

## **CAROL WESTERDAHL INC**

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Carleton Project in Houlton Maine. This alternative school is in the town square and is available to students in the community who are unable to matriculate through the public school system. I have worked with the Carleton Project for 14 years rehabilitating adolescents that suffer from anxiety, depression, ADHD, substance issues and a myriad of other mental health symptoms created by childhood trauma of one type or another.

I am a private clinician, self employed with an office at the school but not employed by the school, so I am able to observe from a different vantage point. This school has an active and successful mental health program which has been crafted as a team effort. The staff and I work together formulating specific plans to incorporate academic growth with achieving mental health stability, learning life skills, and assisting students in being accepted members of their community. Not only do they receive one on one therapy from a provider who is always on site, we have resources available to assist with any needs that exist. We believe in Maslow's Hierarchy which tells us that for a human being to grow all needs must be dealt with accordingly. I have witnessed this school go above and beyond to draw the community together to support a student and in doing so, build self-worth and self-actualization within this student. In turn, that will allow the student to graduate and become a healthy, productive member of the community.

As others have testified, this organization has certainly assisted students in getting diplomas but even more importantly, I have been honored to see the results that our graduates have achieved. They are responsible citizens living, contributing and giving back to the community. The model of this school is family, Carleton is a family, and we are all committed to the growth of each of its members. This is a very worthy project, committed to not only the growth of each student but also the growth of a community. Houlton and the surrounding towns suffer from low income, poor paying jobs and a substance problem. To change our community, we must change our youth; support is vital. Over my years in practice, I have worked with several different types of programs, and it is my opinion, that this school is one of the most beneficial. Thank you for your time.

Carol Westerdahl LCSW



