



ADVOCATE

WHERE ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS MERGE

CONNECTION!

Music & Media Blocks at AIM House

by Angelo Keely



I took a big leap of faith in March of this year by giving up my position as Apple's video and music Mentor Trainer (FCP and Logic) for all of India and moving to Boulder.

I had been working abroad for several years, had become isolated in my career path and deeply sought a greater sense of community and collaboration. With no specific plan, but a sincere desire to find meaningful work, I found myself in the offices of AIM House after a local friend recommended that I contact them. Coincidentally, AIM House was looking for someone to help develop the music and video studio. So, after a few conversations and some really great freestyle rap sessions, I became the Music/Media Studio Coordinator. I don't believe this story is unusual though—it seems like each participant I talk to feels like his desire to seek something more than what his previous lifestyle was offering has been rewarded many times over by getting to work in the Music/Media Studio.

The combination of great gear and amazing people make AIM House the most artistically collaborative place I have ever been a part of. Physically, it is a full-fledged music and video recording studio with a high-end multi-channel digital interface, variety of mics, drumsets, amps, guitars, MIDI keyboards, DSLR

camera, professional lighting and backdrops, camera crane, the newest iMacs, and portable gear that allows us to shoot video and record audio in the field. As for people, I am blown away every day by both the talent and collaborative spirit of the AIM House participants. All levels of players—from total beginners to university-trained musicians—are in the studio everyday, working on new tracks together and seeking input from one another. The studio is an environment where people feel open to share ideas, try out new things, give input and humbly receive feedback. It's a truly unique creative environment.

The studio is open seven days a week and we offer dedicated block courses in video and music production in the afternoon. Block participants are currently working on several original songs for an upcoming live performance to raise money for more instruments and amps. The music they are preparing varies from hip-hop to hard rock to jazz. In addition to the blocks, a few participants work as recording and mixing engineer interns. Each intern is working through a personally-tailored curriculum in production techniques—recording, mixing, beat production, advanced techniques for Logic and Ableton, etc—and getting their hands dirty with real-world production projects. Sometimes I think, *"I wish that I had had these kind of opportunities available to me when I was their age,"* and then I realize, *"It's awesome that I have these opportunities available to me now!"*

I truly believe we're building an unprecedented artistic community: one that emphasizes technical development and group collaboration while never losing focus on the importance of each person's raw and unedited creative experience.



Dylan in the AIM House studio

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MISSION: WOLF

by *Laura Raab and Anya Shulman*



Bishop's Castle

Backpack ✓
Sweatpants ✓
Headlamp... Target List
Water shoes. Do flip flops count?
A good attitude... as long as the wolves don't eat me!

This past month the AIM House Women's Program embarked on an epic journey in search of the wolf sanctuary.

With our heads held high and our vans filled to the brim, seven women began the twelve hour road trip to Mission Wolf. After multiple pit stops, we followed the directions of a senile convenience store cashier and found ourselves at Bishop's Castle. Dubbed "The Craziest Castle in Colorado," Jim Bishop began construction on this hand-built masterpiece in 1969. The girls had the opportunity to climb the stairs to a height of over 160 ft. Many conquered their fear of heights and were rewarded with a beautiful view of the lush Colorado mountains. Waving good-bye to the stone masonry that temporarily distracted us from our wolf mission, we jumped back in the van and headed on our way.

By the time we arrived at our final destination for the next two nights, the sun had disappeared behind the mountains and we were all digging through our backpacks for our sweatshirts and flashlights. We assembled our tents in the dark in no-time. While a few of the girls went off to dig a latrine using their previously learned wilderness skills, the remaining women stayed around the stove and began preparing dinner. That night we feasted on macaroni and cheese and fresh vegetables, served in delightful Ziploc baggies. AIM House staff informed the girls of the next day's adventures and we retired to our tents for the night.

The nine women awoke in the morning and entered the wolf sanctuary. Run by volunteers from across the



Laura and a wolf



Missions wolf trip

world, the girls were introduced to their guide for the weekend. She gave the seven participants a tour, introducing us to twenty-eight different wolves and the various jobs we would be working on. The girls split into two groups. The first four girls went off to contribute to the garden that supplies the staff

with all of their fresh vegetables, while the other three girls were assigned the brutal task of hacking up horse meat to feed to the wolves. After a few hours of hard work all the girls regrouped and separated the meat into different buckets and began the feed! It was a wonderful experience witnessing the wolves partaking in the Mission Wolf dubbed "Big Feed".

