

THE RANCH VOICE

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

Spring 2018



Shawn, a Ranch resident, loves his part-time job with the Ranch Facilities department. Here, he's learning from Donny, a long time Ranch staffer, about great work habits as they make the Family Living Unit sparkle for visitors.



**DAKOTA
BOYS AND GIRLS
RANCH**

www.DakotaRanch.org
1.800.344.0957

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Message from the President/CEO



Joy Ryan
President/CEO

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DakotaRanch.org

The Power of a Simple Handshake

Dear Ranch Friends,

In my role at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, I am responsible for ensuring we have a 40,000-foot view of what we are doing. How can genetic testing help those with psychiatric and behavioral challenges? What is the true impact of trauma on the brain? How do we cover the costs of meeting all the kids' needs now and in the future? How do we constantly and consistently ensure that in the midst of the noise of business, we keep Christ and His love, our humility, and our gratitude at the center of all our work?

But, the 40,000 feet view always gives way to standing on the ground next to real children with real stories and real dreams.

I have told you before about two of our children. Both have been at the Ranch a long time, too long, but they lack the outside support to move "home." Both have worked hard to become their best selves. Both are smart and energetic, and both have smiles that can light a room.

We recently had a concert in our Minot Chapel, with Dr. Monte Selby and the children performing songs they had written. As I sat in the pew, these two remarkable kids came in with Mr. Todd Fjeldahl, our long-time Technology and Business teacher, and sat next to me.

When they sat down, I reached over to shake each of their hands in greeting. Now, handshaking is a big deal in my family. "Make eye contact, proper amount of pressure, firm, just long enough." My three kids shake hands with the best of them! These two beautiful kids were at a loss. They each put their hand in mine, and there it lay. Neither had a clue as to the niceties or import of a handshake.

But, why would they? They have spent their lives surviving. While my kids could leap over concerns about food and shelter and abuse and torture to the basics of social skills, these kids could not. They needed to focus on putting one foot in front of the other, avoiding pain, fighting hunger, finding safety.

But now, they looked at me excitedly as I leaned toward Mr. Fjeldahl and said, "I have a job for you." He looked concerned, but willing. "I would like you, each time you see one of these two kids, to shake their hands. Help them learn how. They'll need to be good at it for the rest of their lives." He responded by putting his hand out to each of them for the first "lesson" and assured me he would make it a habit until they were confident.

A handshake seems simple, but it is a symbol of how far these children have come. These kids need to feel safe and smart and worthy and loved by God, before learning to shake hands can make the list of things to learn. But now, they do...so it can.

Thank you for your continued prayers and blessings. I hope someday to have a chance to shake your hand, look you in the eye, and thank you.

In His love,
Joy

Understanding Our Kids

The Many Roles of a Ranch Nurse



By Heatthyr Haugeberg, RNBC, Director of Nursing Services

Nursing care at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is unlike any other nursing job. I am often asked, “What do the nurses do at the Ranch?” and I am never quite sure how to answer. One day, nursing staff can be found scheduling appointments and managing medications. The next day, we might be out playing a softball game with the kids. No two days are ever the same!

One of the main responsibilities of Ranch nurses is to obtain medical care for the residents. Many of our residents come to us without a consistent history of medical appointments. It is not unusual for our children to have never been to the dentist or had an eye exam. These same children are unaware of how often they should receive medical care, or even how.

We schedule preventative health care appointments for every child who comes into our care. These appointments include: dental exams, vision testing, physicals, vaccinations, and lab work. Scheduling the appointments is easy. The difficult part is to calm our kids’ fears and help them understand what to expect during and after each appointment. The doctor’s or dentist’s office can be a scary place

if you’ve never been there before, especially if you’ve experienced physical or sexual abuse, as many of our children have.

We teach our kids about preventative health care, for when they live on their own. How often should they have a physical, see the dentist, or have an eye exam? Most of our kids don’t know these things—we take extra time to teach them how to manage their own health care. When they leave our care, we often give our phone number to children, and encourage them to call if they have questions.

One story that illustrates the many different roles nurses have at the Ranch is about one of our young boys. He came to us with braces on his teeth that were severely damaged and broken. He had removed the wires himself, as they were broken and cutting his cheeks. The dentist told us the brackets needed to be removed or they would cause severe decay to his teeth and create long-term dental issues. Because he received the braces out-of-state, North Dakota Medicaid would not cover the removal, and his parents didn’t have the resources. Nursing staff worked closely with the Ranch’s financial team to access donor funds—which paid to remove the brackets and make retainers.

After it was all taken care of, the child wrote a note to us saying, “Thank you very much for paying to get my braces off. That really took a lot of stress from my parents. I couldn’t have got them off without your help.”

Ranch nurses also assist the residents with basic self-care and hygiene. It is not uncommon for children to come to the Ranch without a good understanding of how to take care of their body, both inside and out. Nurses, along with youth care workers, teach Ranch kids basic body care. We teach them how to clip their fingernails, care for themselves during their menstrual cycles, and properly shower.

We teach all of these things in a way that meets the specific needs of each child. Children who are visual learners may benefit from a colored chart depicting the steps in taking a shower. Other children may learn best through a verbal discussion. We meet kids where they are at, and strive to adapt our teaching to suit each child’s learning style.

Most of our kids have little knowledge of healthy exercise and nutrition habits. The nursing department, along with the wellness department, teach the youth all about healthy eating and exercise—the types of food that are good/bad for you, healthy portions, exercise options that fit into their daily routines. Nurses often attend the wellness and recreation classes with the kids. Those classes have been some of the best moments I have shared with youth at the Ranch.

Nursing staff at the Ranch work closely with each child’s treatment team to create a treatment plan, and provide lifelong lessons in healthy living, medical care, medications, and self-care.

Living by Principles

Respect, Trust, and the Power of Faith

Jason* had one of those childhoods that is even hard to read about. He and his little sister were abused until Jason was nine. They received severe beatings, and he can show you his scars from the cuts and burns inflicted by his stepfather.

“I did everything I could to get out of that situation. I ran away, stole... I was just rebellious. It got to the point where my little sister wouldn’t stop crying, so I offered myself up so it wouldn’t happen to her. When I told my mom, my sister was so scared, she lied and said it wasn’t happening. That’s when I decided not to trust anyone.”

At 12 years old, Jason came to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

At first, he hated the world and continued to do poorly in school. He refused to tell anyone at the Ranch about the abuse—he “knew” no one would believe him anyway so what was the point. Despite all of the defenses Jason put up, he started learning things at the Ranch that would serve him well in later years.

“I learned that you treat people the way you want to be treated,” Jason says, “and that you don’t ask people to do things you’re not willing to do. The house parents modeled these things. They treated me with respect. Even though I didn’t trust anyone to begin with, I came to trust the people at the Ranch.”

Jason also experienced church in a different way at the Ranch. “The memories I have of church with my family were not very good. You sit there, you shut your mouth, and you

get slapped on the head if you don’t. I was being molested at home, and yet we sat in church every Sunday. How does that make sense?”

At the Ranch, Jason went to church every Sunday, and he saw people acting in a way that matched what was being taught at church. “When someone is walking that walk, you can believe in it and trust it.”

Jason has great memories of going to the gym, playing basketball, and fishing on the back property. He learned how to make honey, learned about plants, and got paid to shuck sweetcorn that was grown at the Ranch. One time, he spent a week at Lake Metigoshe, and another time he went on a fishing trip to Canada.

“The Ranch held a lottery to see who could go on the fishing trip. My number got picked and I had a blast. My number was 7—and, if I pick a number, still to this day, that is my number!”

