

CONNECTION!

The Creative Apprenticeship Program at Factory Made

by Matt Sullivan

As the Vocational Mentor at AIM House, I have the privilege of talking with participants about their passions and what they want to do for a living. Too often I meet with participants who are wildly creative and talented who struggle with how to manifest their interest into a real job or career. It has been my experience that some participants get despondent at the idea of having to choose between committing to a four-year college education or working a job that isn't fulfilling. They may dream of being a graphic designer or a travel photographer, but the cost of time and money for a creative arts education can be prohibitively expensive, particularly when participants may have a history of struggling in traditional college programs. Through the Creative Apprenticeship Program at Factory Made, we created an opportunity for participants to experience what it is like to be a creative professional, while at the same time helping them develop the skills needed to start a career in a creative field.



An AIM apprenticeship classroom

software training module, mentorship from a creative professional, and tools to work on their own project or portfolio. As an Apprentice you are given access to Lynda.com, an online software training website used by major corporations and universities including the

Berklee College of Music, Princeton University, and Yale University. Professional Mentors tailor the online coursework for learners at all different skill levels in programs such as Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, Ableton, and LogicPro in order to develop technical skills. In addition to their chosen creative track, Apprentices are encouraged to cross train in other areas that they find interesting.

The Professional Mentors in the Creative Apprenticeship Program are local creative professionals who are interested in helping develop local aspiring artists. As creative professionals they understand what it takes to be successful in the real world. Apprentices have the opportunity to work one-on-one with their Professional Mentors to understand what it really means to meet with a new client, manage a project, meet a deadline, and to see how a professional handles their work. At the end of the program, Apprentices will be able to walk away with their Lynda certifications, a professional portfolio, a reference letter, a professional connection in their field, and a sense of what it means to be a creative professional.

So far Apprentices have assisted in making a short video for the Boulder International Film Festival, designing and creating their own cookbook, producing their own music, and designing logos for local businesses. From beginning to end, Apprentices gain real world experience in interviewing, writing cover letters, time management, accepting feedback, and dealing with professional accountability. I have personally seen participants who were struggling with maturity and motivation become more invested in their work, committed to their schedules, and take themselves more seriously as artists and professionals. I'm excited about the opportunity the program has to inspire creative work and lend confidence to our participants as they transition to independent living.

For more information about the Creative Apprenticeship Program, please feel free to contact me via email at msullivan@aimhouse.com

Creative Apprenticeship Tracks

- Video Engineering
- Audio Engineering
- Graphic Design
- Photography
- Entrepreneurship (under construction)

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My Name is Owen

by Owen Hardy



Owen at The Factory

My name is Owen and I was 19 years old when I came to AIM House. I came to AIM House hopeful and engaged in my recovery. I was recovering from years of every day weed smoking, a lack of motivation, suicidal thoughts, debilitating anxiety, and most of all a perpetual state of low self esteem. When a person

doesn't believe they deserve a better life, there is no program in the world that can help them achieve one. After three exhausting months of a wilderness therapy program, I finally believed that I deserved a better life and I deserved to be happy, but I didn't know what that life looked like and I had never experienced true happiness before. AIM House helped me realize what my passions were, what I wanted in my life, and how to get it.

I cannot get high everyday and be an adult. I cannot drink every night and be responsible. I cannot lie to those who are closest to me and expect an adult relationship to flourish

My journey at AIM House was all about moving forward, despite a few relapses I continued to move forward. When I made amends with my parents I truly felt guilty for my actions, instead of feigning guilt. For the first time in years, I realized that I had a conscience and the rediscovery of my moral code helped me tremendously. While I did make many mistakes at AIM House, I went to bed every night determined to rebound from them and take the lessons I learned with each mistake and apply them to the future. Before, I would have just said 'screw it' and gotten high. And I could have done that, I could have left the house and gone to find weed and smoked it and gone back to my old life. Something inside me made me want to push through it. My therapist helped me realize that I would never be that pothead again, that I simply wanted more for myself.