To express our thanks for allowing us to participate in Mission Wolf, the girls cooked all of the Sanctuary staff dinner. A delish feast of spaghetti bolognese, freshly sautéed vegetables, home-made garlic bread and salad.

The next day, we said a goodbye to our wolf friends. We bid adieu and piled back into the car and returned to the open road. Later in the day we saw the "Great Colorado Sand Dunes" bridge over the horizon. Girls attempted sliding down the sand dunes on a medley of trash bags, sleeping mats, and razor scooters. None turned out successful except providing multiple girls with a face full of sand. Beyond the sand dunes, miles away, awaited a hot spring pool filled with warm mineral water and a camp sight. The girls splashed around for a few hours and then set up their camp. Two of the girls created a fire for grilling our hotdogs and burgers and we all began preparing a delicious barbeque dinner. That night, we feasted like queens.



The Great Colorado Sand Dunes

Though the girls were sad to leave their beautiful surroundings, they were exhausted from a weekend full of activity and traveling. The drive home was long and full of deep slumbers. The girls were grateful to return home to warm showers and the comfort of their own beds.

Our mission to the wolves was a great success. We can't wait to accept our next mission.

“With our heads held high and our vans filled to the brim, seven women began the twelve hour road trip to Mission Wolf”

Program News

by Daniel Conroy



I hope this letter finds you well! I am writing today to share exciting progress in the evolution of AIM House. As each year culminates, the leadership team at AIM House comes together to assess the program to ensure we are always evolving and enhancing our services to continuously improve each participant's experience. In essence, we do our best to look at our most successful participants and define the factors present that helped them to be successful at AIM House. As you can imagine, this is not easy. There are so many variables when it comes to "success" at AIM House or in any program. Still, we play close attention to inventory the common denominators and themes when participant's Actions and Intentions Merge. As an organization, our role is to provide the best opportunities possible based on the information we have, the experience we possess and resources we are able to offer. To that end, and after much discussion and planning with our leadership team, we have made the following changes to our existing AIM House program and schedule:

Wake Time: We have adjusted the wake up time to 8:00 a.m. Mondays through Friday to more closely reflect schedules of adults engaged in full time work or school. We want participants daily rhythm and schedule to emulate what sustainable, independent living looks like outside of a residential setting. Days begin with deliberate and clear intent. We have added a mindfulness component to the beginning of each group to enhance body and mind awareness, introducing the idea of meditation as yet another skill participants can utilize in daily life.

Program Schedule: The AIM House schedule now includes a block system structure. Our expectation of commitment and structure for each participant has not changed. What has changed is how we help participants implement structure for themselves, especially during the Intentions phase of our program. Mornings will be when most meetings and house-groups occur. Afternoon blocks are reserved for studying, signing up for college classes, high school completion (as applicable), vocational study, and life skill blocks where participants practice applying for and securing employment.

Creative Arts Curriculum: Our Creative Arts Curriculum is conducted at The Factory, and includes hands on experience in our brand new studio learning space. Participants have the opportunity to learn television, music and radio and/or film production. Musicians can record and practice music, while learning to engage in meaningful creativity. We will be launching our own radio station (maderadio.fm) and creating our own television shows. These production blocks are being taught by state of the art educators and mentors who share a passion for creative expression and developing meaningful skills to boost confidence and employability.

We will send more information out about various classes and blocks offered, as we further develop additional offerings. Participants are encouraged and welcome to attend The Factory classes that are already in session, which include screen printing, sewing, bookbinding, painting, drawing and design. As of September 17, 2012, all participants enrolling at AIM House will enroll directly into the new block schedule, as will most participants in the Intentions phase.

We are excited about all of these enhancements to the AIM House program we hope you are too! Stay tuned as we continue to evolve!

