the Bolder Boulder, they can mingle with the festivities, watch the professional races, and run or walk themselves. On the whole, it's a wonderful way for members of AIM to integrate themselves into the Boulder community. Whether spent running, walking, watching, or even making use of a Slip and Slide that one generous homeowner put out for racers, time at the Bolder Boulder is a potent means of recreation and an overall exhilarating use of an afternoon; one that prominently speaks to the profound

energy of the city which we at AIM House have the opportunity to thrive within, and to, on days like that of the Bolder Boulder, comfortably call home.



AIM Makes a Splash on the Arkansas River

by Michael Darer & Carmen F.

While there's certainly a great deal to enjoy in Boulder—the music, the art, the athletics—it always helps to go beyond the city lines every now and again, whether it be hiking in the mountains, visiting Denver, or simply just watching towns pass by while driving along. This summer, in this adventurous spirit, AIM House participants had the ability to partake in a truly exhilarating experience while white water rafting in Buena Vista Colorado.

Arriving at the campground, at which they were to stay, participants had the option to construct their own shelters or to sleep in the open, with tents, provided in case of a sudden downpour. On the first day of the excursion, students relaxed in hot springs, played frisbee and cooked dinner out over a camp stove. The next morning, after gathering up the necessary gear and cleaning the campsite, everyone headed over to the Arkansas River to enjoy the main event. Crashing down through large and small rapids alike, participants found themselves thrilled and enlivened, refreshed by both their own adrenaline and the bursts of cool water that splashed into their raft. After disembarking, AIM students were treated to a prepared lunch from the rafting company, before jumping back into the car to head home.

It's events such as this that make AIM House such a dynamic experience for so many young people—events that thrill and challenge and tap into a joy far beyond substance use. As everyone arrived back on site, none would explain their adventure as anything but a great time, so many insisting on returning for another splash in the Arkansas. *Beat that, drugs!*

“It's events such as this that make AIM House such a dynamic experience for so many young people—events that thrill and challenge and tap into a joy far beyond substance use.”

AIM HOUSE and CU BOULDER Collaborate to Create CUCRC

by Daniel Conroy



The University of Colorado and AIM House have teamed up to establish the CUCRC which is a Collegiate Recovery Community in the heart of the University of Colorado campus. Contrary to popular belief, there are a large number of college students in Boulder who choose not use drugs or alcohol. Some who are in recovery, some who just choose a sober lifestyle. So far the private public partnership between the University and AIM House has been fantastic. Don Misch, Senior Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health and Director of Wardenburg Health Center states: *“CU-Boulder and AIM House have partnered to create the new CU Collegiate Recovery Center (CUCRC) located in the University Memorial Center at the university. Modeled after the public/private collaboration at Texas Tech University, perhaps the nation’s leader in collegiate recovery centers, this new partnership was formed to address the issue of late teen and young adult recovery from alcohol and drug abuse through the combined expertise, resources, and commitment of AIM House and CU.”*

We knew there would be some students who would benefit from a CRC on campus but we weren’t sure how many would show up. We were amazed. Everyday that we have been open on campus, new students have come in. We are approaching 50 members of this brand new center and we have not been open a full month. The CUCRC is a sober lounge. There are 12-step meetings that members have started, yoga classes, meditation, music listening parties, pizza and bowling (we are right across the hall from the bowling alley in the University Memorial Center), study halls, Monday Night Football parties as well as simple hang out times. Throughout the day, students drop by and check in, sometimes to study, sometimes just to say hello.

AIM House veteran and chief designer Sam Randall has joined me on this adventure...in her words: *“The CU Collegiate Recovery Center is a game changer. CU students in recovery or choosing sobriety now have a way to connect and support each other. It is also the missing link that will help us to better serve AIM House participants by connecting them with young people in recovery outside of the program. For AIM House participants new to sobriety, the center is a great place to meet and have fun with others who are clean and sober—where recovery is celebrated, and normal. Mutual respect is a big part of the culture at the center. Everyone is here because they want to be here.*

As a designer, I felt it was important that the students have a safe retreat where they felt welcome. The space is calm and cozy, with great lighting and comfortable seating. It is a place they can call their own, right in the heart of campus. One of the coolest things for Danny and for me is that many of the founding student members of the CUCRC are AIM House graduates who are doing very well and are in long-term recovery. We now get to see them every day and work together with them to build the recovery center program. And they get to share their experiences and serve as role models for current AIM House participants...we are eager to continue to grow in what the center has to offer. My hope is that the CUCRC continues to be a home and resource for all those who may need it, for years to come. The CUCRC is already helping to change many lives...including our own.”

