

# THE RANCH VOICE

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

Summer 2023



Wildlife Club advisor, Andrew Meier, helps a young resident show off one of the three fish she caught on a recent Wildlife Club outing!



[www.DakotaRanch.org](http://www.DakotaRanch.org)  
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# Message from Our President/CEO

## Coming together for the children



Joy Ryan, President/CEO  
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

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As I sat down to write to you today, I thought of the hundreds of people I've talked to since coming to the Ranch. It always heartens me how everyone cares about children, regardless of all the other ways they might disagree. We all care about the children, so I'd like to tell you about three of our kids.

David is tall and lanky and blond and smiles a lot. He is on the autism spectrum. David's parents didn't understand him, so as a small child they "disciplined" him by locking him in a dog kennel. He has no social skills or situational awareness.

Lindsey is bouncy and loud and has long dark curls. She was sexually molested by a neighbor for three years. Her parents didn't know. Lindsey has attempted suicide three times. She wets the bed almost every night. She self-harms through cutting.

Roger has gorgeous caramel-colored skin and teeth that need braces. He has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, was abandoned by his birth mother, and bounced around "family" homes. Eventually, Roger was adopted. Now at 13, his mother and father are divorcing and told him they wish they'd never adopted him... the divorce would be so much "easier." He swears and antagonizes others. He is angry and lashes out at everyone.

Each of these children (not their real names) has come to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. Each of these children is precious and deserves a future.

The Ranch Boards of Directors know this, and every time I meet with them, I am humbled by their commitment to our kids. The Directors are volunteers and are not paid for their work. While all accomplished in their personal lives and careers, they have very different backgrounds and beliefs. They represent a wide range of political positions. They are diverse in age, gender, occupation, schooling, ethnic background, and financial status. They come from across the nation.

Despite their many differences, they come together, time after time, united in the pursuit of the Ranch mission "to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ."

Yes, they challenge each other... and me. They debate, discuss, and then decide in the name of Christ—after filtering every decision through the futures of David, Lindsey, Roger, and every child who walks through our doors.

I want you to know about all the good I see and experience in you and others as they reach out to help David and Lindsey and Roger.

It would be easy to think that all we do in America is disagree. We love to debate. We have clashes of values, distrust, promises, bartering, and bickering. But I believe that most people want to do good, and we agree on more than it seems... especially regarding our nation's children.

*"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."*

—3 John 1:4

In His love,

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

## Finding herself and her purpose

Onaraya, a recent graduate of Dakota Memorial School, isn't sure she would have graduated without the help she received at the Ranch. In fact, she isn't sure she would even be alive.

"To be honest with you," Onaraya said, "without the Ranch, I probably would have overdosed or something."

Onaraya was introduced to drug use by her parents.

"They were both heavy heroin and cocaine users and liked to test stuff on me. They jumped me around from house to house—stranger's houses—and lots of bad things happened to me," she said. "Nobody really thought what happened was that bad, but now I realize I had a lot of trauma."

Onaraya's parents lost custody of her when she was seven and she was taken in by her aunt and uncle, who adopted her when she was 12.

As a teenager, Onaraya struggled with the effects of her trauma. She was put into bad situations that contributed to her own drug and alcohol use, and it got to the point where she was never sober. She was struggling in school, harming herself, attempting suicide, running away, and having huge blow-ups with her adoptive parents.

The Ranch gave her a place to land while she figured out who she was and helped her make positive changes in her life.

"Sobering up, getting away from a toxic environment, and being on a consistent schedule definitely

helped," she said. "It was just easy to tell that people at the Ranch cared. I think that's one of the most important things I learned at the Ranch—that some people do care even when you feel like nobody does."

Onaraya also found acceptance at the Ranch—regardless of her actions.

"Whenever I had a breakdown or tantrum or did things that weren't acceptable, Ranch staff wouldn't immediately shove me away or mock me. They gave me space and then sat down and talked to me," she said. "People were really sympathetic, and I felt heard."

"When I got to the Ranch, I had no idea who I was. I didn't have my own identity or personality and always kind of mooched other people's identities. I just wanted to be likable, but it ended badly most of the time," Onaraya said. "At the Ranch, I had an opportunity to reflect on how I was acting and who

I wanted to be."

While Onaraya was always a believer, she had started to feel as if God had left her.



**Onaraya is determined to continue down the healthy path she started at the Ranch.**

"I would always pray to God and not feel alone. But after a while, I had brought myself down so much that I stopped getting that feeling when I prayed. I just felt alone," she said. "While I was at the Ranch, I realized He didn't leave me. He was still guiding me. Just walking into chapel, I could feel God's energy in the room."

Onaraya was at the Ranch twice. She said her first stay in Fargo helped her learn who she was and

gave her a taste of sobriety. But about six months after moving back with her parents, she fell back into her old habits, and eventually returned to the Ranch, this time in Minot.



Onaraya, and her foster mom, Andy, whom she met at the Ranch, celebrated her high school graduation.

After completing treatment in Minot, Onaraya was living in a foster home, and it wasn't going well. She asked her social worker to contact Andy Kath, a Ranch employee she met at the Fargo treatment center.

"I told Andy I just had to get out," she said. "She was the first person I thought about. I knew she cared and that she wouldn't just give up on me. She didn't even hesitate!"

Because she was an adult Onaraya

knew well, Andy could be a kinship provider, so she took Onaraya into her home and made her a part of the family. When a fire destroyed their home in March 2023, Andy figured out a temporary living arrangement

that would allow Onaraya to stay with her. She helped Onaraya enroll in the Ranch's online education program so she could finish high school, and when she graduated in May, Andy was by her side.

Now nearly 18, Onaraya can look back and see how far she has come.

"I look at pictures and see how different I look," she said.

"A lot of people have told me I look healthier. I'm not paranoid or using people. I like myself better this way."

Sober for nearly a year, Onaraya is determined to continue this healthier path, but she isn't planning too far ahead.

"If I think too far ahead, it stresses me out, and I start to overthink," she said. "When I turn 18 this summer and am out of the government's care, I have to start my life! I'll get a job and see where that

takes me."

While Onaraya admits she can be hotheaded and stubborn, people tell her she is calming and caring. She wants to care for people, so she is applying to nursing homes. She thinks that will be a good fit for her personality—at least for now.

"I'm anxious about being on my own without people making sure I'm okay, but that's what adulting is, right!" she said.

But she knows Andy is just a phone call away.

"I'm considering moving away from North Dakota and starting my life somewhere else—maybe Oregon or Montana. But Andy told me if things don't work out, all I have to do is call, and she'll get me a train or plane ticket to get back here," Onaraya said. "I think I'd be willing to take her up on that if anything goes wrong!"

"I have a lot to be grateful for." Onaraya said, "I want Ranch donors to know their money is going to a good cause. I haven't met any of the donors in person, but I've heard about them, and they all just seem so sweet. As kids, we might not see how much they do to support us, but eventually, we come to see how much their support matters."

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.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do psychotropic medications affect physical health?



**By Dr. Wayne Martinsen, Psychiatrist, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch**

At Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, we serve kids with all types of behavioral and mental health disorders. Some children come to us with severe anxiety and depression, while others are grappling with ADHD, PTSD, or schizophrenia. We often use psychotropic medications, in addition to therapy, to help treat our kids and improve their day-to-day lives.

All medications come with possible side effects and health risks. Certain mood-stabilizing medications or antipsychotics can cause weight gain and elevated blood sugar, cholesterol, or prolactin levels. Stimulant medications for ADHD can cause decreased appetite and growth, and anxiety medications can result in sleepiness. Side effects are different for everyone—children can have dramatically different experiences with the same prescriptions.

Despite the possible side effects, the benefits of these medications far outweigh the risks. For example, people who are effectively treated with medications for anxiety and depression are more likely to live longer than those who aren't. People who are treated with medications for ADHD have a higher likelihood of finishing high school and obtaining employment and a lower

likelihood of developing a chemical dependency. Even pregnant mothers suffering from depression are likely to give birth to a heavier infant when treated with antidepressant medications. To put it another way, the possible negative effects of leaving a mental illness untreated are far worse than the possible negative effects of taking medication.

### **What do we do at the Ranch to help mitigate the health risks and side effects of psychotropic medication?**

We observe children closely for medication side effects and effectiveness. We monitor their weight and how they're feeling; and track any side effects they may be experiencing. We also perform blood tests every three months to monitor things like prolactin and cholesterol levels. Parents or guardians are informed of the details of our psychiatrist's weekly check-in with their child as well, so they're always aware of what's being monitored and if there are any concerns. If a child begins experiencing unwanted side effects, we work with them and their family to change the dosage or medication they're taking.

### **What if a child doesn't want to take medication?**

We have no legal right to make a child at the Ranch take any medication they don't want to take. For us to administer medication, we must have the consent of both the child and parent/guardian. A child can refuse medication at any time and for any reason, without fear of repercussions.

We take side effects very seriously when they occur, but we don't want to avoid effective treatment because of side effects that haven't happened. The risks of not treating a mental health disorder are much higher than the risks of using medication.

### **Levels of Care**

Dakota Boys and Girls provides medication management to children in two levels of residential treatment; **Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF)** and **Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP)**.

The Ranch's PRTF's, located in Minot, Fargo, and Bismarck, provide the highest level of psychiatric residential care available for children in North Dakota. In addition to food, shelter, and medication management, our team provides programming and therapy for children with chronic psychiatric and behavioral health issues.

The Ranch's QRTP's (also known as treatment foster care) are located on our Minot campus. QRTP is a less acute level of care for children who need a safe place to live and supportive services and are able to succeed in a less structured environment.

Medication management services are also available to children and adults through **Dakota Family Services**, the Ranch's outpatient clinic with locations in Fargo and Minot.

## Whatever it Takes

Henry\* was close to completing treatment and moving home. But, while he did well at the Ranch, he struggled with aggressive behaviors during home passes.

The Ranch treatment team came up with a unique solution to help Henry and his family transition, asking Residential Treatment Specialist Austin Stensby to spend time with Henry and his family while he was on home passes.

“Henry successfully met program goals, but every time he had a home pass, he became physically aggressive, and his progress was reversed,” Austin said. “His mom and dad are separated and have very different parenting styles.

I helped them create a more balanced environment between the two homes, so Henry had a consistent schedule and clear expectations.”

When Henry had a home pass, Austin drove him home and spent 6-8 hours with the family each day he was home. During his time there, Austin helped them adhere to their schedule, reinforce expectations, and deal with any conflicts that arose.

“One night I was there, Henry really struggled. Mom tried to deal with his behavior, but then looked to me for help so I stepped in and modeled different ways to redirect him,” Austin said. “Later, I processed the situation with Mom, and we discussed ways to

handle Henry’s behaviors.”

Austin also visited with both parents about how to address incidents after the fact. “It’s important to discuss the



**Austin helped Henry and his family adjust to his transition home.**

situation with the youth and create a plan and response for future incidents. Sharing the responsibility with them is key to helping reduce those situations.”

Austin was surprised to find that the time he spent in the home was helpful for Henry’s siblings too.

“One night, Henry’s brother was frustrated, so I was able to teach him some of the skills we use at the Ranch to process emotions and deal with frustration,” he said. “I hadn’t thought about how using the opportunity to teach Henry’s siblings coping and conflict management skills could improve the home environment.”

Going into the situation, Austin

didn’t know what to expect as it wasn’t something the Ranch had ever done before.

“I thought I would be more of a bystander, but I ended up being involved in things,” Austin said. “It wouldn’t be just them asking Dad to play with them, but they’d ask me too. Then all four of us would be playing a game.”

Having Austin there to help make the transition between treatment and home was a positive experience for Henry and his parents. Henry’s parents appreciated that the Ranch did whatever it took to help him transition home successfully.

For children leaving the Ranch, transitioning to a family home is always hopeful, but stressful. To help children transition out of treatment into the community, the Ranch provides Aftercare services that connect children to community services, provide or arrange for transportation, and help them develop independent living skills. Austin’s work with Henry and his family goes beyond the typical scope of those services.

Natasha Holwegner, a co-worker who helped design the innovative approach, said, “Austin helped Henry and his family learn valuable skills to help them be successful in the future. Austin, you went above and beyond!”

And Austin enjoyed it too.

“It was the most unique and probably the coolest thing I’ve ever done at the Ranch,” he said.