Warm Regards,

Danny

“Musicians
can record and
practice music, while
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The Life Of A Lamb

by *Ryan Lamb*

A lamb is most often portrayed as an animal defined by the flock. My story is more consistent with a wolf in sheep's clothing; not in the usual manner but more along the lines of viewing group mentalities from the outsider's perspective, always hoping one day to be accepted. Knowing I was living a lie I could always turn around and devour the sheep that had come closest to unveiling that mask. Since I was a child, I had a roaring desire to control things that were obviously outside of my control. I felt alone, scared and had a deadly need to be accepted. I had never really been alone; my existence was dependent on human stimulation. Having moved around a lot as a child I learned to compartmentalize my life and adapt to new situations; time and time again I would move, switch gears, abandon my friends, and reinvent myself in the town over. I can remember the first time I sold out and bought into a scene; the easiest scene to buy into is drugs because it only matters if your holding. I defined myself through marijuana, surfing, skating, the music and the lifestyle. I ran head first into it and was smoking all day, everyday, leaving behind any semblance of the life I had lived before. This is when I began to place happiness on a pedestal, embraced that I didn't know who I was, and I was going to do as many things that made my heart beat until I discovered those things with which to define myself. Yet, my insecurities and fear of inadequacy made it so I refused to have anyone

I can remember the first time I sold out and bought into a scene; the easiest scene to buy into is drugs because it only matters if your holding

see me take those first steps and admit to being un-knowledgeable at anything.

The lies grew thicker in the strange brew that was my life. I was a floating mask, a nomad as I traveled from group to group, made my appearance, laughed, maintained connections and moved on. I wanted no attachment to anything or anyone and justified my sick form of hedonism as, "you only live once," and, "what would I care if I die? I'll be dead." I was arrested for trafficking drugs and couldn't recognize how outrageous or risky my behavior really was. I went to a wilderness program to get out of felony charges yet it was a leap forward in forming a bond back with life on life's terms. That was where I started doing Yoga and meditating, reformed a bond with myself and began to internalize and express a bond greater than myself.

While I was working on myself, things between my mother and my newly formed step-father, Shaun, continued to degrade. I, for once, was healthy and was thrown back into an emotional abyss that I wouldn't begin to crawl out of until I was eighteen. My stepfather was steadily robbing my mother until the time of her suicide, racking up a near total of eight million dollars between run up credit, refinanced houses, inheritance, and the devouring of any other capital. Then came the night that I was sick with a hundred and three fever; my mother came to my father's house to drop off the deed to me. That night, I had a vivid dream and when I awoke, I knew my mother was dead. It wasn't confirmed until I had gotten to therapy, but then I finally let go of the possibility that she was



Ryan Lamb at The Factory

alive. That's when I broke down and accepted that my mother had hung herself. People were there for me in the beginning, but after a week or two it was like nothing had happened and I just wanted to scream,

expectations of my ego. I am living with integrity and honesty while cultivating meaning and fulfillment through self-respect, sincerity and an open heart to lead a genuine life.



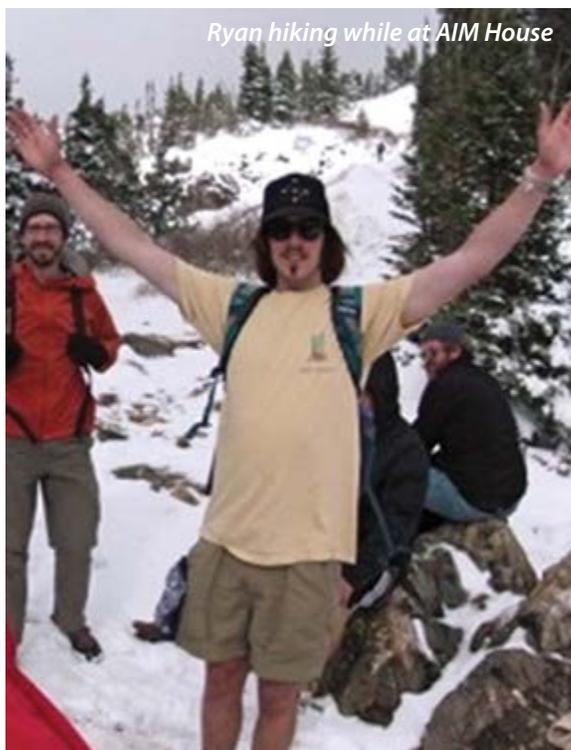
Ryan and friends at AIM House

"Don't you understand that my Mom is gone, she's dead, and she's never coming back."

