

Dear parents,

I understand the way you are all feeling right now. I was there not so long ago, November 2009 going through all the parents' testimonials posted on the web.

Maybe some of you got to Ironwood as I did too, through internet searching.

The minute I saw the school I felt it was something different, I had tapped into something really good, like finding a treasure or an oasis in the middle of the rough desert we were at with our family situation.

Our struggle with our son had been going on for 3 years. He was out of control at many times, and sometimes he was just in a latent stage of apparently nothing happening at all, but it was just a matter of days or hours before he would get himself back into trouble.

This meant: not obeying curfew, stealing the car, marijuana and alcohol abuse, skipping school, kicked out of school a few weeks prior to finishing, arguments at home and school, police encounters, some smuggling, and gang talk.

When it was worse, he would get violent, breaking things around the house, insults, screaming, getting lost for 3 days without letting us know where he was, hanging out with the not very convenient crowd.

It was a very hard decision to make because you don't want to fully acknowledge that you have a problem at home, and taking these steps first uncovers the truth and you come face to face with this painful reality. But there is nothing to feel ashamed of, the only important thing right now is that you feel you need to do something for your son and your family, and you have been guided to what I believe is the best treatment center in the country.

Ironwood for me is: a place of deep healing, of finding balance, of nurture, lots of love, common sense, professionalism, commitment, respect. Ironwood staff knows very well what they are doing. I don't know how they have been able to do it this way? How to be strict and firm but at the same time nurturing and loving. For me is the perfect balance, something I didn't know how to do myself.

The program is designed to meet every teenager's and families' needs. They have found the perfect balance between the group activities and the focus in the personal issues each family and kid have to deal with.

As parents you will feel you have good company walking by your side throughout the entire program, you will feel aided, supported, informed and this will help to bring back your self-esteem as a parent, since you get back the lost respect and authority. Your child acknowledges it too, since you made this decision for him/ her because as a parent of a minor you have the responsibility and the power to do something like this. That was one of our biggest concerns, our son was 17 years old and if we didn't do it now, it would be hardly possible to do it when he turned 18.

The hardest stage is just making the decision and following through. Calling a transport service just seems like the cruelest thing you can be doing to your son or daughter. At the beginning I was much stronger with the decision but right the day before I had cold feet, I was scared that my son would think that I betrayed him, maybe I was overreacting and we could find a better solution, all of these things crossed my mind. Now I can tell you, that I feel we made the best decision. Our son is thankful that we sent him, that gives you the best feedback ever.

We are still walking the walk, but it already seems like a totally different reality.

Wishing that you might find peace, love and unity again in your family circle.

Maria.