After the Ranch, Jason went to trade school. He graduated the top of his class in brick laying. Then he decided to join the Navy—he wanted to be a part of something, and to get away from everyone who knew him. Being away wasn’t enough to forget, so he turned to drinking.

It wasn’t until he got in trouble and had to go in front of his Navy Captain that he faced his drinking problem. “I was an alcoholic. I drank a lot to forget. But when I left work, or we were in port, I drank and got in trouble. When I went in front of the captain, I told him I had a

problem, and asked him to either send me to treatment, or kick me out so I could get help. He sent me to treatment and I never had another drink. That was July 3, 1995.”

After leaving the military, Jason eventually got into his first nuclear power plant job. Since then, he has worked in nuclear power plants (in the U.S. and internationally), with up to 1,500 people working for him at any one time.

Jason brought what he learned at the Ranch to his career in upper management. “I believe in leading by example, and the messages I deliver at every site are things I learned at the Ranch. Treat people the way you want to be treated, never push harder than you pull, and never forget where you came from.”

When he emailed the Ranch in October of last year, Jason was acting on that third principle—to never forget where you came from. As we so often find, it’s difficult to see the Ranch’s impact for some kids until long after they’ve moved on. Jason was one of those kids. Living at the Ranch didn’t magically “fix” his behaviors. But now, he attributes much of his character to the Ranch, and wanted to take the time to say thank you.

“I don’t know where I would be without the Ranch,” Jason said. “The Ranch took me out of a really bad situation. Helped me mature, and gave me a safe place to be. What you do does matter. You empower young kids to make the right decisions.”

***Name changed to protect confidentiality.**

LIVING A LIFE THAT MATTERS

DAY-TO-DAY HEROES AT THE RANCH

By Tammy Noteboom
Vice President, Communications
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

It was 5:30 p.m. on a Thursday. I was working at my desk, when I heard a calm voice coming from the conference room next door. “I won’t let you hurt yourself. It’s my job to keep you safe.”

I could tell it was a staff person talking to one of our kids. At the same time, I could hear a conversation being held outside

my door—several staff were talking about next steps to ensure the health and safety of this girl.

We don’t often tell you about the harder moments here at the Ranch, but these precious children come to us having had all trust ripped away from them. Our Youth Care Workers—direct care staff who are with the kids 24 hours a day, day in and day out—must teach them to trust again.

This young woman, who had

recently come to us, was wrapped by our Youth Care Workers in respect, concern, and dignity, even though she was doing everything to push it away.

The moment brought home for me once again the remarkable commitment and resiliency of the people who work here at the Ranch. I think it’s important for you to hear some of their stories.



Melissa Evans

Artist, adventurer, aunt,
friend

"I like building relationships with the kids and seeing them find ways to succeed. A lot of times they end up being different kids at the end. It's exciting to see them make so much progress and go home.

"As a supervisor, I enjoy building up other staff and seeing their impact on kids. I love being able to empower other people to make a difference in the kids' lives.

"I love Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and what we stand for. Everyone can come up with creative, outside-the-box ideas. There is a lot of room for creativity and for everyone's voice to be heard, including the kids'. I think that's probably the most important, because when the kids' voices are heard, they have more motivation and power to make changes in their lives.

"I want people to know how strong and resilient our kids are. They've been through a lot of difficult things and have had to be strong, all on their own, for a long time. Some of them have not had anyone they could count on to be there for them. They are so strong, and talented, and creative.

"One moment that stands out to me is when a young girl, who didn't have a family, was chosen to be adopted.

That's what she had been wanting forever, a family. It was almost like a fairy tale.

"Sometimes the best moments are seeing the kids happy and laughing when we play volleyball with them, or do an art project, or play a game of Monopoly."

Before joining the Ranch six years ago, Melissa worked with kids at an inner-city church in Seattle and with teenage girls at a group home in California. She has an urban ministries degree from North Central University, a private Christian university in Minneapolis. When she isn't working, she enjoys traveling, hiking, swimming, hanging out with her husband and friends, and spending time with her two adorable nephews. Melissa works at the Al and Johnne Bierdeman Center for Hope and Healing in Fargo.

The Al and Johnne Bierdeman Center for Hope and Healing

is a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility serving kids ages 10-18 who have addiction, depression, anxiety, trauma and other serious mental health issues. The center's multi-disciplinary team provides special programming and therapy for children with chronic psychiatric and behavioral health issues. In addition to basic living needs and psychiatric care, the children receive occupational therapy services, a quality education through Dakota Memorial School, wellness and recreational services, and a robust Spiritual Life Program.



Nancy Lindblom

Dog lover, competitor,
lover of family

"The kids are different than they were when I started 27 years ago. Back then they were all naughty kids who snuck out to drink beer and steal cars. Now, they have more mental health issues. The anger is more prevalent than it used to be. You try to help them work through that, and the changes don't come as fast.

"The hardest part about working here are the 17 or 18-year-olds who have nowhere to go when they turn 18. I still talk to my family all the time, and these kids have no one. You teach them how to live on their own, and hope you've done a good enough job hooking them up with someone in the community so they have a support system.

"But then you see the kids who are doing great. I think of one girl who is a social worker now. She has moved on with her life, is in a relationship, and they've adopted a couple kids. It's neat to see her succeed. She was here a long time ago, but I still run into her.

"Another girl who was here a couple years ago is living in an apartment, going to college, and is on the honor roll. She is working three or four jobs and is doing great.

"I'm pretty by the book, so sometimes

the kids get mad at me, but I'm there for them, and I'm a constant in their lives. They know I will be there and they know what I expect. It doesn't matter if you're this kid or that kid, I'll treat you the same and have the same expectations."

Nancy started working at the Fargo Youth Home part-time while going to Moorhead State University (now Minnesota State University Moorhead), and has been here ever since. She has two degrees from MSUM, criminal justice and elementary education. In her early years at the Ranch, she also worked at the Juvenile Detention Center in Moorhead. When she's not working, Nancy trains her three dogs and travels to competitions around the region. She has been at the Ranch for 27 years.

The **Fargo Youth Home** is a Residential Child Care Facility that serves kids ages 12-19. The Youth Home is in a residential neighborhood and has a strong community and independent living focus. Some of the kids at the youth home have jobs, go to public school, and attend church in the community. They learn how to cook and clean, create and manage a household budget, find an apartment, and other important skills for living on their own. In some cases, young adults can stay at the Ranch until they turn 19—giving them time to transition from treatment center living to adulthood.



Jennifer Orr
Animal lover,
outdoorswoman, lover of
family and friends, old
soul

"I work at the Ranch because of the kids. They are my true meaning for being in this line of work. Even though the days can be mentally exhausting, the kids are the reason to keep going. You have to fight for them and help them.

"The hardest thing is that day-to-day you are the one taking the beating from the kids. Not necessarily physically, but mentally. You're getting the brunt of their feelings and it's hard to pull yourself back to see their perspective. They have had so much trauma. I am truly just an easy target—the middle person with no name and no face. Whether they appreciate what I'm doing for them in this exact moment or not doesn't matter. I need to continue to do the good work.

"My best moments are when I de-escalate a child because of a connection I have. Bringing them from a bad mood to a positive moment is the best. I think that's where I really get to feel my own effectiveness with the residents and truly validate that I'm doing the best I can.

"I want people to understand

that this isn't a problem place where you just throw 'bad' kids. It's rehabilitating. These kids have had very traumatic pasts. For a kid to come back from that, and be a positive member in society, is a huge goal and accomplishment."

Jen has been at the Ranch for three years and currently works at Seeger's Cottage, Minot. Before coming to the Ranch, she was in Security Forces at the Minot Air Force Base. She grew up in Texas, and now lives with her husband and animals in Minot, North Dakota.



