



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CONTACT:**

Susan Cambria  
Eastern Region Vice President  
Aspen Education Group  
scambria@crchealth.com

### **Aspen Education Group Announces Program Conversion, Will Open Talisman School in August 2010**

(Hendersonville, NC – May 17, 2010) – Aspen Education Group, the leading provider of therapeutic education programs for struggling youth, today announced the conversion of its New Leaf Academy in Hendersonville, North Carolina, to become The Talisman School. The new school will serve the growing number of youth with Asperger’s and other autism spectrum disorders, and will open its doors on August 23 of this year.

“There is a growing need in this country for schools dedicated to young people dealing with Asperger’s Disorder and high-functioning autism,” said Linda Tatsapaugh, current Executive Director of Talisman Programs, and now the Executive Director of the new Talisman School.

Tatsapaugh has worked with adolescents for nearly 20 years. Her Talisman Program conducts summer camps and semester-long programs for youth struggling with Asperger’s Disorder, high-functioning autism, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

High-functioning autism and Asperger’s Disorder are both autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that an average of 1 in 110 children in the U.S. has an ASD.

“Adolescence may be the most difficult time for an individual with Asperger’s or high-functioning autism,” explains Tatsapaugh. “In adolescence, social demands become more complex, subtle social cues become more important, and kids with these disorders may have difficulty understanding their peers and the inherent social status structure of high school. Because they are socially naive, the child may not realize when someone is trying to take advantage of them and they can be especially vulnerable to manipulation and peer pressure.”

She adds, “This school will be a comfortable place for them to feel safe and be who they are without peer ridicule.”

The new, co-ed Talisman School will have a 61 student capacity, and will serve students through experiential learning opportunities, specialized instruction and small learning groups. The focus will be on improving social awareness and interaction, independence, and academic self-motivation.

“We have been looking for a place to locate this type of school for a long time,” said Tatsapaugh, adding that their current Talisman Program campsite was just that, “too camp-like” of an environment, and not appropriate for a full-time school. “The new site will allow us to have a traditional school setting that will enable our students to succeed.”

Talisman School will be set within a southern-style mansion that rests among 68 acres of hardwood forest in the world-famous Blue Ridge mountain range.

The site's current school, New Leaf Academy, a private boarding school for girls ages 10-14, will be consolidated with its sister campus, New Leaf of Oregon, as well as Bromley Brook School in Manchester, Vermont, two of Aspen's other all-girl boarding schools. The process of transitioning students will begin immediately, with a close date of June 25. Nine of the school's 36 students will be graduating.

"We are very aware of the complexities involved with transitioning students and hope to make this as seamless as possible for parents and the affiliated referring professionals," said Susan Cambria, Eastern Region Vice President for Aspen Education Group. "Aspen has two other very appropriate, high-quality schools – Bromley Brook and New Leaf Academy of Oregon – or the girls may be ready to transition home. We will do whatever is right for the individual child."

The new Talisman School will incorporate many of the certified teachers from the former New Leaf Academy, as well as Talisman Programs' Clinical Director.

"We are very appreciative for the great staff of New Leaf Academy," said Phil Herschman, President of Aspen Education Group. "They have done an outstanding job with these young girls and we are fortunate that many have chosen to stay on with the new Talisman School."

The Talisman School is a program of Aspen Education Group, the nation's leading provider of therapeutic education programs for struggling or underachieving young people. Aspen's services range from short-term intervention programs to residential treatment, and include a variety of therapeutic settings such as boarding schools, outdoor behavioral health programs and special needs summer camps, allowing professionals and families the opportunity to choose the best setting to meet a student's unique academic and emotional needs. Aspen Education Group is a proud member of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP). Aspen also is a member of CRC Health Group, the nation's largest chemical dependency and related behavioral health organization. For over two decades, CRC Health has been achieving successful outcomes for individuals and families. For more information, visit [www.crchealth.com](http://www.crchealth.com).