*\*Name changed to protect confidentiality*

## Building Relationships and Connection Through Chores



**By Kaitlin Kinsella,  
Director of Residential Services, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Bismarck**

How many of you remember your childhood chores with fondness? I certainly don't! Cleaning my room, taking out the trash, vacuuming, or emptying the dishwasher took time away from the fun things I would have much rather been doing. As an adult, I realize my parents knew something I didn't when they impressed on me the importance of doing chores—and it wasn't just them wanting me to do all the work!

At the Ranch, we expect all residents to complete daily chores. In addition to teaching essential life skills they may not have learned at home (like cooking, cleaning, setting the table, and doing laundry) and ensuring their shared living space is comfortable and clean, daily chores give children a sense of purpose, help them feel more competent and responsible, and build relationships through teamwork.

Tim Gienger, Director of Clinical Care at the Ranch, says motivating our kids to do chores is not always easy.

“For some of our kids who haven't had any responsibilities in the home, chores can lead to anxiety and dysregulation,” Tim said. “Other kids who come from homes where they were running the household and caring for their siblings may feel

like the skills they already have aren't valued. Regardless of where kids are at in their skill development, Ranch staff teach them basic living skills through role modeling, patience, and even by negotiating with kids who try to get out of doing their chores.”

Common daily chores include tidying their room; sweeping and mopping floors; dusting furniture; emptying the garbage; and wiping down sinks, toilets, bathtubs, and mirrors. On the weekly deep clean day, kids and staff do more in-depth cleaning of the cottage, especially in the kids' bedrooms.

We find many ways to motivate and encourage our kids to do their chores. Working alongside them—teaching and providing positive feedback—is the first step in motivating kids to do their chores. A little encouragement goes a long way. We give kids some choice in the chores they complete and when they complete them, which helps to minimize power struggles and fights. And, if they complete their chores, they earn a weekly allowance. They can use their allowance on outings or save it to purchase something special—giving them the added benefit of learning how to manage their money.

Although chores aren't always fun, the benefits are hard to ignore. Through repetition and reinforcement, chores can strengthen relationships and improve self-esteem. They create a sense of community and connection as everyone in the family (or in the cottage) works together towards

a common goal. The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry notes that “children who do chores may exhibit high self-esteem, be more responsible, and be better equipped to deal with frustration, adversity, and delayed gratification,” as well as have “greater success in school, work, and relationships.”

I know I didn't make it easy on my parents when it came to getting my chores done, but I'm thankful for their persistence. I am a much healthier and more responsible adult for having done them.

Thank you, Mom and Dad.

*Kaitlin Kinsella is one of three Directors of Residential Services at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, one each on our Bismarck, Minot, and Fargo campuses.*

*Kaitlin has been at the Ranch since 2004 when she started as a Residential Treatment Advisor after graduating from Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN. She then took on the Recreational Specialist role for about a year before making her way into leadership—from Residential Supervisor to Program Manager to Treatment Manager. In 2018, she was promoted to her current role, where she is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the residential program on the Bismarck campus to ensure it meets the needs of the children and families; and complies with federal, state, and accreditation standards/regulations.*

*Kaitlin completed her master's degree in Leadership from the University of Jamestown in 2020.*



## Building Confidence, Connection, and Mental Health

*A few months ago, a hurting young boy I'll call Ben came to the Ranch. Ben was largely nonverbal and hadn't been to school since 2018. He spent his first two weeks at the Ranch refusing to leave his room. As he became more comfortable with his surroundings and the people caring for him, he started venturing out of his room, and after a few more weeks, he was able to go into the dining center and sit with staff.*

*He didn't eat there that day, but we all celebrated the courage it took him to leave the cottage and be in a big space with other people.*

*Fast forward to July...three other high-energy Ranch boys have taken Ben under their wing. He struggles to keep up with them, but yesterday they taught him how to play Gaga Ball and Volleyball. Each boy let Ben score a few times, and one of them patiently taught him how to*

*serve a volleyball. Through it all, they encouraged him, laughed with him, and included him. While getting the exercise they need, these young boys are also learning and practicing empathy and kindness.*

The science backs up what we see every day at the Ranch, that wellness and physical activity are essential to mental health and healing.

“We know that physical activity



is healthy and that a lack of physical activity is a risk factor for depression and anxiety,” said Dr. Wayne Martinsen, Psychiatrist and Medical Director at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. “For adults, physical activity (20 minutes a day, five days a week, at an intensity that makes it slightly difficult to carry on a conversation) is as effective for the treatment of depression and anxiety as typical antidepressant medications.”

While there isn’t as much research on the impact of exercise on depression in adolescents, an analysis of data from several medical databases published in JAMA Pediatrics concludes that regular exercise for children over age 13 can lead to a reduction in depression symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 60 minutes of exercise per day for children ages 6-17.

Dr. Martinsen, who is pursuing certification from the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, encourages his patients to address all six pillars of well-being (exercise, nutrition, sleep, stress, risky behavior reduction, and social connection).

The Wellness Coordinators and Physical Education teachers at the Ranch address these pillars of well-being by getting kids active, teaching them healthy eating habits, providing social connection through group activities and games, and helping them find activities they can enjoy not only while they are at the Ranch, but throughout their lives.

And they all believe wholeheartedly that physical activity and mental health go hand-in-hand.



**Christian has walked the path of our children and is in a unique position to give them hope.**

## **Christian Kjelland** Wellness Coordinator, Fargo

When Christian Kjelland applied for a job at the Ranch 20 years ago, he wasn’t looking for a way to make a difference.

“I was just looking for a job and saw a Ranch booth at a job fair,” Christian said. “I could relate to the mission of helping kids who are struggling because I was that kid. I was working here probably three months before I realized I could be part of something big.”

Christian was born in the Philippines, and from age 8-14, he lived in a Philippine orphanage—except for the many times he ran away and lived on the streets. At the age of 14, he moved to North Dakota when he was adopted by a Park River, ND, family.

“I tell the kids I know what it’s like to feel like nobody cares, that feeling of not being wanted and losing hope,” Christian said. “But if you know what you want to accomplish and take it step by step, there is always hope. I have walked

their path and was given a chance. At the Ranch, I can give back.”

As Wellness Coordinator, Christian’s main goals are to give kids opportunities to be “normal” and to feel a sense of belonging.

“We can teach kids how to live within our four walls, but they aren’t going to be here forever,” Christian said. “We provide tools and experiences that teach them how to live and grow in their community.”

In addition to giving them the chance to try new activities and learn new things, wellness activities can help Ranch residents cope with overwhelming emotions.

“If a kid has a bad phone call, is sad, or gets in an argument, getting outside or being physically active can help them forget about it for a while,” Christian said. “They’ll ask me if we can shoot hoops or go for a walk. Maybe later, they’ll be in the right mind to talk through why they were upset. But in the moment, it’s about being present and giving them the space they need.”



**This young resident was very proud of her progress!**

Sometimes providing kids with a positive way to release their rage or frustration prevents them from lashing out at other people and things.

“If they have the option to punch a wall, break glass, or work out, they’ll probably choose working out or shooting hoops—at least after they’ve been here a while and learn that it works,” Christian said. “It’s much easier than facing the consequences of the negative ways they’ve reacted in the past.”

Christian also believes the activities he plans for the kids help them make connections—connections they’ve often missed out on. Swimming at a community pool, going to a movie, fishing, volunteering, going to the zoo, or spending the day at the lake, are all ways Ranch kids can build strong connections with each other, Ranch staff, and people throughout the community.

“Ranch kids are sometimes labeled as the ‘bad kids,’ but they are just kids. Just yesterday we were at the swimming pool, and I asked one of my co-workers if they could pinpoint which kids were at the



Weightlifting is a favorite activity of many Ranch kids.

Ranch just by looking at them. She couldn’t,” he said. “Our kids look and act like every other teenager. It’s our job to help them feel that way too.”



As a PE teacher, Dalton Cooper focuses on building skills and confidence.

## Dalton Cooper

PE Teacher, Minot

Dalton Cooper was an active kid. He played baseball, football, and basketball and even as a young child, was always on the move.

“I always had to be moving or fidgeting with something,” Dalton said. “So, when it came time to go to college, I knew I wanted to do something that wouldn’t tie me down to a desk.”

Dalton said his decision to be a Physical Education teacher was influenced by coaches he had throughout childhood and high school.

“They were great role models who molded me into who I am today. I wanted to do that too,” he said.

Dalton graduated from Minot State University, Minot, ND, and started that fall as a PE teacher

at the Ranch. After three years, he continues to love the work and the kids.

“There is a stereotype that the kids here are bad, but it’s the exact opposite,” Dalton said. “It was a little nerve-racking going in because I was a new teacher and didn’t know what to expect in terms of behaviors. But it’s been awesome. These kids need guidance, and the small class sizes allow us to give them more one-on-one attention.”

Because Dalton knows each of his students well, he understands what they need from him when they get frustrated, upset, or heightened.

“It’s different for every student,” he said. “Some kids want you to ask them what’s wrong and help them problem-solve. Others just need you to step away and give them a moment to recollect themselves.”

At the Ranch, Dalton can teach students a variety of games like badminton, pickleball, baseball, and flag football.

“Maybe it’s something brand-new to them or something they’ve only tried once or twice,” he said. “When we start a new sport, we always have a few kids who aren’t confident enough to try it and want to sit out. I find alternative things for them to do, like walking laps or using the elliptical. Once they see the rest of the class participating and having fun, they decide to try. We build on that, and their confidence and abilities grow throughout the weeks and months they are here.”

The students’ hesitance to participate often comes from their lack of fine motor skills, coordination, and visual and spatial awareness.

“Catching, kicking, and throwing are easy for some of our kids, but for others, they are really challenging,” he said. “Our set-up allows us to put kids with similar skill levels together. If I have a class that’s more athletic, I can teach them the rules, do a few drills, and get right into playing the game. For the kids who need a little bit of extra work, we can slow the lesson down and give them more time to learn and practice.”

While Dalton knows some of the children’s lack of motor skills and coordination are trauma-related, he believes it also stems from a lack of experience.

“Many of our kids have been in and out of the system or living on the streets. They haven’t been going to school, so haven’t had the opportunity to play recreational sports or even sports in the classroom,” Dalton said. “A big part of development is doing things at a young age that you can build on as you get older. They’ve missed out on those foundational skills. It’s just like math. If you don’t go to school, your class will be doing long division while you’re still stuck on adding and subtracting.”

A rocky start tends to launch a vicious circle of kids not understanding, not wanting to admit what they don’t know, getting further behind, and then not even trying because they lack confidence and expect they will fail.

Dalton’s goal is to find at least one sport or activity that each student enjoys so they have something they can do to relax.

“For me, it was baseball,” Dalton said. “I could get away from everything and focus on something

I was good at. I want to find that for our kids so they have an outlet. If they’re having a rough day, they can shoot hoops, run, or lift weights to ease the pressure and get their mind off what’s bothering them.”

Dalton said he has seen a lot of kids find that outlet in the weight room.

“They are hitting personal records with the bench press or the deadlift and are so excited,” he said. “One of my students discovered a love for basketball. When he came here, he couldn’t dribble or even hit the basket. Now he is making three-pointers. You see a lot of lightbulb moments where they are like, ‘I can do this!’”

In addition to relieving stress, relaxing the mind, improving cardiovascular health, and leading to overall wellness, Dalton said physical activity has a major impact on mental health.

“If you feel like you can’t do something, you will be discouraged and lack confidence. But if you feel physically strong and healthy, you’ll be able to do a lot more and just feel better overall, which impacts how you feel about yourself.”

Dalton works tirelessly to build his student’s confidence.

“I tell them they can’t expect to be good at things if they’ve never done them. Like when we’re playing Frisbee golf and a kid tells me he can’t throw a Frisbee. Of course he’s not good at it if he’s never done it, but that doesn’t mean he can’t learn,” he said. “It goes back to them not being in school or in PE—their confidence level is very low on even the simplest tasks. I’ve done my job if I can get them to try

and then encourage and teach them so they can improve their skills and even enjoy new things.”

Dalton spends his time outside of work with his wife and two small children, walking and going to the park. He coaches baseball so they spend a lot of time at the baseball field as a family. He also enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking, and weightlifting.

As for Ranch kids, Dalton says they are phenomenal.

“I tell people I work at the Ranch, and they say, ‘I’m sure those kids are a handful.’ But, they aren’t much different than kids at any school,” he said. “Once you give them a little extra guidance and structure, they are great kids. Every one of my Ranch students has made a difference in my life, and I think we’ve made a difference in theirs.”



Erik incorporates the Ranch’s trauma-informed culture into his teaching.