So how did AIM House help me to find a better way of living? It's simple and the simplicity of their version of recovery is what makes it so effective: helping young men and women realize their dreams—dreams and goals tend to get pushed aside in favor of a joint or a beer— and supporting those dreams. That's it: support without reliance. My vocational counselor helped me make my resume, but he didn't fill out applications for me. My therapist helped me come clean to my parents, but she didn't call them for me. My mentor helped me find therapeutic outlets, but he didn't drive me to the gym. Aim House wants you to do it

for yourself. And as long as you want to improve your life, they will support you.

I left AIM House on December 15, 2012 and joined the Manifest program, AIM House's aftercare program. While I was officially out of AIM House, I was still very much part of the program at first; going to the Factory for therapy and mentor meetings, having family call's with my parents every week, and talking to people in the house weekly. But the temptation of freedom was too sweet and soon I found myself straying from the AIM House path I had agreed to: I began drinking occasionally and hanging out with people who had gotten kicked out of AIM House while I was living there. I knew it wasn't the best place for me to be and I knew I needed to find an alternative, but I was relishing my newfound freedom and I wanted to act irresponsibly again. I thought I could handle everything in my life and truthfully I could: I never went to work hungover, never missed a shift, made my family calls and therapy sessions, went to the gym, went grocery shopping, and generally had a handle on my life. But I wasn't taking my UA's anymore and I wasn't following the contract I agreed to with my parents. Part of me felt guilty for disobeying their trust and part of me just wanted to be a kid again. I am an adult now; however, as much as I want to be irresponsible again that chapter in my life is over. I cannot get high everyday and be an adult. I cannot drink every night and be responsible. I cannot lie to those who are closest to me and expect an adult relationship to flourish. My creed in life is now Honesty, Personal Responsibility, and Patience. And working on the Manifest Program has helped me realize that this is the right path for me. Not drugs and alcohol, I'm not saying I won't ever drink again or ever get high again, but they will never rule my life again. I will never smoke before taking a shower in the morning. I will never sacrifice eating for partying. I will never spend my rent money on a crazy weekend. I have errands to run now, job interviews to look nice for, and priorities other than getting messed up. Finding a balance in my new adult lifestyle has been difficult, as it is for every person, but if I didn't have the Manifest Program, I'm not sure I could even call myself an adult.



Owen and his mentor Alex

Gratitude

by Daniel Conroy



We all know we should be grateful, but how often are we really taking time out of our hectic schedules to work on this multi-health benefiting practice? I recently read an article in The Huffington Post sharing a multitude of reasons for beginning a gratitude practice; among them including mental health and GPA progress in teens, heart, immune boosting and sleep benefits as well improved relationships. In an effort to test the theory, I came up with my own gratitude list. I found it immensely uplifting and would encourage you to take a stab at your very own!

Gratitude

I am grateful to my family which is far from perfect but extraordinarily funny and resilient. I am grateful to my parents for giving me the gift of life. I am grateful to my sisters who have shown me what unconditional love is...especially my sister Shannon who has kicked cancers ass twice. I am grateful to love which has found me when I wasn't looking for it. I am grateful to my friends who have taught me to laugh and not take this life too seriously. I am grateful even for the most painful experiences that have chiseled and molded me to be who I am today.

I am grateful for music! All types of music but especially Bruce Springsteen and Phish who have inspired me to create and perform with integrity and wild imagination. I am grateful for sports which always provide an opportunity to escape. I am grateful for ESPN (minus the commercials). I am grateful to modern technology. I am grateful for my strong body. I am grateful for my eyes which are blessed to see beauty everyday. I am grateful to Air travel, it is still miraculous to me that planes can fly! They are heavy and fast. Speaking of heavy and fast...I am not grateful for horses but I am grateful that horses bring joy to others and we wouldn't be here without the help of horses so OK I am even grateful to horses just don't ask me to ride them ever. I am so grateful to laughter...

I am most grateful to my family...I have known Mae (my wife) since I was 12 years old...I am grateful to the 5 children we have had together... My children have been my greatest teachers by far. I am even grateful for the lessons of the loss of our first child, McLaine,...an experience I never would have chosen but cannot imagine my life without. My life since has been informed from the expense and made me a kinder more loving person with so much more compassion...My children have helped me learn to walk my talk because they call me out when what I say and what I do do not match. I am grateful that they have seen what I do more than what I say I do.