Alyssa Edwards
Mother, friend, shopper,
lover of alone time and
long, hot baths

"At the Ranch, kids get to choose whether or not they want to participate in spiritual life activities. I've seen kids walk in this door and they are like, 'I don't believe in God. I don't want anything to do with that.' The next thing you know they are getting close to being discharged and they ask to be baptized.

"It's important to get a kid ready to walk out this door and experience what the world is about and how to deal with it. We're getting kids jobs. We're getting kids permits and taking them to interviews, coaching them for interviews, shopping for dress clothes.

“Sometimes kids come here and it’s the first time they’re cared for in their entire lives. One kid came with just the clothes he was wearing. They didn’t fit, and his glasses were sitting halfway down the bridge of his nose because they were too small. I took him shopping and he didn’t even know what size he wore. He’d never been shopping. He told me his mom locked the fridge on him so he had to steal food from the gas station. I bawled my eyes out for this kid.”

Alyssa had a childhood similar to that of many Ranch children. She lost her dad to suicide, struggled with mental health issues, and was placed in a girls’ home. She turned it around and graduated high school with high honors. Before joining the Ranch 4 ½ years ago, she was a case manager and insurance specialist at ING, (now Cognizant). Alyssa works in Seeger’s Cottage. She has one child, and enjoys shopping and spending time with friends.

Seeger’s Cottage, Minot,

is a Residential Child Care Facility for boys ages 14-18. Kids at Seeger’s have a range of issues and diagnoses including drug and alcohol abuse, behavioral issues, trauma, and autism spectrum disorder. In addition to treatment that addresses behavior and trauma issues, the boys in Seeger’s learn independent living skills—so they are better able to transition back into the community. Some of the boys are nearing adulthood so will live on their own when they leave the Ranch. Others will return to their families or foster homes.



JT Turmon
Dad, Vikings fan, gamer,
fisherman

“These kids aren’t making bad choices because they want to—things have happened to them. They’ve been through a lot and that’s the reason they behave the way they do. They want to succeed in life. They want to grow up and be normal like everybody else, without being labeled as troubled kids.”

“We had one boy who came here when he was 11. He had the snottiest attitude, he was ill-mannered. He was just rude. After getting to know him I finally figured out that his stepdad abused him so he built a wall between himself and other males to protect himself. By the time he left he had changed so much. He is an amazing kid and is doing well. He is getting ready to go to prom, he plays football and basketball, and he rides bulls. He graduates this spring and invited me to his graduation.”

“The best part is when they call back. You think they are going to leave here and not think twice about this place. They aren’t going to want to talk to us because we pushed them to make the right choices. Then you get that phone call. ‘Wait. Wow. You want to talk to me!’

“That’s when you know you made a difference. These kids are so worth it.”

JT came to the Ranch by way of the Air Force. He moved to Minot in 1999, and when he got out of the military, he worked construction before going back to school. He was planning to be a teacher, but after working part-time at the Ranch, he switched his major to sociology. He then went on to earn a master’s degree in addiction. JT has been at the Ranch for eight years, and works in Thatcher cottage. He cheers for the Minnesota Vikings, or for any team that is playing the Patriots, and loves to spend time with his kids—playing video games in the winter and fishing in the summer.

Thatcher Cottage, Minot, is a Residential Child Care Facility for boys ages 14-18, who have been adjudicated for a sexual offense. Most are victims of abuse themselves, and suffer from conduct disorder, ADHD, anxiety, and a variety of other diagnoses. Thatcher Cottage has 14-phase RESPONSIBILITY program each resident works through to reduce the risk of re-offending, develop accountability and responsibility, decrease the risk of other aggressive or abusive behaviors, and restore or develop positive self-esteem and self-confidence.

Offset your tax burden, provide an income stream and help children in the future find Christ at the Ranch. Call 1-800-344-0957 for more information.



Rachael Kary

Movie-goer, traveler, book nerd, weightlifter

“Being present for our kids is all about just being there. Showing them that ‘Yes, it’s my job, but I really care about you. Right now, you have the best team behind you—use us, let us help you.’ Last week one of our girls was really struggling. I went into her room, sat in the corner on the floor, and just let her spill it all out. Sometimes you don’t need any words, you just have to be there.”

“I think a lot of people judge our kids. You tell people where you work and there is an automatic judgement piece. Yes, they have significant issues. But, at the end of the day, they’re just teenagers. If you can push the judgement aside when you sit down and talk to them, you realize they are much like you were at that age.”

“I get the question a lot, ‘Why do you want to do this?’ It’s because they are just like everybody else. A lot of them don’t have ‘a person,’ and for however long they are here, I get to be their person. I get to be present for them. Ninety percent of the time they don’t want you around, but then they write you a little note saying, ‘Thank you.’ These kids are amazing.”

Rachael did her social work internship at the Ranch and loved it so much she didn’t want to leave.

When she graduated with her social work degree from Minot State University, Bismarck campus, she accepted a permanent position at the Ranch’s Bismarck campus. Rachael has been at the Ranch for one year, not counting her internship. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, exercising, and going to movies.



Asa Tessness

Reader, friend, cook, lover of documentaries

“I want people to know that these are good kids. Sometimes they don’t do what’s expected of them, or don’t follow directions, or break things; but deep down they are such good kids. Most of them have gone through so much stuff that, on one hand, it’s heartbreaking; and on the other hand, you’d almost assume they’d be worse off, based on experiences completely out of their control.”

“One of my co-workers, Brandy Arndt, does this thing where she writes notes and puts them on the inside of kids’ doors before she leaves for the night. She’ll write specific things about each resident, like, ‘Hey, you did a great job completing all of your homework today,’ or ‘Thanks for following expectations. Keep up the good work.’ It makes a huge difference for the kids. You can walk by their doors and they still have notes hung up that are weeks old.”

“I like working with the kids. It’s rewarding, and a lot of days it’s challenging. I want to be able to make a difference for these kids.”

Asa attended Bethel University, a private Christian college in St. Paul, where he graduated with a degree in Biblical and Theological Studies. While in college, he worked with kids in youth programs at a couple of churches. When he’s not working, he likes to read academic theology books, watch documentaries with his friends, and cook meals with his girlfriend. Asa works at the Bismarck campus, and has been at the Ranch for ten months.

Western Plains Residential Treatment Center, Bismarck,

is a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Center for boys and girls, ages 10-18. The center can house eight boys and eight girls at any one time—the top three diagnoses of the kids are autism spectrum disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and ADHD. The Bismarck campus focuses on programming for older youth who have no permanent planned living arrangement. In addition to therapy and treatment, kids can participate in spiritual life activities, Team Kaizen (a community running club), gardening, National Youth Program Using Minibikes (NYPUM), and Therapeutic Horseback Riding.



Jose Escobar

Athlete, music lover, role model, lover of sleep

“I grew up in a bad neighborhood, but I had a good supporting cast. My dad was always there. My mom was always there. Some of my friends didn’t have that privilege and were distracted by gangs or drugs. I want to provide leadership for youth, and this is a good place for me to start.”

“I try to lead by example. I’ll be at Chapel and they’ll see me praying. Or we’re at the dining hall and when we say a prayer, I say it loud enough so they can hear me. They’re like, ‘Well, Jose is saying it. So maybe it’s OK for me to say it too.’ Same thing when cleaning the cottages. I like to ask kids, ‘Do you want to help me take the trash out?’ I try to make it fun for them because I mean, really, who wants to take the trash out?”

“We had a past resident who’d come from a troubled background. Dad passed away. Mom was an alcoholic. Then mom passed away, so he was living with his grandpa. He didn’t have any sense of direction. In our cottages, we have a handful of football players, and he fell in love with the sport. He’s out there playing catch and wearing his Minot State jersey every day. It’s something he never even knew he liked. He called last week to tell me he’s going to try out for his high school team.”