## **Erik Olson** PE Teacher, Fargo

Erik Olson grew up in a family of educators and played sports throughout childhood and college, so when it came time to choose a career, teaching/coaching was an

easy choice. He knew his passion was for working with kids in some capacity.

After graduating from North



**Ranch residents learn how to make healthy meals.**

Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, where he played Bison football, Erik started teaching in the public school system. When he saw the open position at the Ranch, he thought it'd be a good fit.

"I've been here one year, and Dakota Memorial School is unlike any other school I've ever been at," Erik said. "The support everyone gives each other is amazing, and the kids are great to work with."

Erik said the smaller class sizes allow him to get to know the kids, their interests, and what they like to do outside of the school day.

"Asking questions and paying attention helps me build positive relationships with our students. They know I recognize their interests and want what's best for them," Erik said.

Erik's main goal for Ranch kids is to create enjoyment of physical activity so when they leave the Ranch or graduate high school, they continue to be physically active.

"By exposing them to a wide variety of activities they can do outside of school, things they don't need special equipment to do," Erik said, "I'm working towards my big goal of helping them to develop lifelong habits of physical activity."

Erik has altered his teaching style as he has learned from the kids.

"In my earlier years of teaching, I would have insisted every child participate in the activity we are doing that day," he said. "But I've seen how much progress students make when you give them options and let them join in slowly. If a student wants to walk around the gym instead of participating in the activity, I'll let them do that for a class period. The next day I'll encourage them to participate with the class, even just for a short while. Eventually, most of them engage and want to be involved."

Erik says physical activity has a big impact on mental health, and he has seen firsthand how exercise improves his mood and stress levels. He also sees it in the students and the benefit of movement breaks for kids who can't focus in the classroom.

"Our teachers are good about offering movement breaks or allowing students to move around in the classroom," he said. "We have standing desks, rocking chairs, and under-the-desk pedals that all help our kids focus."

Erik incorporates the Ranch's trauma-sensitive culture into his

classes and his work with students. If a student has a bad day, he doesn't hold it against them. Every day is a chance for a new start.

He teaches basic skills before getting into playing the game so his students can build their confidence. For instance, if they are learning to play pickleball, they practice hitting the ball back and forth without the net and without boundaries so they can build their confidence. When they play volleyball, Erik changes the rules so the ball can bounce one time before they hit it back over.

"That really increases the engagement in games because everyone feels like they have a chance to be successful," Erik said. "Most of the kids come here with pretty low self-confidence and self-esteem. Making adjustments and celebrating their strengths helps build their confidence so they aren't afraid to try new things."

Erik also puts a lot of focus on teaching life skills through sports.

"I make sure it's not just about the game, but also about sportsmanship and respect. Yes, I want them to be physically active, but respect and sportsmanship are just as important," Erik said. "Some of them have never experienced respect from others, so it needs to go both ways. I want to show them how to be respectful, but also to feel it."

Ranch kids are like all teenagers, with similar interests and challenges. And just like everyone, they have good and bad days. Erik said the best part about Ranch kids is their willingness to be open to new experiences. While it often takes time, he sees so much growth and progress in his students. They don't always see it, so he often reminds

them how much they've grown.

Erik's favorite part about working at the Ranch, besides the kids, is the ability to express his faith openly.

"I love how the Ranch is Christ-centered. Every morning the teachers all meet for prayer in the hallway. It's a great starting point for each day and helps us focus on what's important," Erik said. "We couldn't do this on our own. But with Christ at our center and with His love, we can provide our kids with the love and support they need."



Lucas focuses on teaching and motivating kids to be fit for life.

## Lucas Michaelson

PE Teacher, Bismarck

Lucas Michaelson said he zigzagged his way to teaching Physical Education & Health at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. After changing his college major many times, he landed on teaching, despite trying to avoid joining the profession of almost everyone in his family.

"In high school, I knew I wanted to be a teacher after helping my Dad coach 8-year-old wrestlers, but then I didn't want to admit it

in college. I kept telling myself, 'Everyone else is a teacher, but I'm not,'" he said. "I finally figured it out after about two years of wasting my time. Once I made that decision, I buckled down in my classes and made it happen."

When he graduated from Minot State University, Minot, ND, Lucas moved back to his hometown of Williston, ND, to teach PE before deciding to spread his wings and move out of Williston. He accepted a job at the Youth Correctional Center (YCC) south of Bismarck, ND, and it was there he learned about the Ranch from a co-worker who was leaving YCC to teach at the Ranch.

"I told her the Ranch was where I really wanted to be and asked her to let me know if there was ever an opening. A couple of years later, she called, I applied, and here I am—exactly where I am meant to be," Lucas said.

When Lucas worked in the middle school in Williston, he said he gravitated to the kids the other teachers couldn't handle.

"We would have meetings to talk about how we could help these kids be successful, and the other teachers would talk about their behaviors. I didn't know what they were talking about," Lucas said. "I wasn't having any problem with them in my classes. Then I went to YCC and realized that these are the kids I really like."

"I'm hard on them and hold them accountable, but they take it really well," he said. "Most of them haven't had anyone to hold them accountable at home, and they appreciate the structure. It lets them turn their brains off survival mode

for a little bit."

Through questions he asks in Health classes, Lucas has learned that the majority of Ranch kids haven't had great models when it comes to health and well-being.

"How many of you have obesity in your family? How many have relatives with heart disease? How many have family members at home that smoke? They almost all raise their hand for every question," Lucas said. "Most of our kids have a family history of being sedentary and don't know much about fitness. They have to fend for themselves in that department. Teaching them how to build a lifetime of fitness is so important."

While Lucas doesn't teach any differently at the Ranch than he did in public school, he does think he has an approach that is different from many PE teachers.

"I focus more on strengthening and being fit throughout life," he said. "The most important thing in physical education is showing kids how lifelong fitness can help them create a better lifestyle. It doesn't have to be all about excelling in sports."

He says people's ability to be active throughout their life starts with basic strengthening exercises, with the added benefit of improving their performance for those who are interested in sports.

"I tell my students they'll automatically be better at basketball if they can jump higher. How do you jump higher? You strengthen your legs," Lucas said. "I've seen so much success in my classes. I had a girl that improved her deadlift by 60 pounds since we started. She had

no idea she could lift that much and is really determined to work hard and keep improving.”

Lucas also emphasizes that getting stronger physically helps the kids be stronger mentally.

“When you have a good workout, your brain releases positive chemicals into your body. Eventually, as you keep doing it, you’re going to be a happier person overall,” he said.

In addition, Lucas sees his students becoming more confident as they buy into the benefits of exercise and start participating.

“They start believing in themselves and encouraging each other,” he said. “They come in so down on themselves and are surprised by what they can do. They can be really proud of what they accomplish. I tell them, ‘With weights, you can’t fake it. You either moved it, or you didn’t. And if you’re successful, that’s all you. No one helped you.’”

In his spare time, Lucas likes to play darts, volleyball, softball, and video games. He and his wife keep busy with two teenagers and a six-month-old.



Rebecca helps each child find the activities that spark joy.

## Rebecca Grondahl

Wellness Coordinator, Minot

Rebecca Grondahl started working at the Ranch in 2020 as a Youth Care Worker (now called Residential Treatment Specialist), and in April 2023, she started as Wellness Coordinator.

While she is just getting the feel of the position, she is excited to work with kids and people across campus, and to have a chance to put her studies in elementary education at Minot State University, Minot, ND, to good use.

“I’m a people person. I love getting to know people and bringing them together as much as possible,” she said. “This position gives me a pretty good way to do that.”

Rebecca said kids come to the Ranch feeling unwanted, trapped, and like they don’t have a say in anything.

“My goal is to show them things they can be in control of,” she said. “I spent some time with one of our boys the other day who is almost 18 and doesn’t want to be here. He wants to be doing adult things. I helped him plan out three things he can work on daily to help him be better and feel better. I helped him realize he does have control over some things.”

Rebecca said it’s difficult for Ranch kids to see past the major issues in their lives to the things they can control, like their wellness.

“Wherever they are, they can work on their spiritual, physical, or intellectual wellness. They can find things that spark joy,” she said. “I want them to realize they have choices and to see the many



Kids learn how to spend their free time by playing games.

opportunities around them. I help them explore their interests, set goals, and get excited about things.”

Rebecca plans to introduce the kids on the Minot campus to various activities, including sports, cooking, baking, games, yoga, meditation, and more. By trying out many different activities, they can discover things they like to do—things they can do to get out of their heads.

“The more you sit with your feelings and don’t do anything to release them, the more you lose motivation,” she said. “I see that in myself. After the long winter, I was having trouble getting motivated. I knew I would feel better if I would just go outside and move. It’s the same for our kids. It’s important for them to figure out what makes them feel better—like getting some fresh air, going for a walk, or getting together with other people.”

Rebecca has a tight-knit family and loves to spend her downtime with them (and her Corgi, who has more personality than any dog she has ever met!). Her youngest brother lives in Florida with her mom and spends part of his summers with Rebecca in Minot.

“The kids at the Ranch remind

me of him a lot,” she said. “People think the kids here are completely different from other kids, and they’re really not. They’re very much like every kid everywhere. All kids are going through their own struggles, and some kids have more tools to handle their battles than others. Kids are here so we can give them those tools.”



Talbott focuses on the little things that can start kids on a healthier path.

## Talbott Pollert

Wellness Coordinator, Bismarck

Talbott Pollert started college at North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, as a chemical engineering major, but quickly realized he was on the wrong path and switched his major to psychology.

“My aunt and a grandma both suffered from mental illness,” Talbott said. “I was looking for a better understanding of what made them who they were and how their mental illnesses affected them.”

When Talbott graduated from college, a friend who was working at the Ranch encouraged him to

apply. Twelve years and a couple of promotions later, Talbott stays because he believes in the mission and is committed to making a difference in the lives of the kids and their families.

According to Talbott, most kids who come to the Ranch aren’t thinking about wellness or setting physical health goals.

“It’s hard for them set goals, or even think about the future, when they are wrapped up in trauma,” Talbott said. “We start by meeting their basic needs and getting them to truly feel that they are in a safe place. It’s Maslow’s hierarchy of needs—they can’t work towards bigger goals until their basic needs are met.”

Talbott sees a lot of kids coming in who have experienced food insecurity and trauma and don’t trust the adults in their lives. Regardless of where they’ve come from or what they’ve been through, he believes everyone deserves a chance to heal and succeed.

“We say all the time around here that people would do well if they could,” Talbott said. “We provide an environment that gives them the opportunity to improve. As Wellness Coordinator, my main goal is to help our kids find a path to self-improvement.”

Sometimes it’s the little things that can start them on this path.

“Developing a structured sleep schedule, doing their first pushup, or having a better understanding of healthy eating,” Talbott said, “are all simple ways kids can make small and manageable improvements in their lives.”

Because so many Ranch kids

don’t trust anyone, Talbott starts by proving he is a safe and trusted individual who treats them with compassion and care.

“You don’t jump right in and ask them to tell you all the bad things that have happened to them,” Talbott said. “Just like with any relationship, you get to know people by spending time with them and asking about their interests, likes, and hobbies.”

Talbott provides a variety of activities for the residents, often based on their input and requests. They play basketball, soccer, and volleyball; ride bicycles; and go swimming. The annual hike through Theodore Roosevelt National Park is a summer favorite of the kids.

Talbott also holds a weekly recreational fitness group with a five-week workout rotation. They start with the Presidential Fitness Challenge to establish a baseline for each child’s physical abilities, followed by a leg workout, a core workout, and an upper body workout. On the fifth week, they do a mile run.

“I choose to do these workouts using mostly body weight movements to show our kids they don’t need special equipment or a gym to be healthy,” Talbott said. “Using the weight of your body and gravity, you can exercise no matter where you are.”

Talbott says physical activity and wellness are not only great for physical health but mental health as well.

“Dr. Martinsen talks about the research behind physical activity and mental health in greater detail,



Through team sports, Ranch residents learn how to cooperate and get a much-needed boost of self-confidence.

but basically, exercise releases chemicals in the brain that help you work through your problems and just feel better.”

In his personal life, Talbott said he reminds himself to practice what he preaches.

“Because I’m so active at work, I’d be happy just watching Netflix,” he said. “But I can’t expect our kids to do things I’m not doing myself. So, I try to put the junk food down,

make healthier choices, and work out regularly. I also enjoy bike riding and hiking with my family, and with a kindergartner and teenagers in the house, we do a lot of running.”

When asked what he wants people to know about Ranch kids, he said, “I would tell them that

not just our kids, but all of us, are products of our environment. Every person, no matter where they came from or what they’ve been through, deserves a chance to improve.”