I am grateful for AIM House and the lessons it has taught me and the opportunity to serve. Every family that has come to us has been a gift for us. Every participant since day one has been a piece in the scaffolding that has built our program.

Warm Regards,

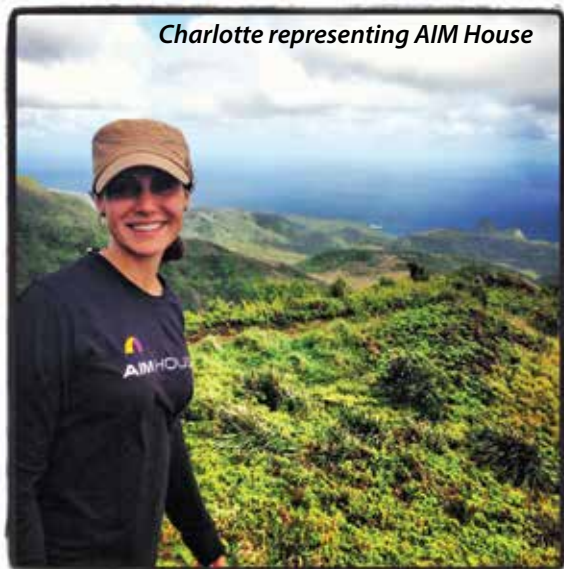
Danny

Reference / further reading: www.huffingtonpost.com

*“My children
have been my
greatest teachers
by far.”*

Giving Up Control

by Charlotte Bouscaren



Charlotte representing AIM House

“I was far from any true awakening... but I was determined. I looked around thinking, how did I end up here?”

Some people believe a strong will is all that is needed to get by in life. This has proven to be quite untrue for me. My will power has only gotten me into trouble. Life is much more successful when there is humility and vulnerability. Grasping to control often leads to complete chaos and the only way to get that control back is by trusting in something other than self-will.

“It’s 4:30am Charlotte, this is your wake up call!”

I was far from any true awakening... but I was determined. I looked around thinking, how did I end up here? The smell of old socks and stuffiness was disturbingly apparent. I quickly grabbed my new hiking backpack and walked to the front of the homeless shelter in this unknown, southern city of Utah. The taxi driver picked me up with a toothless grin. Luckily, I had 10 dollars in my wallet and some quarters for a phone call. I arrived at a tiny airport and picked up my ticket, which was purchased the night before by my ex’s father. There was no care in my mind of how many people I was hurting, how dirty I smelled, or how I would provide for myself when I got back to my hometown in Seattle. I had made up my mind and there was no turning back.

Rewind 2 days. I was really struggling and knew I needed help. Wilderness therapy did not sound appealing. I had been to wilderness before as an adolescent, but there were no alternatives. I was willing to try anything; my addiction was out of control and I couldn’t keep living in this way. The drive to Utah from college was painful. Doubts were flying through my mind. Was this the right decision? Did I overreact? I cannot go through this again. Too late now. I arrived

at the wilderness campsite and felt terrible, so I decided to take the mature route and lay in my sleeping bag all day and pout. The wilderness was all too familiar: the campfire smell, the brisk breeze, and the empty pit in my stomach that consistently arrived when I was left to sit with myself. Fortunately, I was informed that the food at this wilderness program was much better than my previous experience. Of course, food is what I was really concerned with when I had recently been putting my life at high risks on a daily basis.

“At least eat some dinner,” said the underpaid, hippy-looking, staff member. I took a bite of the “stew.” Disgusting. This was much worse than the cheap, dorm food I had recently been consuming. This was a mistake. The moon was rising and my cheeks were starting to turn pink. I got up to build my tarp shelter and passed out shortly thereafter. I awoke feeling uncomfortably wet from the withdrawals and wilderness dew, and I was confused. Why did I come here? I approached a staff member. *“Look, I’m 18. I can leave right? I already did this wilderness thing a year ago and it was great... I learned a lot, but it’s just not what I need. So, can I just leave?”* I asked.

“Charlotte, I know this is difficult...” replied the staff member. I began to drown out her voice. I was going to leave no matter what happened. They were going to do a lot (and they did) to try and change my mind. Doing so would have probably been a good idea, but I had already made a decision and it would have been too embarrassing to admit I was wrong.