“Each of our kids is special in their own way. They each come with their own challenges, but when you get to know them, they’re pretty fun.”

Jose grew up in California, and moved to Minot to play quarterback for Minot State University. He graduated in 2017 with a degree in criminal justice. He has been at the Ranch for about a year, and works in Cornelsen Cottage. When he’s not working, Jose likes to shoot baskets, listen to music, and sleep.



Kyanna Ogilvie

Friend, football fan, wakeboarder, aunt

“The thing that surprises me most about the Ranch is that it’s not obvious it’s a treatment center. It really feels like a home here, and you forget the reasons the kids are here. I mean, in day-to-day interactions, it’s just not obvious. Our kids are just normal kids who have been put through stuff mostly out of their control.”

“We have one resident who has been here awhile. She’s always been this wonderful kid. About a month ago, she couldn’t get in touch with her mom. She found out last week her mom is in jail. It’s sad to see the changes in her after all the stuff that’s happened with her mom. She was doing so well and was ready to move back with her mom, now she doesn’t know where she’ll go.”

“It’s sad these kids get put in the position they’re in. I want to help them any way I can, and show them they have better things to look forward to—that they can make changes.”

Kyanna moved to Minot from Oregon where she worked at a relief nursery. At the nursery, she worked with kids, ages 6 months to 4 years old, who were abused or neglected. Kyanna works with the girls in Challenge Cottage, and has been with the Ranch about one year.

Cornelsen Cottage, Minot,

is a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Center for boys ages 10-14. Boys in Cornelsen suffer from a variety of psychiatric issues including reactive attachment disorder, ADHD, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorder, depression and conduct disorder. Cottage supervisors meet once or twice a week with the kids’ psychiatrist, psychologists, therapists, chaplain, and school personnel, to discuss the boys’ treatment plans and goals. Everyone works as a team to help the boys meet their individualized treatment goals.

Many charitable gifts reduce taxes, provide income and allow you to make a major impact on the next generation. Call 1-800-344-0957 for more information.

When she's not working, she loves to spend time with friends and attend Minot State University football games, where her significant other is a coach.

Challenge Cottage, Minot, is a Residential Child Care Facility for girls ages 10-18. Most of the girls in Challenge have drug or alcohol issues paired with delinquent behavior, but others have multiple diagnoses like depression, PTSD, anxiety, sensory integration issues, etc. Each child has an individualized treatment program based on her individual needs. Challenge Cottage staff encourage normalcy within the treatment setting by implementing family style dynamics including holiday and birthday celebrations, chores, laundry, cooking, and the opportunity to hold part time jobs.



Bridget Banker
Aunt, cook, baker

“A lot of the girls in my cottage still ask for tuck-ins at night. They're just so young, so little, and they may not even be functioning at the 10-year-old level. Sometimes, we do things for them just to light up their world, like one-on-ones outings to get them out of the

cottage. If it's going to the store so they can pick out earrings, or going to a movie, or even just going to the grocery store to fill water jugs—anything so they get that one-on-one time. They think it's the best thing. Some of them don't have that in their homes. Sometimes it's the really little things that make a difference—the things we take for granted.

“I think about myself at age 10—I was attached to my mom at the hip. I honestly look up to these girls, because I would have been a disaster here, away from my parents. I don't know how they do it.”

Bridget Banker has been at the Ranch for seven months, and currently works at Butt Cottage. Before moving to Minot, she was a social work intern at the Division of Juvenile Services in Bismarck. When she isn't working she likes to cook, bake, and spend time with her niece and nephews who live in Bismarck.

Butt Cottage, Minot, is a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Center for girls ages 10-15. All the children in this level of care have psychiatric and behavioral issues—most have experienced significant trauma. Diagnoses include bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, borderline personality disorder and depression. The focus of treatment in Butt Cottage is trauma and relationships. In addition to regular sessions with their therapist, occupational therapist, and psychiatrist, the girls attend Wellness and Spiritual Life Groups, Chapel, and Therapeutic Horseback Riding.

I Am a Youth Care Worker

By Kris Ryan

“I am a Youth Care Worker. I am a mother, teacher, coach, tutor, cheerleader, and authority figure.

“I bring children overwhelmed by their current situation in life into a home and seek to provide them comfort, security, faith, and love.

“I help with morning routines, chores, homework, and activities. I give hugs, high-fives, encouragement, and a dedicated shoulder to lean on.

“I am a bedtime book reader, tooth fairy, Lego architect, and safe place. I am non-judgmental, honest, and committed to fulfilling the mission of the Ranch.

“I am honored and humbled by the great responsibility at hand. Although it is my job and I maintain professional boundaries, I cannot help but love the unique gifts and challenges each child brings me.

“In all that we do for the children, they give back tenfold. They make us wiser, stronger, more patient and creative, and closer to God.

“Our children are the core of our purpose and community. While I would like to say we provide the guiding light for them, the children are our light and hope, and that is why I am a Youth Care Worker.”

Kris Ryan was a Youth Care Worker and Residential Supervisor for four years. She is now a Mission Advancement Officer for Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation.

The Ranch employs 170 Youth Care Workers, who range in age from 21-64.

Celebrations

Mindful Fun and Games

You may recall reading “The Power of Mindfulness,” in the last issue of Ranch Voice. Mindfulness, paying attention to the here and now with curiosity and kindness, is a powerful tool for Ranch children.

Teachers at Dakota Memorial School, the on-campus school of the Ranch, recently learned new ways to support students in the classroom by playing games that strengthen mindfulness and social skills. They learned about the games, and then practiced what they learned by playing the games themselves.



The Minot Air Force Base 5th Munitions Squadron had an Angel Tree to collect Christmas gifts for Ranch kids. The day they delivered the gifts was a cold December day, with no snow, but they brought their own Christmas cheer with them.



One of our Minot residents, who is attending public school, joined the choir. She invited Ranch staff and her peers to attend the concert, and was so excited to see familiar faces in the crowd! At the Ranch, we provide as much normalcy for our kids as possible. This is just one example of normalcy at work!



Grace First Parish Sunday School in Russell, MN, blessed Ranch kids with a box of Valentines. Each Valentine had “The Caring Heart” poem printed inside, reminding our precious children that they are loved.

The Calming Touch of a Weighted Blanket

Children with anxiety and/or sensory issues often benefit from weighted blankets to manage their emotions and help them sleep. The deep pressure from the weight causes the body to produce natural chemicals that help us feel relaxed and calm.

Judith Mittelstadt, Killdeer, ND, recently donated six hand-made weighted blankets to the Ranch. Each blanket is 40”x40” and weighs 10 pounds, and will be given to a child to use at the Ranch and to take home with them.

While so helpful for some children, weighted blankets are often costlier than parents can afford. A 10-pound weighted blanket usually costs over \$100.



Special moments and achievements can happen anywhere. One of our girls became a master of all things baked with bananas. And everything was delicious!



Take a Kid Fishing

For some of our children, outdoor life, and particularly fishing, is part of their culture and heritage. Others have never had the opportunity to go fishing or spend much time outdoors. Some wonderful volunteers from the Berthold Sportsmen Club took a group of Ranch kids ice fishing this winter. By the time Ranch staff and kids arrived at the lake, club members had warm shelters set up, and the spearing holes cut. Each child had his or her own personal guide who taught them the traditional method of fishing with a spear.

One young boy said, “It’s so exciting. First there’s nothing. Then all of a sudden, here come the pike!”

“I missed a few, but I got better with practice,” said another.

Each of our kids speared at least two pike, and the weather cooperated to make it a great day for kids and adults. We are so thankful for the community members who take time to introduce our children to new activities and experiences; and who open their hearts to these incredible children.