“With every child who comes to the Ranch, we have the opportunity to help them advance and grow as individuals, discover who they are capable of becoming, and understand they are more than what happened to them.”

## “I saw hope.”

In July, a Servant Team from Messiah Lutheran Church, Lakeville, MN worked on landscaping projects on the Ranch’s Fargo campus. They also interacted with Ranch kids over lunch and while playing kickball. Before they left, one of the chaperones said she came to the Ranch expecting an atmosphere of sadness and hurt.

“But it was just the opposite,” she said. “I saw joy on the faces of kids and staff as they interacted. It is clear to me that God put some amazing people here at the Ranch to work with our kids. Instead of sadness and hurt, I saw hope.”

While our kids are also hurt and sad, it’s people like Christian, Lucas, Tal, Rebecca, Dalton, and Erik who invite them to experience the joy and confidence that comes through connecting with others, managing their health, and moving their bodies.

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# Celebrations

## Reaping the rewards of hard work

Fishing is a favorite activity of kids in Wildlife Club on our Minot campus, no matter the season. Many of them have never been fishing, but they catch on quickly! Even better than the fishing, however, is being able to fry up and eat what they've caught!



After a lesson on knife maintenance, Mr. Meier and the kids fried up the fish they'd caught for a delicious treat!



Being in nature is a great coping skill for many of our kids. It helps them calm their minds and their bodies.

## Educator Experience

We were thrilled to host teachers from the Bismarck-Mandan community through the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber EDC Educator Experience! During their stop, teachers learned about the work of the Ranch and Dakota Memorial School (DMS) and heard from our experts about the many services the Ranch provides to children and families.



Tim Gienger, Director of Clinical Care, started the day by talking to the group about careers in social work.



Talbott Pollert, Wellness Coordinator, talked about the Ranch Wellness Program and gave the group a tour of the on-campus greenhouse.



Renae Fettig, Occupational Therapy Supervisor, explained the important role of Occupational Therapy in the kids' treatment programs.



Tina DeGree, Superintendent/Director of Education, and Mallory Halvorson, Principal, gave an overview of Dakota Memorial School and how it is different from other schools.

## Sharing the work of the Ranch

Deaconesses Kelly Bristow and Stephanie Wilde attended the National Concordia Deaconess Conference to represent Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and speak at the banquet. Deaconess Kelly said, “We had many thoughtful questions and great engagement with helping our fellow deaconesses think about practical ways they can be more ‘trauma-informed’ in their congregations and institutional settings.”



In a breakout session, Deaconesses Stephanie and Kelly explained “Trauma-Informed Ministry,” a method employed at the Ranch that allows us to respond to our kids’ unique needs in a way that acknowledges their experiences and helps them feel safe.

## Putting on the Armor of God

In Spiritual Life Group, our Bismarck kids have been talking about the Armor of God. Of course, the lesson wouldn’t be complete without a little friendly competition to see who could make the best armor!



Vicar Jason said, “Even though my team didn’t win the armor contest, I’d still call it a major success!”

## Singing loud for all to hear

At the end of the school year, our Minot campus celebrated with an end-of-the-year Talent Show featuring great acts from Ranch children and staff. As a finale, some of our Dakota Memorial School teachers rewrote Bowling for Soup’s song “1985,” and put on quite the show!



From left: Jen Beach, Adrienne Keeney, and Todd Richter.

## Cooking, cooking, cooking

The cooking class on our Fargo campus is exploring recipes from around the world. One of their first recipes was delicious German Hazelnut Cookies. They've also made fried ice cream, guacamole, mini pizzas, and more!



The kids worked together to follow the recipe.



After baking the cookies (and taste-testing the results), the kids shared the cookies with Ranch staff. Everyone loved them!



### German Hazelnut Cookies

#### Ingredients

- 1 Cup whole hazelnuts
- ¾ Cup sugar
- ½ Cup butter, softened
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla extract
- 1 Cup all-purpose flour, sifted
- ¾ teaspoon salt

#### PREP TIME

10 minutes

#### COOK TIME

15 minutes

#### TOTAL TIME

25 minutes

#### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 325°F
2. Chop the hazelnuts in a food processor. Reserve ¼ of the chopped hazelnuts to sprinkle on top of the cookies.
3. Combine softened butter, sugar, and vanilla. Beat on medium-high until pale and fluffy.
4. Add egg yolk and mix again. Scrape down the sides so everything gets mixed together well and you don't end up with clumps of butter.
5. Sift flour and salt into the cookie batter. Mix on low until just combined.
6. Using a cookie scoop or your hands, form the dough into 18 balls and place on a prepared cookie sheet. Using a fork, press down on the cookie dough a couple times (horizontally and vertically) to flatten it out.
7. Sprinkle chopped hazelnuts on top of the cookies and press in lightly.
8. Bake for 12-15 minutes. The cookies are ready when the edges are golden brown.



The guacamole and salsa our kids made were a huge hit!



# Celebrations

## Chalkfest 2023

At the end of the school year, our Fargo campus hosted its first annual Chalkfest! Kids and staff across all departments created amazing works of art based on a “Wonders of Nature” theme.



The People's Choice Award went to our Therapy team for their beautiful work of art reminding everyone to “B-Leaf in yourself!”



Each team of staff and students was given a blank square and a box of chalk to unleash their creativity!



## Baking for good

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House! They had a great time baking cookies and banana bread and building relationships with peers and staff. Staff at the Ronald McDonald House were grateful for the time our kids spent there. They said, “We loved having you here! Thanks for sharing a little love with the families who call our house a home!”



Ranch kids give back to their community and spread joy to others.



Just as important as the baking is the cleaning up! Kids at the Ranch learn and practice important independent living skills, like doing dishes.



## G.R.O.W. Day 2023

G.R.O.W. (God Rewards Our Work) Day is a wonderful “full-circle” event at the Ranch. During the school year, the G.R.O.W. Day Team at Dakota Memorial School rallies the kids to do projects and grow plants that are suitable for sale. In May, items are taken to the Minot Thrift Store for a half-day sale. The following school year, the Leadership Class invites applications for grants on the Minot campus to distribute the funds raised the previous spring. The class goes through a very sophisticated analysis and discernment process and then submits the plans to Joy Ryan, CEO/ President, for final approval. When they get the go-ahead, they make huge checks and distribute them to the chosen grant recipients. This year’s winners included nursing, Wildlife Club, Wellness, and more!



The Spiritual Life Team received funding to replace the chairs and table in the Group Room.



The Nursing Department purchased new sensory items for their waiting room!



The Kitchen staff were thrilled to receive funds to buy new pizza pans and pan racks.



Students made and sold garden produce signs.



G.R.O.W. Day 2023 was complete with a potting station!



Hanging plants and tomatoes grown by our kids were a favorite at this year’s G.R.O.W. Day.



A wide variety of plants were available to purchase, as well as handmade planters and benches.



# Celebrations

## Getting to the heart of it

In May, kids at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, dissected deer hearts! As they worked, they learned about the different parts of the heart and how blood flows through the heart and moves throughout the body. Most of the kids thought it was pretty cool!



Science classes at DMS give kids hands-on opportunities to learn and explore scientific concepts.

## Many kinds of talents

At the end-of-year Bismarck campus talent show, students and staff members stepped up to show what they could do! The acts included card and number tricks, a vocal performance, baton twirling, and more!



A few of our kids choreographed and performed a dance to Lady Gaga's, Alejandro.



Josh, Facilities Manager, wowed the crowd with the many ways he can twist and bend his tongue!

## Excellence in safety

The North Dakota Safety Council awarded Todd Fjeldahl and Mike McCloud with "Outstanding Instructor" awards.

We're grateful for their commitment to making our campuses safe for Ranch children, families, and employees.



Todd has worked as a teacher at the Ranch for 28 years and Mike has worked as Facilities Director at the Ranch for nine years.

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



[facebook.com/dakotaranch1952](https://facebook.com/dakotaranch1952)



[Instagram.com/dbgr52](https://Instagram.com/dbgr52)

## Strawberry garden

Work has begun on the new strawberry garden on our Fargo campus! Thanks to a grant from the Scott's Miracle-Gro Foundation and Kids Gardening, the kids built and planted a new strawberry garden and are now watching the plants grow!



Kids and staff love digging in the dirt and learning about gardening.



The kids loved getting to ratchet in the screws!

## Swinging into summer



Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, went to Suite Shots for some golfing fun! This was the first time swinging a golf club for many of our kids, and they had a blast!

## Lutheran Women in Mission for the Ranch

At the 40th Biennial Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) Convention, held in Milwaukee, WI, convention attendees voted to award the Ranch with a \$100,000 grant for the building of a chapel in Bismarck.



Ranch Board Member Pastor Douglas Bergelin (center) stopped by the Ranch booth to say hello!



The Ranch was well represented by Tim Unsinn (far left) and Laurie Dannewitz (far right), Senior Development Officers. They were joined at the Ranch booth by Paul and Paulette Huber (center), Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Board Members.

# Celebrations

## Sharing notes of hope

Hope Notes are shared with children when they need a little extra encouragement and show our children someone cares for them and wants them to succeed. If you'd like to share a Hope Note with a child at the Ranch, complete the form at [DakotaRanch.org/hopenotes](http://DakotaRanch.org/hopenotes).



Scan Here

"J" reads a Hope Note he received with his treatment specialist, Chantel. After reading his letter he said, "Can I keep it?" and hung it up in his room.

## Art journaling

Kids on our Fargo campus had the opportunity to learn about and do some art journaling. According to Karen Engelter, Executive Assistant, who led the group, art journaling is "a visual diary combining the elements of writing, drawing, painting, collage, and printmaking to express oneself." The kids really enjoyed the activity and had fun being creative in a new way!



The journals will serve as an inspiration for the kids as they look to the future, and a reminder of all the great things they can do.

## Spreading the mission of the Ranch

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation Board Member, Rev. Bart Day and his wife Julie hosted a wonderful donor event for our friends in the St. Louis area. He also arranged for three schools in the area to have their own "Bee Kind Day," where they received Bee Kind t-shirts and had important conversations about bullying. Joy Ryan, President/CEO, made a special appearance to speak with the students at each school.



Students at Word of Life Lutheran School, St. Louis, MO, gathered to hear from Ranch President/CEO, Joy Ryan, during their Bee Kind Day assembly.



## Giving back at the Ranch

The Ranch hosted a group of amazing and hard-working volunteers from Brady Martz & Associates at the Minot Thrift Store and Warehouse. At the Warehouse, the crew power-washed and cleaned the thrift store trucks, loaded bags of merchandise in a semi for transport to other stores across the state, and painted a trailer. Another group worked hard at our Minot Thrift Store where they scraped old paint from the front windows to prep for new art from Ranch residents, organized holiday inventory, and cleaned up the parking lot and sales floor!



After a hard day of working (and a well-deserved barbecue lunch!), Brady Martz graciously presented Sheila Miller, VP of Finance, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, with a \$10,000 gift.



While on a tour of the Minot campus, one of the volunteers said, "It's nice to see the campus. When we audit, we only 'see' it on paper!"



We are so grateful for the hardworking crew from Brady Martz & Associates!



## Corporate Cup 2023

Corporate Cup, an annual event put on by the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce, brings together area businesses for a little friendly competition and physical fitness fun. Teams compete in events like kickball, cycling, tug of war, sand volleyball, an obstacle course, and more!



At Corporate Cup 2023, our amazing Ranch team wore custom shirts that creatively shared our mission "to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ."

# Celebrations

## Self-expression through art

Art is an important means of self-expression for kids at the Ranch. Our art classes explore many different mediums and give kids the chance to create in new and exciting ways.



Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, have been busy designing and screen printing their own shirts.



These pots were thrown on the wheel by students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo.

## Ranch expert shares knowledge of trauma and resilience

Rev. Rick Jones, Chaplain at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, served as a guest expert for the Master's Certificate in Trauma and Resilience from Concordia University Nebraska. The course was focused on helping educators use trauma-informed practices to help meet the needs of the students they serve. Rev. Jones was able to share his experiences working with kids at the Ranch and how being a "Trauma-Informed Ministry" allows children to feel seen and heard as they process and overcome the things that have happened to them.

## Round Up for the Ranch!

The Ranch received a \$250 grant from Walmart Spark Good, Walmart's community giving program, for registering for their Round Up program. While the \$250 grant was a one-time gift, anyone can round up their purchases on Walmart.com or through the Walmart app to donate to the Ranch! Learn more at <https://www.walmart.com/registry/registryforgood>.



