

THE RANCH VOICE

Magazine for friends and donors of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Spring 2022

Kylee is wrapped in love by other Ranch residents as she celebrates her high school graduation.



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1.800.344.0957

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Message from the President/CEO



Joy Ryan, President/CEO,
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Tell me your story

I am pretty sure your life has been challenging.

I have yet to meet anyone, in my entire life, who hasn't faced challenges. Illness, poverty, expectations, abuse, learning abilities, family dynamics, rejection, self-image, not attractive, too attractive, bad teeth, infertility, surprise pregnancy, and the list goes on. When I meet someone, when the time is appropriate, I love to say, "Tell me your story." Everyone has tales of great challenges and loss. But that is just the start of the stories.

Also in those stories are the notes of hope and laughter and faith and support and the caring of those around them. I have had folks tell me about the bonds they made with their "brothers" in the military. I've heard of the teacher who recommended tutoring after school, which included supper, when they learned there was no food at the child's home. I've heard of the best friends who believed that, against all odds, "they could both go to college." I have heard of the "come along" child, who simply melted into the love of another family, when their own was absent.

All those stories are told with gratitude and some wonder. The teller always shares the story of their successes, however great or humble, with those who surrounded them and cared about them.

I have never had even one person tell me they found success/happiness/contentment/peace all on their own.

That is the gift you bring to the traumatized children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

These kids have been on their own to face their challenges. But now, because of your love and support, they too are surrounded by people who are kind and caring and skilled and smart. Your love comes through to them, as does His. And when they tell their stories, you will be woven into them...

Several of the girls here decorated note cards for me to use to send to friends of the Ranch. Some had rainbows or hearts or "thank you" on them.

But so many said, "Thank you for caring about us." Your caring about them makes all the difference in their world.

Please keep our kids and staff in your prayers.

In His love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joy".

Kindness and compassion



By Deaconess
Kelly Bristow
Dakota Boys and
Girls Ranch

“He’s OK,” I said. “But Pastor Rick has been in a pretty serious car accident.”

Without skipping a beat, one of our young boys said, “Can I make him a card?”

Some people might think Ranch kids have no compassion, kindness, or anything left to give after the extreme circumstances and experiences they’ve faced. They come to us having been through so much—abuse, sex trafficking, and the trauma of being shuffled between countless foster homes and treatment facilities. In addition, they face ongoing learning obstacles, addictions, and mental health challenges.

It’d be natural to think they are unable to show kindness and compassion to others, but that is not the case at all! I have the privilege of seeing our kids being kind and compassionate every single day.

This winter, our Chaplain was in a serious car accident. Everyone who witnessed the event, and/or saw the pictures of his car, were amazed he walked away with only minor injuries, or moreover, was even still alive. God truly worked a miracle that day.

As I shared a prayer request for Chaplain Rick’s healing with the kids in my weekly spiritual life groups (think Bible study), one of the teenage boys asked if he could make him a card. This young man was horribly abused. He has lived in many foster homes and treatment facilities. He doesn’t have a place to call home. Yet, his first thought was to make a get-well card so Chaplain Rick would know he was praying for him. *Just wow.*

Another day, this same young man started with a prayer request that his brand-new shoes not get messy and followed it with another prayer request for his relationship with his dad to get better. And on Valentine’s Day, he walked around sharing his candy with Ranch staff. *Kindness and compassion.*

As Deaconess, one of my roles is to help instill kindness and compassion in our youth. One of the ways I do this is by teaching them about prayer, specifically how we can pray for the people God has brought into our lives—which brings to mind another young boy at the Ranch who has been working on regulating his emotions and focusing during activities. He struggles to refrain from making random loud noises, banging on the tables, and being disruptive during group. It is challenging for him to make and keep friends due to some of these tendencies. One day during our prayer time, he asked that we pray for one of his peers to have a good birthday, and he even proceeded to say the prayer.

I can’t begin to tell you how often our kids pray for their family members and friends to be safe and healthy, and for the future families of those kids who don’t currently have one. *Kindness and compassion.*

One last example I’ll share happened the week before Valentine’s Day. Our wellness coordinator works with our kids to decorate shoeboxes for Valentine’s Day, and then staff put little valentines and treats in the children’s boxes. The kids (and staff!) love this tradition! One of our girls made a box just for fun, even though she was leaving our care before Valentine’s Day. A few days later, a new girl came to the Ranch. Without being asked, the girl who was leaving gave the new resident the box she had decorated so she wouldn’t have to miss out. *Kindness and compassion.*

“We love because He first loved us.” —1 John 4:19

Through prayers and conversations with our kids about this amazing love that God has for us, we nurture and cultivate their kindness and compassion—gifts from God that are still present in their hearts. Their kindness and compassion towards themselves and others are amazing testimonies to the incredible love of God. What amazing kindness and compassion they show all of us!

Good at so many things!

“I couldn’t control my anger at all, and it was a very hard thing to deal with,” Paytin said. “It’s kind of like stopping a wave of water that is just too heavy to stop. Instead of redirecting it like I do now, I tried to stop it from flowing. And that never worked.”

Paytin was a 5th grader when he started attending Dakota Memorial School, the on-campus school of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. “It got to the point where essentially my [home] school couldn’t deal with me anymore. So, I came here.”

While Paytin didn’t understand his anger at the time, he now realizes it stemmed from an inability to understand what the people around him were doing and why, and from his disabilities.

“I was so blinded by my disabilities that I didn’t see the gifts hidden behind that wall of anger,” Paytin said. “Mrs. DeGree, and basically the whole school, helped me find a different way. My entire life was hidden behind that wall, and I didn’t know how to dig hard enough to get to it.”

Just weeks away from his high school graduation, Paytin credits the teachers and staff at Dakota Memorial School with giving him the tools and the motivation to address his anger. He acknowledges it wasn’t an overnight transformation.

“The staff at the Ranch had a lot of patience with me when they could have refused to work with me. I have patience now, but back then,

I would not have dealt with me for a second. I’d have walked right up to the principal with my quitting papers!”

Paytin said he thought a lot about the direction he was headed with his life and decided to make some changes a couple years ago.

“I started wondering why I’d be angry around people who are so positive. Like Mrs. DeGree, she is an absolutely amazing person. 10 out of 10,” Paytin said. “Every time I talk to her it’s just smiles, sunshine, and have a good day.”

“When I got rid of my anger, finally, for the first time in my life, I had a clear mind. I realized I was good at so many different things and I just didn’t know it because I was so mad. The day I decided to pull a full 180 must have been a beautiful day for my family. I’m sure they were under a lot of stress.”

Paytin will graduate from the Dakota Memorial School Class of 2022 in May. For graduation, he plans to honor his father, who passed away in 2019, in a special way.

“I’ve grown all of this hair out just to get a Mohawk for graduation,” Paytin said. “My dad really

liked his Mohawk so this will be a reminder of him.”

As for the future, he is still exploring his options.

“I really love science. I love writing. I love a lot of things. That’s the thing. I’m good at a lot of things,” he said. “I can build things. I know how to piece together blueprints. I love to cook. I’m good at cooking. I love to write. I’m good at writing. I can’t just pick one.”

Whatever he decides and wherever he goes, Paytin is sure to find and impart wisdom, impacting the world by living out his own life philosophy, “If you can make everyone else happy, they’ll make you happy in the end.”



Paytin enjoys caring for the plants in the greenhouse.

Paytin's special thank you



For Random Acts of Kindness Week, Dakota Memorial School, Minot, catered in a meal for the entire student body and faculty. Finding out the meal was made possible by a generous Ranch donor, Paytin asked if he could write a thank you letter.

“I really wanted them to know that what they do is appreciated,” Paytin

said. “Dude, they gave me tacos. How could I not say thank you? You know, if someone is going to make my day, I’m going to take that and throw it right back to make their day.”

To whomever donated to the Ranch,
I don't know your name, and I don't believe
Such kindness should be wasted.
So here I am, writing a letter regarding the very
Same kindness you have imparted unto me,
And all those who reside here.