We are funding this project entirely by private donations and matching funds. For more information please check out the CUCRC website at: <http://www.colorado.edu/recoverycenter/> If you are interested in donating to the center visit: <http://www.cufund.org/giving-opportunities/fund-description/?id=13824>

“We are approaching 50 members of this brand new center and we have not been open a full month.”

Warm Regards,

Danny



Blue Skies, We're Cleared to Fly

by Daniel Williamson



“I found that self-harm cleared some of the clouds and gave me some semblance of control over my feelings.”

My life has ebbed and flowed like the tides on the Texas beaches I spent my early summers on. The earliest memories I have on the beach are as a child with my head down, standing in the shallows under rain clouds. I don't remember my age or feelings, but I recall wishing the sun would come out.

Ten years later, at thirteen years old, that wish had not been answered nor subsided. I was so desperate to feel differently. I found that self-harm cleared some of the clouds and gave me some semblance of control over my feelings. It's so sad to me that I was willing to cling so tightly to cutting and burning myself because for the brief respite they provided me from oppressive feelings.

About 3 months after discovering the relief, my cousin offered me some of the sunlight he had found, in the form of weed. So I got high, and oh did I ever get high. Giggling, Sonic munching, blasts of music doing mating dances with my ears high. For a few hours I basked in the proverbial sun like a lizard. Like a bear shaking off hibernation. Which is a good metaphor because it accounts for how much I ate. In my mind, marijuana was the answer to my inclimate weather problem, so I smoked with my cousin every morning before school. The problem, in my eyes, was that when I woke up from the short-lived high, I woke to my emotions lingering over me. The problem, thought I, was that I could not smoke often enough.

I was turned onto other drugs as well that year. If pot was the answer to some vast grey question, then ad-

derall helped me study for the exam. And painkillers, it seemed, were a well-crafted essay to top off the test. And so it went. But underlying the use, neglected depression waited to swoop with a firm slap in the face and a return to self-harm. I was sad, very sad, and I got high with the intention of changing that.

By the time I started selling pot and opiates, the fear of returning to my feelings was my main customer. I covered it well. I clung to the truth that how I felt when I used was infinitely better than how I felt when I was sober. It was the “why” that I struggled with.

At 15, I was asked to leave my high school for selling drugs on campus. My parents were shocked. I was shocked too. My parents probably weren't as bummed as I was that I would have to be sober for a year to have a chance of readmittance.

I started public school on my birthday and I couldn't stand it. I was miserable. I returned to self-harm and suicidal tendencies. But I stayed sober. It's impossible to describe how uncomfortable it was to do so, though. Being forced away from my drugs, I had to rely on self-harm and constant mental transfixation, escapism, to keep the clouds from consuming me. I felt like I was on fire most days. Burning to death behind a desk in a school where no one knew my name.

At home, I didn't do much to relieve my parents' pain. I snuck around, crawling out my window at night and bringing friends around when my mom left the house. In short, nothing changed inside me. External circumstances kept me sober, but in my mind I was already getting high again. I had no choice, when the year was up, and I couldn't help but run back to smoking and pill popping. That few months of sobriety was a fluke, plain and simple.

Through my “hard work” at public school, I earned the privilege of returning to my first school. My life had been such to that point that “hard work” equated to “keeping my head down”. For some reason, I subconsciously designated that school year “the year of the bull in the china shop”, through violating every single relationship that I had. First, my parents. I lied through my teeth to them in order to get high. I begged for money and snuck people into their homes and laughed when I got away with it. I had a lovely girlfriend at that point, whose trust I liked to stomp on by getting stoned behind her back and eventually cheating on her while blacked out. And my school, who had enough faith in me as to designate me the first student worthy of returning after a year of absence; for them, I snuck other student's pee into drug tests in five hour energy bottles. I was just a Georgia peach at that point in my life.

But hey, the sunshine was back in my skies. All was

well that felt good for a couple of hours. Then Xanax waltzed into my life. Magic, those pills were. No, they ruined my life and wellbeing. But the apathy they bred was everything I had wanted for so long. They held back the clouds and storms so well. Much finer than my tolerances allowed opiates and weed to perform.