I had a friend that had slowly been falling into the grips of crystal meth and heroin addiction. I'd always refused but when I hadn't found a drain for my unfelt emotions I said, "Who cares, why not, give me a hit." It made me feel something when I felt nothing and allowed me to check out when I felt way too much and overwhelmed by life. At first, I couldn't see the problems with this and thought I had found my wonder drug. It wasn't until my best friend's mother attempted suicide that I realized I still needed to deal with my own grief. I was furious with her for doing that to her family and saw a need to dredge up the anger I had harbored away towards my own mother. I stayed sober for a year and a half after going to my first treatment but then suddenly, I thought I could drink and smoke pot like a normal person. From 20-22 I battled sobriety and my ensuing drug addictions. I placed the victimized image of my mother on a pedestal and wouldn't allow her memory to be accountable for the burdens she'd placed upon my shoulders. In turn, I victimized myself and was unable to be accountable for my behaviors until I could let go of the hold she had over my life. Something I was unable to do until I got to Open Sky Wilderness in Durango, Colorado. I hated every aspect of myself and my insanity convinced me that every time I used, was my last time. My self-loathing, lying and behaviors drove everyone I loved out of my life and forced my father to stick to his word and kick me out of his house. I wanted to stop, but couldn't on my own. Then, I remembered wilderness and knew that was where I needed to go.

Today, I recognize that most of life is outside of my control, and I can be okay with that. Fear is not a debilitating factor in my life anymore but something to be felt, acknowledged and understood, so that I can take action for myself from my heart. I can look at any given moment and recognize what I sincerely know to be true, without adding the assumptions and

With the support of AIM House, and the creative outlets of The Factory/Made, I am rebuilding my confidence as an artist and will be displaying my work for sale within their store. I participate weekly in community service; I go to AA/NA meetings everyday and am actively working with a sponsor; I practice daily yoga and meditation; I work with other participants at AIM House to facilitate these activities and opportunities surrounding them. When I have tough feelings that come up or concerns, I know AIM House is a safe environment for me to express myself and be supported in my continual growth. The structure here allows me to take risks that develop my independence and strive for progress not perfection. Through individual therapy and groups, I can continue to do serious work on myself and through sponsored activities and the tight knit community, I get to play and be a kid while continuing to stay sober and focus on my recovery.



Ryan hiking while at AIM House

"Don't you understand that my Mom is gone, she's dead, and she's never coming back"

There are so many opportunities open to me today that I can feel overwhelmed deciding which not to engage in, where in the past, drugs had me rooted to a very specific schedule and location of where I could score and get high. Today the world is open to me and I can go wherever my heart desires. Through the specific phases at AIM House I am furthering my actions by acting with intention and engaging my community at large. Today I get to have a real life.

Staff Bio: Katie Conroy-Paz

by Charlotte Bouscaren



Katie is the community relations representative. Katie started working for AIM House the summer of 2012. Prior to AIM House, Katie worked for an Independent Educational Consulting firm out of Chicago. She worked with families from the beginning stages of placement

into wilderness or primary treatment through the transitioning process into therapeutic boarding schools or other transitional programs. Katie was also an administrator at a center for Pediatric Neuropsychology in Connecticut for many years. The years before starting her own family Katie worked for a woman's recovery home in Newport Beach California specializing in eating disorders. She also spent her free time studying improvisational comedy and performed throughout LA, before starting her own troop in Orange County.

Katie loves working for AIM House because of the contact and connection with families, professionals and clients in a collaborative effort to make a transformation and difference in someone's life. Katie shared, "What drew me to this field wasn't just that my family worked in the field, although my exposure certainly came from my family. My children have their own learning styles, personalities and individual struggles, and I was interested in finding solutions for their roadblocks." This lead Katie to enter the workforce again after being a stay-at-home mom. She realized that she wanted to be a part of the solution/support for as many kids as she could reach who struggle with ADHD, learning issues, emotional issues and anxiety, to name a few. Katie began working in a pediatric neuropsychological center part-time while also working with an Educational Consultant. "My passion emerged. I realized that finding a solution to the problem, supporting or just listening to parents like myself, who are scared and unsure, was fulfilling. I have three children so when I talk to families, I understand their struggles. If I can ease their worry just a little, whether it be at AIM House or pointing them in another direction, then I have had a successful day. Working in this industry, I get to meet some of the greatest people. Creating connections in the industry of helping people, enables me to better support our families and our participants." Katie loves building relationships with all different people and professionals in this field and being able to connect people together.