## Cause Night at Minot High School

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch was selected by the Minot High School Varsity Soccer Team to be the recipient of funds raised at their annual cause night. The students designed and sold t-shirts, and donated the proceeds to the Ranch for weight room equipment to be used by Ranch kids.

## “The Ranch saved my son”

*“This place is amazing. My son spent four months at the Ranch in Fargo and is a completely different kid. He still struggles but he is more self-motivated and succeeding at Dakota Memorial School. Had I not made this heartbreaking decision in his best interests, I would have lost my son. Thank you for being there!”*

—Lexi Hauge on Ranch Facebook page

Lexi Hauge said her 16-year-old son, Hudson, has struggled since preschool.

“He had a lot of oppositional behaviors. He would argue with you, refuse to comply, and simply shut down. Authority has always been a struggle for him,” Lexi said.

At age 10, Hudson was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, but Lexi takes responsibility for her part in Hudson’s struggles.

“Some of the ways I dealt with my children when they were young were probably unhealthy and traumatic for them,” Lexi said. “I was struggling with my own demons and wasn’t as hands-on or emotionally supportive as I could have been.”

Lexi said she has been in abusive relationships, which has been emotionally and mentally damaging for her children.

When Hudson was 15, Lexi was at a breaking point.

“I knew if I didn’t step up to the plate and work on things now, it would be too late to reach him. I was tired of therapists, doctors, and calling the school because he refused to go,” Lexi said. “I needed to do something drastic. Placing Hudson at the Ranch was the most difficult

decision I’ve ever made, hands down.”

At the Ranch, Hudson discovered that he has control over his life and how it turns out; and that there are consequences for his choices. Lexi said the Ranch taught him skills she was afraid he wasn’t ever going to be able to grasp—social and relationship skills, as well as tools to manage and control how he responds to what is going on around him.

Lexi said the family therapy she and Hudson did while he was in treatment was the most emotional thing she has ever endured, but so worth it.

“We were able to focus on our relationship as mother and son and have gotten closer,” she said. “I admire Hudson’s perseverance and resilience. He rose above time and time again over all the things that should have broken him. And I love his wit and sarcasm. He is so quick-witted he catches me off guard sometimes.”

Hudson continues to attend Dakota Memorial School (DMS), the Ranch’s on-campus school, as a Day Student and has learned to advocate for himself. During a meeting at his home school, Hudson

told his education team it was in his best interest to stay at DMS and convinced them to let him continue as a DMS Day Student. He went from hating school to enjoying it and working hard to be successful.

Last spring, Hudson got a job working with the Ranch facilities team. In addition to some janitorial work and landscaping, Hudson worked in the Ranch kitchen prepping food, serving meals, and doing dishes and other cleanup.

Jeremy Markey, a Ranch cook, said, “Hudson liked to joke around with the staff and kids. He said he enjoyed working here and that it kept his mind active. We liked having him—he was a hard worker.”

“I look at the kid who just a year ago didn’t want to be here and saw no hope for his future. He didn’t have any goals or dreams,” Lexi said. “When he came home after four months at the Ranch, it was like there was light in him I hadn’t seen since he was a baby. He is just a different person. He is happy. The Ranch saved my son and our relationship. I thank everyone at the Ranch so much for the effort they put into bettering the lives of kids and their families.”

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.

## Finding common ground

When a ministry team from Hip Hope & Hope spent the day with the kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Dayson made a special connection with keynote speaker Artie Gonzales.

“I felt like Artie and I had something in common because my godfather went to prison like he did. I asked him to sit by me at lunch and we bonded over that, like a friendship-type bond,” said Dayson, a former Ranch resident and current day student at Dakota Memorial School (DMS), the Ranch’s on-campus school.

Artie spent time in the California prison system before being released as a model prisoner in 2015. Now a movie writer and producer, author, and speaker, Artie is a member of several social justice organizations and a guest speaker for Hip Hop & Hope (see sidebar on next page).

When Artie asked Dayson about his favorite movies and discovered Dayson was a big fan of Ryan Reynolds, he said, “Really? I know Ryan Reynolds. Can I take our picture and email it to him?”

“I kind of freaked out,” Dayson said. “Artie sent our picture to Ryan and mentioned what I had said about him at lunch.”

Dayson said Ryan Reynolds’s movies helped him through tough times.

“I was going through a lot of

depression and was in and out of the hospital,” Dayson said. “Watching Ryan Reynolds’s movies helped me relax. When I’m down, I watch



**Dayson (right) experiences hope through a special connection with Artie Gonzales, keynote speaker for a Hip Hop & Hope event at the Ranch.**

Ryan Reynolds—I even watch the commercials he does on YouTube—and I can’t stop laughing. He is a big idol of mine.”

Dayson has lived with his grandmother most of his life and calls her “Mom.” His eyes light up when he talks about her.

“I was bullied a lot in school and other kids told me I should just slit my wrists. I had friends, but they stabbed me in the back and always chose the other person’s side,” Dayson said. “I just wish they’d have stuck up for me sometimes.”

To cope with the pain and uncontrollable anger, Dayson started

drinking, using drugs, fighting, and getting in trouble with the police. At age 14, Dayson was placed in residential treatment at the Ranch—and he said being at the Ranch changed him.

“Paul, my primary, and all the staff were very nice to me, even though I was mean to them. I had a lot of freakouts,” Dayson said. “Ranch staff told me I might not always be able to control my behaviors, but I can take responsibility for them. They taught me that I need to work on myself and learn to control my anger, so that’s what I did.”

Now in his third year as a Day Student at DMS, Dayson has “real friends” and enjoys school. If he thinks he might have done or said something wrong, he is quick to talk to someone to see what they think about the situation and how he might have handled it differently.

Dayson is focused on getting his grades up to graduate in May 2024. And he has some advice for other kids who are making bad decisions.

“If you want to change yourself and be better in the future, you can. Set goals and work towards completing them,” Dayson said. “If you have a goal, work towards it and never give up.”

And when all else fails, watch a Ryan Reynolds movie!

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.

## Hip hop & hope

Working in law enforcement, Michael Bloom saw the growing need for incarcerated adults and youth in corrections to know Jesus. In 2016, he started connecting with children in the Fargo, N.D. community by rapping in uniform, and it became clear to him that Hip Hop and community resources were powerful tools for inspiring change.

He and other Fargo Police Officers started hosting live events featuring faith-based Hip Hop artists and community leaders in juvenile hall and local treatment centers (including Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch).

In July 2022, Bloom left the Fargo Police Department to launch Hip Hop & Hope Tours, with a goal of bringing the Gospel and community resources to over 10,000 incarcerated individuals by 2025.

In an article in the May-June 2023 issue of "The Good Life" magazine, Bloom said, "We just want to meet them in the middle of their mess."

Last spring, Hip Hop & Hope Tours brought live Hip Hop and a fantastic story from keynote speaker Artie Gonzales to more than 50 children on the Ranch's Minot campus.

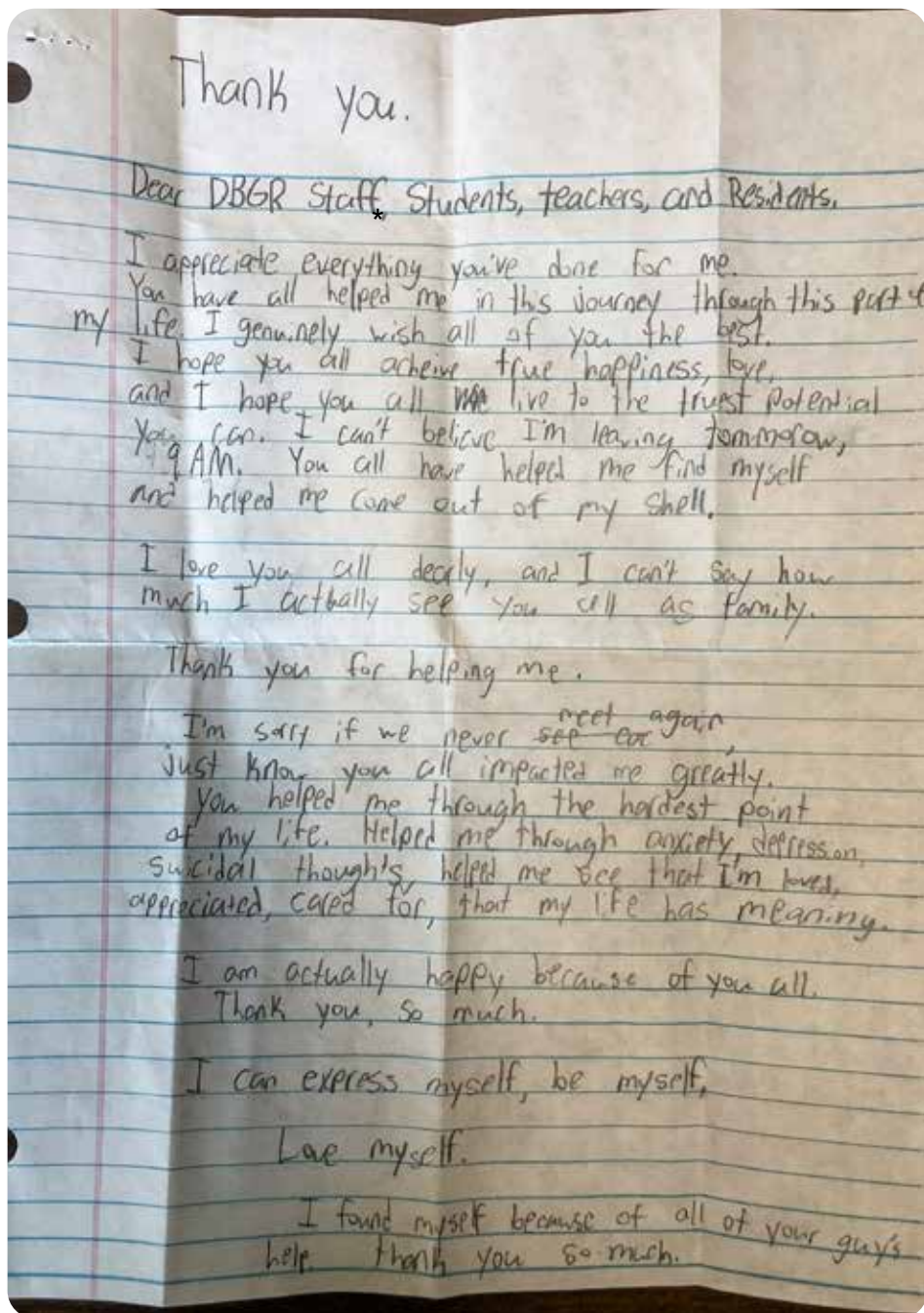
"They did an incredible job engaging our whole school with their music, joy, inspirational stories, and words of hope," said Deaconess Kelly Bristow, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. "They took time and care to ensure our kids felt seen, heard, and valued."

To learn more, go to [hiphopandhoptours.org](http://hiphopandhoptours.org) and [artiegonzales.com](http://artiegonzales.com).

## Thank you for helping me

When she left our care to move back home, one of our kids expressed her gratitude with a heartfelt thank-you note.

As Ranch donors, you make this work possible, so the thank you is as much for you as for all of us who work here.



# HONEY SUNDAY



For decades, congregations across the U.S. have held Honey Sundays for Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. You can bring God's love to a child, and support your own ministry, by organizing a Honey Sunday (or Honey Wednesday) fundraiser for your congregation.

**Choose your Honey Sunday  
(or Honey Wednesday)  
in September or October.**

**We will send you a Honey Kit, which includes:**

- Posters
- Bulletin inserts
- Order forms
- 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 Ranch honey to each purchaser.



Scan here to request Honey Sunday materials.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a Christ-centered residential treatment and educational center for children. We help the most troubled, complicated, and amazing kids by providing best-in-class psychiatric therapy and trauma-informed care.



1-800-344-0957 • [DakotaRanch.org](http://DakotaRanch.org)

For more information, contact Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation at

**1-800-344-0957**

# 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](https://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 donate 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](https://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](https://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 stone 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.



## 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.

## ***Campaign Complete, Construction Begins*** **Bismarck Chapel — Building a Place of Hope**



In just one year, God provided, through 114 donors and organizations, the \$2.4 million necessary to begin constructing the chapel on the Ranch's Western Plains Bismarck campus.

In September, our contractor will break ground on this healing space where we can minister to our precious children's spiritual needs.