Such great a gift it is, and my joy and all
my being is brought to bear,
whoever you are, know that there is good in this
world, people like you teach me so,
it gives me hope to know that those like me
are never truly alone to bear the burdens
that life has sent onto me.

I have stood alone, building will, and
forming skill, tempering my anger into
determination, and yet I had always feared
others, the things they could do,
yet you, and all those like you,
chase away that fear.

There is good, still there are bad,
but your reminder of the fact that
not all the world is decayed by negativity,
is the reason I still push forward.

—Paytin

Ranchers teaching educators

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch leaders recently presented at CONFEDEx, an annual gathering of education executives, DCEs (Directors of Christian Education), teachers, and school administrators from the various districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). They gather each December to learn about concepts, trends, and challenges in the intersection of faith and education.

Rev. Rick Jones, VP Spiritual Life; Marcia Bartok, VP Education; and Tim Gienger, Director of Therapy Services; spoke about trauma-sensitive treatment, learning, and ministry. The attendees learned about trauma's effects on the brain, how to recognize potential signs of trauma, and how to apply trauma-informed practices to ministry and learning environments.

Trip Rogers, Asst. to the President for Education and Congregational Life, Central Illinois District of the LCMS, one of the conference organizers, said, “It was exactly what we were hoping for. We had a lot of positive responses back from people. The Ranch presenters really spoke to the heart of the emotional needs of our children.”

“Having them with us also gave us a much better understanding of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch,” Rogers said. “It was very clear that the Ranch is not just a facility to help kids, but a facility to help kids with the love of Christ. Christ's love is the first thing at the Ranch, not an afterthought.”

Finding a reason to live

When Maliya came to the Ranch at age 16 she was depressed and suicidal.

“My childhood was really challenging,” Maliya said. “I didn’t really have a grip on reality because I was hallucinating a lot from a medication I was on. As far as my family, my stepdad was very abusive and left an emotional scar on my family.”

To compound the pain and sadness, Maliya had recently experienced some significant losses.

“I’d just gone through the funerals of my aunt and uncle,” she said. “I didn’t see any reason to live.”

As you might imagine, coming to the Ranch, an unfamiliar environment with all new people, is difficult for most children. Maliya was no exception.

“I was scared at first, and I wasn’t exactly the nicest,” she said. “But after a while I came out of my shell, and I really knew I was in a safe place. I knew that if something bad happened, Ranch staff would be there to help me.”

At the Ranch, Maliya learned how to identify and talk through her emotions.

“Ranch staff made me feel like a

person—like I was being heard and not being ignored. They were nice to me,” Maliya said.

As Maliya thinks back to her time at the Ranch, three staff come to mind as having made the biggest



At the Ranch, Maliya found people who listened.

impact—Kevin, Brandon, and Sara.

“Kevin would make the perfect father because he tells the best dad jokes and knows how to make someone feel better. If you feel like you can’t smile, he’ll find a way to make you smile. And Brandon just has a good vibe. He has a very calm demeanor and I love it. Sara was my therapist. She helped me talk through my emotions and helped me figure out a way to cope with them.”

Maliya’s mom, Amanda, appreciated the patience and skills of Ranch staff, and the way the Ranch Aftercare Program helped integrate Maliya back to the home.

“Before going to the Ranch, Maliya had significant mental health issues,” Amanda said. “She was failing her classes and was aggressive and volatile at home and at school. Now she is doing well, and we are all pretty amazed by how far she has come.”

Maliya grew close to the staff at the Ranch and has stayed in contact.

“I left the Ranch a little more prepared for life,” Maliya said. “I got off those pills that were making me hallucinate and so far, I seem to be doing great. I’ve been able to communicate with my Mom and I’m working through my troubles. If I ever have a problem, I feel like I could talk to staff at the Ranch, and they could help me through it.”

Simply put, the Ranch saved Maliya’s life.

“Without the Ranch, I’d most likely be dead or maybe in jail. I don’t know... a bad place that’s for sure,” Maliya said. “The Ranch helped me find a reason to live.”

We take great care to guard the privacy of our children. The pictures you see of Ranch children are only used with the permission of the children themselves and the written permission of their guardians.

An illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a blue hoodie and dark blue pants, standing on a road. The road has a yellow double line down the center and leads towards the viewer. To the left of the person is a red barn with a white door and a small window. To the right is a white house with a brown roof and a brown door. In the background, there are stylized blue and green hills and a city skyline with various buildings. A windmill is visible on the far left. The title 'The Hard Work of Going Home' is written in a large, red, outlined font at the top of the image.

The Hard Work of Going Home

Supporting children and their families so they can succeed after residential treatment.



One of the great challenges of the work we do at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is helping our children be successful when they leave our care. During treatment, we wrap children and their families in many services and supports. When a child completes treatment and goes home, the family must find these services in the community—not an easy task when they may have their own challenges and/or live in a rural area with few available services.

In 2019, out of that need and with the support of some changing service guidelines, the Ranch created the Aftercare Program.

The Aftercare Program provides six months (or more) of follow-up aftercare services to every child who leaves a Ranch Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), which includes three cottages in Minot and one in Fargo.

Kaitlin Kinsella, Director of Residential Services, said the Ranch aftercare specialists bridge the gap between treatment and home.

“There is a big gap between the treatment environment and what happens in the home environment in terms of activity, structure, people, and support,” Kaitlin said. “They help to make sure all of the progress kids make in treatment continues into the home and community environment.”

And for the Youth and Family Engagement Specialists doing the work, it’s more than an 8-5 job.

“Our work cell phones are always on,” said Margarita Nieskes. “If it’s after hours I might not answer, but I always call them back. If a kid or parent is calling, it’s because they need you at that moment.”

The success of the Ranch’s Aftercare Program ultimately comes down

to the people—Amanda Grubb, who was instrumental in creating the program, and her staff of Youth and Family Engagement Specialists (aftercare specialists).

Amanda Grubb

Aftercare Program Coordinator



“It’s pretty cool when kids are successful in their communities and they don’t need us anymore,” said Amanda.

Amanda Grubb grew up in Allegan, MI, and graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. She moved to Bismarck, ND, after graduation and was looking for a job in adult probation when she heard about Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

“I didn’t really want to work with kids,” Amanda said, “but I was hearing about the Ranch all over the place, so I decided to look into it. I thought it might be a good starting place before moving onto what I really wanted to do. Now I can’t imagine not working with kids.”

Amanda believes in what the Ranch does and after 10 years at the Ranch, she can’t see herself anywhere else.

“I met all my best friends at the Ranch, including my maid of honor. The Ranch is my family. I don’t think you will find another agency

out there like us. We are truly here to help kids be successful and we are the best of the best. We put in the extra effort, we go the extra step, we follow through, and we fix things. The Ranch is a great place.”

Amanda said the Aftercare Program is built on relationships. Aftercare specialists start getting to know kids as soon as they come to the Ranch. They attend the child’s treatment meetings, introduce themselves to the child’s family, and explain the program.

“During treatment, we really focus on relationship building. We meet with the kids and do fun relationship-building activities. We learned that if we take them out for coffee a couple times during treatment, they’ll want to hang out with us afterwards,” Amanda said. “When we first started the program, many of the families refused to work with us, but we rarely have that happen now. Families and referrals are learning that we are here to make their jobs easier.”

One of the challenges families face, Amanda said, is the lack of community resources, including a lack of therapists, providers who can prescribe and monitor psychotropic medications, healthy activities, positive peer groups, and mentors.

Transportation is also a big issue for well-intentioned parents who want to get their kids to their appointments, but don’t have a way to get them there.

“We’ve found that families often need as much or more support than the child. They don’t have a strong support group behind them to help them deal with these tough kids,” Amanda said. “And by families, I mean whoever the child is living with, whether it be a grandparent,



foster family, brother, sister, or parent.”

“I don’t think people realize how much these families have going on—medical appointments, therapy appointments, and all the meetings and calls from us and others who are trying to help them. Parents are getting pulled in a million different directions while still trying to live their own lives and hold down jobs. We can simplify it for them and help them get the most of everything. Sometimes we can combine services, so we all meet with them together. Sometimes we can help them arrange transportation.”

