

THE RANCH VOICE

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

Spring 2024



Quinton's graduation was a joyous occasion for him and his family. He is shown here with teachers Raye Ann Genre and Josh Hvidsten.



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Message from Our President/CEO



Joy Ryan, President/CEO,
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Hello Ranch Friends,

I cherish the honor of being President and CEO of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, the Foundation, and Dakota Family Services.

Sometimes, my title is misinterpreted, especially by our kids. Many times over the years, I've been introduced to a child new to our care, who asks, "So, you own this place?" And I laugh. Nope.

I explain that the Ranch is "owned" by the community and exists solely "to help children and families succeed in the name of Christ." The next question is often, "So, who is your boss?"

"Well," I tell them, "men and women volunteer their time to be on our boards. These boards represent everyone who cares about you and ensure I'm doing my job." Usually, I get a blank stare back... or they say, "So, you have lots of bosses?"

Yup. And they are amazing people. Our board members come from across the United States and every walk of life. The one thing they have in common is a complete devotion "to help children and families succeed in the name of Christ." Their governance expertise and wisdom are the framework for our work. I believe the Lord brings the best of the best to the boards of the Ranch.

A couple of weeks ago, one of the board members texted me. He asked, "If you could describe in one or two words what the average child at the Ranch desires the most, what would that be?"

I pondered.

I couldn't respond in one or two words, but I knew the answer.

With all their little hearts, they desire not to have needed the Ranch.

These children have serious psychiatric and behavioral health illnesses brought on by trauma. They need the treatment we provide. However, just like any cancer patient or person with diabetes or any other health challenge, they wish they didn't need the help. They wish that the traumas, abuse, and pain that brought them to us had never happened.

But it did.

And thanks to you, our doors and arms are open so they can heal.

Our board member was able to put it in two words... "To be normal and accepted."

Thank you for reading. Please keep our staff and children in your prayers.

In His love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

You are not a failure



**By Boni Simonson, Therapist
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch**

Most of the children who come to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch have experienced immense pain and trauma, leaving them feeling like they are unworthy. I've worked with many kids who have been told they shouldn't have been born or they were a mistake or a failure (and will always be a failure).

Sometimes, they are told not in words but by actions—family drug addiction and alcoholism can result in neglect and put kids in unhealthy and dangerous situations. One 12-year-old girl told me this morning that she pretty much raised herself. When she was removed from her parent's home, it didn't get much better. She bounced from foster home to foster home, sometimes only staying for a week or two before moving on to the next stranger's home. It's not difficult to understand why she doesn't believe she is worthy of love.

Our kids aren't going to start believing in themselves overnight—it's a long process and one that will continue long past the time they are with us. At the Ranch, we create

a safe, nurturing, and consistent environment where they are encouraged to express themselves freely. They are surrounded by a team of dedicated professionals who genuinely care about their well-being.

In therapy, we help kids identify their unhealthy beliefs, discover where they originated, and teach them how to challenge them. It is a delicate process to validate their thoughts and feelings while helping them understand that some of their beliefs about themselves are just plain wrong.

I recently worked with a boy who believed he was bad. When he was in my office, he was a teddy bear. But as soon as he got around other people, he was mean, tough, and intimidating. I met with him after one particularly difficult therapy group and asked him, "What was that? Who was that kid?" I told him I believed he thinks that way about himself, but that I see him differently. We talked about how he puts on the tough guy attitude to protect himself. He has been hurt over and over—pushing people away prevents them from hurting him.

In addition to therapeutic interventions, we emphasize the importance of building healthy relationships and connections. We work tirelessly to create a supportive community where children can form meaningful connections with peers and adults who believe in them. Through these relationships, they start to see themselves as valuable members

of a larger community and begin to understand the impact they can have on others.

Finally, we put kids in situations where they can be successful, whether that's in school or other activities. Some kids are successful working with horses. Others learn they can be good at fishing. And still others find they have talent in art, music, or working in the shop.

Deaconess Kelly Bristow organizes a talent show every couple of months that has also been helpful in building kids' self-esteem. Even if they don't have extraordinary talent, they get many hoops, hollers, and cheers—just getting on the stage gives them a reason to believe in themselves.

At the Ranch, we have an unwavering belief that every child has inherent worth and potential. Through consistent affirmation and validation, we counteract the negative beliefs that have been ingrained in their hearts and minds.

I find great joy in watching kids emerge from a place of self-doubt and despair to a place where they see themselves as capable, loved, and worthy individuals with the potential to shape their futures. At the Ranch, we help kids rewrite their stories, believe in themselves, and create brighter futures filled with hope and possibility.

Being seen and finding her voice

At 20 years old, Arraya has lived through more trauma than most people face in a lifetime.

Arraya was born in Oklahoma to a mother who abandoned her as a newborn. Her father abused her. By the time Arraya was 12 years old, her dad had married and divorced six times. They moved to North Dakota when she was in seventh grade.

“By that time, I had had enough of the abuse and couldn’t take it anymore,” Arraya said. “My dad was either going to run me

into the ground or kill me, and I decided I had to escape. I ran away, confided with some people in my neighborhood, and eventually ended up in the foster care system.”

While she says it was fear more than bravery, Arraya’s strength and resilience were already evident in the actions she took to save herself.

“I was angry and upset there was no one there to protect me, so I took it into my own hands,” she said.

Throughout her teens, Arraya lived in seven foster homes and a

few residential facilities. One of those facilities was the Ranch, and she says it saved her.

“Without the Ranch, I think I would be living on the streets,” Arraya said. “I definitely wouldn’t be going to college and living in my own apartment. I wouldn’t have the stability I have now.”

When Arraya came to the Ranch at age 15, she was angry, sad, lashing out, and trying to get attention in any way she could, positive or negative.

“Not having parents really hurts at that age,” she said. “I couldn’t go on home visits because I didn’t have a family to go to. I was struggling pretty hard and lashing out to make everyone else feel as horrible as me.”

Arraya wasn’t happy about being at the Ranch, and because she didn’t have parents to fight, she said Ranch staff took the brunt of her anger.

“I was just trying to make people see me because I had felt unseen for so long,” she said. “Staff at the Ranch gave me the support I needed and didn’t back away from my anger. They didn’t retaliate against me for it. They understood where the anger was coming from and even if I didn’t understand it, they never made me feel guilty for my emotions.”

At the Ranch, Arraya met Ranch therapist Christy Wilkie.

“The other kids talked about how much they loved Christy and how amazing she was. I wanted to be



Arraya (shown here with her dad, mom, and little brother) no longer experiences terror about the future or being unwanted.

different and not follow the crowd, so I didn't want to like her," Arraya said. "The first time I met her I said, 'I'm not going to like you.' Christy said, 'That's okay. I don't know you, so I don't like you yet either.'"



Arraya and her mom share a happy moment.

Christy's honesty and directness helped to knock down some of Arraya's walls, and they were able to connect.

"Instead of screaming into a void, I was now crying and screaming to somebody who could help me understand why I was so angry," Arraya said. "I was rightfully angry, but I couldn't let it go. I was giving it to all these people who didn't deserve it."

In treatment, Arraya learned that

she is strong and resilient.

"Christy pulled me back from a very dark place, and she helped me find my voice," she said. "She made me feel like a human being. Christy helped me find my power and my strength."

"I'm like a bonsai tree," Arraya said. "Bonsai trees are super fragile, but if you take care of them right, they'll blossom and bloom and last for hundreds of years. Like a bonsai tree, I have to prune and pull off the damaged leaves and deadness so I can grow."

When Arraya was 16, she had completed treatment at the Ranch and was living with a foster family.

That foster family started having their own family struggles. To protect Arraya from additional trauma, her county caseworker moved her to a "temporary" respite home until they could find a long-term foster home.

"I was only supposed to be with them for a few days, but it just clicked. I didn't want to let them go, and they didn't want to let me go," she said. "I started living with them when I was 16, and

two weeks before I turned 18, my adoption was finalized."

Her family recently moved to Nebraska, and she moved with them. She lives in an apartment just five minutes away from their home.

"I'm there almost every day hanging out, watching movies, playing games, enjoying the holidays. You know, just doing what families do, all the things I didn't have in my childhood," Arraya said.

Arraya is now in college studying to be a social worker so she can help people like the Ranch helped her. Despite her growth and success, Arraya doesn't pretend to have a perfect life.

"I still struggle in my day-to-day life, and everything isn't going to work out how I want," she said. "But now my whole world is hope. I lived with fear every day—fear of not having parents, fear of not thriving, fear of not being wanted. I no longer have terror in my life. I am wanted, and I am thriving. It can only go up from here!"

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.

Bridging the Gap

The crucial role of special
education teachers
at the Ranch



Austin is an eighth grader at Dakota Memorial School, the on-campus school of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. Before coming to the Ranch, Austin was frequently suspended for verbal and physical aggression toward his teachers and classmates. He is a smart kid but was flunking most of his classes because even when he was in school, he spent very little time in the classroom. When he started yelling, throwing things, and threatening his teachers and peers, which happened regularly, he was removed from the classroom.

At the Ranch, where he received individual attention and was in small classes, Austin slowly grew to trust the school staff. Mallory Halvorson, principal at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, said she recently attended a meeting with Austin and his parents where they talked about how he is attending classes, making friends, and building relationships with his teachers. He has learned ways to regulate his behavior and rarely has an aggressive outburst.

“The other kids want to be around Austin because he is fun,” Mallory said. “His parents told me this was the first school meeting they’d ever attended where they were told of Austin’s strengths and progress.”

Special education is a unique form of teaching. Although it is often associated with low IQ and developmental disabilities, many children who need special education services are like Austin, high-IQ children with behavioral and mental health challenges.

Tina DeGree, Superintendent and VP Education, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, said students at Dakota Memorial School have experienced significant trauma or suffer from mental illness.

“Trauma, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns affect how kids learn,” Tina said.

Special education teachers are trained to identify each student’s emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges and make adaptations that allow them to learn.

In North Dakota, special education teachers must have a bachelor’s degree in special education and pass the Praxis II Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications exam. Most also have special education endorsements or certifications based on the population in which they choose to work, which might include emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and intellectual disabilities.

In the pages that follow, you will meet our special education teachers and see the passion and commitment they bring to work with them each day.



Sequoia Magrum

Special Education Teacher, Fargo

Sequoia Magrum taught Sunday School growing up and always wanted to be a teacher. She earned an elementary education degree at the University of North Dakota (UND), and after teaching for a few years, realized she enjoyed working with the students who were struggling. She recently completed a master's degree in special education with a specialization in emotional behavior disorders.

"I really like the part of special education where you feel like you can make a difference and help kids," she said. "You have to really think about what is blocking a kid from being able to access their education. Are their basic needs being met? Do they have trauma they haven't addressed? What skills are they missing to manage their behaviors?"

Sequoia sees special education as filling the gaps in students' skills and needs so they can bridge that gap and get to a place where they can learn. It starts with building a strong relationship.

"Sometimes it takes a bit for the students to trust you and realize you are here to help them," Sequoia said. "These kids are here because they have already had traumatic



school experiences. Once they figure out you are there for them, learn to trust you, and know that you'll follow through on what you say, those walls start to come down."

Sequoia told the story of one student who didn't

want to be in school and didn't want to graduate from high school. She took the student on a college tour recently, and it opened her eyes to the possibilities.

"She realized college was something she could do, and her eyes were lit up the whole time," Sequoia said. "If you let kids coast by, their hate for the system is going to grow. If you tailor school to their needs, they might see how they can be successful and build their confidence."

