



"We tell the kids, 'Our job is to talk; your job is to listen,'" says Heartland founder Charles Sharpe (on the Newark, Mo., campus).

In the 19 months since he arrived at Heartland Christian Academy, a boot camp for troubled teens in northeastern Missouri, Matt Smith has been paddled more than 300 times—sometimes for infractions as minor as looking at a girl or passing a note. Last September, when he refused to stand with his nose pressed against a fire extinguisher as a punishment for being loud, a staffer broke his arm by twisting it behind the 14-year-old's back. Not surprisingly, Smith says he would like to leave Heartland. "They take the Bible and turn it into punishment," he says. "I hate this place."

However much he hates it, though, Smith isn't going anywhere. With a juvenile record of assault, he was sent to the sprawling campus 150 miles north of St. Louis by court order, and with the blessing of his custodial grandmother, in February 2005 and placed in the care of Charles Sharpe, a millionaire insurance tycoon turned preach-

SCHOOL OF LAST RESORT

SPARE THE ROD? NOT AT HEARTLAND CHRISTIAN ACADEMY, A BOOT CAMP FOR TROUBLED TEENS RUN BY PREACHER CHARLES SHARPE

■ **BY MARIA EFTIMIADIS**