

Wye River Upper School

... because not all great minds think alike



Caine and Chris Egleseder



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Cris Egleseder, Parent, Wye River Upper School

“So many things have changed for the better, thanks to Wye River,” says Crissy Jens, mother of Caine Knopp ’10. “By eighth grade, Caine had attended approximately six different schools, both public and parochial, and his experiences in all of them were negative. It was never a question of his ability — it was his need for a different kind of approach and attention. He had a hard time sitting still at his desk and an even harder time focusing in an environment that was noisy or chaotic. He knew he was different, he sensed how other students reacted to him, and he felt the teachers’ contempt for him. As time went by, he lost his confidence and his self-esteem.”

When Caine visited Wye River Upper School in the Spring of his eighth grade year for an interview and testing, the school’s faculty and staff quickly recognized his strong academic ability and moved him ahead a year. Caine and his family quickly realized that he was in a new world, a world where there would be no IEP referrals, no demands that he “stop fidgeting, sit straight and put both feet on the floor,” no rigid expectations about the way he would learn. And better yet, there were dedicated teachers with exceptional talent and expertise to share with motivated students who were eager to reciprocate.

“Caine’s strongest interest is in the intersections of art, graphics, and computers, but when he first arrived at Wye River, he was just so emotionally closed in, he wasn’t able to really pursue it,” recalls his mom. “Once he started working in Mr. Martinez’ classes, it was like a causeway opened up for him — he just took off. Soon he was flourishing in his classes and also, his social life got so much better. He’d always been a YMCA kid, but after starting at Wye River, he became more outgoing, making more friends and making them more easily and quickly.”

For Caine, Crissy and her husband, the changes were all good, not just in school but at home as well. “I have to admit that it took me a little time to get used to Wye River’s approach,” recalls Crissy. “It seemed so ‘out of the box’ to me, that Caine was allowed to express his energy during class. I had to bite my tongue at first, but soon I saw what a difference it made for him to be allowed his own learning style and personal idiosyncrasies. The teachers and staff were so helpful in showing us, as parents, how to ‘pick our battles’ and make adjustments in our expectations that would encourage Caine’s self-confidence and his overall growth.”

In addition to course material and teaching techniques that were challenging and engaging, Caine participated in Wye River’s Mississippi trip where students and faculty assisted in building and repairing homes for Hurricane Katrina victims. “Caine and I had done some volunteer wetlands planting, among other things, but the school trip was a really exciting experience for him, to see firsthand the devastation those families had experienced, to talk with teens who had lost everything, and to be able to help out,” says Crissy.

Of the many gains her son has made since he enrolled at Wye River Upper School, Crissy is most excited by his increased motivation. “Caine wants to go to college now — he sees what kind of alternative learning opportunities are there for him and he knows he can succeed,” she reports.

Now an 11th grader, Caine is taking advantage of the school’s College Advisory Program and looks forward to choosing a college that will enable him to further develop his talent and experience in preparation for the real world. “It has been an absolute gift to watch Caine realize his potential,” says Crissy. “Our family is very grateful to Wye River and the people here who have made such a wonderful difference in his life and ours.”