Sequoia is constantly looking for the reasons behind kids' behaviors.

"Why don't they want to be in the classroom? If it's because the work is too hard, then we need to figure out how to make the work at their level," she said. "If they are having conflict with another student, we need to figure out how to make that work. Maybe they need social skills instruction and to learn how to build friendships. It's never one simple thing. We must dig deep and work together to find out what

will work for each student."

In her work at the Ranch, Sequoia embraces each child's strengths and interests. She worked with one student who everyone said didn't read. She talked with him and found some books that matched his interests. Now he is reading at the same level as his peers.

"You find what they like and embrace it," Sequoia said. "Another student hadn't made it through a full day of public school in years. He wouldn't go into the lunchroom. He did nothing with his peers. He wouldn't go into classrooms or use the computers. After just a few months with us, he is coming to school half days and being successful. That is a celebration!"

Sequoia said it can take time to build a relationship, but once the kids let their barriers down, they are amazing.

"I love the kids here. They'll test you and challenge you, and it's really hard. Then the next day, you see them doing something amazing," she said. "Once they begin to see the benefits of getting help, the kids want to get better. They want to be successful."

Sequoia stays at the Ranch for several reasons. She sees kids making amazing progress. She enjoys the strong leadership and working with a team of people who really care about kids. And she likes being able to talk about her faith.

"The Ranch is faith-based, which I find really amazing," she said. "We can talk about our faith and that's important for these kids. We pray before the kids get here every morning and do a prayer together

during morning announcements. They ask me all the time about my faith. It's powerful and healing, and they are often searching for it."

Sequoia is from Minneapolis, where her three sisters and parents still live. She and her husband moved around for his job before deciding to settle in Fargo, ND. They enjoy walking with their two dogs, camping, traveling, and watching movies.

Lyzz Harpster

Special Education Teacher, Fargo

Lyzz Harpster was born in Fort Worth, TX, and moved with her family to North Dakota when she was ten years old. Lyzz said elementary and high school were difficult, but she was tough.

"I graduated with mutual respect between myself and the three boys who really liked to target me," she said. "I fought my way through all of high school because I wasn't going to let them hurt me or haze me."

Her difficult school experiences showed Lyzz the importance of kids having someone on their side. As a special education teacher, one of Lyzz's goals is to help students feel emotionally and physically safe at school.

"When I lead Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, I

start by going around the table and asking everyone to share a strength of the child," she said. "School has not been a safe place for our kids. They have been repeatedly told that they are failures and won't amount to anything. When they come to a meeting I'm leading, they are going to hear what they are doing well."

As a special education teacher, Lyzz pulls together the Ranch team of teachers, nurses, occupational therapists, and direct care staff to meet each student's needs and help them be the best they can be. One of her current students struggles with reading.

"She is smart as a whip, but I would guess

something in her past traumatized reading for her. This kid is capable of reading hard things, but she doesn't believe in herself," Lyzz said. "I got her a stack of hard books in graphic novel format because I know she can do it, and right now, she is reading a book about Julius Caesar."

Lyzz is a firm believer that her journey at the Ranch has been a "God thing." Her husband was doing IT work at the Ranch's Grand Forks thrift store, and she was picking him up for lunch. When she walked into the store, she asked the cashier, "Are y'all

hiring right now?" She had a job by the time she and her husband left for lunch.

When she finished her master's degree in elementary and middle school education her boss at the thrift store gave her an internal job bid form for a position in Fargo. She and her husband moved to Fargo for her to take a job as a Residential Treatment Specialist, working directly with the kids in the cottage. She moved to teaching when a position opened in the school.

"I love seeing the kids have those 'aha' moments. I spend most of my day working with kids who are struggling emotionally," Lyzz said. "My favorite thing is when a kid picks up a desk, and before they throw it, they realize they don't want the consequences that will happen. Watching them stop themselves in that cycle, seeing real growth, is my favorite thing."

Lyzz said most kids at the Ranch are in survival mode 100 percent of the time.

"It's really easy for people to judge them, but you and I would have the same struggles if we went through half of what they have," she said. "They are brave and courageous. They have gone through more trauma than you can imagine, and multiple places and people have failed them. By the time they get to us, they just expect we are another place that will fail them. They are disenfranchised with humanity in general."

Lyzz helps kids learn skills they need to regulate their emotions, get along with their peers, and get to a place where they can learn. She



uses a lot of games to teach social and emotional skills.

“So much of learning these skills is practice. They need to practice interacting with people without being mean,” Lyzz said. “We play a game, we talk, and we have authentic interactions. You can do overt lessons to teach the skills, but that often backfires.”

Lyzz said the Ranch is like a family, with everyone pulling together for the kids.

“At the end of the day, we are all here for the kids,” Lyzz said. “Every single person working in any of our Ranch buildings is here for the kids.”

Lyzz lives in Fargo with her husband and their five-year-old son. In addition to parenting and spending time with her family, Lyzz likes to cross-stitch, read, watch competition and fantasy television shows, participate in taekwondo, and play video games.

Tammy Wolf

Special Education Teacher, Bismarck

In seventh grade, Tammy Wolf volunteered to coach Special Olympics and fell in love with the kids. That’s when she knew she wanted to be a Special Education teacher. She went to college right out of high

school, but then life happened, and she took a 19-year break.

“In 2014, I had the opportunity to go back to school,” Tammy said. “It was a very scary time for me because I didn’t want to fail. My family was very supportive, and I graduated with a bachelor’s degree in special education at age 43.”

At the Ranch, Tammy helps students through challenging times and helps them learn.

“You have to be flexible. You meet each kid where they are at. You can’t change the education standards and requirements, but you can change your instruction to help the student meet the standard,” Tammy said.

Tammy understands that when kids’ basic needs aren’t being met, they can’t focus on learning. Many of the kids have grown up in homes with drugs and alcohol and people coming in and out of the home. Others have been abused or sex trafficked for drugs. Some don’t

have food and are trying to feed and care for younger siblings.

“Kids need sleep. They need shelter. They need food. If those needs aren’t being met, nothing else is going to matter,” Tammy said.

“I don’t know what it’s like not to have food. I don’t know what it’s like to sleep

on the floor. I don’t know what it’s

like not to have a home. I’ve always had my needs met.”

Tammy said even the toughest kids are great. But they are often misunderstood and feel like they are naughty or bad.

“They just haven’t had the chance. I want them to feel safe in my room. I tell them I have faith in them and that they can get past this. It’s a blip in their life. We have a student now who said, ‘I don’t want to leave [the Ranch] because I feel safe here’.”

Tammy works with students in her room and in their regular classrooms. When they are in her room, she teaches life skills, like where to vote, how to research basic laws, where to get their social security card, and how to choose life insurance or car insurance.

“They might not need these skills right now,” Tammy said, “but I hope what they’ve learned will spark something when they need it.

She also helps them make and meet their goals and works with them on subjects where they are behind or struggling.

For instance, if a student is deficient in math computation, she spends individual time with them to improve those skills. She also works closely with the general education teachers, and when she finds a teaching strategy that works, helps them implement it in the regular classroom.

“In addition to working with kids one-on-one in my room, I push into classes,” Tammy said. “Kids are pulled so many times for therapies, so I try not to pull them from the classroom during core classes. I can



observe and help manage behaviors right in the classroom.”

Tammy also enjoys working with the parents.

“A lot of the parents are really great to work with, and they want their child to succeed,” she said. “I work closely with them and text or email them things about their child. They’ve often only heard from their child’s school when they’ve had bad behaviors. I want them to know when their child does something well.”

“I love coming to work every day. People ask me why I work here because there is a stigma about kids at the Ranch. I tell them I love the kids and that kids at the Ranch need good teachers too. I have found my passion.”

Between them, Tammy and her husband have six children, four grandchildren, and one grandchild on the way. They have a cabin in South Dakota where they go to fish, relax, and enjoy the outdoors.

Roanna Parker

Special Education Teacher, Minot

Roanna Parker earned her first bachelor’s degree in Bible and Theology at Multnomah University in Portland, OR. She then joined the Air Force, where she met her

husband, had two children, and was a stay-at-home mom.

When the family moved to Minot, ND, Roanna decided to go back to school for special education so she could be a better mom, especially to her son, who has high-functioning autism. Teaching wasn’t new to her, even though she didn’t yet have a teaching degree.

“When I was in college the first time around, I taught English as a second language to Thai and Laotian refugees,” Roanna said. “After that, I taught Bible studies to middle school kids at a local church. I’ve always been teaching in some form or fashion.”

After graduating from Minot State University with a degree in special education and working in a public school for a year, Roanna accepted a special education position at the Ranch.

“I knew I wanted to work at the Ranch because, in some ways, I understand what the kids have been through,” Roanna said. “I felt emotionally neglected growing up.

My mother was more concerned with her career than me. She provided food and clothing, but that was it. She didn’t provide any emotional support, and if I asked a serious question, she told me to knock it off.”

Roanna uses

these experiences to connect with the kids.

“They are going through way more than what I had to experience, but I try to discern what they are feeling, not judge, and help them through the process,” she said. “I pray for God to give me the wisdom to meet the kids’ needs, to be supportive, and to not just look at their behaviors. How can I help them feel cared for? How can I help them feel interested in their lives?”

Roanna has noticed that kids who come from a neglected background often lack vocabulary skills. They weren’t talked to or read to and don’t have the reading skills they need to be successful in school.

“The lack of reading skills spills over into being able to access content in social studies, science, and literature,” Roanna said. “It’s hard to make up time learning vocabulary for that when they are 15 years old. How can you gain another hundred thousand words in a school year?”

Roanna works with the teachers to use strategies that help students access the curriculum.

“They might modify the wording to make it easier to understand or go over vocabulary words in the lesson,” Roanna said. “We see a lot of kids who have been a ‘bother’ to their school. They aren’t a bother here. We see them. When kids are at a large school, they might hide in the bathroom or get in a fight. We are trained to understand how their trauma affects them. We don’t hold it against them if they have a down day. We push them when we need to, but if they are over-stimulated or depressed, we



message everyone and tell them not to push it that day.”

In addition to general content, Roanna teaches sewing, cooking, life and relationship skills, general hygiene, and anything else that might pertain to daily life.

She recently helped two students graduate using North Dakota’s Option Two program.

With the Option Two program, North Dakota modified graduation requirements to allow students to receive credits for a passing score on the relevant portion of the GED assessment. The program is for students who are credit deficient and at risk of dropping out of school because they will be unable to complete their graduation requirements with traditional credit recovery options.

“The GED has four portions, science, math, social studies, and English,” Roanna said. “If a student is in their junior or senior year and won’t have enough credits to graduate, but can pass that portion of the GED, they can acquire those missing credits and earn a high school diploma.”

One of Roanna’s students needed social studies credits to graduate. He spent two hours a day for two weeks in her classroom, studying everything to do with World War I, World War II, the Constitution, and amendments. After about two weeks, he said, “I think I can do this,” so Roanna took him to the Adult Learning Center to take the test.

“It was very suspenseful” Roanna said. “I checked online, and by the time we got to the Ranch, we knew

he had passed, which meant he had automatically graduated. I let him walk ahead to tell people in the office that he’d passed. Everyone was screaming and crying and congratulating him.”

Roanna said, “As Mrs. DeGree says, even if these kids are lying on the ground or refusing to participate and don’t look like they are listening, they are absorbing information. They are capable.”

Roanna and her husband live in Minot, ND, with their 17-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter. She loves anything to do with crafts and shares those skills in the classroom.

