



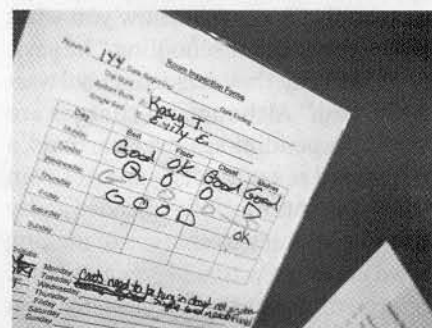
children to Heartland when they became violent and sexually active during adolescence. One recently graduated; two still remain at the facility. "I don't agree with everything they do, but my kids were totally out of control."

Founded in 1995, Heartland grew from a promise that Sharpe, the son of poor farmers from Newark, Mo., made to God after his second wife began suffering from anxiety attacks. "The Lord spoke to me. He said, 'Build this place or your wife won't make it,'" he says. Sharpe, who had long been contemplating creating a school with the profits from his insurance company, Ozark National Life Insurance, designed a program where every minute of a student's day is choreographed: Wake-up is at 5:30 a.m., followed by daily Bible study, classroom instruction and evening church services. Students have chores ranging from pulling weeds to scrubbing toilets. Lights out in the sex-segregated dorms is at 8:30 p.m.

Seventeen-year-old Sam Calicotte

from Hannibal, Mo., was smoking pot and cigarettes when her mother sent her to Heartland. She didn't like it at first, but now Calicotte happily mops floors and talks of going to Bible college one day. "I've learned to finish what I start," she says. "There's a lot of rules to keep you in line." And punishment for breaking them. Isolation, food deprivation and hours of extra chores are common. Girls who misbehave are forced to wear a grannyish "ugly dress"; unruly boys put on a bow tie and a suit. Teens who run away or self-mutilate must wear an orange jumpsuit for at least a month and, most days, several students are paddled. Some punishment techniques have been dropped in recent years, including digging graves to "bury an attitude" and eating "Heartland stew," a mixture of table scraps and leftovers.

Over the years, child welfare authorities have intervened at Heartland, which shares a sprawling campus with a Bible college for non-delinquent adults. During the 2001 raid, investigators learned



Students (like those seen in the classroom above) attend school year-round. "It's all about God and the kids," says Sharpe. "It's a fight, but we love it."

student Josh O'Rourke, then 16, was paddled more than 50 times the previous year and forced to sit in a metal chair overnight. His father, Jim, who lived at Heartland and participated in the beating, had accused his son of stealing \$100. (Jim O'Rourke ultimately pleaded guilty to child abuse.) At the same time, five staffers were arrested for forcing 11 teenagers to wade into concrete-lined pits of manure up to chest height.