Amanda said one of our 16-year-old boys was discharging from treatment to a foster family that lived 45 miles from Bismarck. The family didn’t know until about a week before he was to live with them that he wasn’t able to be alone. They had assumed he could be alone during the day while they were at work. Rather than jeopardize his placement, the Aftercare Team went to work. They enrolled him in summer programming on the Ranch’s Bismarck campus so he would have something productive to do, and they figured out a way for him to get to Bismarck and back home every day.

“It was day-to-day, but we found a way. It was just a matter of getting creative,” Amanda said.

“Our goal at the end of the day is for these kids to be successful. I feel like the Aftercare Program really pushes that ultimate idea of success. It’s pretty cool when kids are successful in their communities, and they don’t need us anymore.”

In addition to her work at the Ranch, Amanda co-owns a small daycare center with her mother and

sister. She and her husband have a two-year-old daughter “who is full of spaz and is just the cutest thing in the world,” and a puppy named Chewy. When she isn’t working, Amanda enjoys spending time with her family and doing remodeling projects around the house.

Kaitlyn Schelske

Youth and Family Engagement Specialist



Kaitlyn listens and learns from the kids and their families.

Kaitlyn Schelske is at the Ranch for the kids. Fresh out of college in 2019, she joined the Ranch as a youth care worker, was promoted to shift leader, and in November 2021, moved into the aftercare specialist position.

“I absolutely love working with the kids,” Kaitlyn said. “One of my favorite roles in direct care was one-on-one time with the kids. And now I literally get a caseload of kids that I get to do that with.”

Kaitlyn said the work is challenging because every child is unique and she needs to approach each one in a different way. She thrives on the challenge.

“I love being a sponge,” she said. “I love listening and watching and learning all these different things. I

need to push myself and to know a bunch of different things to support my kids. I can do that best by challenging myself and by listening to the kids and their families.”

Kaitlyn believes working with a child’s family is critical to their long-term success.

“The families get accustomed to the child not being there. It can be a challenge to get back into a routine and get set up with different services,” Kaitlyn said. “If parents are having a hard time adjusting to the child coming back into the home, our role is to support them and come up with solutions. Kids get used to the Ranch’s structure and routine. If they move to a home where their parents don’t hold them accountable, it’s easy for them to go back to their bad habits. Maybe they need to set more rules and expectations. We can help them do that.”

Working with the child’s caseworkers and others involved in their care is also an important part of an aftercare specialists work.

“We’re like the middleman of the team,” Kaitlyn said, “where we go back and forth and are here to support anybody and everybody who is related to our kids.”

While Kaitlyn says the thing she loves most about her work is the kids, she also loves the Ranch for the opportunities it provides its employees.

“When I started at the Ranch, I was fresh out of college and working in direct care. I found ways to push myself and discovered interests I didn’t think I had. The Ranch allowed me to grow and to pursue those interests. The Ranch provides a lot and it’s awesome to be able to take advantage of it.”



Kaitlyn earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND. After working at the Ranch, Kaitlyn realized she wanted to expand her options, so she is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in social work at Minot State University.

Kaitlyn was born in Devils Lake, ND, and moved with her family to Mandan, ND, when she was five. Her dad was a park ranger so she grew up living in state parks and continues to enjoy outdoor activities like kayaking and hiking. She loves spending time with her family, her boyfriend, and her cat, Hadley. She also enjoys cooking, baking, and her weekend job at Huff Hills Ski Area.

Katrin Seideman

Youth and Family Engagement Specialist



Katrin said families are often overwhelmed when their kids come home from treatment. "We can help them navigate those challenges."

Katrin Seideman spent time at the Ranch before she was even born. Her mom, Shannon Lackey, was pregnant with Katrin when she was hired to work at the Ranch.

"She eventually became a police officer," Katrin said, "but she worked at the Ranch a long time

and loved it. I had a feeling I would too, so when I graduated from the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND, and saw the Ranch was hiring, I was like, now is my time."

Katrin was also drawn to the Ranch because of her older brother. "He really struggled with drugs, being involved in the wrong crowds, and running away," Katrin said. "He ended up passing away when he was 18 and I was nine. I think he is a big reason I've always wanted to work with people who struggle with mental health and other issues."

Katrin says her goal as an aftercare specialist is to support youth and families in every way possible.

"I think aftercare is important for the kids and their families. You can't have a child in treatment for months and then all of sudden say, 'Well, here you go. Good luck.' You still need people around to help."

Aftercare specialists like Katrin support the families for six months, and longer if the family or child requests an extension.

"After a child has been in treatment, the community can be super overwhelming," Katrin said. "We can help them deal with those feelings and navigate the challenges."

Katrin tells of one young man she worked with as a youth care worker when she first started at the Ranch, and now as an aftercare specialist. Nick* and his older brother, who had serious drug issues, were raised by their grandma. Nick started getting in trouble at a young age and has been in several placements, including at the Ranch.

Nick really struggled so Katrin supported both him and his grandma every way she could. Eventually, another older brother—who has a stable job, a wife, and

children—took him in and he has made a complete turnaround.

"I just talked to him yesterday and he is doing so well," Katrin said. "I helped him with his resume so he can get a job. He will be 18 this summer so we are trying to get him ready to be an adult. He is learning some good skills and I'm really proud of him."

Katrin said her job is different every day, but it's basically broken down into three parts—attending treatment meetings for her kids, visiting the kids and their families, and paperwork.

"It's a good balance," Katrin said. "You are super social seeing families, talking on the phone, and going to meetings. And then you can calm down a bit and focus on getting all the paperwork done."

When Katrin isn't working, she enjoys spending time with her family, watching scary movies, and playing with her dog, Recon. She also likes relaxing at home with a book and going to lake in the summer.

Margarita Nieskes

Youth and Family Engagement Specialist



"I love the kids and it's a privilege to work with them," Margarita said.



Margarita Nieskes grew up in the upper peninsula of Michigan. She graduated (as a first-generation college graduate) from Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI, with a bachelor's degree in biological science. Shortly after graduation, Margarita moved to North Dakota to work as a Certified Nursing Assistant in a nursing home. While continuing to work part time as a CNA, Margarita also worked in early childhood and elementary education, at a vocational rehabilitation center for adults, at Dakota Memorial School in a short-term contract position, and as a restorative justice facilitator at Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota.

When LSS closed, Margarita was excited to get back to the Ranch, this time as an aftercare specialist.

"I looked for opportunities to come back to the Ranch because it's special," Margarita said. "People who work at the Ranch are here for different reasons than employees in other places. Those reasons are rooted in our faith and the Ranch mission. We know why we are here. We know that we are up against the odds but we're going to put our best foot forward because we know that's our work, that's what we do."

"The rewards are seeing kids make strides, seeing them get up after they fall, seeing them advocate for themselves. It's hard work," Margarita said, "but I love the kids and it's a privilege to work with them."

In her role at the Ranch, Margarita helps kids grow, develop, and learn so they can reach for their dreams.

"If one of my kids has something they are interested in, it's my responsibility to help spark that

interest, to make it come alive for them, to help them believe in their ability to get back up when they fall," she said. "These are the kids that need to go to college because they are going to change the world. They have never had the world given to them. They've always struggled, so they are going to fight for what is right."

When one of her children is discharging, Margarita likes tackling some of the big questions. What is something you're looking forward to? What is something that worries you? What is something you wish you didn't have to do when you go home?

"A lot of my kids are worried about having access to everything, the good and bad of the world and the consequences that come with it," Margarita said.

One of Margarita's young clients, Emma* was worried about using alcohol and marijuana, and she succumbed to the temptation soon after returning home.

"The good news is that her foster mom is amazing. She knows her child and her behavior and called her on it," Margarita said. "When I asked Emma what happened and what was going through her head, she said, 'I was bored. I was lonely, so I reached out to an old friend.' We talked about some things she can do when she is feeling that way, and how she can advocate for her own well-being by saying something like, 'I'm on a better path for myself and that's just not something I want to engage in,' and then walk away. I talked to her last week and she hasn't used since then. It's been a month."