Michelle Racine

Special Education Teacher, Minot

Michelle Racine, who has worked in special education for more than 30 years, says special ed is for students who don’t learn the typical way. Special education teachers provide interventions and strategies students need to be successful.

“They learn the same material,” she said, “but maybe in a different way. We might break the material into smaller chunks, teach slower, or spend more time explaining the vocabulary words.”

Michelle recently transitioned from teaching high school to elementary students.

“The biggest difference I see,” Michelle said, “is that elementary students don’t have as much control over their behavior. They don’t have as many coping skills and tools so it’s more of a struggle for them to regulate their emotions to handle the moment-to-moment frustrations.”

Michelle said a lot has changed since she started teaching, including the words people use to talk about special education.

“When I got my degree from Minot State University, it was called a bachelor’s degree in Mental Retardation. Years later, I got my master’s degree, and it was called a

master’s degree in severely mentally handicapped.”

Despite the words used to describe them, Michelle said the kids are amazing.

She said, “They have so many needs, but when you get to know them on a one-to-one basis,

they can be such sweethearts, in spite of the moments you want to tear your hair out!”

Michelle said the students are all so different and come with their own stories. Some of the kids are dysregulated in the cottage, but don’t have those same issues in school. Others are dysregulated no matter what setting they are in.

“And then we have some kids that



come just for our day program,” Michelle said. “Their learning and mental health challenges, often combined with instability in their families, just pulls on your heartstrings.”

Michelle is responsible for IEPs and behavior plans for both residential and day students. She has a resource room where students can come to get help with their classwork or work on their goals.

“I get to witness some of the moment-to-moment successes. For day program students who are often with us longer, we can see how they have grown and succeeded over time,” Michelle said. “As far as residential students, you take it on faith that you have helped them be successful and that they have learned to overcome or cope with the things that make school difficult.”

Michelle said it’s important to set expectations for how students should manage themselves in the classroom, so they aren’t confused or unclear.

“And then you learn to read those little signs that they are becoming dysregulated so you can intervene before it escalates,” she said. “If you can catch it early, you can offer some of the coping skills, whether it be a fidget, music, or a mindful break out of the room.”

In her work, Michelle collaborates with other teachers and occupational therapists to meet each child’s individual needs. She really appreciates the residential treatment specialists who work with residential kids and says they do an excellent job caring for the kids and getting to know them.

“I have great co-workers at the Ranch,” Michelle said. “And we get so much support and backup from our principal and superintendent. If I need to say something or talk about a situation, I’m heard.”

Michelle has a daughter in Minot, a son in San Antonio, four grandchildren, and a great-grandchild on the way. She is actively involved in two animal rescue organizations in Minot. She also enjoys sitting in the sun with a good book and spending time at the lake.

Bethany Brown

Behavior Intervention Coordinator, Minot

Bethany Brown was a Special Education Teacher at the Ranch for five years before taking on the role of Behavior Intervention Coordinator, a new position created when the Ranch started serving more elementary students with significant needs. Bethany manages the students’ behavior intervention and safety plans.

When Bethany was in fourth grade, she always wanted to assist the teacher and read out loud to the other students. That was when she decided she wanted to be a teacher. After high school, she attended Minot State University and earned a degree in Special Education. Several years later, she completed her master’s degree

in Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

“Once I finished that, I finally felt ready to look for an actual special education job,” she said. “I had done a practicum at the Ranch while getting my bachelor’s degree and wanted to return. I started part-time, and after just six weeks, Tina [DeGree] hired me for a Special Education position.”

Bethany defines special education as a way of making sure every student has access to education, is able to participate however they are

able, and can get the most out of it.

“A lot of times, mental health or behavioral challenges are barriers to kids getting an education,” she said. “Before we can do anything else, we have to address those

issues. Lately, we have seen a lot of students on the autism spectrum where social skills and executive functioning are tough.”

Bethany spends much of her time helping students develop social skills and coping skills. She said it’s often hard to tell if the behavior is because of a child’s mental health or trauma history or if it’s because reading is really hard and stresses them out.

“Academics, behaviors, and trauma



are often really intertwined. It takes time to pick that apart and find out what is really going on,” Bethany said.

She also involves the students’ parents whenever she can. At Dakota Memorial School, families are encouraged to be involved in their child’s education. Many have had bad experiences with their child’s school and didn’t get the help they needed.

“If you can listen and take in information, they feel like somebody has heard them and something is going to happen,” Bethany said. “They know their child better than anyone. It must be hard if they’re not asked, or no one is listening to them.”

Bethany enjoys walking around the school, sitting with kids in class, and talking to teachers about how it’s going and where they need help. In doing functional behavior assessments, Bethany gathers information from everyone involved with the child and then walks through the steps.

“What happens before the behavior? What is the behavior? What happens after the behavior? The behavior plan usually starts with the behavior and what we want to replace it with,” she said. “Then we talk about how we are going to prevent the negative behavior, how we are teaching replacement behaviors, and how we are going to respond to the behavior.”

“Every one of these kids is a unique individual,” Bethany said, “and there is usually something that will work for them. If we are willing to be creative and flexible

enough, we will find a way to help them be successful.”

Bethany talked about one elementary student who screams when he needs an energy outlet. She participated in a group debriefing after an incident where they talked about the things he likes to do.

“He likes to rearrange the furniture and build things. He keeps a running journal with how fast he is,” Bethany said. “These are all little things that can help him get out energy. Someone said, ‘Well, that’s a weird list.’ But some of those ideas are probably going to work.”

Bethany carries around a packet of cue cards kids can use to identify coping skills that might work in the moment.

“If I’m walking through the school and see a kid struggling, I can stop and say, ‘We need a coping skill. Can you find something here that will work?’ They might choose one that is taking deep breaths or a card indicating they need a break,” Bethany said. “I gave one little guy a card he can hold up asking people to be quiet. He might not be able to speak up to say he needs a break, so instead of having a meltdown, he holds up the card to let the adults in the room know he needs a break.”

She loves being creative and trying different strategies for different kids.

“As educators, we are learning that we don’t always have to do things the same way,” she said. “We are also learning the value of including kids in the decision-making. Even younger kids are much more

invested when treated that way. When I do a behavior assessment, I ask the kid what is going on. You get valuable information from kids when you talk to them about what is happening.”

Bethany and her husband live in Minot, ND, with their dogs. She likes to read, bake, do crafty things, spend time outside, and garden.

With special education integrated into the Ranch’s trauma-informed care practices, Superintendent Tina DeGree says the Ranch combines the best of educational quality and standards with knowledge about brain development and trauma so more kids like Austin can be successful in school.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are a federal designation used to trigger special education services. They are not an indicator of intellect or potential but are used to identify special learning needs like behavior, emotional disorders, deficiencies in specific subject areas, and lack of social skills.

Special education makes up a large part of the schooling we provide at the Ranch as typically, 80-85% of our students have an IEP. In addition, while all schools are required by law to provide special education for every student with an IEP, all students at Dakota Memorial School receive individualized learning and support.

Frequently Asked Questions

Building empathy and compassion



By Deaconess
Kelly Bristow

What does empathy look like at the Ranch?

em-pa-thy (noun): The ability to sense other people's emotions and imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.

Many Ranch kids come to us in "survival mode," focused on keeping themselves safe and making it to the next day. When self-preservation is your top priority, empathy can take a back seat. Forming and maintaining close connections and intimacy with others can be challenging to impossible without empathy.

This is not always the case, but it rings true for many kids. To be empathetic, you must also be able to regulate your emotions, a skill most of our kids lack when they first arrive. This means they often struggle to recognize and understand their own emotions, much less someone else's.

Fortunately, most people have the capacity to develop empathy given time, modeling, and practice.

At the Ranch, empathy starts with each of us as employees.

As it says in Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

The first thing we do for our residents is show them empathy and compassion. Through our actions and

words, we demonstrate to them that their lives have value and their feelings matter. They are loved and redeemed children of God, deserving of grace and care.

We model what empathy is by saying things such as, "I can't fully understand your experience, but I'm here to listen." And "Please help me understand why you're feeling this way." We take it a step further by asking, "How can I help?" We do our best to figure out why our kids behave the way they do and help them find the tools they need to succeed.

We also show empathy to one another. Our kids sometimes forget that staff members are also human beings with feelings and different life experiences. The kids learn about empathy when we show grace and care in how we treat each other.

In addition to modeling empathy, we find ways to teach it in the moment. When one of our kids says something insensitive to a peer, we can redirect them with, "Hey, how would it make you feel if someone said that to you?" They often say, "I wouldn't care," but deep down, they know it is something that would hurt them, too.

Getting to a point where our kids can think before they speak takes repetition. We must be patient and kind as we redirect children over and over.

Every 12 weeks, empathy is the theme of the week. We talk and learn about empathy in our groups (spiritual life, therapy, occupational therapy, nursing, and wellness) in different ways. In addition to

discussions and activities that teach empathy, we find ways for them to practice being empathetic. For instance, around holidays such as Christmas and Easter, we often make cards for nursing home residents. We talk about how they might feel during the holiday season, and how our small acts of kindness can brighten their days.

In our therapy and OT sessions, kids learn about emotion regulation, which involves recognizing their emotions and then using coping skills to help them manage those emotions. Once they can recognize and regulate their own emotions, they are better able to notice and respond to others' emotions, thereby showing them empathy.

Another area in which our residents practice emotion regulation is with our horse program. Horses are very attuned to others' emotional states and will often mirror people's emotions. If a child is calm, the horse will be much more accepting of their approach than if they are dysregulated. To approach, connect, and build relationships with the horses, our kids must work to manage their emotions. This emotion regulation work is the backbone of empathy.

To be clear, Ranch kids do not lack the will to be empathetic, but the skill. They need a little extra help building the skill of empathy so they can live their lives to the fullest.

We join Jesus in His mission of coming, "that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10b).

Saving Grace

Concerned about children leaving the Ranch without follow-up care and a lack of community services to prevent children from needing residential treatment, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch founded Dakota Family Services (DFS) in 2005. It has evolved over the years, and now DFS clinics in Minot and Fargo, ND, provide outpatient counseling, psychology, and psychiatric services to children, adolescents, and adults.

Their work with Ranch kids and their families has allowed Dakota Family Services' providers to develop unprecedented skills and techniques to meet the needs of children who have complex trauma, psychiatric, and behavioral challenges. They are the best of the best, and other professionals in the mental health community often refer to DFS when a child's diagnoses and behaviors outweigh their expertise and experience.

While residential care is sometimes the best alternative to keep a child safe and provide them with tools for healing, the Ranch and Dakota Family Services are committed to helping children live in the community. Anne Friederichs and her family are one example of who Dakota Family Services was designed to serve.

Anne Friederichs was introduced to Dakota Family Services by a friend. They were talking one day and realized their children were dealing with some of the same challenges.

"Our oldest daughter was born with generalized anxiety. She was very introverted and scared of the world," Anne said. "We couldn't go anywhere

without spending 20 minutes telling her every single detail about where we were going and what we were doing. Then it'd take her another 20 minutes to get ready. If we said something like, 'Just get in the car. What's the big deal?,' it would start all over again, and we'd have to get through another 20 minutes of strong emotions."

Anne said their daughter would have moments where she was awesome, but the hard times were really hard, and

When they walked into the DFS clinic seven years ago, Anne said they felt welcomed and accepted.

"We didn't feel self-conscious or judged. Just sitting in the waiting room is therapeutic," Anne said. "It feels good to be there."

They did psychological testing and started seeing therapist Christy Wilkie, who had worked exclusively with children at the Ranch before moving to Dakota Family Services



Outpatient mental health services from Dakota Family Services "saved" the Friederichs family.

when she started school, it got worse. They were walking on eggshells, and the tension was beginning to affect their two younger daughters.