One night, I drank a few beers and popped a few bars. I was in for it. It was raining that night, hard. I hopped in my truck and tried to make the five block drive back home. I didn't make it. I spun out into a tree, to this day I'm still not sure where. In fact, all of my knowledge of that night is from deduction. I put my head through a window, based on the concussion and broken window. I fell out of my car and called my mother, which I gathered from a drunken voicemail left on her phone. I couldn't tell her where I was though, so she and my little sister spent an hour trying to find me. The first thing I do remember waking up four days later, in my bed. I walked outside to see a totalled truck, and I remembered the rain.

Rain, symbolically, has a strong dichotomy. Clouds obscure light, causing depression and lethargy. Storms, in contrast, are healing. They penetrate the surface of the earth and carry a message that something is drastically out of balance. R. Summerset Maugham implied rain's duty to thwart attempts at seizing power. My power grab was arrogance. Attempts to subdue and deny my true nature and true pain. Eventually the floodgates broke. The message that night hit its mark. For the first time, I wanted to change.

But I couldn't. A year later, returning home from college, nothing was different. I went to a party and stole Xanax from someone I cared about deeply. Deeply enough to hesitate before I snatched the pills, anyways. She caught me in the act. She sat me down with her sister, a recovering addict, and told me that I must change. I tried to stay sober for a month, and lasted six days.

Three days after my first "relapse," I was on a plane to Utah. Wilderness therapy was a life changing experience for me. Left to my own devices in the woods, I felt like my spirit, my childhood self, came out to enjoy the sun. I accepted the work I had to do and began healing. Some wounds were obvious. Pain from my parents' divorce and fighting. Some didn't make any sense, like a haunting feeling of being abandoned.

I'm an active member of recovery, so it's important to note that I found a higher power in the deserts of Utah. The wind and sun and snow, the ravens and foxes, all took on immense power in my thoughts and dreams. They smiled at me when I slept. Wilderness therapy, in a word, was magical. That being said, after twelve weeks, the only thing I

liked more than the idea of being in the woods was the idea of leaving. Making a new home in Boulder.

My first three months in Colorado were designed to teach me what functioning and thriving sober actually looks like. Participants get comfortable with job searches, school applications, even doing their own laundry. For me that time ended, and halfway through my time at AIM House I'm seeking to direct my energy inwards. Working a 12 Step program, meditating, practices that dust off my attributes and ultimately give me the ability to meet my own needs. To love more deeply.

Everything we do at AIM House is designed to improve our lives and well-being, comfortably or not. I wake up every morning to clean my room and contribute to the Castle's functioning. I have an internship that demands professionalism and hard work. A lot of people treat transitional living as time to count down and life skills to passively observe. But for me to truly maximize my time, I've had to combine interpersonal work with integration into society. Aftercares can be easy. Recovery simply is not.

Have I been cured? No, I am a drug addict. I think about liquids, powders, and pills often. I worry that this is a common, unstated misconception: that treatment cures addicts. Unfortunately it is not so. But I'm recovering. I'm honest, bright, emotional, almost to a fault. I'm seeking paradise, I'm seeking sunshine.

My life today is one worth living. I definitely don't enjoy each and every day. I would go so far as to say that I exist on a lower emotional spectrum than most. But I'm becoming intimate with my emotions with the intention of knowing myself better than I ever have. I live for rope swings, pretty girls, dogs, food, and running. It's a narrow list, yes, but it's clean and honest and I love it.

“I went to a party and stole Xanax from someone I cared about deeply. deeply enough to hesitate before I snatched the pills, anyways. She caught me in the act.”



Staff Bio: Kelly Luck

by Kelly Luck



Right, left, right, left, right, left... the sounds of my shoes meeting the trail below, deep breaths in and out, green grass passing by... freedom, clarity, and a sense of calm.

I'm a runner. I've always been a runner. I'll always be a runner. Perhaps a closer look under the microscope and my blood cells are wearing running shoes. It's that ingrained into my DNA. It's brought me the ultimate freedom, taught me the most about myself, and thrown me into one of the greatest communities.

Left, right, left, right, left, right... the sounds of the door clicking shut behind me, deep bass rattling the trunk of an old Honda, loud voices of incoherent friends... escape, clouded judgment, and a sense of nothingness.

I'm a runner. I've always been a runner. I'll always be a runner. A closer look under the microscope and my blood cells are wearing the chemicals I've just ingested and are taking them to my brain. It's brought me temporary freedom, let me forget all about myself, and thrown me into a community where I have no clue who any of these people really are. After a month on the run from home I returned and convinced my parents that I was going to stop using. I told them that I was going to live my life my way and that was the key to my happiness. I had just turned 17.