While Margarita says the work is challenging emotionally and physically, it's worth it. "These kids

deserve a voice. I want to be that voice for them and to help them find their voice along the way."

Margarita spends her off-work time reading, listening to music, and with her friends and family.

Shaina Vanyo

Youth and Family Engagement Specialist



Shaina helps families put structure in place until their children are ready for a more normal home life.

Shaina Vanyo graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead, Moorhead, MN, with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. She joined the Ranch as a youth care worker in 2017, shortly after graduation, and hasn't looked back.

"I'm a Rancher," Shaina said. "I love our mission, our value statements, everything. I've met so many cool staff and kids, and I've learned so much from all of them. I've just never thought about leaving."

Shaina grew up in Fargo, ND, as the oldest of four children, and says she wishes her kids could have grown up in a family like hers.

"I grew up with a family that I think a lot of people deserve. We weren't perfect. But we always knew we were loved," she said. "We knew



we could go home and be accepted for who we were. That's what motivates me to be there for these kids, because I know most of them missed out on that. I want these kids to know I care about them, think about them, pray for them, and want them to do well."

Along with Amanda Grubb, Shaina was one of the first Aftercare Program employees. She said the challenge at the beginning was figuring out the aftercare role while kids were still in treatment.

"It got a little messy because parents and referrals didn't know who to talk to. Their go-to should be the case manager, so we had to step back a little," Shaina said. "It's our job to collaborate with the treatment team and make sure they are talking about discharge planning."

The other big challenge was getting kids, families, and referrals to buy into the program.

"When we first started and the kids didn't know us well, they wouldn't take our calls. Aftercare is much different now because of the relationship building we do with the kids. It's a unique role," Shaina said. "Because we aren't direct care staff, we don't have to tell them what they can't do. I get to just listen when they are frustrated and give advice. They start to trust you and then they know who to call when they discharge."

A few weeks ago, Shaina received one of those calls from Simon*, one of her aftercare kids. He had left the Ranch to live in a foster home a few months before he turned 18. He ran away and Shaina didn't hear from him until about three weeks after his 18th birthday. He called Shaina and said he needed help—he was homeless and living in his van.

"That day I was able to get him into a shelter," Shaina said. "And we made plans to keep getting together to figure out what he wanted to do and what he was willing to accept for help. He decided he wanted to get into an Independent Living Program, but to do that he had to sign himself back into foster care. That is really hard for kids to do."

Shaina said Simon did it all on his own. He talked to his caseworker, who he'd been avoiding for months.

"I was with him when he signed himself into care and by the end of February he should be living in an apartment. He has so many goals. He wants to get his GED, he wants to get a job. I keep telling him it's just one step at a time. Our first step was to get him a safe place to live."

In addition to working with the kids, Shaina supports the parents. She sets up an aftercare plan after asking lots of questions. Who is in charge of making appointments? Who is in charge of getting the kid up for school? Who brings him to school? What are the house rules? Are they allowed to leave home without asking? Who should they ask?

"Treatment is so structured. When kids go home that structure is usually gone. We help the families put some structure in place until the kids are ready for a more normal home life," Shaina said. "What I do depends on what the families need. It's a super individualized program. I tell families that we have to be honest with each other. They have to tell me what they are struggling with. If I can't help them directly, we will figure it out together."

Shaina and her husband, Riley, live in Comstock, MN, with their two cats and a dog. They love to travel

and go to the lake in the summer. Shaina describes herself as an introverted extrovert.

"I can do well in large groups, but I definitely re-energize when I'm alone. My ideal day is sitting on the couch, staying home, playing with the dog, reading, or watching TV."

The gold standard

Amanda, Kaitlyn, Katrin, Margarita, and Shaina may have difficult days as aftercare specialists, but they continue for the kids.

"I've had kids and parents texting me and say things like, 'I don't know how I could have done it without you,'" Shaina said. "That'll keep me going for six months!"

The Aftercare Program meets some long-term goals of Ranch leaders who wanted to give kids a smoother transition from treatment to home. And in typical Ranch fashion, we are doing it well.

"They are a very enthusiastic, creative, driven group," Kaitlin said. "We are seeing amazing outcomes with kids and they are chipping away at some of the barriers to getting kids and families the help they need."

Brittany Fode, LMSW, Guardianship and QRTP Licensing Administrator for the state of North Dakota, said after a recent licensing review, "It is clear that Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch has set a gold standard for the aftercare services they provide to children and families, early engagement, and even engaging with families to extend beyond. This is AMAZING!"

**Names changed to protect confidentiality.*

HONEY SUNDAY



Bring God's love to a child by organizing a Honey Sunday fundraiser this fall.

Honey Sundays, hosted by congregations all across the United States, support the residential treatment and educational programs for the troubled, complicated, and amazing children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

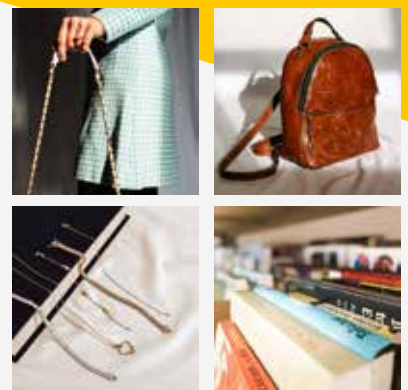
Learn more about holding a Honey Sunday for your congregation at DakotaRanch.org/honey-sunday, or scan the QR code to the right.



DAKOTA RANCH ONLINE

Shop online to support Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch!

By shopping online, you're providing hope and healing for troubled, complicated, and amazing kids.



Scan to start shopping now!



DakotaRanch.org/thrift-stores/shop-online/



Celebrations

Creative healing

Taylor Volker, a Youth Care Worker on our Fargo campus, formed a crafting group. This group gives our kids the opportunity to build relationships with staff and peers, while tapping into the creative parts of their brains, which can be so important as they navigate their journey to hope and healing.



Art is a powerful coping tool our kids use to express themselves and practice self-care.

Starting kids off on the right foot

A generous gift from Westlie Motors in Minot allowed us to purchase new boots for our Horse Program! Horse-assisted therapy helps kids overcome physical and emotional abuse, violence, multiple placements, and other traumas that make it difficult for them to succeed in school and at home.



To keep kids safe and comfortable when working in the barn and with the horses, we need many different sizes and styles of boots.



Celebrating our Veterans

Kids at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, created this beautiful display to honor the men and women at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch who serve or served our country.



Cultural connections

Kids on the Minot campus had the opportunity to attend an Indigenous Fashion, Art, and Music event at Minot State University. They learned about the history of the jingle dress, and the importance of carrying the tradition forward. After attending the event, the girls in Challenge Cottage made Sister Bead earrings.



The girls in Challenge Cottage practiced patience as they completed their Sister Bead earrings.

Quilting from the heart



Our friends at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Devils Lake, ND made some beautiful quilts for our kids. This Ranch-inspired quilt is just perfect!

Jingle Dress
Dancer at
Minot State
University's
Indigenous
Fashion, Art,
and Music
event.



Arts in the community

The Mouse River Players in Minot put on a special performance of "Alice in Wonderland" for our Minot kids. It was the first time many of them had been to a play!



The kids were astonished to realize Bart Burns from our Facilities Team was the King of Hearts!

Celebrations

Learning skills for life

In Daily Living Class, kids learn skills that will help them become successful adults, including managing a checking account, budgeting, child rearing/development, interpersonal relationships, cooking, meal planning, and sewing.



Sewing pillowcases and tying blankets teaches students real world skills.



Daily Living Class is offered for our Minot students in grades 9 - 12.



The kids are cooking up a storm, making homemade ramen and egg McMuffins.

Celebrating friends and gratitude

Kids and staff on our Minot campus celebrated Friendsgiving, an annual tradition where each cottage brings a dish to share, and they enjoy a delicious meal together and make wonderful memories. The night ended with an exciting game of "Hot Potato!"



Group meals are a great way for kids to build relationships with peers and staff.

Books, books, books

Nursing students from the University of Mary held a book drive for kids at the Ranch. Brooke Lovas, a UMary Nursing Student, led the effort as her service project. The donated books were used to stock our libraries and foster our kids' love of reading.