Away from work, Katie spends her free time being a mom to her three kids, spending time with them and an amazing community of friends they have created in Connecticut.

Earl House News

by Elizabeth Olson, Earl House Clinical Director



We have exciting news from the Earl House that I would like to share with you. We have decided to make a significant and meaningful change in our programming! Starting November 1st, as many of you already know, we began the transition toward becoming a mixed

gender program. We are excited about this change for many reasons and believe that this will generate positive outcomes for both the women and men. Over the years, we have discussed the possibility of offering a co-ed program at the Earl House because we have seen the growing need for services that address affect regulatory issues for both men and women. At the Earl House, we are uniquely positioned to offer sophisticated mentoring and clinical approaches that specifically address affect regulatory issues such as self harm behaviors, eating issues, social difficulties, addictive behaviors, relational difficulties, emotional disturbances and self esteem issues. We have a highly trained staff and a well structured, Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills based program. We offer services designed to address the emotional and cognitive needs of both men and women who struggle to cope effectively with making constructive life choices. We work diligently to help these young adults get back on a healthy track and to replace self-destructive behaviors with more stable and effective coping strategies. We have the expertise to encourage and support these young adults to reengage in their lives socially, educationally, and vocationally. We want these services to be available to not only the women who can benefit from this kind of high quality programming, but also the men who struggle with these same issues.

While we think that offering mixed gender services will benefit the growing number of young men who would prefer this type of programming, we also think that this will be helpful for the women enrolled in the Earl House. The participants have typically already engaged in mixed gender primary care in their wilderness, recovery and residential mental health programs by the time they enter AIM House. Many participants have already attended co-ed colleges as well. Living within a mixed gender program more closely resembles many of the normal, developmental tasks encountered in young adulthood. We think that mixed gender programming will benefit the young women because their feelings and behaviors associated with young men will become evident in the groups as opportunities to work through and resolve old patterns

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Katie is available and happy to talk with any families and consultants with questions or concerns regarding current or potential AIM House participants. She can be reached at 203-747-2807.

Creative Recovery Tuesday Nights 7PM @ the Factory

By Paul Soderman

For about two months of Tuesdays, the Castle, Earl House and various members of the recovering community of Boulder have been circling up at the Factory. We come together for the sole purpose of honoring our collective and individual creativity while abstinent from mood altering substances. We are not against drugs and alcohol as much as we are for solid, inspired creativity without them.



Typically, we will host a guest speaker who will share their experience with drugs and alcohol and then becoming

creative without. We have hosted Painters, Jewelry Makers, Music Producers, DJ's, Graphic Artists, Singer/Songwriters and a full Dance Troupe. All of these folks have requested to come back on a regular rotation and some come every Tuesday just for "the hang." Then we break the circle with one chosen word from our guest. The group then has the option to get busy with the evening's chosen Art activity in the main workshop. Some retire to the candlelit acoustic lounge and share songs and video inspiration. Meanwhile, the 'AIM House All-Stars' (anyone who is in the room) file into the studio to begin a session of rehearsing/jamming for the open stage at Nissi's on Thurs Jan. 3rd.

Upcoming CR nights will include more inspiring guest speakers and participant-led activities such as Karaoke, DJ Dance Party, Pictionary, Puppet Making, Christmas Cookie Design and Scene Acting. Paul S books the guests and acts as MC/ Ringleader. Sam Randall, AIM House Creative Director, is the "God-Mother" of Creative Recovery and lends her omnipresent nurturing spirit to the gatherings, without fail.

The emerging talent among many participants is quite astounding and is already making it's own mark in the creative world. Thus, the CR community would like to announce the AIM House's 'GOT TALENT' Show for late January or early February (aiming for around family workshop). All are welcome to attend or perform a song, spoken word, skit or anything artistic at all.

On we go, abstinely creating.

Continued from page 6...

Earl House News *cont'd*

by behaving in new ways. The challenges that arise with the opposite gender in their daily lives will manifest in their Earl House experiences and the staff will be present to help them navigate their responses every step of the way.

We are excited about this change and we understand that you might like to know more about how we will be implementing this transition. Please feel free to contact me or the AIM House staff, so we can offer answers to your questions and address any thoughts that you might have on this new development in our program.

“We are not against drugs and alcohol as much as we are for solid, inspired creativity without them”

Participants performing at Nissi's open mic