They had tried therapy, but it wasn't working. Anne and her husband, Troy, felt they had done everything to help their eight-year-old daughter, but when a friend highly recommended Dakota Family Services, they decided to give it a try.

to expand her impact to children through outpatient services.

Anne said, "She met with Christy weekly, and it made a big difference. Christy would ask her what it felt like when she walked into school. Or what it felt like when someone she didn't know was talking to her. She helped her label those thoughts and feelings, normalize them, and to stop and think before she reacted."



They also had regular appointments with Dr. Wayne Martinsen, psychiatrist at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and Dakota Family Services.

“Dr. Martinsen is an incredible person and is highly intelligent in his field,” Anne said. “He communicates on a normal level, so I understand what he is saying. He doesn’t doctor it up too much, and he doesn’t give up. He has stuck with us through this whole process.”

The providers at Dakota Family Services wrapped the entire family in care. The three girls see Christy and Dr. Martinsen, and Anne sees Dr. Megan Spencer. The DFS team has adjusted as the girls moved into different developmental stages and needed different things.

“It’s healthy to take care of your mental health, and there is no shame in getting help. Our communication is better. We are learning to talk to each other differently,” Anne said. “We can say, ‘I’m having a really anxious moment right now and need to take a breather.’ Troy and I have learned to have open conversations. We are more accepting and compassionate of each other. Thanks to Dakota Family Services, I am more confident in the choices we are making for our family.”

“This is our life. It’s the life we are meant to have, and I wouldn’t change it. It’s been a journey. We’ve had some interesting times, but the good always overshadows the bad. Dakota Family Services has been a saving grace for our entire family.”



Ways to Give

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

Give Now

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

Prayers

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

Memorials and Honorariums

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

Planned and Estate Gifts

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

Tree of Life

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



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.

Celebrations

Learning about philanthropy

We welcomed students from Horace, Oak Grove, Kindred, and Lake Park-Audubon high schools to our Fargo campus as part of the Barry Foundation's Philanthropy and Youth (PaY) program. The students toured the campus, learned about our programs, and asked many great questions!

Modeled after Youth in Philanthropy, an initiative of The Winnipeg Foundation, PaY is a program that introduces high school students to philanthropy by allocating funds to high schools in Fargo, ND, Moorhead and Detroit Lakes, MN, and the surrounding areas to use for grantmaking in the community.



Kindred High School students,
Kindred, ND.



Oak Grove High School students,
Fargo, ND.

Exploring sea life

Kids at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, visited the Oceanarium at Minnesota State University Moorhead! They interacted with sting rays, a horseshoe crab, a sea urchin, and a starfish. Their tour guide, Phil, was very knowledgeable and included a demonstration of feeding scallops to the fish.

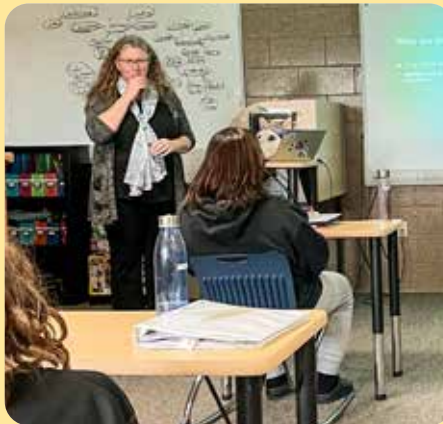


Planning for the future

Because of their traumas and chaotic home situations, many kids at the Ranch have not been able to set goals or consider college plans. We help kids plan for life after high school by giving them opportunities to explore different college and career options. Throughout the school year, students across the Dakota Memorial School District toured colleges and local businesses and heard from services like Job Corps to discover options for their futures.



Yei from Job Corps gave a presentation to students in Fargo on careers and the training process they offer.



Shana Klee, a job coach from Bismarck State College, talked with students in Bismarck about the program she oversees, as well as general information about the college.



Fargo students toured the University of North Dakota where they learned about the dorm accommodations and student activity clubs. They also met a therapy dog, Jersey Grace.



Students in Fargo toured Minnesota State Community and Technical College. While there, they visited the dental and nursing labs, and the auto mechanic bay. They also spoke with a professor from the criminal justice program.



Minot students visited Butler Machinery to learn about their schooling and training program. A couple of the students showed great interest in the program!



Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, attended the Career and Trade Expo at the Fargodome. They learned a lot about crime scene investigation and even got to try on police and fire-fighting gear!

Celebrations

Manifesting Spring

Spring has sprung at Dakota Memorial School, Minot! The bulletin board, designed and created by students in extracurricular activities, boasts a beautiful spring design and an even greater message. Dan Fagerlund, Coordinator of Students Services, said, "The students went with a spring theme that welcomes all who pass by to embrace the season and to 'grow and blossom.'"



The students worked on collaboration and patience skills as they worked as a team to create a spring-themed billboard.

Making science fun!

Students at Dakota Memorial School ventured out of the classroom to their local science museums. Hands-on experiences like this are not only fun for the kids, but help their brains make connections and bring learning to life.



Students at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, explored science concepts at the Magic City Discovery Center.



The newly constructed Gateway to Science proved to be a lot of fun and a great learning experience for kids at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck.

Law Enforcement Appreciation

C and M delivered a care basket filled with goodies and handwritten cards from the students and staff at Dakota Memorial School to the Fargo Police Department in celebration of National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.



Sergeants Kjonass and Ystebøe accepted the gift on behalf of the Fargo Police Department.

S'more science fun!

What could you make with a heat lamp, tin foil, and a cardboard box? Students in the extracurricular activities group at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, were challenged to come up with a creative way to make s'mores using just these items!



The s'mores were judged on presentation, overall marshmallow gooeyness, and melt-to-crunch ratio.

Spreading the love

We work hard to show kids at the Ranch they're loved and cared for all year round, but it's especially fun on Valentine's Day—a day dedicated to love and friendship! Kids at the Ranch decorate boxes to collect cards and treats from Ranch staff, as well as decorate valentines for others!



Kids at the Ranch make Valentine's Day cards for local nursing homes, as well as for donors at our Donor Appreciation Luncheon.

Projects like these give kids the chance to tap into their creativity and build relationships with their peers.

Marsh McLennan gives back

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch received a holiday donation from Marsh McLennan Agency. Matt Nagel, Market Development Manager and Employee Benefits Consultant at Marsh McLennan Agency, said, "We really appreciate your team and value the difficult work that you do, and hope this helps, in a small way, to continue that mission."



(From left) Brooke Rogers, Dan Gunderson, Linda Medhus, Alyssa Beal, Matt Nagel

Dakota Memorial School supports local families

Before Christmas, students at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, hosted a food drive. Some of the items went to Day Students and their families, while the rest were donated to the Minot Homeless Coalition for local families in need.



Students sorted donated items by type and then put together bags containing a variety of items.

Celebrations

He is risen, indeed!

Easter at the Ranch is a time to share the good news with our boys and girls that because Jesus rose again, they too can have new life. Leading up to Easter, kids make Easter art, decorate eggs, make special Easter treats (including a cake decorating contest!), and search for hidden plastic eggs filled with candy during the annual Easter egg hunt. Most importantly, they hear the Easter story many times, so they understand its significance to the world and to their lives.

Here's a look back at Easter 2023.



Each child etched their own unique design into a multi-colored cross.

Bible verse clues guided kids around campus to find hidden eggs.



Challenge Cottage won first place in appearance with their cute bunny cake made from cupcakes.



Butt Cottage took home the prize for "Most Artistic" with their River Cake, which made the judges think happy thoughts of the upcoming spring and summer.



Cornelsen Cottage won first place in creativity with their "Galaxy Cake," which featured the earth, stars, an ear of corn, and bunny tails.



Seegers Cottage took first place in taste! Their Chick Hatching cake featured a delicious Funfetti cake inside.



These tie-dyed eggs were created using whipped cream and food coloring!

Honey box packing

Each year, the Ranch sends more than 12,000 bottles of honey to our loyal Ranch donors and friends. And we're so grateful for the volunteers who help to make that possible!



The team at Johnson Eyecare & Eyewear spent a morning boxing honey at the Ranch.



Boy Scout Troop 425 boxed honey and helped get it ready to mail to Ranch donors.

Winter fun!

Kids in Minot had “snow” much fun at the winter park! Shelly, a Residential Treatment Specialist, said, “It lit up my heart seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces and how much they enjoyed each other’s company. Hearing the giggles made me realize why I do what I do.”



Activities like snow tubing give kids at the Ranch a chance to get into the community and take part in “normal” childhood experiences.

Custom sweatshirts for Wildlife Club

Kids in the Wildlife Club designed and created their own custom “Wildlife Club” sweatshirts using iron-on transfers. A special thanks to Susann Krueger and Sonja Meier, who provided their expertise and Cricut machines for the project. The kids are thrilled to wear them around campus.



Each child designed their own sweatshirt, so no two are alike!

Celebrations

Giving Thanks

For many of our kids, showing gratitude doesn't come naturally after all they've experienced. They've been focused on surviving, and they haven't been able to think outside themselves. While at the Ranch, we teach them the importance of gratitude and how it can benefit them and bring joy to their lives, and we help them recognize the things they have in their lives to be thankful for.



During the month of November, kids and staff on the Fargo campus decorated a board with all the things they're thankful for.



During therapy groups in Bismarck, kids wrote what they were thankful for on leaves and added them to the gratitude tree. They also talked about how to make gratitude a part of their daily lives.



Kids on the Fargo campus made turkey centerpieces for our annual Thanksgiving lunch, filled with the things they're thankful for. Karen, who led the activity shared, "We discussed how finding something to be grateful for brings happiness and peace. And we had a lot of fun! We even broke into a chorus of 'You Are My Sunshine.'"

Learning and growing

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, visited Baker Nursery and Garden. They painted pots and took a tour of the greenhouse. They even got to pot a sprig of the largest plant in the nursery, "Myra Jean."



Their tour guide, Audrey, gave a great tour and answered their many questions!

Women of the LWML support chapel building project on Bismarck campus

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch was the recipient of a \$100,000 grant from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League to support a capital campaign to build a Chapel on its Bismarck campus. The project fills a crucial gap in spiritual care and will be a healing space for boys and girls working to overcome the effects of significant childhood trauma.

Construction of the Chapel began with a groundbreaking in August 2023. The Chapel is expected to be completed by late Summer 2024.



Representatives from the Ranch (from left: Anne Compere, Laurie Dannewitz, and Rev. Rick Jones) accepted the check from ND LWML President, LaurieAnn Totenhagen.



Bismarck Chapel construction, day 155.

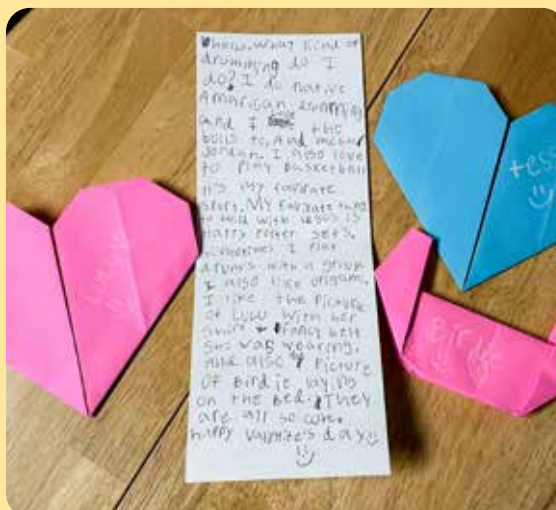
A Thanksgiving blessing

AgCountry Farm Credit Services in Minot donated funds to purchase Thanksgiving meals for our Minot Day Students and their families.