At the Ranch, nursing students develop a better understanding of working with children with various mental health needs.

Fishing for new skills

After thorough lessons in safety, Ranch kids in Wildlife Club used a plasma cutter, practiced welding, and operated metal grinders and files to make 12 ice fishing spears. The spears were donated to Pheasants for the Future to sell at their annual banquet. Darkhouse Spearfishing, one of the oldest forms of fishing, involves cutting a large rectangular hole through the ice on a frozen lake, placing a darkened shelter over the hole, and spearing fish as they swim by. North Dakota's Darkhouse Spearfishing season opens when the lakes ice over. Anglers are allowed to spear Northern Pike and other non-game fish.



Wildlife Club enhances healing through outdoor and wildlife-related activities.

A new class pet

Norman, the hairless guinea pig, is the newest Fargo Rancher. Norman was donated to our science class by Clinical Psychologist, Megan Spencer.

Shea Durham, Science teacher, says, "He is a hairless guinea pig or a 'skinny pig,' for short. He keeps us on our toes but provides some good energy to the school. Many students come in between classes or before and after school to say hello. He loves salads and carrots. He eats and poops constantly, but it just gives us more to do to help care for him!"



Class pet, Norman, brings joy to the school and teaches students how to love and care for another living thing.

Celebrations

Giving the gift of hope

Kids at Dakota Memorial School in Fargo recently volunteered at Hope Blooms, a local nonprofit that turns donated flowers into beautiful bouquets for people who may need a bright spot in their day.



The kids helped clean the flowers and arrange them into mini-bouquets. The bouquets were distributed later that day at a local food pantry.

The heart of the matter



Each year, the Science classes at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, dissect deer hearts. Kids learn how to identify the four chambers, valves, arteries, and veins.

The anatomy unit is always a crowd-favorite for students who enjoy learning how blood flows in and out of the heart.

Enbridge grants funds for medication fridge in Minot

The Ranch's nursing department was able to purchase a medication fridge, for medications that need cold storage, thanks to a grant from local energy transportation company, Enbridge.



Brianna Stromberg and Alyssa Edwards accepted a check from Enbridge on behalf of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

A mindful moment

Kids on our Bismarck campus created an interactive mindfulness board for students and staff to practice mindfulness at school. The interactive elements guide you through a body scan, controlled breathing exercises, and expressions of gratitude.



Mindfulness helps Ranch kids be present in the moment as they notice what is going on in their bodies, their minds, and the world around them.

Spreading love on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a great time for our kids to share love the people around them and to give back to their communities. It is also a time for the Ranch to thank its many donors who live or winter in Arizona with two donor recognition luncheons.



Thanks to an anonymous donor, every attendee at the 2022 Arizona Luncheons received a set of two coasters featuring art created by Ranch residents. At the luncheon, MC Jerry Hauff asked those receiving the coasters to display them in their homes as a reminder to pray for Ranch kids.



Valentine's Day cards, lovingly made by Ranch kids, warm the hearts of Ranch friends who attend one of the Arizona Luncheons. The kids also made cards for residents at a local nursing home.

Celebrations

Ring in the New Year

Our Bismarck kids had a very special New Years Eve! A special Ranch donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, treated them to dinner from Space Aliens and a night of “Extreme Bowling,” at Midway Lanes.



Community activities, like bowling, give Ranch kids normalcy, something that may have been in short supply during their young lives.

Blessed to be a blessing

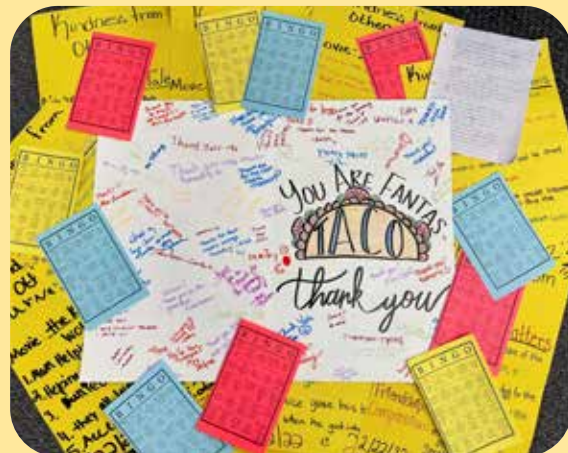
Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, had the opportunity to give back on Giving Hearts Day 2022. They divvied up \$250 to local nonprofits, based on where they wanted to see a change. They chose to bless 13 local nonprofits including 4 Luv of Dog Rescue, Central Dakota Humane Society, Great Plains Food Bank, Churches United, Veterans Honor Flight ND/MN, and Red River Zoo. Our kids loved giving back to their community!



Thank you to our amazing Ranch donors who helped us raise over \$50,000 on Giving Hearts Day 2022!

Kindness all around

Random Acts of Kindness week was reason for a big celebration on our Minot campus. Staff and students planned activities highlighting kindness, including Kindness Bingo, reminders to be kind to yourself and others, mindfulness and self-care activities, and a day focused on kindness to animals. They were also treated to a special lunch from Mi Mexico thanks to a generous Ranch friend! (See article on p. 5 for a thank you poem one student wrote to the anonymous donor who made the Mi Mexico dinner possible.)



Each act of kindness crossed off on the Kindness Bingo cards by our kids resulted in a donation to a local shelter. Kids also practiced kindness by making a taco-themed thank you card for our “fantas-taco” Ranch friends

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay up-to-date on Ranch happenings and stories.



facebook.com/dakotaranch1952



Instagram.com/dbgr52

Not a failure

Robert grew up with this dad. “My mom couldn’t handle all of us at once, so she put me with my dad. I’ve lived with him since I was born,” he said.

Robert said his dad has always worked hard and has helped him through a lot of rough times. But no amount of hard work could equip his dad to help him deal with the challenges resulting from Robert’s psychiatric issues and autism.

“School was rough. I was stealing and had anger issues,” Robert said. “That’s what brought me to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. I was having trouble getting regulated with my medication.”

Coming to the Ranch wasn’t easy. “It was a little scary because I didn’t know what it’d be like,” Robert said. “I was miles away from home and I didn’t get to see my dad as much.”

Robert has been at the Ranch twice. He recalls being 13 or 14 years old when he started his first stay. He went home and did really well for about a year before backsliding.

“I kind of acted up again and had to go back when I was 16,” Robert said.

Therapy, school, Ranch staff, and good medication management made all the difference for Robert.

“The staff just taught me and stuck with me. They motivated me. They were always encouraging me and telling me I could do things. I was angry because I thought I was a failure. They really helped me see that I wasn’t. They helped to re-regulate me and now I’ve been doing well for almost two years.”

Robert says Marisa Rudie, Program

Manager, and Paul Cordova, Youth Care Worker, helped him the most.

“They were phenomenal,” Robert said. “They joked with me and taught me from wrong to good. They always believed in me and told me I could do it if I tried with all my heart. They told me, ‘If you don’t try, you’ll never

University, where he lives in the dorms, and is working at Trinity Hospital as a Dietary Aide. He hasn’t declared a major yet, but he is getting closer to choosing his path.

“I might just stick with Trinity and go into nursing. I like it here,” Robert said.



Robert is in college, thanks to Ranch staff who believed in him.

succeed, but if you try, you can do anything.”

Robert put those lessons to work in school while he was at the Ranch and at his home school when he moved back home.

“My teachers [at the Ranch] were great too. They believed in me. Now I’m in college because of what they taught me and what they told me.”

Robert is going to Minot State

Robert has something he’d like to say to everyone at the Ranch who helped him.

“Thank you for believing in me. I appreciate it,” Robert said. “I’ll always remember what you guys taught me and what you showed me. You cared for me, and you made a difference in my life. Without the Ranch I’d probably be having a really hard time right now. I wouldn’t have been in a good place.”

A safe place to heal

Shanaye didn't experience much safety in her childhood—either at home or at school.

“Until my dad moved out, home was a really hostile and scary place,” Shanaye said. “I was abused by my father for a good portion of my life. It was just horrible.”