Each of these kids had flourished in the Ranch Wildlife Club and helped build pheasant transport boxes for the club—the fishing trip is how the adult club thanks the kids for their contributions.

Celebrations



Jason Strand (left) and Tom Lambrecht (right), from Advanced Engineering and Environment Services, spent a few hours on Giving Tuesday at the Ranch. They boxed the Ranch honey that we send to thank our donors at the end of the year. Jason said, "We chose to do our Christmas philanthropy at the Ranch because we wanted to keep our donations local and make a difference in our community. We take pride in our Minot area, and we were happy to help."



A huge thank you to the Creative Plains Foundation for their donation of art supplies to the Ranch. The kids will use them for their Arts and Crafts therapy groups. Just a few of the large boxes of supplies are pictured here.

Thank You, Forest Lake, MN

The youth group at Lord of the Lakes Lutheran Church in Forest Lake, MN, made fleece hats to warm the heads and hearts of our kids this winter. While the 6th-8th graders tied the fleece hats, their leaders told them about the kids at the Ranch and the struggles they are facing. Pastor Craig Bertram said, "Our kids had a great time making the hats. And we were very surprised at the thought and time they put into writing the 'Notes of Hope' they attached to each one."



Kids Helping Kids

By Jake B., 6th grade
Dakota Memorial School, Minot

For a service project, the Elementary class has been busy collecting pop tops, for the Ronald McDonald House, since the start of the school year. They enlisted the help of the Dakota Memorial School (DMS) home rooms, and turned it into a contest to see which home room could collect the most! The winner each month received caramel rolls for breakfast, and the winning home room for the 1st semester received McDonalds for lunch! All together DMS collected 51,485 pop tops in the 1st semester!



Prairie Heights Serves Community

In November, Prairie Heights Community church partnered with several local non-profits, including Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, for a week of “Servilization.” Groups from Prairie Heights helped at Ranch thrift stores, providing valuable assistance ahead of the Christmas time rush.

One group came to the Fargo campus and helped design and create posters for Mr. Durham’s science classroom. These posters highlighted scientists from many different cultural backgrounds, and with disabilities. We are very grateful to these groups,

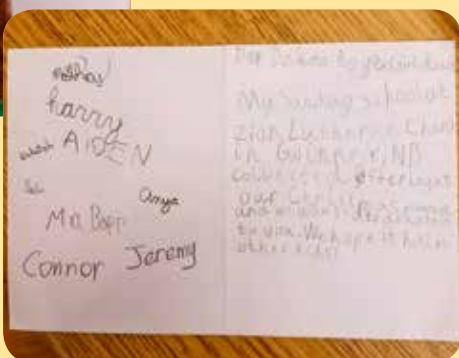


and for the time and energy Prairie Heights poured into the Ranch, and to the Fargo area community as a whole.

Left to right: Zach, Tori, Macall, Mike, and Brad, members of Prairie Heights Community Church repaired salvaged furniture at the Fargo Thrift Store Warehouse to be sold at the Ranch’s eight thrift stores.



The Zion Lutheran Church Sunday School class, in Gwinner, ND, donated their Christmas program offering to support kids at the Ranch. They sent along this wonderful handwritten note.



Little Hats, Big Hearts™

Students at Dakota Memorial School (DMS) really do have big hearts. In February, they took part in “Little Hats, Big Hearts™”, by knitting red hats for premature babies. They sent their hats, along with handmade cards, to Sanford Hospital in Sioux Falls, SD.

DMS students were just a few of the thousands of volunteers across the country who joined with the American Heart Association and the Children’s Health



Foundation to honor babies and mothers, and to raise awareness of Congenital Heart Defects and heart health.

As a part of the project, students learned about Congenital Heart Defects, and some had their own stories to share.

One teenager wrote this in the card she sent along with her hat, “Keep your head up. I know what it’s like to be in your situation; my baby brother was in the NICU for 6 weeks. You just have to stay positive for both you and your baby. In the end it will be OK. Hope is key. Good luck. You’re all in my prayers!”



Boden Rohde decided to use his Christmas money to buy games for the waiting room at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. He and his mom, Susan, delivered the games to the Fargo campus, and then set up Candyland on the

table in the waiting room—so it’d be all ready for kids when they came in! Thank you, Boden, for being so considerate and caring.

A Culture of Gratitude

Almost since the founding of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch in 1952, a strong group of supporters in Arizona has done wonderful work spreading the word about the Ranch through their churches and friends. Each year, to say thank you, that group and many more friends gather for the annual Donor Appreciation Luncheons in Mesa, and Sun City, AZ. We share food, laughter, stories, prayer, song, and, most of all, gratitude.

So much of our work depends on the love and generosity of our friends. This is one opportunity to hug all those we can and say, “thank you.”



Valentines made by Ranch kids decorated the tables at the luncheons we held in Arizona this February.



Kacie, a former Ranch resident, told her story to donors in Mesa and Sun City West. She had the entire audience in tears of hope and joy. She shared what she had endured, and beautifully overcome! What an amazing young woman.

Day of Rejoicing

A couple years ago, on January 27, one of our kids had to be resuscitated, and since then it has been a rough day for him and his family.

To change the narrative, Chaplain Rick Jones and Spiritual Life Specialist Martha Anderson held a Celebration of Life for this young man. His parents came for a visit and they gathered in the cottage with their son and his peers. Together, they shared a few passages of Scripture, Martha sang a song, they all ate cake, and everyone celebrated his new opportunities.

Chaplain Rick said, “His mom was bawling, dad was beaming, and the residents were busy munching cake. I hope and pray it helps him turn January 27 from a day of regret to a day of rejoicing.”

Seeger’s Cottage Renovation

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch received a \$3,500 grant from Minnesota Power Foundation. The Ranch will use the funds towards the renovation of a bathroom in Seeger’s cottage, one of the five children’s cottages on the Minot campus.

The Minnesota Power Foundation, established in 2006 by Minnesota Power, supports organizations that improve the health and vitality of communities in its service areas. Each year, the Foundation distributes nearly \$1 million in grants, scholarships and sponsorship support to advance its priorities in education, community enrichment, arts and culture, and health and human services.



Gardening as Therapeutic Tool

Farm Credit Services of North Dakota is proud to announce it has awarded the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation \$5,000 as a recipient of the Pat-NOW Community Fund. The grant funds will help fund the Ranch's Minot campus greenhouse project.

Representatives from Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch accepted the check in December, and will use the funds to support the costs of the greenhouse program. The Ranch's Greenhouse Program provides agriculture education and experience to at-risk children, ages 10-18, who live at the Ranch.

Most of the children who come to the Ranch have never had the opportunity to care for and grow plants. We provide this experience to the youth through our summer Greenhouse Program and through school-year classes in horticulture and botany. Gardening is a relaxing activity our children can use as a "therapeutic tool" to deal with life challenges and stressors. Students working in our greenhouses communicate more often and with greater success. They learn and practice leadership skills, and learn techniques in small gardening that can transfer to a life-long skill and an increased interest in learning.

"Farm Credit is proud to provide grant funds to the Ranch for their greenhouse project," says Claude Sem, CEO of Farm Credit Services of North Dakota. "We are excited to help them with this valuable project that will positively impact everyone involved."

Farm Credit Services of North Dakota established the Pat-NOW Community Fund to assist in the implementation and development of projects in local communities and rural areas in western North Dakota.



Representatives from Farm Credit Services toured the greenhouses they are supporting through a PAT-NOW Community Fund grant. From left: Peder Colbenson- loan officer, Farm Credit Services; Barb Clementich, Amanda Mosser, and Mike McCloud, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch; and Claude Sem, CEO, Farm Credit Services.