A special pen pal valentine

One of our Hope Notes friends recently sent a letter and pictures of her three dogs to one of our kids. He wrote back to her and included origami hearts and a bird that he made, one for each of her dogs.



Hope Notes pen pals provide encouragement to kids at the Ranch when they need it most.

New winter experiences

Another winter in North Dakota means more ice fishing! Even with uncharacteristically warm temperatures this winter, kids at the Ranch have had great opportunities to try their hands at ice fishing. It was also a very special experience for Residential Treatment Specialist, Zeus.

“I am from Iraq,” Zeus said. “I have been around the world, but never gone ice fishing. I went ice fishing for the first time today and it was so much fun. It was incredible for me to walk on the ice because I can still imagine there is water under there! I loved the number of stars that started showing when we were done. The vibe was unmatched, I recommend the experience to all.”



Ice fishing encourages team building, problem-solving, building resiliency, and most importantly, having fun.

Spreading the word about the Ranch

Thanks to Bart Day, President & CEO of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) and a Ranch board member, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch was one of two ministries featured in an article in the LCEF publication, “Interest Time.” The article, “When Families Break: These Christ-Centered Ministries Extend Hope to Households in Crisis” was published on the LCEF website in December. Scan the QR code on the right to check it out!



Celebrating excellence

Denny Grocott, Facilities Manager at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Fargo, received the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara, which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated the highest standard of integrity and moral character; displayed an outstanding degree of professional competence; served the United States Army or Marine Corps Field Artillery with selflessness; and contributed to the promotion of the Field Artillery in ways that stand out in the eyes of the recipient’s seniors, subordinates, and peers alike.



Denny, pictured with his wife, Amanda, was awarded the prestigious Honorable Order of St. Barbara from the United States Field Artillery Association.

Taking art out of the classroom

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, took a field trip to Clay Your Way, a local pottery painting and art studio. They learned about the kilns used to fire the pottery and painted their own works of art.



Art serves as a positive coping skill for kids at the Ranch.



Meeting kids where they're at

At the Ranch, we understand that our kids have been through a lot and it's important to meet them where they're at. Sometimes helping a child become their best self might look a little different than you'd expect.

One of our kids was having a tough moment, so Dee, a Shift Leader, took her to a scenic spot where she could enjoy a beautiful view and release some pent-up emotions by letting out a scream. Dee shared, "She asked me to do it with her and I did. Sometimes, unconventional methods like this can be effective in providing a positive and memorable experience that contributes to [our kids'] emotional well-being. The smiles after were an unforgettable moment."



Financial literacy for all!

Sara Meixner, DMS Fargo Mathematics Instructor, received a scholarship to attend the 14th annual Jump\$tart National Educator Conference in Arizona. The goal of the conference is to expand the impact of effective financial education in classrooms. Meixner has already added relevant resources she received to the DMS financial literacy library for teachers to use in developing their weekly financial literacy lessons.

Celebrations

Fit for life

Learning healthy habits and the importance of physical fitness is something kids at the Ranch will be able to use throughout their lives. To put those healthy habits into practice, kids at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, went to Big Muddy CrossFit. It was a great workout, and the kids and staff had a blast!



Celebrating our graduates

Graduation is a big deal at the Ranch! In December, we were able to celebrate with two students who graduated from Dakota Memorial School. We're so proud of their hard work and can't wait to see what they do next.



Quinton celebrated his graduation surrounded by family, friends, and staff at Dakota Memorial School.



After years of hard work, Bryce received his diploma from Shea Durham, Coordinator of Student Services.

Giving back to the community

Each year, the Grand Forks Thrift Store is blessed by the team at Opp Construction. From January to March, they're at the thrift store completing projects, including painting, small remodels, moving or setting up fixtures, installing lighting fixtures, sorting clothes, and more. Carrie Frankl, a project manager at Opp Construction, says it's a win-win: their employees can work during the slow winter months, and they are giving back to the community.



Volunteers make a huge difference at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Thrift Stores and support our mission to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.

Bismarck Chapel Update

Building a place of hope

Thanks to a mild winter and a great contractor, the construction of the chapel on our Bismarck campus is right on schedule to be completed by July. We plan to hold a dedication ceremony and open house in August.



The chapel will represent to the community that Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a Christ-centered facility.

Stained glass artist, Stacy Askvig, completed the final panel in mid-March. With the help of her husband and Ranch board member, Brent Askvig, she is preparing the panels for transport and installation.



The chapel will provide a hope-filled space for Ranch children and staff to hear the Gospel, pray, find peace, and learn of God's unconditional love.



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Each Purchase Provides Hope and Healing

Shop our elevated second-hand online boutique consisting of fashion-forward, hand-selected modern and vintage goods.

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Modern & Vintage Goods



Scan to start
shopping now!



My fork in the road

Forty-eight years after his stay at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Mark French still recalls the lessons he learned and the people who impacted him.

“I was at a fork in the road,” Mark said. “What I learned at the Ranch helped me take a better path and, for the most part, make good choices. My time at the Ranch was the most profoundly impactful time in my young life.”

Mark arrived at the Ranch in 1976 after getting involved in petty vandalism and truancy and being what the court described as an “unruly child.”

“I was just a lost teen trying to function in the midst of some challenging times. My parents divorced when I was 11 years old, and I remember this feeling coming upon me that I was an outsider,” Mark said of being in a single-parent household in the 1970s.

“My friends all had two parents, I felt I was different. I started hanging with kids in similar situations and trouble always seemed to find us. While I didn’t initiate the trouble, I participated and don’t excuse myself.”

“When I got into trouble, I knew it would hit my mother hard. I could see the pain on my mother’s face, and that always bothered me,” he said. “I also felt the embarrassment of bringing this into our house. My mother worked three jobs to make sure we had a roof over our heads and food on the table, and I was bringing this pain into her life.”

Mark said this was just the

beginning of several tumultuous years where he had trouble in and out of school.

“My seventh and eighth grade [years] were absolutely horrible for my teachers, my mom, and myself. I was bullying other kids, acting out in class, trying to be the class clown, and doing whatever I could to grab the attention of my classmates at the expense of my teachers. I was called to the principal’s office over and over. They kept telling me I had to shape up, and all I could think of was getting out of that room so I could go hang with my buddies,” Mark said. “In reflection, I suppose I was doing it all to defer and deflect what I was feeling.”

Mark and his mom were called in front of the school board when he was in ninth grade. They gave him a stern slap on the wrist and told him he needed to change or face bigger consequences. A month later, he was back in front of the school board, and this time, they suspended him from school for a week.

His poor behaviors continued when he got back to school, and then his mother received a letter from the juvenile court system with a date and time she and Mark had to be at the courthouse for a meeting with the juvenile commissioner.

“By this time, I was already on probation for some of the petty stuff I was doing,” Mark said. “But now I was scared and ashamed. I vividly remember my mother and I standing on the marble floor in the basement of the courthouse, looking at a solid, huge, oak door. It

was going through my mind that on the other side of that door were the people who controlled my fate.”

When Mark and his mother walked into the room, he was surprised by all the people in the room, including his probation officer, the superintendent of schools, a former music teacher, the junior high principal, and others.

“Phyllis Loftsgaard was the juvenile commissioner—I’ll never forget her name,” Mark said. “She invited us into the room, and they went around the table talking about what they had faced with me over the past few years and the things they had tried to help me get better. Phyllis looked me in the eye and said, ‘Mark, as you’ve heard, we’ve tried everything, and now you leave me no choice but to send you away. Hopefully, you will get the help you need. I am sending you to Dakota Boys Ranch in Minot, ND, for a period of no less than one year.’”

“The fear that overcame me in that moment was just intense,” Mark said. “In my mind, I was going to prison. I was never a fighter, and I was going to a place for kids who I imagined were mean and who would force me to fight and get into more trouble. I was terrified! The four-hour drive from Grafton to Minot was filled with anxiety and fear.”

Upon arrival, Mark and his mom were met outside of Challenge Cottage by warm and welcoming house parents. Then he walked into the cottage and saw three boys playing foosball.

“All I heard was, ‘Hey, do you play foosball? Come on, we need a fourth.’ My house parents gave my mom a tour and briefed her on what was happening, and I played foosball,” Mark said. “That was the best way for them to break the ice. They made me feel like I was accepted.”

Mark was slowly integrated into activities, school, and counseling and met people who would change his life.

“I remember so many faces and names,” Mark said. “Fabian was in charge of the ceramic shop. He helped me realize I loved to create, perhaps that’s why I’m a photographer today. The kitchen lady made me and every kid who walked through the doors feel valued. She always met us with a kind word, and you felt at home when she was present.”

Ranch staff structured lessons in such a way that Mark said even though they might not have stuck in

the moment, they would certainly be valuable later in life.

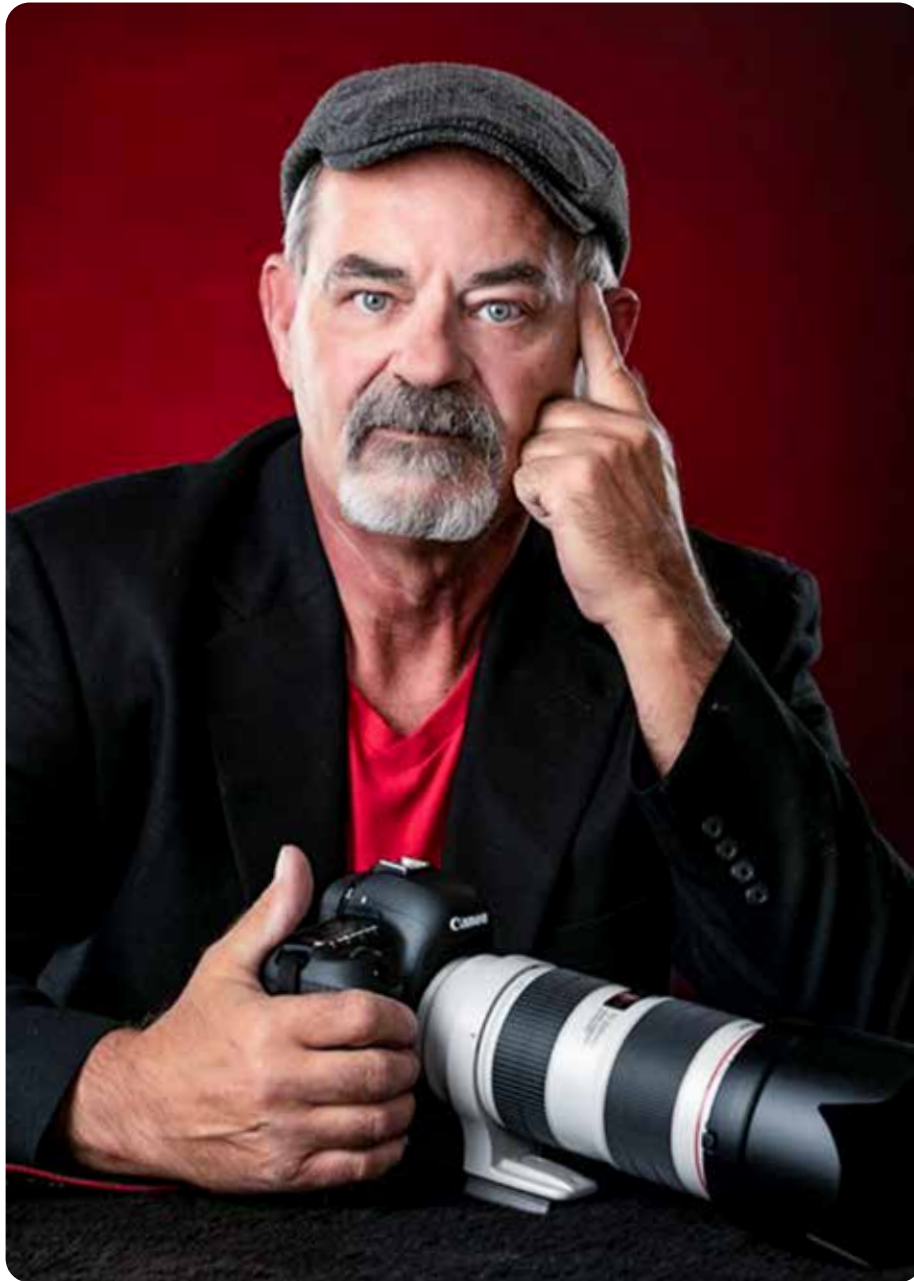
“The Ranch taught me how to make good decisions in life, but I didn’t know it while I was living it,” Mark said. “There was one

gentleman, Jack Krukenberg, who had the most profound impact on me, more than any other man in my life. He was a big man and had a voice that commanded attention but in a very calming way. He

showed me, usually without saying a word, that you are going to make decisions in life and they are either going to work out well or they are going to have negative consequences. And typically, it’s the path that’s not so good that is going to be the easiest.”