On top of that, her mother's chronic health issues were hard on Shanaye and her younger brother.

“She would come home very sick from her treatments, and we had to take care of her. My dad didn't really help, so I was her caregiver. He would just ignore all the signs that I had depression or that my mom was getting severely ill again.”

School wasn't much better, even though Shanaye excelled in her classes. “I was bullied quite heavily until about my freshman year,” she said.

By the time Shanaye was 16, the bullying had stopped, and her father was no longer a part of her life, but she continued to carry the pain and suffering caused by a lifetime of trauma. She was depressed, suicidal, and had quit doing the activities she previously enjoyed.

“I was in and out of hospitals all the time,” Shanaye said. “I was barely talking to my family, and it was like I wasn't living my life anymore.”

Still, Shanaye was not happy about coming to the Ranch. She didn't think

she needed to be here, and in her own words, “was very defiant.”



At the Ranch, Shanaye turned to God and rediscovered her faith.

But, with a place to feel safe and secure, family therapy, and a lot of people who cared, Shanaye settled in and learned to love herself, built strong relationships with her

brother and mother, and found a reason to live.

“Therapy was hard for me,” she said.

“But when I did trauma therapy, it changed everything. I was able to talk about everything that happened, and work through it with my therapist. I'm still processing things and

I still have flashbacks, but things are so much better than they were. Everything has changed since I came to the Ranch. I've grown so much. I've learned new skills, and I've really grown into the person I am now.”

As she left the Ranch to go home late

last year, Shanaye said she took many things with her. One of those things is her faith.

“When I got here, I was at the lowest point in my life, and even though I'd been going to church since I was a little girl, I had no faith. I didn't believe in anything. I turned to God at the Ranch because of Pastor Rick and Deaconess Kelly. I will continue to practice things, like prayer, that are a part of my faith. That will help me be stronger.”

“The other thing I took with me is how much the Ranch worked with me to get my diabetes and mental health under control. To be honest, if it weren't for the Ranch, I'd probably be dead by now,” Shanaye said.

“I saw myself as having no future. Now I see myself graduating from high school and continuing my education to become a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist. My life has become brighter and worth living.”

In January, Rev. Rick Jones, Chaplain and VP Spiritual Life

at the Ranch, attended the North Dakota District Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and returned with an update on Shanaye.

Rev. Jones said, “Shanaye's pastor approached me at the convention



Shanaye's horse at the Ranch, Grey, helped calm her anxiety and brought her great joy.

today to thank us for everything we did for her. He said she returned to the community with joy, greater determination for self-success, and as he put it, 'more alive in her faith than I have ever seen'."

What am I thankful for?

By Shanaye

People ask me that all the time. Whether it be food or my cat, thankfulness comes from the heart.

I am always thankful for three things. Faith, Family, Treatment.

Faith has saved me so many times. It has saved me from myself and from hurting others.

Family has created a safe place for me to express myself.

It has also created multiple opportunities for me.

Treatment has saved my life.

It made me rethink my life and how much I truly love it.

Thankfulness can come out in many different ways.

You can do something for others or say a simple thank you to someone who has had an impact on you.

Learn to express your thankfulness so others can feel like they can express themselves.

So, what are you thankful for?

Traditions matter



By Tom Kopp,
Director of Residential Services,
Fargo

Traditions provide a sense of belonging and bring meaning to our lives. Most of us have many traditions—often without knowing or appreciating how special they are.

The children who come to the Ranch often miss out on the traditions you and I take for granted. Coming from conditions of deprivation, neglect, and trauma, they were focused on where their next meal would come from or if they were going to be beaten before bed. Where and how they were going to celebrate Easter was not even on their radar.

When children come to the Ranch, we provide them a stable, safe, caring, purposeful, and structured environment that provides for their basic needs and supports them through therapy and treatment. This environment includes purposefully and intentionally celebrating, attending, and participating in many day-to-day traditions—many of which are new to our children.

Birthday celebrations are a good example. We hang streamers and signs and let the birthday boy or girl choose their favorite birthday dessert. It's always a surprise when a child tells us it's their first birthday cake.

We take pictures of the kids on the first and last day of school. We

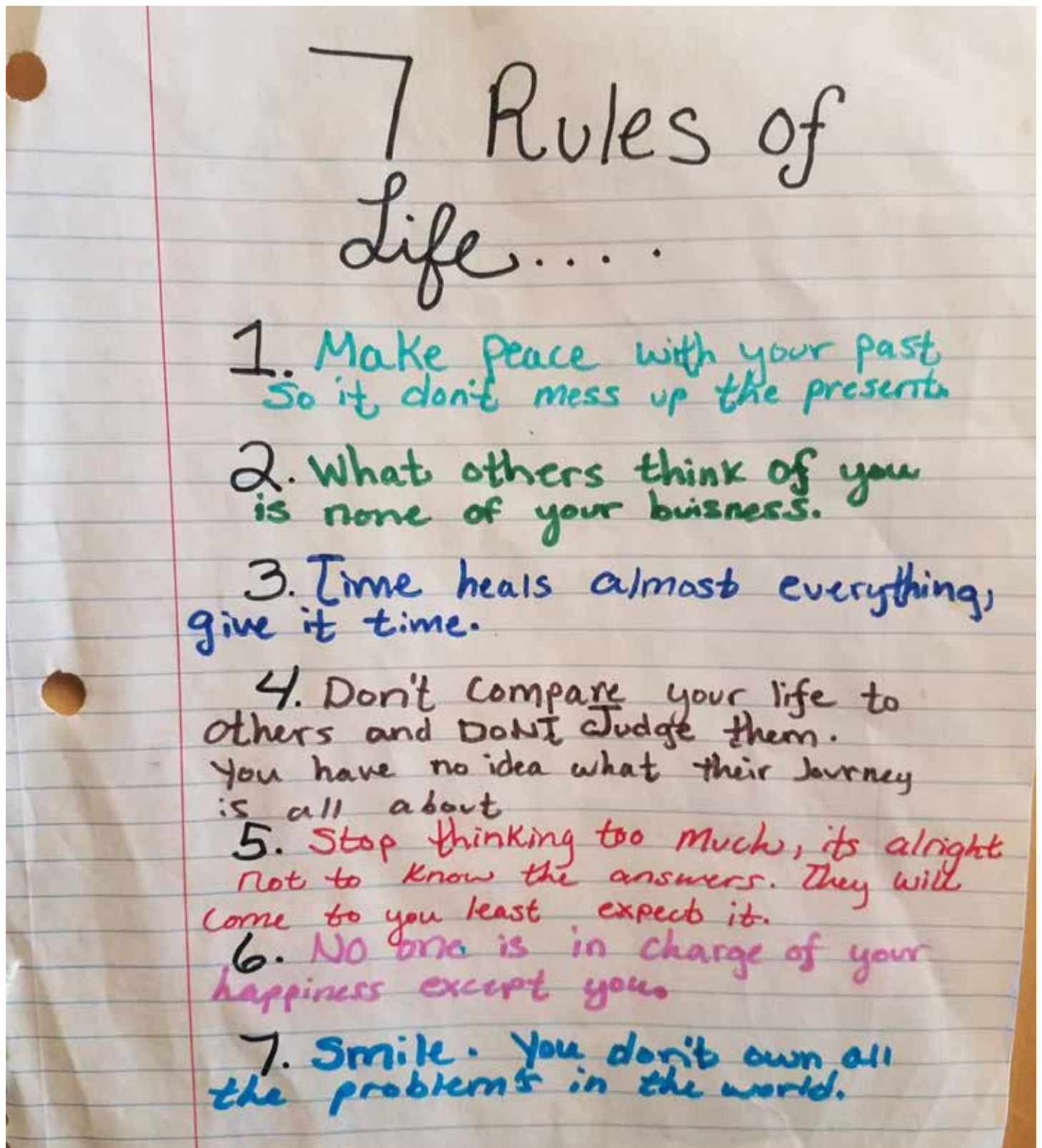
celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, 4th of July, Easter, and Halloween with all the fun foods and gifts that come along with them. We recognize small and large achievements within the school and therapeutic settings (art fairs, public school extra-curricular activities, completing drug court, student council, and Honor Roll). When a student graduates from our on-campus school, Dakota Memorial School, we pull out all the stops. Whether it's one student or 10 students, we decorate the gym, put up a stage, bring in a speaker, and invite family and friends to a graduation ceremony and celebration. We often hear from students' families that they didn't think their child would even graduate, much less have a party!