After the not-so-convincing lectures from the other participants and telephone calls to my parents, it became clear that I did not want to listen.

“Ok, I guess you can leave, but you’ll have to hike back and nobody has ever made it.” said the staff member. That was a mistake because I am Charlotte. I will beat the odds. *“Fine, we better go so we can make it back before it’s too late,”* I confidently said.

We then embarked on our lovely journey. There was no chance I would turn back I didn’t even belong there. A staff member received the pleasant assignment of hiking back with me and made a point to ask if I wanted to turn back around at each rest point. Not happening. I may have been out of shape, but that wasn’t going to stop me. It began to get dark and my back was killing me.

“I do not have to carry this 1000 pound pack!” I snapped *“I’m leaving it here.”*

“No you have to take it.” The staff member replied.

“Why? I’m leaving it.” I felt guilty littering, so I kept it on and kept hiking. Finally, after some hitchhiking attempts, the staff member called a ride for us.

The truck pulled a u-turn and picked us up. Relief. We

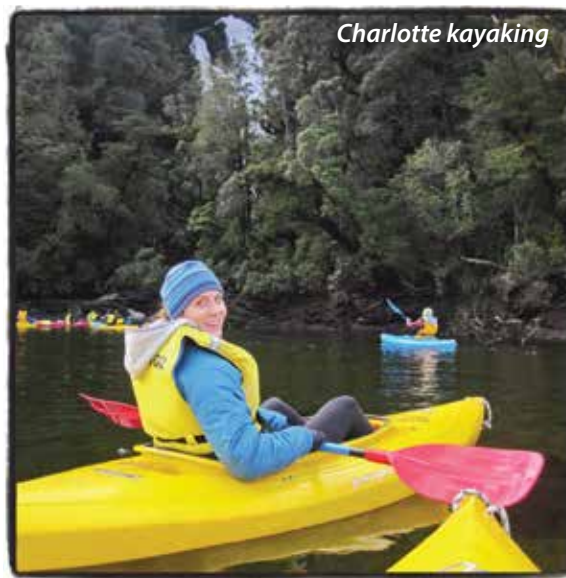
headed to town where the main office of the treatment center was located so I could call the family and 'make some important decisions.'

"Mom, hi, I'm sorry but I just couldn't do it," I cried. "We were so worried," said my mom. "Just stay there tonight, we'll talk in the morning. You scared me to death!" sobbed my older sister. I agreed and hung up. I sat there a moment and pondered. Stay until the morning? They're just going to try to convince me to stay. The staff member told me I would have to sleep in the local homeless shelter. She said they would check on me in the morning. Whatever. It seemed like nothing could faze me anymore. I may have grown up in a sheltered town, but I was in control of the situation. They dropped me off at the shelter with my pack and I checked in. The plump lady working behind the counter seemed familiar with my situation. My roommate at the shelter let me use her cell phone and I madly dialed everyone I knew. I discovered my parents had already talked to quite a few of my friends with the directions, "Don't help Charlotte and don't send any money." I realized I still had a chance with my codependent ex and his dad. When I phoned him, he said that he would talk it over with his dad and told me to call him back in an hour or so. I then spoke with Jim (the ex's dad) and turned on the water works.

"I had to hike 15 miles! Nobody will help me and I'm in a homeless shelter!" I must have been convincing because he got me a plane ticket and the next thing I knew, it was 7am, I had made it to my 3 hour lay over in San Francisco, and decided to call my parents from a pay phone. That was a tough call so did what I knew best. I called a friend in San Francisco; she picked me up for a bit and I used my layover time to take a shower at her place and then... well, why not? I got high with her. I had told myself I was running from wilderness for other reasons: I didn't belong there, it wasn't the right program, but my addict-self had gotten the best of me once again.

I ended up back in Seattle and lived off a friend for a few weeks, then reentered a different treatment center because I knew I still wasn't well and a part of me still wanted a different, sober life. I went to treatment 2 more times after that with similar resistance... a week or so in (I had a hard time with withdrawals... and guilt). The last facility I went to was in April of 2007 after hitting my lowest low in my addiction, which was about a year and a half after my wilderness run-away. My best thinking had put me back in treatment, emotionally miserable, in a lot of legal trouble and financial debt. When I let my self-will take over, I acted selfish, uncaring, and unhappy. I finally realized that I had to let go; I had to take suggestions from others because my way was not working.