The chapel will give our kids a dedicated space where they can meet God and invite him into their lives, enabling them to love and be

loved, accept and be accepted, give and receive respect, thrive and help others thrive.

In addition to providing a space for hope and healing, the chapel will be an iconic representation to the Bismarck community that Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a Christ-centered facility.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who supported our dream of building a healing space for children to nurture and grow their faith.

**Construction on the new chapel will begin in September, 2023.**

The Chapel Project is a debt-free undertaking—except for \$200,000 in pledges, all funds are in the bank!

In late August, we are holding a groundbreaking ceremony. We will include photos of the groundbreaking ceremony, as well as a list of campaign donors, in the December issue of Ranch Voice.

We ask you for your prayers for the successful completion of this healing space.



# Zurcher Cottage — Building a Place of Care



A new psychiatric residential treatment facility will give us a space on our Minot campus to provide best-in-class care and treatment for the youngest and highest-needs boys and girls served at the Ranch.

**\$5,003,538\* raised (77% of \$6.5 million goal)**

9% in pledges; Remainder is cash in hand

\*Gifts as of May 2, 2023

Despite supportive parents who will do anything to help him, 14-year-old Kyle\* carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. Since he was sexually assaulted several years ago, he has struggled with severe anxiety, depression, and aggression, and has been hospitalized on many occasions for making suicidal threats.

To mask his intense emotional pain, Kyle experimented with drugs, ran away from home, and took dangerous risks like trying to jump out of a moving car. His once bright shining eyes and curly chestnut hair became dull and lifeless. When Kyle's parents no longer felt they could keep him safe, they placed him at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch where he is learning how to heal from his past trauma.

**Please consider a gift to build Zurcher Cottage, a place where kids like Kyle can heal and become their best selves.**

## Ways to Give

The Zurcher Cottage project is a debt-free undertaking. You can help us complete the campaign to build this healing space.

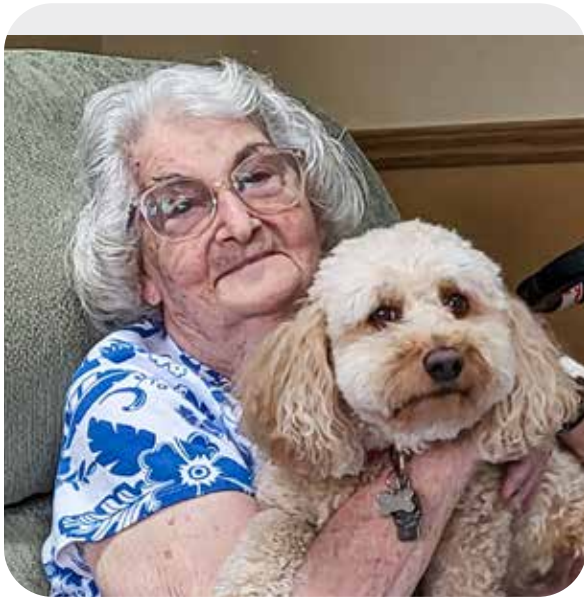
**Give by phone:** Call 1-800-344-0957

**Give by mail:** Mail check to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, P.O. Box 5007, Minot, ND 58702

**Give online:** Go to [DakotaRanch.org/ZurcherCottage](https://DakotaRanch.org/ZurcherCottage) or scan the QR code to the right.



## God's Love in Her Paintbrush



JoAnn with Honey, her 4-year-old Cockapoo

### JoAnn McDermott

“There is something special about reaching people by being like Christ rather than telling them about Christ. I think that is my job right now,” said JoAnn McDermott.

At 83 years old, she continues spreading God's word, despite health problems that require her to rely a lot on friends, family, and neighbors.

“You get to be my age and you don't drive anymore. Everything you do you have to ask for help and you feel like you're never giving.”

She didn't like being unable to give back, so she did something about it! When JoAnn learned about Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch from a friend in early 2023, she called to ask if she could make cards for the children.

Of course, we said, “Yes,” and her first batch of watercolor cards arrived just in time for Valentine's Day.

“It just makes me feel so good,” JoAnn said. “This is something I can do. And it's for kids, which just makes me love it all the more.”

JoAnn grew up in Philadelphia. Her dad was an alcoholic, but she is quick to point out he had a horrible childhood and only went to school through 4th grade.

“My parents had their own business and my mom helped him with what he needed to know. But he was intimidated when it came time to talk to customers, all college

graduates. I think he thought a little drink would help relax him,” JoAnn said.

JoAnn wishes she would have figured that out sooner so, as a teenager, she could have been more compassionate towards her dad.

While neither of JoAnn's parents were Christians, they sent her to Sunday School, and her faith has carried her through many difficult times.

“When my first husband and I divorced, my two children and I were living below the poverty level—although I didn't know it then!” JoAnn said. “It was amazing how the Lord provided. That's when I learned that the people who didn't have much money helped the most. They'd invite us over for hamburgers or offer to help in other ways. I try to remember that. I don't have much money, but I can make cards for Ranch kids. And I pray for them every day. If I were younger, I would probably go give them all a hug!”

JoAnn believes the Lord put the Ranch on her heart because of her son's challenges.

“My youngest son had a learning disability, and I didn't know it,” JoAnn said. “We'd work for hours on his homework, and he'd get an F every time. I had tried everything I could think of and was always in the school office because he was acting up.”

When JoAnn's nephew was diagnosed with a learning disability, she realized her son had the same symptoms.

“I got him help from a special education teacher and it made a world of difference. I wish I’d have known sooner so I could have been more patient,” JoAnn said. “I thought he just didn’t care, and I was too hard on him.”

“He said to me one day, ‘Do you know why I stood on my head outside the classroom? Because if I had stayed in that room I’d have cried, and the kids would have made fun of me.’ He didn’t understand the assignment, so he acted out. It broke my heart.”

“It’s just amazing how well he is doing now,” JoAnn said. “I’m so proud of him. The Ranch is there for children and families like that teacher was there for us.”

When JoAnn met and fell in love with her second husband, Bud, she worried about blending their families.

“But the hand of the Lord was in that house and they never fought,” JoAnn said. “It was amazing. I would cook in my biggest pot, thinking I might get tomorrow’s lunch out of it. But I never did. We had too many teenagers in the house!”



**JoAnn uses her artistic talents to share God’s love with children at the Ranch.**

In later years, she and her husband, who had six children between them, built a house with a main-floor apartment for her parents. Her parents moved in, and she was able to care for them.

“My dad was in pretty bad shape by then, so we cared for him. He and I ended up having some good times together,” she said. “Bringing them into our home was the best thing we

ever did. I am blessed to have those memories.”

Bud died at age 60, but JoAnn feels blessed for their many good years together.

“Bud retired early so we were able to travel. We had a place in the mountains and did a lot of walking. We went to stock car races. I didn’t really like racing, but I went because he loved it!” JoAnn said. “We had a lot of very, very good times and he was a wonderful Christian man.”

JoAnn now spends most of her time at home because of health issues that make it difficult to get out and about,

but she is content with her life.

In addition to sending her beautiful cards, JoAnn prays for Ranch kids every day.

“The older I get, the more I feel that the Lord is in me. I feel his comfort when things are tough,” she said.

In turn, she passes on His comfort to the children.

## Led by Curiosity and Christ



### Dorothy Kaestner

Dorothy Kaestner's father lived to age 95, and except for the last week of his life, he woke up every morning with one question on his mind: "What can I learn today?"

"He was always busy, always active, and always tinkering. He liked to come up with ideas and then figure out how to make them happen," she said. "He was raised to be a farmer and didn't finish high school, but he was very smart and self-educated. When a developer purchased the farmland, we moved to a home in the new housing development, and he worked for an implement dealer. He could fix anything and never stopped looking for things to fix or figure out."

Dorothy inherited her father's

curiosity, which led her to a successful career, first as a teacher, and then in Information Technology. She taught for 11 years before her husband became ill. She needed a career that would support both of them, so she left teaching to work in the computer department at Concordia River Forest (her college alma mater).

Within a year, Dorothy was responsible for overseeing the

Development (Fundraising) software at their computer center, where she was continually learning new things, developing computer systems and software, and troubleshooting. Dorothy said it was easy to relate to the women in the movie, "Hidden Figures."

"As a computer systems analyst in the 80s, I was often the only woman in the room. From time to time, we dealt with some of the same issues as they did in the movie. But I did my work and was responsible for what I needed to do, so I was a team player."

While Dorothy knew about the Ranch before, she really got to know the Ranch through her work at Concordia.

"In those days, organizations had to share computers, so we set up a sharing system with eight or nine small colleges and several development offices. Dakota Boys Ranch contacted us to see if we could provide their computer

services," Dorothy said. "In the late 80s, I was in Minot a couple of different times getting the Ranch's development software and hardware set up and training staff."

While in Minot, Dorothy worked closely with Lisa Cole, who continues to work at the Ranch, now as a Mission Advancement Officer. Lisa said Dorothy set up the first Ranch computer and created the software to track donors and their donations.

In 2019, 30 years later, Dorothy attended the Ranch's Valentine's Day luncheon in Mesa, AZ, with a friend. She ran into Lisa, and they remembered each other fondly. Dorothy started donating to the Ranch, and when Lisa invited her to join the Ranch's Arizona luncheon steering committee, she was happy to be involved.

"Dorothy is a blessing to the steering committee," Lisa said. "She has many creative ideas for how we can share the Ranch story at our Arizona luncheon events. Her energy and purpose are contagious!"

Dorothy's husband died in 1999 after a long illness, and by the time she and Lisa reconnected, she was retired and looking for ways to stay active and involved in the community.

"I was nervous about retiring," Dorothy said. "In my career, first at Concordia and then at the LCMS Foundation, I was always busy designing reports, designing software, designing enhancements, and solving people's computer

issues. Then the last six years of my career I spent as a full-time Mission Advancement Officer, so I worked in every aspect of fundraising. I wasn't sure how I would spend my time."

She needn't have worried because she approached retirement the way she had everything else in her life—by researching every aspect of it and setting goals to keep her mind and body active. Part-time work as a fundraising consultant allowed her to ease into retirement while she developed new routines and worked towards her retirement goals.

"This sounds silly, but one of my goals was to not eat so fast. I lived my whole life gobbling down my lunch so I could get back to work, especially when I traveled which was often every week," Dorothy said. "So, the first thing I did was learn how to eat slow. Now I'm the last

one done at every table!"

Dorothy also looked for ways to meet new people in new situations. She joined a Book Club, started a fitness routine, and joined the board of directors of Camp Wartburg, a program of Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois. While on the board, Dorothy served as a member of the Executive Committee and as board chair. She continues to serve on the fundraising committee and takes on special projects.

She is also on the membership and baptism committee at Shepherd of the Desert Church in Scottsdale, helping to increase the number of new members and baptisms each year.

In Scottsdale, Dorothy said she goes to the theater, attends concerts, and meets up almost daily with her

walking group. During the summer months, she lives in the Chicago area, close to a brother and a sister, and many nieces and nephews.

Dorothy's mother worked for Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois, so she says the type of work the Ranch does has always been a part of her life.

"I love hearing the stories about the children and their successes," she said. "They need very specialized services to help them deal with all the issues they've had—anything from drugs to a poor childhood to living in foster care. And they do it with such professionalism and integrity. But even more important, the children experience the love of Jesus. The Ranch changes lives, and I like being a part of that."

## MONTHLY GIVING MATTERS

**Change a child's life through your faithful, monthly support!**

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](http://DakotaRanch.org/MonthlySupport) or call 1-800-344-0957.



## I Love Honey Sundays



By Tim Unsinn, Senior Development Officer

What is your favorite season—spring, summer, fall, winter? Mine is Honey Sunday Season!

In my second week at the Ranch almost five years ago, I was asked to host a Honey Sunday at Woodbury Lutheran Church – Oak Hill Campus, in Stillwater, MN. I met some of the most amazing, caring, and giving people. They asked questions about the Ranch and our kids and listened intently for the answers, and they genuinely cared about the kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

A typical Honey Sunday is hosted by churches in September and October and usually includes a member of the congregation or someone from the Ranch providing information about the Ranch during a church service, Bible study, or Sunday school class. Afterward, church members can purchase a bottle of Ranch honey to support the troubled and amazing boys and girls served by the Ranch.

Honey Sundays give us the rewarding opportunity to introduce the Ranch and our kids to people throughout the country, in many cases for the first time. They then take up the cause of creating a better life and future for our kids through their support.

