



Paul Fleissner
Director of Behavioral Health
Minnesota Department of Human Services

October 14, 2021

Dear Mr. Fleissner:

The October 18, 2021 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine includes an article that places a derogatory spotlight on certain “Teen Challenge” adolescent-focused programs located in the southern United States. We find the content disturbing and the practices unsettling.

We have a longstanding, positive relationship with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and thus want to be open, clear and transparent about any confusion and concern that may be brought on by *The New Yorker* article.

Due to the egregious accusations and abhorrent practices cited in the article, it’s important to clarify that this article is NOT about Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge. We never have and never would consider the use of those practices and adamantly oppose their use in any of our programs or facilities. The teen programs referenced in *The New Yorker* article are unlicensed and unsupervised. Please note that adolescent programs in our state, including Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge, are fully licensed and adhere to rigorous standards for the care and treatment of individuals.

Further, we are concerned that this article may create confusion since “Teen Challenge” is part of our name. Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge is an independent corporation and is not formally affiliated with any other “Teen Challenge” centers.

Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge has an independent and dedicated board of directors, leadership team, and staff. Our adolescent program, Lakeside Academy, is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health & Human Services as a Rule 2960 children’s residential facility. At Lakeside Academy, we provide licensed treatment for substance use disorder as well as licensed mental health services. In addition, we offer an on-site public school, staffed with licensed teachers from District 288.

We welcome the opportunity to address any concerns that arise as a result of this article. Moreover, we look forward to continuing our work together.



With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rich Scherber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rich" and last name "Scherber" clearly legible.

Rich Scherber
Chief Executive Officer
Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge

cc: Senator Michelle Benson
 Senator Jim Abeler
 Senator Melissa Wiklund
 Senator John Hoffman
 Representative Peter Fischer
 Representative Keith Franke
 Representative Tina Liebling
 Representative Joe Schomacker
 Representative Jen Schultz
 Representative Tony Albright