Dakota Memorial School middle school students painted wooden therapeutic toys donated by Ron Ackerson, Spearfish, SD. Ron makes the toys with wood donated by his family and friends—then he donates them to children's charities throughout the United States. It is a special blessing for our children to participate in creating the toys they use in therapy.



Mr. Potato Head Goes to Chapel

Preachers have long used object lessons in children's sermons. They are powerful tools for teaching long-lasting lessons—helping to stimulate interest and to create visuals that make it easier to remember the lesson. Ranch kids are older than the typical child who rushes to the front of the church each Sunday for the children's sermon. But, most of them suffer from attention issues, some have learning disabilities, and others have sensory processing issues.

Object lessons teach concepts in a way that cater to our children—most who learn best through three of the four different learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic)*. For this reason, Chaplain Rick Jones, Vice President of Spiritual Life at the Ranch, often brings object lessons into his sermons.

Mr. Potato Head recently made an appearance at a Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch chapel service. Chaplain Rick taped pieces of the popular children's toy (arms, legs, mouth, hat, nose, eyes, etc.) under the chairs in the chapel. He opened his sermon by asking everyone to look under their chairs. Chaplain Rick then invited the children and staff to come forward with the pieces they found, one at a time, to place them on the toy. He told them they could put their pieces anywhere they wanted—so Mr. Potato Head had a nose on the top of his head, a mouth where an ear would usually go, and on and on.

As Mr. Potato Head was coming together, in a wild and wonderful way, Chaplain Rick said, "We can often feel like we don't have a place

to belong—we don't fit. We don't have the right pieces. Or sometimes our pieces feel inadequate, our life is falling apart and we feel ill-equipped to handle it. When we reach this point we can despair, or try to make ourselves into something we are not—usually to further despair, pain, and failure."

"Instead," he continued, "We should look to the promise of God's Word. As our Acts 17 passage reminded us, He created everything—He put everything together just the way it is on purpose. Furthermore, He sent His Son to pick up all our lost and broken pieces and put our lives back together. In the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus is torn to pieces to reassemble ours. In his resurrection he gives us new life, new purpose, new hope. We remember that 'in him we live and move and have our being...' (Acts 17:28). And therefore, because he has done all of this for us, 'I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...' (Psalm 139:14)."

Then, Chaplain Rick asked if anyone had a leftover piece. The kids' eyes darted around the room, back at Mr. Potato Head, and then around the room again—wondering what they could have missed. One of our girls raised her hand and said, "I do." She came to the front of the room and when Chaplain Rick asked her what her piece was, she said hesitantly, "It's a cross."



Chaplain Rick Jones uses a variety of props to share God's Word with Ranch kids—on this day, it was Mr. Potato Head.

The room was silent as Chaplain Rick opened the flap in Mr. Potato Head's back and asked her to place the cross inside his body. Then, he said, "This handy flap in Mr. Potato Head lets us place the cross inside him—to illustrate that God is always inside each of us. He puts our broken pieces back together, and he is with us at all times."

The visual learner saw Mr. Potato Head, the auditory learner heard Chaplain Rick sharing the message, and the kinesthetic learner participated in the lesson by looking for the Mr. Potato Head parts under their chair. Object lessons are a great way to share the Word of God in a way that connects with our kids.

*The fourth learning style is reading/writing.

We take great care to guard the privacy of our children. Pictures and identifying information are only used with the permission of the children themselves and the written permission of their guardians.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

13th Annual BLT DAY

Saturday, May 12, 2018

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch
6301 19th Ave. N.W., Minot

BLT Lunch

11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Program at 12 Noon.

Spring Plant Sale

(plants raised by Ranch residents and staff)

Vegetables

Herbs

Ornamental Grasses

Flowers

Succulents

Potting Station

(Bring your own pots, buy our plants,
and we will pot them for you!)

Birdhouse Planter Sale

(built by Ranch residents and staff)

Dakota Cruisers Car Show

Proceeds benefit the Verendrye Electric Greenhouse Technology
Program on the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Minot campus.



For more information, call 1-800-593-3098
or visit DakotaRanch.org.



Caring for Others Brings Great Joy



Herb and Jan Hegstad

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is one of many charities Herb and Jan support. They made their first connection with the Ranch when their son, Mitch, became a houseparent on the Ranch's Minot campus. He started in 1990 and stayed for 7 ½ years. Through that connection they learned about the kids who are at the Ranch to heal.

"We support the Ranch because everything we have ever read or heard concerning the Ranch has been very positive," Jan said. "We have a heart for kids who don't have a fair chance in life. And, we have seen a lot of good things that are being done [at the Ranch.]"

Jan and Herb have been married for 62 years, and spent much of those years farming and raising Black Angus cattle on a small farm near Powers Lake, ND. Jan said, "I can't imagine any other life or raising my children in any other place. It was wonderful to work together and raise our children."

Because they had horses, and their children grew up on horseback, Jan and Herb have a special affinity for the Ranch's Horse Program.

Jan said, "I just know what a horse can mean. It's just so healing for them. I think there is, within each one of us, the ability to provide comfort to others, not just take it in for ourselves. I really believe that as kids comfort these horses, it feeds their soul. It's almost magical because it's a need we all have—to care for

Herb and Jan Hegstad find joy in many places.

They like to dance, play cards, and have friends over to visit. They enjoy wintering in Arizona where tennis, shuffleboard, bocce ball, bible study, and church services are all just a short walk away. And, they find joy in spending time with their children and grandchildren.

But, their greatest joy is found in the Lord, and in caring for others.

"Happiness is found through Jesus first, others second, then yourself," Jan said. "You can't go wrong when you get things in proper perspective that way. Jesus teaches us to care for others. It gives you so much joy."

Jan said she and Herb have been blessed with an abundance, and as Christians, they believe it's not all theirs. Her parents taught her to tithe, and she brought that lesson to her marriage.

"We believe in giving back," she said.

someone or something that has less than we have, that needs us.”

Jan and Herb take advantage of the North Dakota Tax Credit. “Because we have been blessed, we pay tax,” Jan said. “We made a \$5,000 gift to a Ranch endowment fund and, in turn, got \$2,000 back on our North Dakota tax. We itemize, so the contribution is subtracted from our income to reduce federal taxes. We funded two of them this year because we were paying more. I could have paid \$1,500 in state tax, but instead gave a gift to the Ranch’s endowment fund.”

In addition to their faithful financial support of the Ranch, Jan and Herb enjoy attending Ranch events. They attend the Valentine’s Day luncheon in Mesa, AZ, every year, and BLT Day each May, back in North Dakota. Last year, they met their son at BLT Day, where they bought their outdoor flowers and all had lunch together.

“[The Ranch] is a real good institution. And, as ranchers, we just think kids belong on a Ranch,” Jan said. “It is a perfect setting for healing for those kids.”

The North Dakota Tax Credit is only available, by law, to those donors who pay North Dakota income tax. Your state may have similar programs for charitable giving. Please check with your tax professional.

Seeing Through a Different Lens

When Adam, a Dakota Memorial School (DMS) day student, took his first art class a couple of years ago, he fell in love with photography.

Since then, DMS art teacher, Alana Wilhelm, has helped him hone his skills; and last fall she encouraged him to enter some of his work into the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards competition. The regional competition, hosted by the Red River Valley Writing Project and Plains Art Museum, is very prestigious and competitive—only 5% of students who enter the competition win regional recognition.

When they announced the winners last fall, three of five of Adam’s entries earned recognition. He won a Gold Key Award and an American Visions Nomination for “Fork on Black and White,” which is pictured on the



Adam discusses his award-winning photos with photography judge, Dan Koeck, at the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Exhibition and Reception, held in March at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, ND.

back cover of this issue of Ranch Voice. “Pillar of Water,” pictured above, received an Honorable Mention, and “Balance,” received a Silver Key Award.