One of my favorite Honey Sunday

stories was told to me by a donor in Georgia who was moving to a new home. When one of the moving company staff saw the couple's Ranch honey on the table, he said to his co-worker, "I'm alive because of the Ranch. I wish my brother could have gone to the Ranch too. Maybe he would still be alive today."

When your church hosts a Honey Sunday, you support the mission of the Ranch to help the most troubled, complicated, and amazing boys and girls not only survive, but thrive.

It's not too late to host a Honey

Sunday at your church. Please feel free to call, email, or text me, and we can get you started. Contact me at 701-405-4186 or [t.unsinn@dakotaranch.org](mailto:t.unsinn@dakotaranch.org), or go to [DakotaRanch.org](http://DakotaRanch.org), to learn more and/or sign up for a Honey Sunday.

Honey Sundays are a great way to make a difference in the lives of kids who, in many cases are out of options. Plus, every time you enjoy the honey you'll be reminded of the boys and girls you are helping!

Thank you for being a difference-maker!

Your prayers for our kids are a source of healing and hope. If you have any questions about the Ranch, contact Tim Unsinn, or any member of our team, at 1-800-344-0957 or [info@dakotaranch.org](mailto:info@dakotaranch.org). We would love to visit with you about the many ways you can support our mission of helping at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.



**Lisa Cole**  
Mission Advancement Officer



**Anne Compere**  
Director of Mission Advancement



**Paul Krueger**  
Senior Development Officer



**Linda Medhus**  
Senior Engagement Officer



**Laurie Dannewitz**  
Senior Development Officer



**Dennis Aune**  
Senior Development Officer



**Angela Kargbo**  
Development Officer

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## Foundation and Corporate Donations

**Basin Electric; Fire Alarm Panel;** \$5,000 (Bismarck)

**Kids Gardening - The Scott's Miracle-Gro Foundation;** \$500 (Fargo)

**Capital Electric Cooperative; Fire Alarm Panel;** \$2,000 (Bismarck)

**Cass County Electric Cooperative; Safety Upgrades;** \$3,000 (Fargo)

**Fargo South High School PaY Committee; Wellness Program;** \$500 (Fargo)

**Northern Cass High School PaY Committee; Wellness Program;** \$1,000 (Fargo)

**Verendrye Electric; Key Fobs;** \$2,500 (Minot)

**First Lutheran Church Foundation; Books for Library;** \$5,000 (Fargo)

**Hindi's Libraries; Library Books** (Fargo, Minot, and Bismarck)

**Lutheran Women's Missionary League National Grant; Bismarck Chapel;** \$100,000

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## Ranch Voice Editor

Tammy Noteboom, Vice President,  
Communications

# Working at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is more than a job.

## *It's a mission!*

Because you are reading Ranch Voice, we know you care about kids and value the impact and mission of the work we do at the Ranch.

We are looking for good people to provide Christ-centered care and compassion to children on one of our three North Dakota campuses.

The Ranch has a breadth of services and a need for varied expertise, and people from many career paths find their calling here. We look for the right people to join us through opportunities in healthcare, mental health, education, direct care, and many others.

Is this the opportunity you or someone you know have been waiting for?

**Learn more or apply today**

1-800-593-3098 | [DakotaRanch.org/careers](http://DakotaRanch.org/careers)



## **Ranch Culture of Purpose, Caring, and Learning**

By working at the Ranch, you will not only change kids' lives but experience a workplace like no other—a workplace defined by a Culture of Purpose, Caring, and Learning.

Our Culture of Purpose is exemplified by idealism and altruism.

Our Culture of Caring is built on relationships and mutual trust.

Our Culture of Learning is exemplified by exploration, expansiveness, and creativity.



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

1-800-593-3098 | [DakotaRanch.org/careers](http://DakotaRanch.org/careers)



# 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.

## Memorials

March 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

ALBERS, JAMES

Millie Bueligen

ALLEN, RUTH

Valorie Erickson

*"He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has."*

—Epictetus

ALSIN, MARY LOU

Carol Urbach

ALWIN, REX

Betsy Alwin

ANDERSON, CHARLES "BUZ"

Gordon & Gail Bischoff

ANDERSON, DUANE

Ilene Bussler

ANDERSON, JEANETTE

Keith & Roberta Hoesel

ASCHE, RUTH

Dennis & Pat Freese

AUGUSTIN, MRS. JANET

Barbara Pingel

AVERY, AMANDA

Mark Avery

BABCOCK, MICHAEL

Burnette Kunz

Penelope Kunz

BAKER, GERALD

Marilyn Frank

BARTRAM, KAYLEE

Barbara Rude

BAUER, ROBERT

Jeff Givens

BAUER, WAYNE

Jim & Judy Mittelstadt

BAUMANN, DIANE

Wayne & Ginny Hankins

BEERMAN, DANIEL

Linda Beerman

BERG, JOANNE

Beverly Mundell

BERGENDAHL, JEANNE M.

Bart & Judy Bergendahl

Rose Hollan

BERNTSON, LUTHER

Carol Haugen

BETHKE, PHYLLIS

Violet Podenski

BIEL, KRISTIN

Daven Sanders

BITTRICH, JOHN "JACK"

Barbara Pingel

BLOMS, KURT

Lynda Newman

BODI, ANDY

George & Eleanor Krueger

BOGER, RUBY

Loren & Lori

Hoffman

BUCKMAN,

LESTER &

CAROLINE

Austin & Sarah

Buckman

BRAYTON, KAREN

Barbara Rude

BRENTON, VIRGIL POOG

Judith A. Brenton

BREWARD, JOHN C.

Gloria Breward

BULAND, HAROLD J.

Arlys Torgerson

BURDETTE, LORENDIA

Rhonda Pryor

BURGESS, MRS. SHARON

Barbara Pingel

BUTH, SCOTT

Barbara Rude

CALLIOTT, EDWARD "EDDIE"

Linda Calliott

CARLSON, ROBERT B.

Karen Michael

CAROW, RICHARD

John & Pat Sebastian

CHAMLEY, WILLIAM

Richard & Linda Schmidt

COFELL, MYRNA

Violet Podenski

CORNELSEN, DAVID

Eileen Cornelsen

DALLMANN, KARL

Violet Podenski

DECKER, JEROME "ROMEY" W.

Jesse & Michele Pettit

DELISLE, MARK

Lyle & Becky Hangsleben

*"A grateful heart is a magnet for miracles."*

—Jane Fuller

DESMOND, ROBERT

Susan Mysliwicz

DIERS, LOIS

LaMae Pettit

DOLLAR, FRANK

Carol Kleinschmidt

# Memorials/Honorariums

*"This is a wonderful day. I have never seen this one before."*

—Maya Angelou

DUBEN, CINDY

Paul & Elaine Carlson

DURKIN, LOIS

Stan & Peggy Greciar

EDWARDS, JUNE

Roger & Sandy Ploeger

EGGERS, WESLEY

Millie Bueligen

Irene Heid

ELLEFSON, DENNIS

David Pugh

ELLIS, LEONORE

Connie Trageser

ENGBERG, HAZEL

Todd & Karen McDaniel

ESCHENKO, ROSE

Gwen Roffler

FATLAND, SYLVIA & JAN

Dean Fatland

FALCK, MICHAEL

Bill & Joan Ferguson

FEDERICO, LORRAINE

Carol Kleinschmidt

FERGUSON, JOYCE HOPE

Robin Schuldt

FICK, GEORGE

Bruce & Louise Bogenrief

Derrill Fick

Lori Fick

Adrian & Colleen Fitchner

Gayl Gregory

Jeanine Kabanuk

Ron & LaVonne Matthews

Jane Moe

Sharon Neshem

Mark & Jackie Opland

Larry Pederson

Blaine & Denise Rubbelke

Melanie Webber

FINSTROM, ELIJAH

Dale & Laurie Dannewitz

FJELDAHL, PETER

Dale & Laurie Dannewitz

FRENG, MERLA

Dolores Simdorn

FUNK, CHERI

Jeff & Mona Pithan

FURHMAN, JO DEE

Merle & Patricia Nylander

GIGLIO, JAMES

Joseph Giglio

GJELLSTAD, ROBERT

Dave & Sharon Miller

GLIENKE, JEANNE

Caroline Letzring

GULLICKSON, GREG

Kerry Horton

GRUEBELE, FRED A

LeRoy & Kathy Bertsch

Cheryl Binstock

Harlan & Rhonda Bloom

Jim & Joy Bloom

Suzanne Brown

Jim & Cheryl Erickson

Joel Gruebele

Conald & Donne Havelka

Paul & Paulette Huber

Roger & Diane Johnson

Vivian Kilwein

David & Ruby Perhus

Leopold & Joyanne Renner

HARTWIG, JUNE

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Carow

HATTENBACH, ABBAGAIL "ABBY"

Greg & Paula Matli

HAYER, HAROLD

June B. Hayer

HEINTZ, ROBERTA

Marilyn Heintz

HENKE, REV. BARRIE

Tim Unsinn

HERRICK, LILAS

Beverly Mundell

HINKELMAN, ARMIN

Merle Heidenreich

*"Everything we do should be a result of our gratitude for what God has done for us."*

—Lauryn Hill

HOESEL, MAVIS

Millie Bueligen

Irene Heid

Delores Maier

HOFF, DONALD W.

Elaine Hoff

HOLSTEN, JAMES "JIM"

Bruce & Norine Johnson

HOWE, SR., BRUCE

Paul & Paulette Huber

HUBER, ALLEN

Violet Podenski

HUFFMAN, DARCY

Carroll & Alice Holl

ILTEN, NADINE

Tracy Heller

JACOBSON, DENNIS

Mary Siedschlag

JAEGER, TINA

Charles & Helen-Foss Bohm

JELLEBERG, SADIE

Cindy Aaser

JOHNSON, JEANINE

Willard & Janice Streng

JOHNSON, KAREN

Richard Gust

*"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."*

—John F. Kennedy

JORDHEIM, HARLAN  
Barbara Rude  
KAUTZNER, WALLY  
Charles & Diane Koogler  
KIRCHMEIER, JACK  
Keith & Roberta Hoesel  
KOHLS, MELVIN  
Marjorie Kohls  
KRAMER, LINDA  
Hank Albers Family  
KRISHNAN, PREMA  
Dr. Radha K. Krishnan  
KRUEGER, HAROLD  
Carol Grieger  
KRUIZE, JANICE "JANN"  
Joan Fiechtner  
KUSLER, JAMES O.  
Jan Smith  
LARSON, JORDIENE  
Robert Anderson  
Richard Gust  
Duane & Shirley Larson  
LATHROP, LLOYD  
Curtis & Elaine Bening  
LEMMON, MARCELLA  
Chris & Jean Hansen

*"I awoke this morning  
with devout thanksgiving  
for my friends, the old and  
the new."*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

LINDEE, DAVID  
Beverly Mundell  
LOTHSPEICH, ROSEMARY  
Mark & Jane Solsen  
LUCHT, WAYNE J.  
Chris & Jean Hansen  
LUDWIG, MORRIS  
Joyce & Sharon Knudsvig

*"When we focus on  
gratitude, the tide of  
disappointment goes  
out and the tide of love  
rushes in."*

—Kristin Armstrong

LUND, CLYDE  
Margaret Heglie  
MAIER, NANCY  
Mary Siedschlag  
MARCHUS, LARRY  
Duane Larson  
MC NAMEE, MICHAEL  
Jim & Karen Bonnet  
MEIER, EUGENE "GENE"  
Lilia M. Christianson  
MELLAND, DEAN  
Darlene Hauck  
MEYERHOFF, CHAD  
Lilia M. Christianson  
MIELKE, DONALD O.  
James Kirschman  
MILLER, ROY  
Bob Rudolph  
MILLER, TIMOTHY J.  
Ginny Miller  
MILLER, WILLIAM & ADELIN  
Donald & Eleanor Miller  
MITCHELL, ROD  
Connie Grondahl  
Todd & Julie Olson  
MOORE, PATTI C. (BUCKETT)  
Liz Ravenscroft  
MOORE, VERNA JEAN  
Walter Baumann  
MORLOCK, TERESA  
Maverick Bohm  
MURTHA, NEIL  
Robert & Grace Swanson  
MUTSCHLER, KAREN  
Kay Stoterau

NELSON, DEAN A.  
Jeff & Mona Pithan  
NESHEM, ARDIS  
Thomas Neshem  
OAS, GORDON  
Shane & Anna Oas  
ONSTOTT, EDD  
Sue Hylland  
OVERBUST, LOUAN  
Gordon & Gail Bischoff  
PAULSON, AMY  
William & Doris Wegner  
PFENNIG, HELMUTH  
Wilbur & Mavis Pfennig  
PIERCE, ELYZABETH  
Marisa Knutson