Another special tradition we celebrate at the Ranch is the sacrament of baptism. One of our residents, I'll call her Luna, came to the Ranch ready to better herself by working hard in therapy. She also wanted to deepen her faith through baptism. After working with her to understand the meaning and awesomeness of this spiritual journey, our Spiritual Life team arranged for Luna to be baptized.

Traditions, expressions of love and care, are the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. When children grow up in chaos and survival mode, these customs and beliefs are often lost. We introduce our residents to special moments and traditions they can build upon when they leave our care, become adults, and have families of their own.

A Ranch resident's life rules

One of our kids curated a list of life rules. She spent hours asking others for their best advice, searching through quote books, and searching her own experiences for the lessons she wanted to carry with her. Wise words from a young girl—words that can benefit us all.



Ways to Give

Thanks to gifts from our generous donors, the Ranch helps the most troubled, complicated, and amazing kids by providing best-in-class psychiatric therapy and trauma-informed care. If you would like to provide hope and healing for a child at the Ranch, you can give several different ways.

Give Now

You can give now to meet the needs of our precious children in one of two ways. Give online at DakotaRanch.org/donate, or mail a check to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, PO Box 5007, Minot, ND 58702.

Prayers

So many of our children come to us exhausted from just fighting to survive. Often, they've lost all hope. Please pray for strength—strength for our children to face and overcome the circumstances that led them to us. Pray for them to find rest, safety, and the promise of God's abiding love. And pray for our staff. Working with our children is difficult, and Ranch staff also need your prayers for them to be accepting, respectful, kind, and strong as they work with these precious children who sometimes lash out because they are in so much pain.

Memorials and Honorariums

When you make a donation in memory or in honor of a loved one, they will live on through programs that provide much-needed care for the hurting children who come to the Ranch. You can make your donation online at DakotaRanch.org or by calling 1-800-344-0957.

Planned and Estate Gifts

Naming Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch as a beneficiary in your will is one way to leave a legacy that serves God's Kingdom. But, it's not the only way. Other legacy giving options include Charitable Gift Annuities, naming the Ranch as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets or a life insurance policy, leaving real estate to the Ranch, and more. To learn more, contact one of our Development Officers at 1-800-344-0957. Or, visit our legacy giving website at DakotaRanch.org/legacy for tools and information you can use to maximize your philanthropic goals.

Tree of Life

Honor or remember a loved one by purchasing a leaf, acorn, or rock on one of our Trees of Life. For a Tree of Life order form, scan the QR code on the right, or call 1-800-344-0957—we can send you an order form or take your information over the phone.



Tree of Life Form

Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

If you are a Thrivent Financial member, you may have Thrivent Choice Dollars[®] available to direct to your favorite enrolled charity. Directing Choice Dollars[®] to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch helps us teach Christian values to the amazing children of the Ranch—values that aid in their healing, provide a foundation of hope, and help them be successful in their treatment.

Amazon Smile

If you shop online at Amazon.com, AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way to support the Ranch every time you shop, at no extra cost to you. Simply go to smile.amazon.com and select “Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch” as your charity.

Honey Sunday

For decades, congregations across the U.S. have held Honey Sundays. You can bring God's love to a child by organizing a Honey Sunday for your congregation. Choose your Honey Sunday in September or October. We will send you a Honey Sunday kit, which includes posters, bulletin inserts for promoting your event, order forms, and labels. We suggest you charge \$10 per bottle. Keep 30 percent of the money collected for your group, and send the remainder to us. In return, we'll send an 11-ounce squeeze bottle of honey to each purchaser. Learn more at www.DakotaRanch.org/honey-sunday.

A brilliant man with a heart for troubled children



President/CEO Joy Ryan thanks Armin for his generous gift to provide for Ranch kids.

Armin Rubbert

At age 89, Armin Rubbert reads math textbooks and proves mathematical theorems for fun. He also laughs easily; and has a quick mind, a heart for troubled children, and a long family history with the Ranch.

Armin spent much of his childhood in Tolley, ND, where his father served as pastor at the German Lutheran Church. While in Tolley, the Rubbert family met Ida and Louis

Butt, who took in 10 Ranch boys and eventually donated their farm to Dakota Boys Ranch. Through this connection and his role as a pastor, Armin's father was asked to join the Ranch board of directors, where he served for 30 years.

Armin's love for mathematics started early on. In first grade, he recalls seeing the fourth graders doing multiplication tables. He thought, "I can do that," and started working on them at his desk.

"The teacher came by one day and asked, 'Armin, what's this?' 'Those are my multiplication tables,' I told her. She said I wasn't supposed to be doing them and took my papers. I had a second set hidden at the bottom of my desk. She didn't find those," he said. "And I kept doing multiplication tables."

After graduating from high school, Armin followed his brother to Yankton College where he graduated

with majors in Math and Chemistry. He then earned a master's degree in Mathematics at North Dakota State University before moving to Seattle to work at Boeing. While on the west coast, Armin earned a second master's degree in Systems Management from the University of Southern California.

After several positions working for military contractors, he moved to Ohio to work at the Wright Patterson Air Force Base. In 1984, Armin was named Logistics Manager of the Year after finding a way to save \$100 million on stocking spare airplane parts, with no change in availability.

In 1994, Armin took early retirement and bought a place on Star Lake, Ottertail County, Minnesota.

"I fixed it up a bit and put some money in it. And then I got married," Armin said, as he pointed to a sign hanging on the wall behind him.

"That sign was given to us at our marriage, and it was about the nicest wedding gift we got," Armin said. "It reads, 'It's never too late to live happily ever after.' We were both 76 when we got married, and for me it was a first marriage."

Armin and Marie met when he saw an ad for a singles club. "I sent in my name and the information they requested, and they sent me back a list of women my age in a three or four-state area. She was the first woman who called me."

After talking on the telephone and

meeting in person, Armin said they figured out they were compatible. So, he took advantage of a perfect opportunity.

“She broke her necklace and spilled the beads all over. I got down to pick up the beads, and said, ‘As long as I’m down here, will you marry me?’”

After their wedding, Armin moved to Cuba City, WI, where Marie had a home.

“We did quite a bit of traveling together,” Armin said. “We took bus tours and eventually moved to senior housing in Platteville, WI. We made it a little past our 10th anniversary before she died of heart failure.”

Shortly after his wife’s death, Armin moved to Fargo, ND, to be close to family, including his first-cousin, Elizabeth Wick.

This year, after supporting Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch for 32 years, Armin decided to make a larger gift. “I thought about it a while and thought, ‘Why wait until I’m dead to give it? Why not enjoy letting them see it.’ I called up my sister, Margaret, and she agreed.”

“I chose Dakota Boys and Girls

Ranch because you’re helping teenagers who have emotional problems, helping them be able to go back to live with their parents,” Armin said. “That was the goal when my dad was on the board, and I think it’s still the goal—to help these

afraid I’d lose them. I was right.

When I finished asking questions, I said, “I think that’s all I need. If you want to talk about math, go for it,” and they started speaking a different language.

Armin said, “Math was just a natural for me. I bet for you too. OK, here’s one. A couple years ago I was reading a high school algebra book that said the log of minus one doesn’t exist. I can prove that it does. It’s a complex variable. To prove it, we need to find some new algebraic function.”

And the discussion continued as they talked about how

they might be able to prove Armin’s theorem—cosine of power X , π radians, cosine of X is minus one, and on and on. Their banter and shared passion delighted me—even though I was lost at “log of minus one.”

As we walked out to the car, Ben said, “I want to be just like Armin when I’m 89. He is so sharp, and I love that he spends his time studying and solving problems.”



Armin shows off the model he built—a 3D net of a 4D hypercube—to Rancher Tammy Noteboom’s son, Ben.

kids get control of themselves.”