“Fork on Black and White” advanced to the national competition and winners will be announced this spring. If he wins a national award, Adam and Ms. Wilhelm will be invited to a reception at Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY, in June.

Dakota Memorial School is the on-campus school of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Alana Wilhelm, art teacher at Dakota Memorial School, the on-campus school of the Ranch, discovered and nurtured Adam’s interest and natural abilities in photography.



Giving to Provide Hope and Healing

Thanks to gifts from our generous donors, the Ranch helps the most troubled, complicated, and amazing kids by providing best-in-class psychiatric treatment and trauma-informed care.

If you would like to provide hope and healing for a child at the Ranch, you can choose from many ways to give.

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 in one of the following ways:

- Online at DakotaRanch.org: Select Memorial/Honorarium when completing the donation form.
- Phone: Call 1-800-344-0957 to visit with one of our development staff. They will take your information over the phone.

Gift in Your Will

Your stewardship impacts your ability to serve God's Kingdom; it also affects the legacy you leave. Our legacy giving website will help you become a better steward so you can provide for your loved ones and the ministries you believe in—ministries like Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. To maximize your philanthropic goals, visit our legacy giving website at DakotaRanch.org/legacy.

Tree of Life

You can honor or remember a loved one with a gift to:

- Tree of Life in Minot (supports Dakota Memorial School, Minot)
- Tree of Life in Fargo (supports the Fargo Residential Center)
- Tree of Life in Bismarck (supports services provided at the Bismarck campus)

“Those privileged to touch the lives of children should constantly be aware that their impact on a single child may affect a multitude of others a thousand years from now.”

– Unknown

For a Tree of Life order form, go to DakotaRanch.org and choose “Many Ways to Give” from the dropdown menu. 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 at the Ranch—values that aid in their healing, provide a foundation of hope, and help them be successful in their treatment. At the Ranch, we use all Thrivent Choice® funding to support our Spiritual Life Program.

Go to the Thrivent Choice website, login, and choose Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. To direct Choice

Dollars® over the phone, call 1-800-847-4836 and say, “Thrivent Choice” after the prompt.

Contact a local Thrivent Financial representative for more information about membership at Thrivent Financial or directing your Choice Dollars®.

Sponsor a Honey Sunday at Your Church.

For years, congregations across the United States have sold Ranch honey to fundraise for their own ministries, raise money to support children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, and to introduce and promote the Ranch's Christian mission to their congregations.

This year, all participating congregations will receive a Sunday School curriculum, “God Loves All His Children,” written by Chaplain Rick Jones, Vice President of Spiritual Life Services at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, along with all the materials they need to hold a Honey Sunday (or Honey Wednesday). See page 24 for more information.

Employer Matching Gifts

Some employers match the donations or volunteer hours of their employees; and Ranch children benefit from many employer matching gifts each year. Check with your employer to see if they have a matching gift/volunteer program, and how you can access those matching dollars for the Ranch. If they need us to complete any paperwork, we are happy to do so. Contact us at 1-800-344-0957 or info@dakotaranch.org.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Ranch

I keep hearing about autism and the “spectrum.” What does that really mean and what does autism have to do with trauma?

**By Dr. Meryl Willert, Psychologist
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch**

Simply put, children on the autism spectrum have difficulties relating and responding to others. In more “clinical” language, autism involves impairments in social interaction, relationship-forming, and communication, along with restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior. In other words, their relationships tend to be one-sided.

Other characteristics of kids on the autism spectrum include:

- Repetitive engagement in a narrow range of interests (for example, they may spend much of their day playing with Legos, lining up toys, or playing video games).

- Rigidity when it comes to following a routine and desiring sameness.

- Hypersensitivity to sensory experiences.

The most recent diagnostic manual published by the American Psychiatric Association identifies a new category called autism spectrum disorders. They call it a spectrum because it encompasses mild, moderate, and severe forms of autism. The new category includes

previous diagnoses such as Asperger’s syndrome.

Regarding autism and trauma, some autistic children who come to the Ranch have suffered significant trauma—they have been neglected or abused, or have encountered tremendous stress (for example, domestic violence, car accident, sudden loss of a parent). Trauma complicates the clinical picture, usually worsens their autistic difficulties, and contributes to other problems involving anxiety, depression, anger, attachment, or trauma-related symptoms, such as nightmares.

Celebrating Easter at the Ranch

Easter is a special time for focusing on the spiritual development of Ranch kids, by providing them with additional opportunities to learn about Christ’s world-changing sacrifice. In the days leading up to Easter, we held special chapel services and a variety of other festive activities to keep the children focused on Jesus and His love.



Easter week festivities began with kids and staff gathering to create woven baskets, decorative bags, and suncatchers. Our Spiritual Life department followed that up the next night with a great event highlighting the life of Jesus, “The Footprints of Jesus Scavenger Hunt.” Then they colored Easter eggs before moving into Easter weekend chapel services.

Show Me the Honey

We start every new year thanking our donors for their prayers and support by sending them a bottle of Ranch honey. Donors sent us photos of honey spotted at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA, on a farm in Illinois, in sunny Arizona, on a child's peanut butter toast in Minot, ND, in 7 feet of snow in Meadville, PA, with a donor's tea in New Hampshire, and more. Send us a photo of your bottle of Ranch honey and maybe you'll see it here.



Noble, IL



Sandy O'Donnell, Tuscon, AZ



Quin Seiler, Minneapolis, MN



Betsy Jones, Minot, ND



Caanan, NH



Kris Ryan, Philadelphia, PA



Cierra Schneider, Meadville, PA



Gerry & Karen Leeseberg, Flower Mound, TX

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 October or November. We will send you a Honey Kit, which includes:

- Posters
- Bulletin inserts
- Order forms
- Labels

We suggest you charge \$7-10 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.



Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a Christian 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

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

1-800-344-0957

Guardian Angel

Meghan, Strong and True

“God is important in my life. I’ve spent a lot of time in facilities and foster homes, and God has always been with me,” Meghan said. “Sometimes, I didn’t think He liked me, but if I’m lonely, God is there for me. If I’m going to a new place, He is there. God just knows what to do.”

That’s true faith from a girl who, at thirteen years old, has lived in four foster homes and four residential treatment centers.

She is now living in her fifth foster home, which she hopes is her last.

“I hope this house fits me,” she said. “A house that fits means it’s a house that takes care of my needs. Not too strict, not too lenient. They are OK with how I am, and I am OK with how they are.”

To say the road has not been easy for Meghan, is a massive understatement.

Eventually, Meghan was brought to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. She started out in Butt cottage, the Ranch’s Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility in Minot. She spent seven months there before moving to the Fargo Youth Home, another Ranch facility that provides a lower level of care.

Meghan experienced success at the Ranch. She is getting good grades, and she discovered she is an artist.

“I’m really good at drawing,” she said. “I donated a painting to the Minot school when I left, and they put it on the back of Ranch Voice.” (See the Winter 2017-18 issue of



13-year-old Meghan puts the finishing touches on an art sculpture under the encouraging supervision of Art teacher, Alana Wilhelm.

Ranch Voice for Meghan’s painting, “Sunrise of Hope.”)

Meghan is in control of her emotions and better able to manage her anger. What made the difference? Meghan will tell you it was a couple things—the people at the Ranch and her faith.

“The people at the Ranch are supportive. They know what to do and are good at their jobs. They pay attention to the kids more,” she said.

The Christian foundation of the Ranch has made a difference, too. She feels like she always believed in

God, but says her faith has gotten stronger at the Ranch.