*"Enjoy the little  
things, for one  
day you may look  
back and realize  
they were the big  
things."*

—Robert Brault

POCH, RUTH  
Martin Poch  
RIFE, RICHARD "DICK"  
Carroll & Alice Holl  
ROORDA, JOYCE  
Ruby Peterson  
RUDOLPH, AUGUST & MARY  
Bob Rudolph  
RUPP, GENE  
Elda Blake

*"When eating fruit,  
remember the one who  
planted the tree."*

—Vietnamese Proverb

# Memorials/Honorariums

*“Gratitude is a divine emotion: it fills the heart, but not to bursting; it warms it, but not to fever.”*

—Charlotte Brontë

Heidi Losby-Collison  
Kelly & Roxann Hayhurst  
Rian & Carla Luehe  
Arlyn & Donna Marquardt  
SCHEUERMANN, RUTH  
Karen Minear  
SCHMIDT, CODY JAMES  
Joshua & Jessica Miller  
SCHNABEL, GARY  
Chris & Jean Hansen  
SCHRADER, LOREN “LARRY”  
Dennis Carlton  
Wendi Casselman  
Carla Stene  
Denise Wallace  
SCHROEDER, MRS. VIOLET  
Barbara Pingel  
SCHUMACHER, KENNETH  
Ray & Marlys Long  
Ruth Mattson  
Jean Peppard  
Donald Schumacher  
SCHWAGLER, ROBERT  
Steve Bittermann  
Irene Heid  
Keith & Roberta Hoesel  
Marvin & Laverne Schulz  
SEFTON, HILDA  
Loren & Lori Hoffman  
SHERECK, DARREL  
Cynthia Shereck  
SITZER, BRENT  
Lou & Myrna Mitchell  
SIVANANDAJI, SRI SWAMI  
Ryan Kulkarni  
SMITH, DOROTHY H.

Donald & Bette Flater  
SMITH, STANLEY MIKE  
Diane Heagle  
SNYDER, REX  
Nolan & Eileen Bode  
SOINE, RITA  
Merle & Patricia Nylander  
SOLBERG, ARTHUR “ART” B.  
Patricia Bahr  
STEAD, ROBERTA  
Linda Hill  
Gaylord & Marilyn Schilling  
STEINKE, BERNICE  
Penny Kunz  
STIBAL, MAVIS M.  
Marilyn Frank  
STRAUCH, SHIRLEY  
Walter Strauch  
STRILCOV, SHARON  
Marlys Opheim  
SWANCUTT, SHIRLEY ANN  
Lilia M. Christianson  
SZEWCZAK, CASEY

*“No duty is more urgent than giving thanks.”*

—James Allen

Patricia Szewczak  
TAWNEY, LEI  
John Tawney  
THOMPSON, THOMAS  
Robert & Grace Swanson  
TOPEL, MARK ALLEN  
Walter Baumann  
TRECKER, WILLIAM  
Violet Podenski  
TYNDALL, DONNA  
Ardell Oas  
VACHAL, STANLEY  
Jim & Sherrell Almond  
Margaret Gjerde  
Eric & Ashly Hadenhorst

Dorothy Iverson  
Marichel Mariscal  
Joyce Vachal  
VANDERHOEF, AIDAN  
Dennis & Mitzie May  
Shane & Anna Oas  
VAN KEKERIX, KENNETH

*“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.”*

—G.K. Chesterton

Bill & Joan Ferguson  
VOGELER, BARBARA  
Dolores Simdorn  
VOORHEES, WEBB & JOYCE  
Rev. Jack L. & Joneen Richards  
VULLES, LOLA MAE  
Laurie Dannewitz  
WALLACE, CHRISTINE KAUL  
Messiah Lutheran Church  
WALLACE, DUANE  
Linda Medhus  
Joy Ryan  
WARD, DONALD  
Tim Ward  
WEIDNER, DELMER  
Jim & Judy Mittelstadt  
WEISER, CHARLES  
Rev. Loren & Carolyn Vogler

*“It’s a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.”*

—Germany Kent

*“Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.”*

—A.A. Milne

WEISS, JIMMY

Norma Von Osterheldt

WIEDENMEYER, ELSIE

Hanna Link

WILSON, JOEL

Paul & Jan Bohling

Shawnee Jakober

Stan & Kari Jung

Rene Hixon

Don & Lydia Miller

Joyce Wilson

WOLFE, RONALD

Eugene Heckendorf

YALE, CLARICE “TESS”

Bruce & Norine Johnson

YOUNG, ARTHUR & BEATA

Rev. David & Mary Ann Young

ZURCHER, ELMER

Jack & Irene Townsend

ZURCHER, ELMER & CONNIE

Carol Townsend

ZIEGLER, BONNIE

Harold Ziegler

## Honorariums

March 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

CECILIA PODCZERWINSKI

Janet Podczerwinski

CODY PARISH

Harold Parish

DON & DEBBIE FORSBERG

John & Pat Sebastian

DOROTHY ROMEO

Bob James

ETHAN MIGUEL ANGEL

ABREGO-TORRES

Dheny Abrego

GAVIN & DANYEL MOE

Thomas & Donna Schneider

GIA MORA

Crystal Mora

TRENTON & TAESHA'S

BIRTHDAYS

Clara Heinemann

JESUS CHRIST, OUR

REDEEMER, SAVIOR &

LORD

Gloria Trim

JOY RYAN

Kole & Quin Seiler

LT. COL. MATTHEW

FIECHTNER'S

MILITARY RETIREMENT

Keith & Barbara Robberstad

MRS. CANNING

Daven Sanders

MRS. CAROL SMIDT

Barbara Pingel

NATHAN & JENNIFER TODD

Annette Behm-Caldwell

REV. DR. PAUL KRUEGER

Paul League

WALLY KAUTZNER

Charles & Diane Koogler

*“Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”*

—Melodie Beattie

## Revisiting his legacy

Larry Knutson, a long-time Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch employee, toured the Minot campus in July. During his 32-year tenure, Larry served in many leadership roles, including social worker, fundraiser, and Executive Director. Larry and his son, Dr. Jim Knutson, spent the day touring every corner of the campus and the Minot thrift store. After visiting with many current employees and asking great questions, Larry was pleased to report that his legacy is in good hands.



During his visit, Larry connected with a few people he worked with at the Ranch. Vicki Reiner (left) has retired, but Sandy Schmidt, accountant, and Laurie Dannewitz, Senior Development Officer, are still at the Ranch, 25 years after his retirement.



6301 19th Ave. NW  
Minot, ND 58703  
1-800-344-0957  
DakotaRanch.org

Benefiting From

# UNNEEDED Life Insurance

**Make the most of  
your options**

In addition to the satisfaction of helping Ranch children heal, the following gifts of life insurance may provide specific tax benefits.

**A gift of life insurance is a way to support  
the work of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch**

### **A gift of your policy**

If you own a life insurance policy that is no longer needed for its intended purpose, a gift of life insurance can provide immediate benefits for you. If you decide to make a gift of your policy today, you will receive an income tax deduction.

### **Annual gifts to pay premiums**

If the policy is not paid up, you can make an annual donation for the amount of the premium (and we will pay the premium) and receive an annual income tax deduction for each of those gifts as well.

### **Naming us as a beneficiary**

If you are like many people, you may not yet know if you will need your life insurance policy and you would like to preserve your options. Another idea to consider is maintaining your existing life insurance policy during your lifetime and naming the Ranch as a beneficiary. Your insurance company can provide you with a change of beneficiary form that will permit you to name Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch as the sole beneficiary or as the beneficiary of a percentage of the policy proceeds.

### **Creating a new policy**

If you don't currently own a life insurance policy and wish to help further the Ranch mission to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ, you can create a new policy, name the Ranch as sole beneficiary and give ownership of the policy to the Ranch. You will receive an income tax deduction for your gift. Life insurance premiums can be surprisingly low.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Gift of existing policy	Income tax deduction
Annual gifts to cover premiums	Annual income tax deductions
Life insurance beneficiary designation	Estate tax deduction
Gift of new policy	Income tax deduction

### **Learn more**

There are many ways you can help Ranch kids and benefit! Please contact us to learn more about gifts of life insurance and other ways you can help further the Ranch mission. We'd love to visit with you or give you a tour of our campuses.

This information is not intended as tax, legal or financial advice. Gift results may vary. Consult your personal financial advisor for information specific to your situation.

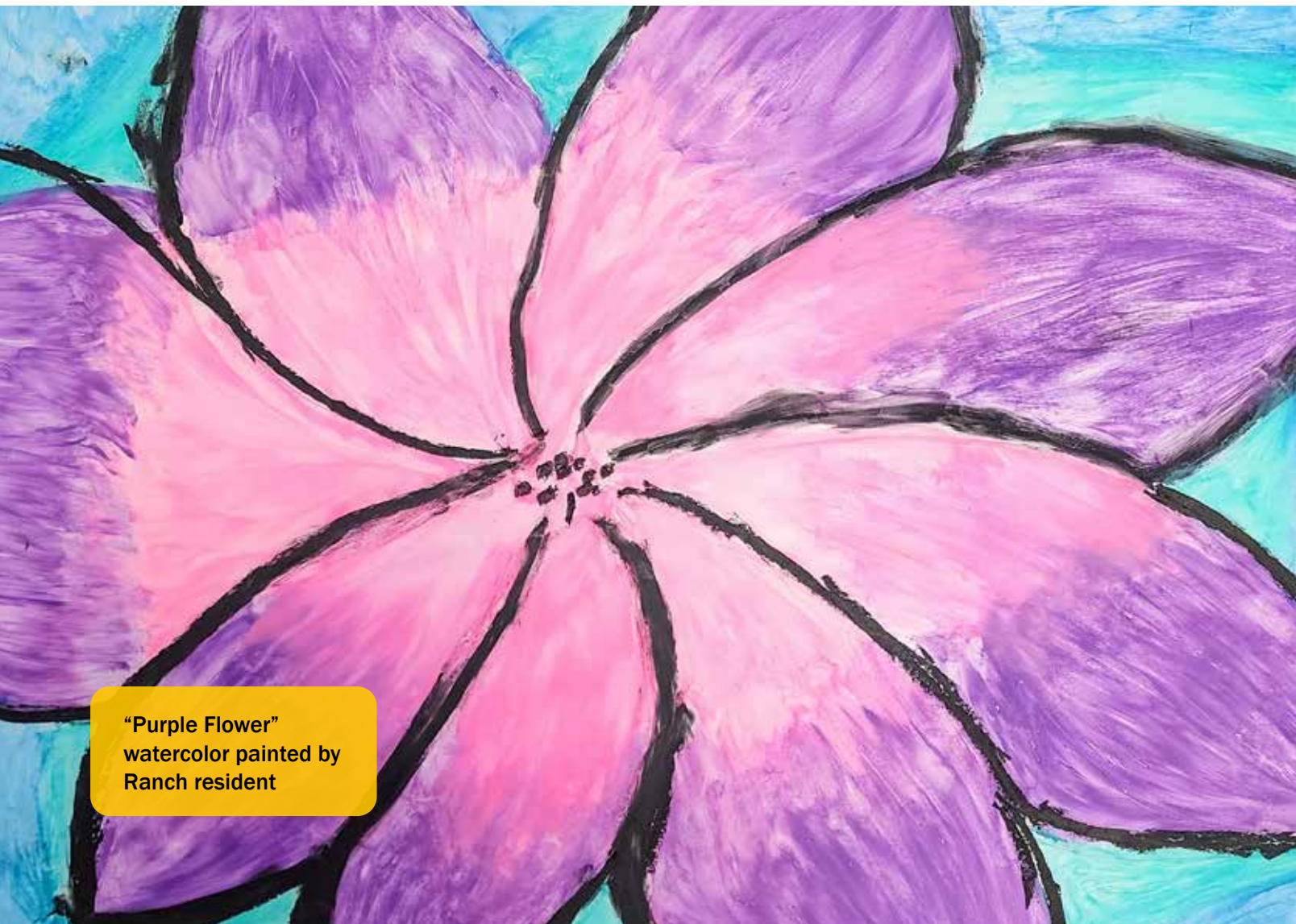
## *A Prayer for Healing*

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.

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](mailto:info@DakotaRanch.org).



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



“Purple Flower”  
watercolor painted 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](http://www.DakotaRanch.org)

Main Switchboard: 1-800-593-3098

Foundation: 1-800-344-0957

