



Summit Preparatory in Kalispell.

never would have had a relationship with my parents. Now it's one of those things I want to have."

Many of her bad habits were influenced by popular culture, starting at the time she played with Barbie dolls. Rap music, Olivia said, "doesn't send a good message of what a lady or a woman should be."

During their stay at Summit, students are required to work in the kitchen — another effort to help simulate the home environment where everyone contributes.

On an October day in 2008, Tyler, a tall, lanky young man from Spokane, was working in the dish room after lunch. He explained how he had come to Summit Preparatory School. He had attended a wilderness program near Bozeman before coming to Summit. "It's not a lovey-dovey environment here all the time," he said, hinting that things can still be hard for a young person as they begin to develop self confidence. "It's a teen environment."

Before coming to Summit, Tyler was a failing student, did drugs and battled depression. Tyler, 17, now says that after 13 months at Summit he has the social and emotional tools to deal with the real world. "I'm just basically a totally different person," he said. He graduated in November and plans to attend college this winter. "My therapist has prepared me for a life on my own," he said.

Most importantly, perhaps, was his reconnection with his parents. His former habits of lying to them and deceiving them are gone. "Now I can talk to them about anything I want," he said. "I know they love me and always will."

This is what Rick and Jan Johnson see as a success: a student prepared to move on to a healthy life with a solid set of values and skills. Many students arrive at Summit in a crisis situation. All other options have failed, and the parents are forced to choose another path for their child.

This often leads to feelings of guilt for the parents. Summit staff work with the parents and students in family therapy sessions. "We help parents recognize it's not their fault," Johnson said. Rick and Jan Johnson see the successes every day — in the classroom, in the gymnasium, or in counseling sessions with one of the licensed therapists on staff. The successes come in different ways. A success might be a young woman engaging in healthy conversations and learning a better self image, or a young man accepting himself among his peers. Jan Johnson said students reconnecting with their parents is another significant measure of success. Jan explained how one parent described this transformation in their relationship with their previously estranged son.

The parent told Johnson, "you gave us our child back."

**On the Web: [www.summitprepschool.org](http://www.summitprepschool.org)**



## T R U S T

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