Mark recalls learning one important lesson when the river was flooding and some homeowners near the Ranch needed help sandbagging. The call went out for volunteers, and not a single boy volunteered, including Mark.

“We were called out to the front of the main building, and the director at the time, Larry Knutson, didn’t say we had to help, but after he laid into us and expressed



Mark was profoundly impacted by his time at the Ranch, including discovering his love for creating. He now uses his creativity in his professional photography business.

his displeasure, every one of us reconsidered and went. I'm so thankful for that because it exposed us to what service looked like. Seeing the appreciation on the faces of the homeowners was priceless," he said. "When we got done, Larry told us he'd never been prouder of a group of kids. I can still see his face. It was the first time I felt a real sense of doing something good for others. It felt good."

Mark acknowledges that he didn't always choose the right path after his year at the Ranch. However, he believes his experiences helped him learn and grow from his mistakes and to keep trying to choose the better path.

After leaving the Ranch, it was difficult for Mark to transition back to school in his hometown of Grafton because he had burned so many bridges with his teachers.

"The Ranch reinforced the importance of education and while I had difficulties in a school setting when I returned home, I never lost sight of the importance of education," Mark said. "This prompted me to join Job Corps where I completed my GED and learned a trade. While thankful for obtaining my GED, one of my biggest regrets is not walking across the stage with my Grafton Class of 1979 classmates."

Having a GED opened the door for Mark to join the United States Air Force where he served from 1981-1986. He was stationed in the United Kingdom for three years and in San Antonio, TX, for one

year. After the military, he returned to North Dakota where he held a variety of jobs. He married, had a daughter, and began a successful 18-year career at Cargill. After working several years as an operations technician, Mark's manager invited him to attend a Dale Carnegie communications course which opened new opportunities. Mark said it was by far the best training he's ever received.

When he retired from Cargill in 2018, Mark had served in a variety of supervisory and management roles. His last role was working as a Performance Coach helping other Cargill employees identify their leadership styles and prepare for greater roles in the company. He also found joy in sharing his insights with others by way of public speaking engagements. Mark said his most notable speaking engagement was speaking to business students at Iowa State University on the value of creating win-win opportunities while completing internships and co-ops. He hopes to one day speak in person at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch to share his experiences and perhaps encourage positive change.

Mark, who now lives in Grafton where he moved in 2021 to be close to his aging mother, would like the kids at the Ranch to know that their time there can positively impact them for the rest of their lives.

"You might not understand the value of what is happening in your life right now," Mark said, "but I guarantee down the road, you are going to look back and see the

impact. Be grateful for this gift!"

Mark is just beginning a journey across the United States to photograph the "hidden gems" of our country. Follow him on Facebook at "MA French, Photography."

How things have changed

Mark French talks about how he was "sent" to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch by the Juvenile Commissioner in the 1970s

The Ranch continues to work with the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS), but the process is very different. Tim Gienger, Senior Director of Residential Partnerships, explains.

"Kids are no longer sentenced to facilities but referred to treatment programs. When children commit a crime and are referred to DJS, they are assigned a caseworker who helps them receive the services they need. Services can include restitution, supervised probation, and/or residential treatment at the Ranch for their behavioral health issues.

"We have learned unlawful behavior is often a symptom of a child's trauma or life circumstances. These are the children we help at the Ranch. We work with them to feel better about themselves, and in turn, make choices that don't result in legal consequences."

Do not let concerns about capital gains taxes prevent you from doing what you want with your property.

Sale and Unitrust



If you are holding on to your property to avoid taxes, there is another option to consider. It is called a sale and unitrust. By transferring a portion of your property to a charitable trust, you can avoid paying capital gains tax on the sale of the property inside the trust. The trust will pay you income for life or a term of years and, because the trust also benefits charity, you will receive a charitable income tax deduction.

How a Sale and Unitrust Works

- You establish a charitable remainder unitrust.
- You transfer a portion of your property to the unitrust while retaining ownership of the other portion.
- You and the unitrust proceed to jointly sell the property. You receive cash from the sale and the rest of the sales proceeds are paid to the unitrust.
- You will not have to pay capital gains tax on the part of the property transferred to the trust.
- You receive a charitable income tax deduction to offset the tax from the cash proceeds that you receive from the sale.
- Once the property sells, the trust provides income to you.

You maintain control

With a Sale and Unitrust, you control who benefits from the trust assets and how.

- You set the payment rate and schedule, based on your needs.
- You can direct payments to you, you and your spouse, or to your family.
- The remainder of the trust goes to further the Ranch mission.



DakotaRanch.org
1-800-344-0957

A different kind of dad

When Levi and four of his siblings lived with his dad and stepmom, they were rarely allowed to leave the house except for church, and he wasn't allowed to talk to his mom. They were homeschooled, but he said they didn't have grades or learn much.

"My dad wasn't the best dad, I guess," Levi said. "He was very controlling and isolated us."

When Levi was 10, his dad was accused of child abuse, and Levi and his siblings were moved out of the home into foster care. After three years, Levi moved back with his dad and stepmom, but the environment was tense, and he started getting in trouble. Some legal trouble led to him being placed at the Ranch.

As you can imagine, coming to the Ranch was difficult.

"I was kind of a nervous wreck that first day," Levi said. "It was hard for me, but I started feeling better once I was there for a while. I felt like I had help when I needed it. People supported me."

Once he started to trust that the people at the Ranch really wanted to help him, Levi started working on controlling his anger.

"Anger was a pretty big thing when I got here," Levi said. "Being respectful was another. At the Ranch, I started to understand what was getting me in trouble. The people there really helped me learn to respect others and their stuff."

Levi had a strong connection with his primary Residential Treatment Specialist, Julius, and knew he could go to him whenever he was having a rough time.

"He made a big difference and showed me how and why to be respectful. My therapist, Boni, was also a big support and someone I could go to if I needed something.

Boni had answers to just about everything!" Levi said.

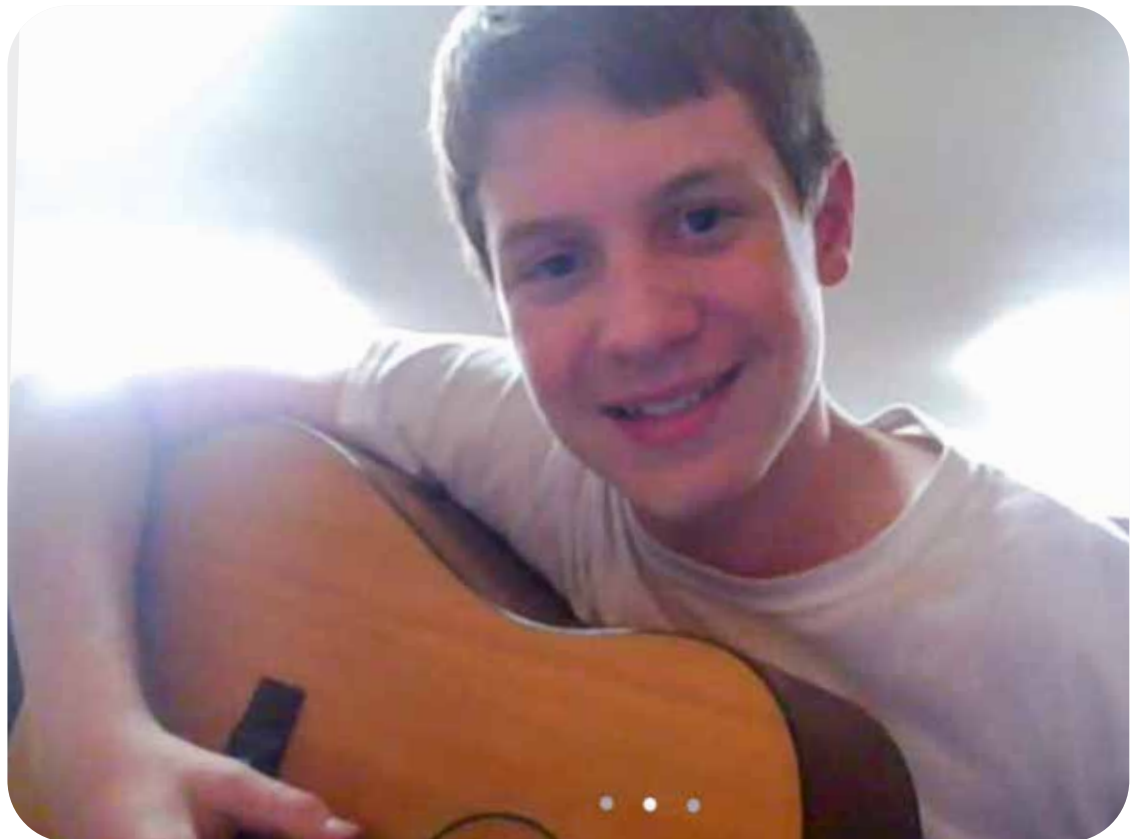
"Boni and others would talk to me about things, and for a while, it didn't seem to do anything," he said. "But then my brain started processing what was going on and it really started to help."

After leaving the Ranch, Levi moved to a foster home, while his brothers and sisters live in other foster homes.

"Being away from my siblings and not knowing how they are doing is really hard on me," he said.

But he is making the best of it.

"I feel like a normal 14-year-



While at the Ranch, Levi connected with his mom via video calls. He was excited to show off his his new guitar skills.

old now,” he said. “I try to be respectful and not pick fights, and most of the time I succeed! I’ve got a few friends I hang out with, I’m going to public school, I’m talking to family more than I used to.”

While Levi chooses to not talk to his dad, he has built a relationship with his mom and recently moved to Michigan to live with her.

“She is doing well,” Levi said. “And now that I know she tried to talk to us, but my dad wouldn’t let her, we are building our relationship.”

As for where he would be if it wasn’t for the Ranch, Levi said, “I’d probably be still living with my dad and it’d be a rough life. After I went to the Ranch, everything just seemed better. Once I really thought about what I did and everything, I thought to myself, ‘I need help, so why would I refuse it?’”