Although a part of me longed for freedom after my last 90-day inpatient program, I realized I needed more support transitioning back to life; I didn't have a great track record of doing things my way. I toured a few programs for aftercare and when I visited Boulder, I knew AIM House was the place for me. I saw AIM House as a place I could actually feel "normal." I wasn't isolated and there were opportunities for a life in Boulder. I was in a college town with people my age; I could find a good job, have the opportunity for an education, and also have that therapeutic support and structure that I still needed. I had no idea of what my passions were or the reasons to stay sober, and I still didn't see what was so great about life. I just knew I had hit my bottom with drugs and they weren't working for me anymore. The relationship I had with my AIM House mentor was amazing. She inspired me to keep searching for things that could make me happy; she helped me create goals and find the reasons to stay sober. I discovered a love for hiking (without a large, heavy pack of course), yoga and helping others. I got a job at a gym and slowly started paying off my debts. I got involved with the 12-step community and fitness communities in Boulder and learned how to build healthy, consistent friendships. I



Charlotte kayaking

"I had no idea of what my passions were or the reasons to stay sober, and I still didn't see what was so great about life. I just knew I had hit my bottom with drugs and they weren't working for me anymore"

was also inspired and built back the confidence to get back into school, and finally got my degree at Naropa University. I may have been behind my high school class when I graduated college, but the experiences that led me back to school, made my education so much more valuable. I wasn't taking it for granted anymore; I was there for me.

Things are not perfect now, but I am happy to wake up sober every morning and actually experience my life each day. I don't have to live in fear like I did before. My family has gained back trust and I'm not the "problem" anymore. I have a job that I truly

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Staff Bio: Janine Moderski

by Charlotte Bouscaren



Janine grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia. She attended Sacred Heart Academy in Bryn Mawr, PA from 7th grade through high school. She graduated from Villanova University with a bachelor of arts, where she was interested in studying geography, specifically cartography and philosophy. For graduate school, Janine attended the contemplative psychotherapy MA program at Naropa University.

After college Janine went on a 3 month long semester course with Colorado Outward Bound. The course changed her life and she knew she wanted to pursue a career in outdoor education. The decision to study psychology in graduate school resurfaced midway through her 8 year OB career. Janine noticed an increased trend of students on medications and with psychological evaluations attached to their enrollment questionnaires. She had two courses that were monumental in her decision, one of which was helping a student who had attended Columbine touch into her trauma from the shooting on a mountain ridge; she felt the fear of that day surface for the first time on the ridge and was no longer avoiding her tears. That combined with another course of having a group of young men who were defiant, who would have been better suited for Wilderness therapy, Janine could no longer ignore the signs and it was time to apply to school. Her intention was to better understand the

shifts in youth with the goal of becoming a better Outward Bound instructor/course director. She did not realize until the end of her second year of a three-year program that becoming a therapist was even an option. Janine laughs about that now, but she has come to learn through her work that we tend to discard our natural talents as potential careers because the societal perception of work is that it has to be difficult. *"I finally realized that I can make a living out of the gift I have been given in this life,"* shared Janine.

Janine moved to Boulder for graduate school and struggled with really grounding here. She knew it was time to attend school, however her community of friends and interests remained in the mountains, where she had been living before graduate school. After graduation, Janine went back to Western Colorado to be closer to her mountain community and took a position as an outpatient therapist at the Center for Mental Health in Montrose, CO. Her specialties became working with high risk suicidal clients, substance abuse, youth integrating back to society from residential treatment, combat veterans, trauma, personality disorders and working with psychosis. After three years of working at the center, Janine decided she needed a geographical move. During that time, she became interested in residential treatment and after much searching, she landed back in Boulder. Janine took a position as a therapist at Devereux Cleo Wallace, which is a high end residential treatment center for at-risk youth. She was assigned to an 18 bed unit for 13-16 year old boys. After she accepted the position, she learned that the unit had been deemed *"the most difficult on campus."* She also learned that she was hired because of her Outward Bound experience and my ability to manage and assess risk. *"The inner*

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"The inner rebel in me set the intention that I was going to help to dispel the 6 year stigma attached to this unit, the labels attached to those young boys and build a solid team."