She enjoys Ranch chapel services and can’t decide who she likes best, Chaplain Rick Jones or Jay Schaefer (the Spiritual Life Specialist in Fargo.)

“They are both my favorites. The have very different styles, but they are both really cool in how they make their sermons for kids our age. They’re not too childish and not too adult-like. I like chapel.”

Through all the pain and trauma she has experienced in her young life, Meghan has focused on others.

She said, “I don’t usually pray for what I want, but for what others need. I’ve been like that ever since I was little and took care of my brother. You put others before yourself. If someone is going to fall, you pick them up.”

Her giving spirit may be most present in the song she wrote with Dr. Monte Selby, when he spent a week at the Ranch last November.

“We were going through ideas of what I was going to write about and I told Monte I used to fight the bullies to keep them off my friends,” Meghan said. “They called me their guardian angel because I kept the bullies away from them. They also called me ‘Pitbull,’ but we thought guardian angel sounded better!”

Meghan dedicated her song, “Guardian Angel,” to her little brother.

“We always say a prayer together”

GUARDIAN ANGEL

By Meghan and Dr. Monte Selby

I know what mean people are
I know what kind people are
Cause I've seen both sides
I know it's hard sometimes
You might not want to try
But I'll be by your side

Chorus:

I'll be your guardian angel
I'll show you strong and brave
You might see bruises and scars
When I defend who you are
If you're not able
I'll be your guardian angel

You can count on me
To come back when I leave
Like you're my very own
Precious and unique
I'll listen when you speak
You are not alone

CHORUS

Sometimes I need that too
Someone who's strong and true
And a friend for life

CHORUS

To hear Meghan and Dr. Monte Selby perform her song, “Guardian Angel,” go to <http://bit.ly/2p9bp3f>.

We take great care to guard the privacy of our children. Pictures and identifying information are only used with the permission of the children themselves and the written permission of their guardians.



Chloe put her newfound faith to work making necklaces for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes.

Church wasn't a foreign concept to Chloe. She remembers going a long time ago, but it wasn't a regular part of her life until she came to the Ranch.

At the Ranch, she attended chapel services and spiritual life group, and was quickly drawn to God. “I liked learning about God,” she said. “I know God is here for me. He wants to take care of me. He is caring.”

When she asked to be baptized, her parents were all for it. Her dad, Troy, said, “My wife and I realized that somewhere along the line we hadn't addressed the spiritual issue. We don't want to leave anything out from Chloe's trek through life. It's all about the mind, body, and spirit.”

Chloe talked to Chaplain Rick Jones, Vice President of Spiritual Life at the Ranch, about her growing faith; and he shared with her the meaning and significance of baptism. Then it was just a matter of scheduling a time for her baptism that worked for her parents—they

didn't want to miss this momentous occasion in her life.

Baptism is a pivotal blessing in a child's faith journey. And, at the Ranch it is tradition to celebrate following the wonderful event with a Baptismal cake! Chaplain Rick, the

children and the staff all are part of the special, spiritual moment.

Chloe's baptism and faith in God has impacted her entire family. When she completes her treatment and returns home, Troy said they are committed to attending church with her. According to Chloe, they've already begun demonstrating this commitment through their actions.

“When I call my parents,” Chloe said, “we always say a prayer together.”

**Does your will
reflect your values?**

**Call
1-800-344-0957 for
more information.**

A Circle of Compassion



By Jim Vetter
Vice President and Development Officer

For 30 years, I have been privileged to work with people who pour their hearts and souls into the kids at the Ranch. For some, it's their full-time job to spend time with the kids and do all sorts of activities together. Some just pitch in on field trips and recreational outings. Others share their artistic talents so kids can discover their own gifts. Still others have a limited amount of time to spend with the kids—they spend the majority of their time doing

all of the other things that make a residential treatment center and school run smoothly.

What I've learned though, is that the amount of time someone spends with the kids doesn't measure the amount of heart they put into it. Instead, the benefits of adult/child interactions are measured by the love and compassion staff share with the kids. Being present and giving everything they have at that moment is what matters.

This past year, a new privilege has been afforded me at the Ranch. With my new role as a part-time Development Officer, I get to meet and know Ranch donors. In this role, I've found a real parallel between Ranch staff and donors. It's not how much our donors give that measures their commitment

to the Ranch—it's the amount of love and compassion they put behind their giving. This love and compassion is the true measure of the relationship.

I've seen so much love and compassion from donors through their giving, just as I've seen with staff who give to our kids. Our kids are truly blessed by the heartfelt giving that comes not from our donor's abundance, but from their hearts.

And to complete the circle, these compassionate gifts from our donors make it possible for staff to be more free to spend time with the kids. What a true blessing it is for our staff, kids, and donors to be so lovingly interrelated.

I am truly amazed and blessed each day to be part of the Ranch mission.

Jim Vetter is just one of the caring professionals who works one-by-one with Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch donors—helping them find the means to make an impact on the world in a way that best suits their values and wishes. If you have any questions about the Ranch, feel free to contact any of the people listed below at 1-800-344-0957 or info@DakotaRanch.org.



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

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“[The Ranch] is an excellent institution with a very dedicated staff and board of directors. Keep up the good work. God bless you all.”

-Larry Manning,
 Vancouver, WA
 (born in Lemmon, SD)

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*“Your work changes
lives, and don’t doubt
it for a minute. I also
found faith at the
Ranch and learned that
the Lord is always with
me.”*

-former resident

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November 1, 2017 – February 28, 2018

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Carol Anderson
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John & Inez Larson
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Ryan Bakke
MARY BRENDEN
Patricia Brenden

*"You all shaped me in
ways you can't begin to
imagine. I miss you all
so much."*

-former resident

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 CLAYPOOLE
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BILL & COLLEEN LARSON
 John & Inez Larson

“Anything is possible with the love and support of the Ranch and its staff. When I started there I was a very angry person with lots of trauma. Now I have my diploma, I’m engaged to be married, and I’m starting Job Corps in January to get CNA certified.”

-former resident

JEFF, KRISTI & HALEY LARSON
 John & Inez Larson
 JOHN & TOOTIE LARSON
 Alan Larson
 MATT & KRISTA LARSON & FAMILY
 John & Inez Larson
 PAUL & BECKY LARSON & FAMILY
 John & Inez Larson
 TODD & JUDY LARSON & FAMILY
 John & Inez Larson
 RHONDA LIVEDALEN & FAMILY
 Sue Miller
 LARRY MILBRANDT’S 80TH BIRTHDAY
 Walter & Diane Baumann
 MARC & KATHY MILLER
 Elizabeth Reusch
 JOSEPH NEFEY FAMILY
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 John & Denise Batcher
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 SHEILA SCHALLHORN-DURHAM FAMILY
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 TIMOTHY SCHALLHORN FAMILY
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 ARLENE SCHUMACHER
 Sharon Haberkamp
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 JoAnn Grilley
 MR. & MRS. GREG VASEK
 Gary Vasek
 ASHLEY WEBSTER
 Laurie Webster
 RACHEL WEBSTER
 Laurie Webster

Can We Pray for You?

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. When we receive your request, we will distribute it to our pastors and spiritual life specialists to pray for you during our chapel services on all three campuses.

We also write your prayer in a special Prayer Book that we keep in the Foundation office in Minot. If you are ever in the area and want to stop by, we’d love to help you find your prayer in our Prayer Book.



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

Change Service Requested



“Fork on Black and White.” Dakota Memorial School student, Adam B., won a Gold Key Award and American Visions Nomination for this photo, which qualified him for the national competition (see article on p. 20).

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

www.DakotaRanch.org

Main Switchboard: 1-800-593-3098

Foundation: 1-800-344-0957