Levi’s dreams for the future are to grow up, get a successful job, and have a family. He wants to make good choices and be intentional about how he treats people.

“I’m going to be a different kind of dad,” Levi said. “I might be stern, but I’m also going to be nice and loving.”

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.



Since moving to Michigan to live with his mom, Levi has bonded with his mom’s bird, Paco, (above) and dog, Apache (left).

Big brain, big heart



Jim, Larry, and Cole make the world a better place through service and philanthropy.

Dr. Jim Knutson

North Dakota. When he realized he wasn't cut out for clinical psychology, he shifted his career focus to Human Factors Engineering, earning his master's and doctorate degrees at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta.

Jim describes Human Factors Engineering as "a marriage between psychology and engineering."

"We know how people process information, what colors they see, what kinds of things they can do, and how they see motion. That's the psychology part. And then you've got Engineering, where you must design something that people use," Jim said. "Human Factors Engineers make that interaction between humans and machines the best it can be. All my professional life, I've strived to design things to be easy to use and safe."

Early in his career, Jim worked on one of the first graphical ATMs, designing

Although he humbly attributes most of his accomplishments to persistence rather than brainpower, Dr. Jim Knutson is a soft-spoken, kind man, with a big brain.

After growing up in Minot, ND, Jim earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of

software that allowed users to push buttons on the screen rather than hard metal buttons. He also did some work for the Army on "head-up displays" for Desert Storm.

"In the night vision goggles, sand dunes look just like the sky, so the helicopter pilots were flying right into them," Jim said. "We designed 'head-up displays' on the night vision goggles so they could avoid that when flying close to the ground at night."

Later, at Gateway Computers, his group made computer setup easier by color coding all the ports, and by developing a pictorial setup poster showing how everything went together.

Jim now works for MTS systems, a leading global supplier of testing and simulation systems used for product design, manufacturing, and research. In simple terms, Jim designs the user interfaces for systems that test cars, medical devices, and other products in the automotive, aerospace, biomedical, energy, and civil engineering industries.

In addition to a big brain, Jim has a big heart.

His heart can be partially attributed to childhood memories of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. Jim's father, Larry Knutson, a long-time Ranch leader, involved him in the kids' day-to-day activities.

"We moved from East Grand Forks, MN, to Minot, ND, when Dad took the job at the Ranch. I spent a lot of time at the Ranch, riding horses, helping with the honeybees, doing ceramics with the boys, and

making things in the shop with Jack Kruckenberg.”

Jim’s parents role-modeled a spirit of giving and caring about the world, both at the Ranch and at home.

“It was the little things,” Jim said. “You go to church and give money because that perpetuates the church. They always gave money so people could do wonderful things.”

His parents, Larry and Mickey, also modeled a giving spirit in the careers they chose. They both impacted hundreds of lives through their work—Larry through his work at the Ranch and Mickey as the founder of the Nurse Practitioner and Physician’s Assistant programs at the University of North Dakota (UND).

“I started giving to the Ranch because Dad told me that I should, and it was just a thing I did,” Jim said. “Now I’m more discerning and I give to places that make a large impact in the world. I think our world has gone astray in some areas so I look for places that can bring back some of the goodness. The Ranch does good work in the world, and I appreciate that.”

Jim directs his donations to a scholarship created by his dad, the Knutson Family Scholarship Fund, to help Ranch boys and girls further their post-secondary education. Many former Ranch residents have received significant scholarships that allow

them to attend college or trade school.

“When Dad created the fund, it was only available for those seeking a college education,” Jim said. “A few



Larry didn’t waste any time getting Jim on a Ranch horse, and when he was older, Jim competed in the rodeo with boys who lived at the Ranch.

years ago, we opened it up to trade schools, realizing that not everyone needs to go to college. The scholarship fund is a vehicle where we can get kids the training they need so that they can make the world a better place.”

When Jim makes a gift, he submits it to his employer who generously matches it, times three.

“Through their matching program, my employer allows me to give more than I normally could by compounding my donation,” Jim said.

The family legacy of giving continues with Jim’s son, Cole.

“Just like my parents did with me, we started early with Cole. We gave in church and he gave in Sunday School,” Jim said. “When I receive letters

from scholarship recipients at the Ranch, and at UND where Mom also has a scholarship endowment in her name, I share the news with him. We talk about the good we are doing through the scholarship funds. I encourage him to give, but don’t push it on him now that he is an adult. It’s not like when he was young, and I could ask him if he put his quarter in the Sunday

School offering! Now, Cole is a very empathetic man who makes the world better through multiple service efforts that are important to him.”

Jim drove his dad to Minot last summer to visit the Ranch campus where he spent so many years. At age 89, Larry continues to support the Ranch and enjoys staying connected to the work and the people. Jim said it’s fun to go back and see how the Ranch has evolved over the years.

“I’m just very, very proud to have been a little part of the Ranch throughout its history,” he said.

Finding love over a donut



Fred and Jean Baue

Sitting down with Fred and Jean Baue is like attending a marriage retreat. They laugh together. They listen to each other. And their respect and love for each other come through loud and clear in their words and actions.

Fred says, “We can talk about books, ideas, music, politics, spirituality, and all kinds of things. One of the reasons I was attracted to Jean was she wasn’t afraid to have a brain!”

The couple met when they were both attending Florida State University in the mid-seventies. Fred was studying the classical guitar and Jean was working on two master’s degrees, one in music with a focus on vocal performance and another in library science.

For Fred, it was love at first sight.

“We had a mutual friend through Jean’s church. He called me one day and said, ‘Fred, get your guitar and come over here. There are two good-looking girls here.’ I grabbed my guitar and went over there right quick,” Fred said. “One of them was Jean, and honestly, I was in love. Bingo. Just like that!”

Jean said she was very reserved and didn’t fall for Fred as quickly as he did for her, but she soon succumbed to his charm and their many shared interests. They married two years later and moved back to Fred’s hometown of St. Louis, MO, where he attended Concordia Seminary.

“Being a pastor was my second

career,” Fred said. “I spent a number of years playing in coffee houses, pubs, and folk festivals. While studying at Florida State [University], I started going back to church and got interested in reading the Bible. Much to my surprise, the Holy Ghost grabbed me and dragged me into the ministry. I’ve been doing that quite happily for 40 years.”

In addition to pastoring congregations in Minnesota, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, Fred was an editor at Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. While still in Florida, Jean worked behind the scenes cataloging music at the Florida State University Library. When they moved back to St. Louis, she was the librarian archivist at Concordia Publishing House.

In 1991, Fred and Jean co-wrote a hymn titled “What is This Bread?” for a communion service at their church in Tucson, AZ.

“Much to our surprise, it became very popular,” Fred said.

The hymn was first published in the 1998 Hymnal Supplement and later added to the “Lutheran Service Book,” a hymnal used by Lutheran congregations around the world.

Fred said, “I was in the Dominican Republic in January and I found out that this little hymn we wrote has become quite popular in Latin America.”

Ranch connections

Growing up in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Fred said he had always been familiar with Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and the

annual Honey Sunday the Ranch held at his church. It wasn't until one of his and Jean's three children needed help that he understood the life-changing impact of the Ranch.

"Our son, Mike, is autistic and as a teenager he started acting out quite a bit," Fred said. "We were desperate for help and the Ranch helped enormously. After his time at the Ranch, Mike was a lot calmer and a little more gathered together. That is the main thing I noticed, and that's still there. Mike has his ups and downs, but don't we all. He is an asset to the community and has a good Christian faith."

"It's not an exaggeration to say that the changes in Mike during his time at the Ranch were like night and day," Jean said. "He wasn't constantly tied up in knots. He could find out about the world around him and not feel like he was constantly under pressure."

At age 38, Mike lives in his own apartment and has a great group of friends. He worked several years in the fast-food industry and was good at it.

"I was worried about customer engagement," Jean said, "but he ended up having customers that came regularly and looked forward to seeing him. We didn't think he would thrive in that rapid fire environment, but he did. I think that is a big indication of how the Ranch helped get him started

and keep going in his adjustment to society."

Mike recently reached out to a local agency that specializes in providing services to adults with autism.

Fred said, "He initiated contact with the job search department and has been meeting with a job coach to develop his resume and look for work. He is a big, strong man and likes physical work, so he has some good things going with that agency."

Supporting the Lord's work

Born in San Antonio, TX, Jean grew up in an Air Force family, moving every 2-3 years.

"Giving was definitely modeled in my home," Jean said. "It started with weekly giving at church. In addition to financial contributions, they did charitable work. My mother volunteered with the Red Cross and the Girl Scouts. The Air Force kept my dad pretty busy as a pilot, but when he retired, he became involved in supporting charities in some way or another."

Fred's family was very intentional in teaching him the importance of generosity.

"When I was a boy, my mother sat me down and said in a very simple manner, 'Your father is very generous with the church.' That made an impression on me and I've never

forgotten it. He was a model to me for supporting the work of the Lord. He was also active in the community, and his work as a funeral director was a public service in itself."

Both families modeled generosity in service, and when Fred and Jean were able to help out, they put Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch on their list of regular giving.

"We are forever grateful to the Ranch for turning Mike's life around," Jean said, "and glad to donate here and there as best as we can."

In "retirement"

In their so-called "retirement," Fred and Jean enjoy eating out, watching old movies, discussing everything under the sun, and exploring their shared interests in music, art, and theater.

Jean also loves to read, sing in the church choir, and get together with friends. Fred stays busy writing, playing in coffee houses, and doing on-call ministerial work.

They plan to support the Ranch as long as they are able, not only because of the impact the Ranch had on their own family but because of its professionalism and Christian foundation.

"I'm grateful to support the Ranch because of the values it upholds," Fred said. "In addition to the spiritual component, the Ranch's professional treatment programs are first class. I would encourage anyone who knows of a boy or girl that needs professional help to check out the Ranch and become a generous supporter!"

"It's not an exxageration to say that the changes [in our son] during his time at the Ranch were like night and day."

Mission Advancement

A spirit of giving



**By Lisa Cole,
Mission
Advancement
Officer**

I attended my first Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Donor Appreciation Lunch in the 1990s, and it has become one of my favorite events.

The event was started many years ago by Ranch donors, Duane and Luann Kiefel. Duane and Luann wintered in Arizona and wanted to get together with other Ranch donors who lived in Arizona full-time or part-time. So, they started inviting them to their home for a Valentine's Day fish fry.

It became, and remains, a time to connect, share stories, hear from past residents of the Ranch, and acknowledge the invaluable importance of your prayers and support for the kids in our care.

When the event became too large to hold at the Kiefel's home, it was moved to a Mesa hotel and organized by Ranch staff.

The Kiefel's have since passed on, but we continue their tradition, and a few years ago formed a committee of amazing folks to help organize the luncheon. The Arizona Steering Committee meets twice a year and plays a vital role in orchestrating this significant event. Their responsibilities range from sending out heartfelt invitations to facilitating the registration process.

The spirit of giving and gratitude takes center stage as the committee

gears up for the annual event. They come together to work, pray, and share their ideas for how we can best express our gratitude and appreciation to the faithful donors who support the Ranch ministry.

As we prepared for this year's luncheon, one of our committee members wrote a poem that encapsulates the essence of gratitude and the spirit of giving that defines this event.

In the heart of the Dakota, where kindness takes its stand, Volunteers unite, a compassionate band.

With hands that toil and hearts that care, You stuff the invites with love to share.

A Valentine's feast in Mesa, so divine, Where warmth and joy in every valentine.

Delicious menu, a banquet for the soul, Creating moments that make hearts whole.

Thank you, volunteers, for the love you bestow, In this gathering, your kindness does show.

