

CONVERSION PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT: Eckerd Connects AKA Eckerd  
Youth Alternatives (multi-state/FL, NC, etc.)  
By Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE (<https://www.cope.church> ) Dated: 1/6/21

The HEAL Mission of COPE has received 54 complaints from individuals and families alleging physical abuse, improper restraint (resulting in fractured/broken bones (i.e. ribs, arms)), injuries to youth caused by staff resulting in stitches, physical restraint person-on-person exceeding 20-30 hours, torture, stabbed with pine straw causing bleeding, the restrained would be stabbed with pine straw, exposure (to elements-freezing cold (sensory deprivation?)), food and water deprivation, false imprisonment, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, infliction of suicidal distress, forced to bathe in freezing river water in winter, coercive thought reform, held incommunicado (communication blackouts), monitored calls, poison ivy untreated for weeks resulting in black scabs in the Gulf of Mexico (survivor reported via e-mail: "I flew home to [Redacted] with black scabs on my face and a rash like none I have ever had before or since....I was immediately taken to the doctors and put on medication for my 'tropical skin condition'"), forced labor (including digging trenches/ditches), belongings confiscated/stolen by staff and never returned nor reimbursed, beatings, authoritarian/totalitarian leadership, wrongful death (i.e. Michael Wiltsie), false advertising, rape/sexual assault (survivor reported via e-mail of the rapist: "there IS a letter TO that director from eckerd saying "it would behoove him to resign and take the position being offered him" within the organization in Florida...after it was discovered what had happened" [suggests cover up of rape by Eckerd in my opinion]), arm torn out of socket, illegal and unethical practices, understaffed, lacks structure, staff providing cigarettes to kids they like while abusing other kids (Survivor reported via e-mail: "Chief ben was the name of the man who would strike me the same man had given me cigarettes and turn a blind eye to me smuggling in weed to push around kids he didnt like it gradually progressed out of control and when another kid came forward about me pushing him around and i felt bad and i tlood him we were done i didn't need cigarettes he started to degrade me and get physical and told me i was never getting out until i was an adult but i witnessed many horrors whil i was there attempted suicide of my friends where my friend skin had turned blue and the whites of his eyes wher purple the smile on his face still haunts my dreams when he was cut down the program director stood over him once he regained consciousness and screamed do you like attention hows this for attention and dragged him across the campsite pretty violently to the 6 weeler and sent him to be evaluated another time i watched blood squirt out of my friends wrist punctured with a piece of glass the blood shot about a foot and it squirted everywhere bullying, from staff going too staff would often "restrain" kids for little more than getting verbal with them the bathroom in severely unsanitary conditions (the box) and pee buckets in our tents) and often the temperature was so low nobody could wash up after kids that got sick including myself(coughing up blood) where still dragged around in the sub zero conditions and expected to chop wood the school was reserved for transitioning kids (i was never aloud to go so i dont know much about it) we were expected to act like we loved the place if a judge or government official of any kind came by and the reward would be a "special trip" if they bought it food was cooked by the children and often times was just unedible depending on the kids who cooked it i tried

to tell my jppo Jodie varney as well as my case manager and my "advocate" that things were not right but they listened in on my phone calls so i couldn't go into detail but it didnt Matter i was told i was just trying to figure a way out of there and that it couldn't be that bad i finally got out after 10 months when i took a stance against my abuser and hospitalized him everything came forward and chief been never showed up to court"), destroys families, corruption, labor trafficking, medical and educational neglect (survivor reported via e-mail: "I have some occasions...stuff I'm not sure was legal for them to do(keeping 18 yr olds from leaving, unwarranted unsafe restraints). Also stories of serious neglect of health needs, from brown recluse bites, untreated kidney infections, dangerous hemroids, scary untreated allergic reactions. Strange use of medications. I recall three to four days once when water had frozen to the ground of where we slept. And additionally lots of feelings of mental torture and intimidation, and finally, the schooling was absolutely nothing. I lost so much that year. So please, if theres anything I can tell, ive waited a long time to tell it. I made it out alive."), wrongful termination for reporting sexual and physical abuse of children, humiliation tactics (survivor reported via e-mail: "I was not allowed to go to the bathroom except at certain times of day when everyone was allowed to go. Because of that, I developed a bladder infection so bad that I lost control of my bladder, and was subsequently punished often. It got to the point where the infection was so severe that I ws bleeding, and my counselors decided that I had gotten my period and humiliated me in front of the group (I would not actually get my period until two years later.) I came from an educated background and was mocked and insulted for the way I spoke because they thought I was trying to be 'better than them'... We were not, of course, allowed to tell our parents or anyone else what was going on at camp, because if your parents reported what you had said, you would be really punished when you got back from your monthly weekend at home. The conditions were unsanitary, unsafe and abusive. I know it's too late past the statute of limitations to be able to sue these people, but I wanted to tell my story in hopes that it could be used in some way to stop these abusive child prisons, or that there was some other way I can help."), and causing Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD) at Eckerd programs (including E Nini Hassee and E Ku Sumee). Some of these complaints are referenced online (including above) and others remain confidential and on file with the church (and mission). With the intention of providing an opportunity for catharsis, clarification, and potentially peace, Rev. Angela Smith invited the victims (families and survivors) as well as staff whistleblowers to provide a guest sermon for publication to the site. The invitation was sent via e-mail on December 29th, 2020. That invitation read thus:

"Dear Eckerd Survivors and Families,

Eckerd Youth Alternatives AKA Eckerd Connects (Eckerd) is on the HEAL Mission watch-list (of fraudulent and abusive programs) and enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program based on your reports to the HEAL Mission alleging fraud, abuse, and/or other violations. You can learn more or refresh your memory at <https://www.heal-online.org/thelist.htm> and/or <https://www.heal-online.org/eckerd.htm> .