Note from Tammy Noteboom, Vice President Communications, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

When I visited Armin to interview him for this article, I asked my son, Ben, to join me. Ben is a teaching fellow at North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, where he is finalizing his dissertation for a Ph.D. in Mathematics. I insisted Armin answer my questions before they started talking “math,” because I was

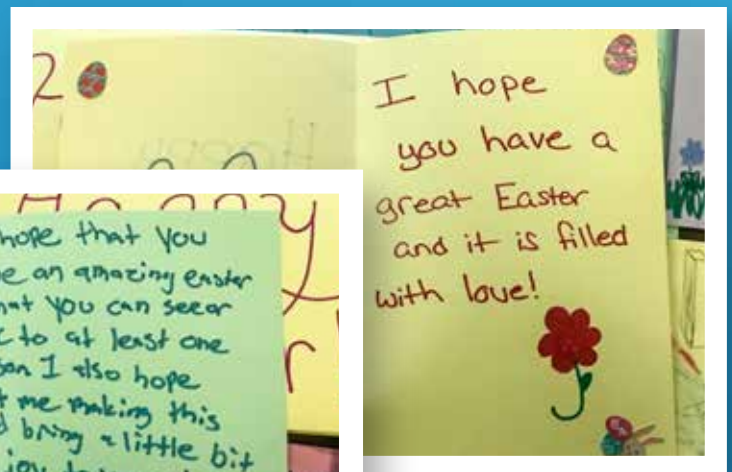
Happy Easter

One of our donors enjoys purchasing special Easter treats for our kids. Last year, she provided Gospel Cubes and Chocolate crosses for all of the residential and day students on the Fargo campus. Spiritual Life staff added a devotional life book and a special message, and put it all in the children's Easter baskets. These special touches make the holiday meaningful for our kids.

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

—Luke 24:1-7



Every Easter, Ranch residents make beautiful, creative, and thoughtful cards for residents of a local nursing home.





One of Deaconess Kelly Bristow's favorite Spiritual Life group activities is making Easter Cross Crafts with the kids.



Easter baskets galore! For some of our Ranch kids, this is the first time they've celebrated Easter.



Cottage Cake Wars are a big hit with the kids. Judges give prizes for taste, creativity, and appearance!



The annual Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt leads to an epic search throughout campus. You just never know where you might find an Easter egg filled with treats—sometimes months later!



Never give up



By Denise Watson
Development
Officer

In 2014, I started working at the Ranch as a cook. I had worked with at-risk teens in a previous job and enjoyed cooking, so it seemed like the perfect fit. I was right. I absolutely LOVE being a part of the Ranch and impacting the lives of the children we serve!

Last year, when I decided to move across the country to help care for family, leaders at the Ranch encouraged me to apply for the open Development Officer position. They saw something in me I didn't know I had. Because they believed in me, I applied for the job and got it!

Just as people at the Ranch believed in me, we all believe in our kids. Most of the children who come to the Ranch have never been surrounded by people who believe in them. Until they come to the Ranch, where we surround them with the care and support they need.

Every child at the Ranch is assigned a primary staff with whom they spend one-on-one time. In cases where a child has no family, their primary staff steps in to attend parent/teacher conferences and school performances, and to provide a healthy adult role model.

In addition, our kids have regular contact and support from the therapists, psychologists, youth care workers, occupational therapists, teachers, psychiatrist, and social workers. Cooking, housekeeping, facility, administration, and mission

advancement team staff also contribute to the overall well-being of every child who comes through our doors.

As I move forward in my new role at the Ranch, I am excited to meet people like you who support the Ranch ministry. I have many stories to share with you—stories about kids whose lives have been transformed in remarkable ways.

One example is of a young woman I'll call Mandy. Mandy came to the Ranch two years ago from a foster family. She is a sweet girl with a big heart. Serious mental health issues resulted in several suicide attempts, and constant threats of suicide. Mandy's journey at the Ranch

was bumpy, but we did not give up on her. With a lot of hard work on the part of Mandy and many Ranch staff, she is happy, healthy, safe, and leaving the Ranch to live with family.

Mandy would not be where she is today without the support of the people at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch—and that includes you. Your prayers and support make all the difference. Thank you.

"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." —Galatians 6:9

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." —Proverbs 22:6

Your prayers for our kids are a source of healing and hope. Thank you for loving our children. If you have any questions about the Ranch, contact Denise Watson, or any of the people shown here, at 1-800-344-0957.



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HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO WITH A CHARITABLE LIFE ESTATE

What is a Charitable Life Estate?

A Charitable Life Estate allows you to deed your home, farm, ranch, or vacation property to a charity like Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, while retaining use of the property for one or two lifetimes, or a specific number of years. At the end of your life, or before if you choose, the Ranch can either use the property, or sell it and use the proceeds to further its mission.

Benefits of a Charitable Life Estate?

1. Retain full use of your property for your lifetime or a specified number of years.
2. Receive an income tax deduction in the year of the gift.
3. The property is removed from your estate, reducing estate taxes and probate costs.
4. You will continue to receive any income generated from the property, such as rent from farmland.
5. Leaving your property before passing can generate additional financial benefits.



John and Mary's Story

John and Mary wanted to make a substantial gift to the Ranch to help continue its mission into the future, but they didn't want to take money out of their savings. In addition to their primary residence, they owned a lake home where they enjoyed spending time during the summer. After talking with a Development Officer and their financial advisor, they learned they could set up a charitable life estate by deeding the lake property to the Ranch while retaining the right to use it for both their lifetimes. They also liked the benefit of receiving a large income tax deduction in the year of the gift, which would save them considerable income taxes. John and Mary create the Charitable Life Estate, understanding they would continue to pay maintenance, taxes, and insurance on the property.

When John passed away five years later, Mary no longer enjoyed being at the lake alone. She recalled being told that forfeiting use of the property would result in additional financial benefits, so she called her Ranch Development Officer to learn the options.

1. Mary and the Ranch can sell the property and she can receive part of the sale price.
2. Mary can choose to donate her existing value in the property to the Ranch and receive another charitable deduction.
3. Mary can use her existing value in the property to establish a charitable gift annuity with the Ranch that will provide an income for the rest of her life, with a portion of the income being tax-free.
4. A combination of one and three above.

For a personal analysis of how a Charitable Life Estate could work for you, contact us at 1-800-344-0957 or info@DakotaRanch.org.



Memorials/Honorariums

Unless otherwise designated, donations you make in memory or in honor of your loved ones will be used to help build and maintain chapel facilities on all Ranch campuses. Your gift to the Ranch will live on through the children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch who learn about Jesus' unending love. For more information about making memorial and honorarium gifts to the Ranch, contact the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation at 1-800-344-0957 or info@DakotaRanch.org.

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CASEY SZEWCZAK

Patricia Szwczak

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MONTHLY GIVING MATTERS

**Change a child's life through
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Make your giving an even greater blessing when you join the Ranch as a *Honeycomb Partner*.

With each monthly gift, you'll share HEALING and HOPE with boys and girls who have endured unspeakable pain, crushing academic failure, abandonment, and abuse. But most important, you'll give them the chance to meet Jesus and know His love and forgiveness.

It's easy to join. Just visit DakotaRanch.org/MonthlySupport or call 1-800-344-0957.



A Prayer for Healing

Lord Jesus, heal me.
Heal in me, whatever
You see needs healing.
Heal me in whatever might
Separate me from You.
Heal my memory, heal my
Heart, heal my emotions,
Heal my spirit, heal my
Body, heal my soul.
Lay Your hands gently
Upon me and heal me
Through your love for me.
Amen.



DAKOTA BOYS RANCH

We keep all donors, kids, and Ranch staff in our prayers. If you have a special intention or prayer request, please contact us at 1-800-344-0957 or info@DakotaRanch.org.



Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch
P.O. Box 5007
Minot, ND 58702-5007

Change Service Requested



Etch-A-Sketch art by
Ranch Resident

The mission of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.

www.DakotaRanch.org

Main Switchboard: 1-800-593-3098

Foundation: 1-800-344-0957