Janine skiing with AIM House participants



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rebel in me set the intention that I was going to help to dispel the 6 year stigma attached to this unit, the labels attached to those young boys and build a solid team." After being at the center a while, Janine was approached by a graduate school friend to apply at AIM House. She was faced with an internal dilemma: in her time at Devereux, she had transformed the unit and built a solid team, however, she had wanted to work at AIM House since her internship in graduate school. Janine laughs with Danny now because this was her third time applying for a position at AIM House.

Janine was sad to leave Devereux and the cohesive team she helped build. *"There will always be a special place in my heart for my time there and that population of youth, however I knew making the move to AIM House was what I needed for my development as a therapist and to increase my quality of life."* Janine was initially drawn to AIM House because of the ability to blend her experience with Outward Bound with her therapeutic skills, but the opportunity to work with Francis Kaklauskas and Elizabeth Olson (clinical directors at AIM House), who were her mentors during graduate school, sealed the deal in her transition from Devereux.

"There are so many aspects of my current position that excite me! My role as one of the three pillars allows me to work closely with Danny to implement his vision, which pushes my growing edge and capitalizes on my strengths." Janine especially enjoys supervising the therapists on the clinical team and training graduate level interns and practicum students. She is also really excited about the opportunity to attend conferences with AIM House with the hope of developing more fluidity in the transition between therapists. Janine is currently working closely with several wilderness therapists on effectively transitioning coping skills, and hopeful will be presenting on this topic at some upcoming workshops. *"The hardest part about being a therapist for me, is that helping people is naturally engrained in my personality and as much as I try to shut off analysis it is infused in my being. I have learned to disconnect from that part of my brain, to set boundaries those who are not my clients, and ask for help when I need it."*

Janine is currently working on a creative project with several participants and staff to develop a compilation meditation CD, which is being recorded in the Factory. The vision of this project is to incorporate three areas: service, creativity and meditation. The guided meditations will be geared toward helping people cope through a challenging emotion. Janine feels very passionate about the service component. Once the tracks are completed and ready for sale, part of the proceeds will go to a non-profit organization that helps youth who are in need of financial support to attend wilderness or aftercare.

Janine has a relational approach to the work that she does with the participants. She learned early in her career that the traditional therapeutic approach was not effective with most youth, due to their previous history with therapists, so she developed a style of connecting that meets the participant where they are in their process. *"I really appreciate the ability at AIM House to be able to share my passions with the guys whether it is in a yoga class or on the ski slope."* Often times the connection and the healing occurs outside the office.

Janine is also interested in helping the guys reconnect to their inner knowing or personal truth that at some point in their lives was squashed or shamed. Janine has found that the disconnect from themselves is an underlying factor in their depression or use. Janine tries to help the participant connect with their strengths and their passions while maintaining the level of vulnerability they developed in wilderness. Janine also works with the families to see their child in present time and to identify and talk about the triggers that are surfacing from the past.

Janine says she is learning something new everyday at AIM House. *"The participants are brilliant and teach me so much."* Janine spends a significant amount of time outside of work practicing Bikram Yoga. She also enjoys skiing, biking and when she has the opportunity, reconnecting with her community in the mountains. She also spends time studying alternative forms of healing, writing, doing house projects, and spending time with my family. Janine has been a great gift to AIM House and continues to share her skills in new and creative way skills in new and creative ways.

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Giving Up Control, cont'd

enjoy, that challenges me and keeps me growing, and I actually appreciate the ups and downs in life; I know I can get through anything now. Asking for help is never easy, but when I find myself being resistant and fighting for control, I remember where my self-will has taken me in the past, I take and step back, and practice humility. I'm grateful to AIM House everyday for providing me exactly what I needed. I wasn't treated like a child while I was a participant there, I was given the opportunity to find out who I was. Thank you AIM House and all of the treatment centers that helped me along the way! I may have been slow to get it, but everyone has their path to hike!



“Janine is currently working on a creative project with several participants and staff to develop a compilation meditation CD, which is being recorded in the Factory.”