The majority of Eckerd locations that populate(d) the watch-list have been closed and are currently buried at <http://www.beyondbusiness.net/youarenext.htm> . However, E Nini

Hassee in Florida and E Ku Sume in North Carolina remain open and we continue to work to expose and close them.

The HEAL Mission and COPE Conversion Program (for Conversion Programs) has updated our protocols to provide entities populating the watch-list and/or enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program three ways off the watch-list or out of the program. Death and/or closure remains one way after which they will be buried at <http://www.beyondbusiness.net/youarenext.htm> with the others who didn't make it off the list or reform in time. Programs enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program/placed on the watch-list are also eligible for graduation if they meet the minimum Honesty In Marketing Standards described and/or provided via hypertext link at <https://www.cope.church/standards.htm> . The third option is merciful release. Merciful releases are determined by date of last directly reported to the HEAL Mission complaint (date of incident(s) of abuse), whether those incidents occurred prior to when by custom or law the requirement to retain such records has expired, and whether Sponsors (you) are actively participating or maintaining interest in holding your program accountable.

The most recent complaint the mission has received occurred in 2015 (if you were abused later than that then you did not include the dates of your enrollment when you contacted the HEAL Mission) on Eckerd. The custom is to retain such records for 7 years in Florida (understanding the other locations to be North Carolina, etc.). So, the requirements for merciful release have not been met. This is an invitation for you to provide a guest sermon no later than Wednesday, January 6th, 2021 at 8pm Pacific if you wish to provide a more personalized guest sermon rather than have a progress report posted at that time. Current progress reports on other programs are available at <https://www.heal-online.org> so you get an idea of what will be posted if you do not provide a guest sermon. For sermons (including guest sermons), see <https://www.cope.church/sermons.htm> . Here's how to participate:

1. In the body of an e-mail message write out your complete sermon and include answers to the following questions:

Did you report fraud or other unlawful actions to the proper authorities? If not, why? If so, what happened with the reports? (So, 2 part question)

Why do you believe Eckerd should remain enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program?

2. Send that guest sermon to me at [rev@cope.church](mailto:rev@cope.church) with your first and last name (full) and notify me if you wish for your contact information to be included or for all feedback to be handled by the mission and/or church. Your full first and last name will be shared along with your sermon as written and provided by you. It will be posted as a Guest Sermon at <https://www.heal-online.org> , <https://www.heal-online.org/eckerd.htm> , and <https://www.cope.church/sermons.htm> .

If no one provides a guest sermon and there are no new complaints received by the

HEAL Mission by December 31st, 2022, Eckerd's remaining programs enrolled on the watch-list (E Nini Hassee and E Ku Sume) will receive a merciful release.

Thank you in advance for participating. And, please learn more about how to value your contributions at <https://www.cope.church/givetoday.pdf>.

In Solidarity,

Rev. Angela Smith  
HEAL Mission National Coordinator/Founding Mother of COPE"

Now, there was a vote on whether Eckerd should remain on the watch-list initiated on March 26th, 2020 where all Sponsors of that program's placement in the COPE Conversion Program were invited to participate. No one voted for merciful release or the equivalent at that time. HEAL Mission and the COPE Conversion Program recognize participation in the vote in March as recent enough participation even if Sponsors prefer more time to consider, write, and/or provide any guest sermon. While we understand this may be disappointing for Eckerd, it is the hope that this progress report helps explain the reasons for the continued enrollment/placement in the COPE Conversion Program. Additional or continued participation by Sponsors, including providing guest sermons or participating in future votes will impact whether or not the program qualifies for merciful release or remains enrolled. Lack of participation by Sponsors where all other criteria for merciful release are met, will result in merciful release of the program.

Similar invitations will be going out to all survivor/victim/whistleblower e-mail lists with their respective programs placed on the watch-list. It may take some time to get through the entire list especially if enrollments pick up. But, we are working on it and everyone can submit Feedback at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> at any time regardless of position regarding program placement or enrollment.

To close, I remind everyone that there are remedies at law. Labor trafficking, rape, fraud (misleading marketing/false advertising), false imprisonment, kidnapping, battery, assault, and any crime or tort you could name are actionable at law. The HEAL Mission of COPE is prepared to assist all victims by providing reporting resources and information for the sake of justice and we appreciate all Sponsors who selflessly contribute content for the sake of informing the public to help those exercising due diligence avoid becoming a victim. For reporting resources, see <http://www.heal-online.org/report.htm> for directory of law enforcement and regulatory bodies throughout the USA.