After six months of falling deeper and deeper into a black hole of misery and accelerated drug use I heard, "It's time." A heavy weight boxer has landed a left hook into my midsection. A 5-megaton bomb just landed on top of me. The universe simply imploded. They were only two words, two; yet they came with so much force behind them that it would only be appropriate for some supernatural force to deliver them. But they didn't come from some super being or unearthly force, they came from my mom.

I found myself in a place of choice where neither option was the one I wanted: treatment center or no family. Unfortunately I couldn't do what I do best and run from the situation. I had to stop and I had to make a choice.

With a willingness to try anything to end the feelings of misery and only the smallest glimmer of hope I agreed and got into the car. Two days later I found myself in Southern Utah at a treatment facility.

If you are to ask just about anyone about the most difficult time to fit in and be comfortable with their peers, or the entire world, perhaps junior high would be the most common answer. It's that odd time in all of our lives when nature plays its cruel trick of puberty. You know, hormones through the roof, acne, sudden growth spurts which turn good fitting jeans into flood pants within a week's span. Each day there is a new target bringing on the snarky teenage comments and hurtful jokes of those going through the same ordeal, but who are trying their hardest to direct the focus onto anyone else. Before the cruelty of nature I was already uncomfortable. I was already trying to run from any attention of my peers and especially run from the feelings of being me. As I grew older I needed to find an escape from the feelings and from myself.

Through drugs and alcohol I was able to escape the discomfort of being me and was able to find what I thought to be freedom. Yet the feelings kept creeping back in and I wasn't able to outrun them. The faster I tried to run away the harder the drugs became. And the harder the drugs became the deeper into depression I fell. I became extremely anxious at the thought of my depressed feelings returning each time I came down from a high so much so that I needed to use more to run from the anxiety.

The cycle eventually brought me to my rock bottom and when my mom quietly said those two small words to me "it's time" it was clear that I had to stop running away and turn around. I had to run head on into myself.

On my eighteenth birthday I thought about running away again. I had the opportunity as I was a legal adult and technically could do whatever I wanted to do. I no longer had to stay at treatment. While contemplating my options and planning my exit my parents told me that my options were "Finish treatment and graduate the program, or you can have a bus ticket to the location of your choice along with \$20 and an extra set of clothes." And with 5 months clean the choice became clear and I continued to do what I did best, run. But I continued to run towards myself, towards my sobriety, and back to my family.

“I found myself in a place of choice where neither option was the one I wanted: treatment center or no family. Unfortunately I couldn't do what I do best and run from the situation. I had to stop and I had to make a choice.”

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It was while in treatment I started running. I discovered something I loved, a time where I could experience freedom and finally felt comfortable being myself.

After a successful graduation from treatment I found myself back home in Boulder. Terrified of the world and of the past I decided the best approach was to continue one step at a time. It was said by many that Boulder couldn't support a sober lifestyle, that the college atmosphere allowed people to live out their early twenties well into their early sixties, as a nonstop party. I laid out a schedule of meetings for myself and committed to completing 90 meetings in 90 days. I took up a full-time job working at a local running shoe store, continued working with a therapist and not only repairing the relationship with my family but also making it stronger than it had ever been. I put myself into positions where I could help others and inspired by the amazing therapist I had in treatment, Garth, decided to pursue a college degree in the hopes of one day also becoming a therapist.

A year later I found myself at the University of Redlands in Southern California. Four years later I was back in Colorado with a B.A. in psychology and a successful

college cross country and track career under my belt. I began graduate school and with this next chapter began training for marathons.

Today I also enjoy coaching a local running group in Boulder. The group comes together to help one another push through a tough hill climb or through a long 12 mile run. They also come together to help one another out in times of need, which is an aspect I appreciate about AIM House. I enjoy coming into AIM House each day and helping out others who are in the same place I once found myself. AIM House gives me the opportunity to work with some amazing people. Most importantly I get to help others find their passion, their freedom and hopefully long term recovery.

You see, I'm a runner. I've always been a runner. I'll always be a runner. Perhaps a closer look under the microscope and my blood cells are wearing running shoes. It's ingrained into my DNA. Its brought me the ultimate freedom, taught me the most about myself, and thrown me into one of the greatest communities – one in which I'm surrounded with wonderful people all helping one another out.



“The cycle eventually brought me to my rock bottom and when my mom quietly said those two small words to me “it’s time”, it was clear that I had to stop running away and turn around. I had to run head on into myself.”



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