As you depart, carry the spirit of cheer, For the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, hold it near.

In Mesa, on Feb 14, let love unfold, A celebration of hearts, a story told.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for the precious children who come to the Ranch where they have a safe place to live, learn, and heal. We are so very grateful to you!

If you live or winter in Arizona and would like to join our Arizona Steering Committee, please email me at l.cole@dakotaranch.org or call 701-721-2425.

Your prayers for our kids are a source of healing and hope. If you have any questions about the Ranch, contact Lisa Cole, or any Mission Advancement team member, at 1-800-344-0957 or info@dakotaranch.org. We would love to visit with you about how you can support our mission of helping at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.



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Linda Medhus
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Senior Development
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Anne Compere
Director of Mission
Advancement



Angela Kargbo
Development Officer



Janie Wunderlich
Development Officer



Foundation and Corporate Donations

Inspiritus Community Health Foundation; Wildlife Club;

\$32,712.70 (Minot)

The Chatlos Foundation;

\$1,000

The Tom & Frances Leach Foundation; DMS Safety Upgrades;

\$5,000 (Bismarck)

WSI Ergonomic Initiative Grant; Ergonomic Updates;

\$9,167.69 (Minot)

Will you host a Ranch event in your community?

In the last few years, Ranch donors have hosted events in other cities to bring current donors together and introduce new people to the Ranch mission. If you are interested in hosting an event in your part of the country, please contact us at 701-509-4547.

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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

November 1, 2023 - February 29, 2024

ALBERS, HENRY "HANK"

Cecilia Albers
Jan Albers
Michelle Bachmeier
Wava Bails
Stephen & Shelly Campbell
Jeb Carlson
Patricia Churchill
Daniels Company
Lonnie Henke
Dick Letteer
Philip & Sarah Lukas
Leman Olson
Joan Sailer
Kevin Stadler
Shawn Strand
Melanie Tschider
Anthony Wagner

ALTEPETER, DARREL

Clayton & Zona Pearson

ALWIN, REX

Betsy Alwin

ANDERSON, CURTIS

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Mrs. Lorina Zuern

AVERY, AMANDA

Mark Avery

BALZART, JONE

Dan Soler

BARTOSH, FAY

Bruce & Pam Smith

BAUER, GERTIE

Merry Engelhardt

Kerry Horton

BAUER, ROBERT

Jeff Givens

BAUER, WILMA

Rev. Erhart & Anita Bauer

BERG, JANET

Clayton & Zona Pearson

BEUCH, ORVILLE

Ethel Beuch

BEYER, ALFRED

Eugene Heckendorf

BERRETH, KELSEY

Darrell & Cheryl Berreth

BERTRAM, DELORIS "DEE"

Bob & Karen Huether

BERTSCH, ARLENE

Rev. Tom & Sara Marcis

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Nolan & Eileen Bode

BODE, SHERYL

Nolan & Eileen Bode

BOETTNER, RUSSELL

Marlys Boettner

BOHN, GRAYDON "GRADY"

Arlin & Harriet Buchholz

BOWMAN, LUELLEA

Anna Kingstad Jantzen

Tim Kingstad

Issac Murphy

Naomi Kingstad Murphy

BRENTON, VIRGIL POOG

Judith A. Brenton

BREWARD, JOHN C.

Gloria Beward

BROSSART, MICHAEL

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Austin & Sarah Buckman

BUNDE, FERN

Duane & Sharon Myron

BURGESS, MARY

Kay Stoterau

BUSSLER, CLIFFORD

Ilene Bussler

BUTLER, RICHIE

Jim & Barbara Winston

CALLIOTT, EDWARD

Linda J. Calliott

CARLSON, STUART

Bruce & Norine Johnson

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Bruce & Esther Dalager

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COOK, DWIGHT

Kerry Horton

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Morris & JoAnn Saxerud

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James Coomber

Mary Jane Haugen

Karla Smart-Morstad

Ethelyn Prom

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Vance & Michele Vannote

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George & Eleanor Krueger

DAHL, NANCY

Jane Gamble

DAHLSTROM, FLORENCE

Chris & Jean Hansen

DELL, PATRICIA

Ruth Lumb

DESMOND, ROBERT

Susan Mysliwicz

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Jim Dick Family

Janna Diggs

DICK, JIM & MILLIE

Benji & Kat Dick

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Ellen Grossland McIntyre

Janett Mueller

Barbara Turner

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Lorina Zuern

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Carolyn Feldman

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Dean Fatland

FLEMING, ETHEL

Jeff Fleming

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Merle Heidenreich

FROELICH, AGNES

Gary Froelich

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Joseph Giglio

GLINZ, ELAINE

Rosella Debele

Sharon Grondahl

GORMAN, MAXINE

Steve Gorman

Linda Medhus

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Elaine Swanson

Philip & Linda Thorpe

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Sherrie Guenthner

Renae Snyder

GUERICKE, DONALD

Ladeen Guericke

GUSTAFSON, ROGER M.

Tom & Brenda Pieterick

H., SONJA

Ardys Horner

HAJICEK FAMILY

Madonna Hajicek

HAKANSON, JEFF

Alan & Harlean Houge

HALL, EUGENE "GENE"

Harlan Hall

HANGSLEBEN, BERNICE

Lyle & Susan Hangsleben

HANSLER, ANTOINETTE "TONI"

Lorna Agustin

Caryn Fischman

Susan Kass

Brian Paradies

Andrew Repoza

Bill & Rita Yingling

Steve, Katie, & Liam Yingling

Will, Erica, & Madison Yingling

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Al & Johnne Bierdeman

Jay & Joy Ryan

HAUG, HELEN

Ruth Mattson

Jean Peppard

HAYER, HARRY

June B. Hayer

HEINTZ, ROBERTA

Marilyn Heintz

HELM, RON

Debbie Davis

HELSTEDT, LOWELL

Mrs. Mardell Kiner

HENSLIN, REV. DAVID

Barbara Pingel

HESTERMANN, BUD & BETTY

Rick, Tom, & Dino Hestermann

HETT, BARB

Dale & Laurie Dannewitz

HIKE, PAUL

David & Janice Oppedahl

HOIRUP, GEORGIANA

Bruce & Norine Johnson

HOLBROOK, RICK

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Barbara Oates

HUBRIG, GARY

Kari Hubrig

JACOBSON, JOHN

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JOHNSON, GARY

Al & Johnne Bierdeman

JOHNSON, JAMES

Ed & Gertrude Anderson

JONES, TILLMAN

Carolyn Feldman

JORDAHL, NORMA J.

Marilyn Dean

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Eugene Heckendorf

KASPARI, MARLENE

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KAUTZ, KENNETH

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Laura Mariani

Shirley Rice

Mark Stange

Tina Tews

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Jeffrey & Michelle Borowicz

Arlys Torgerson

KOLDING, JANICE "JAN"

Jim & Jody Hauge

David Kolding

Norma Lundstrom

Terry Nordeng

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Roger Koole

KRIVARCHKA, DUANE

Morris & JoAnn Saxerud

KUSLER, JAMES O.

Jan Smith

LAMBRECHT, BEVERLY H.

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LeRoy & Kathy Bertsch

LARSON, GERALDINE

Melinda Seil

LARSON, JOLEEN "JO"

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Jackie & Dottie Nelson

LEE, INGEBORG & ANDERS

The Palisades Lutheran Church

LEE, PETER

The Palisades Lutheran Church

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Lyle & Becky Hangsleben

LIMOGES, DAN

Barbara Pingel

LINDGREN, MARLYS

Julie Burich

LINTON, SALLY

Kay Stoterau

LUECK, GARY

Mary Meyer

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Alyce Lunde

MAAR, BRIAN

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Vickie Moon

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Annella Monson

MOORE, DON

Chris & Jean Hansen

MOOS, LEANN

Ruth Lumb

MURPHY, SHIRLEY

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Janet Rudolph

NELSON, EARL

Dorothy Nelson

NELSON, JEAN CLAIRE

Alissa Thiessen

NEVA, VERNETTE

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NICHOLAS, JOHN

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Donald Schumacher

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OMDAHL, RUTH

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ONSTOTT, EDD

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PFAFF, ANNA

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Chris & Jean Hansen

PIEPER, LAVERN

Curtis & Elaine Bening

PIERCE, ELYZABETH

Marissa Knudson

POSS, WILLIAM "BILL"

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PUDENZ, ALICE

Jeff & Mona Pithan

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Al & Johnne Bierdeman

RAATZ, BEVERLY

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Phyllis Bruguier

Doug & Rhonda Martenson

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Carolyn Ellefson

Traci Spano

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TERPENING, BRUCE

Ray & Marlys Long

Donald Schumacher

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Ethel Beuch

TESKE, MARJORIE

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THE HAJICEK FAMILY

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Mildred Bueligen

THOMPSON, GEORGIE

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Brent & Stacy Askvig

Gary & Maxine Beckwith

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Gerald & Gwen Bruzek

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Nancy Manske

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WADE, LANNY

Owen Brenden

WAGNER, RICHARD "DICK"

Kay Stoterau

WAGNER, WELDON

Eunice Wagner

WASHINGTON, OPAL

Ronald Wyatt

WEIGAND, DANNY

Derek & Holly Weigand

WEISS, JIMMY

Norma Von Osterheldt

WERCHAU, MARTIN

Mildred Bueligen

Irene Heid

Evelyn Schwagler

WERFELMAN, ERNEST &

DOROTHY

James & Connie Wise

WIEDRICK, MELVIN & EVELYN

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Marion Niebuhr

WILLIAMS, GLADYS

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WOLD, DEBBIE

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ZEBAUGH, DAVID

Barbara Pingel

ZELLER, BONNIE

Maynard & Ardella Krause

ZURCHER, ELMER & CONNIE

Carol Townsend

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November 1, 2023 - February 29, 2024

BLAINE C. JOHNER & FAMILY

Sue Miller

BRIAN PETERS & FAMILY

Sue Miller

CASEY SZEWCZAK

Patricia Szewczak

CECILIA PODCZERWINSKI

Janet Podczerwinski

DARREL HERTEL

Violet Podenski

DOREEN JUNG

Bonnie Chase

DOROTHY ROMEO

Bob James

DR. & MRS. CARL HOLL, JR.

Mark Holl

Michael Holl

GAYLORD & MARILYN

SCHILLING

Linda Hill

GERALD PETERSON

Jeff & Judy Schaefer

HUDSON & MEGAN

Clara Heinemann

IN HONOR OF MILDRED

MELVIN'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

Florence Hopp

IN HONOR OF MY CHILDREN &

THEIR FAMILIES

Patricia Johnson

JENESSA

Tom Seibel

JESUS CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER,

SAVIOR, AND LORD

Gloria Trim

JOY RYAN

Senator Judy Lee

Kole & Quin Seiler

LINDA HILL

Gaylord & Marilyn Schilling

MADELYN VERA ON HER

BIRTHDAY

Rev. Mark & Rosalind Burger

MELISSA KLEIN & FAMILY

Sue Miller

PASTOR DOUGLAS BERGELIN

Allen & Deborah Behl

PATRICIA BOWERS

Christine Bowers

REV. CHUCK & SUE KITTEL

Holly Giertz

REV. DR. PAUL A. KRUEGER

Paul League

RHONDA LIVEDALEN & FAMILY

Sue Miller

RITA MARIE AND PATRICIA

BOWERS

Christine Bowers

SENATOR JUDY LEE

Matal Maren

SHAWNA KUKAS

Kris Medenhall

STANDING ROCK WELCA

Standing Rock Church

THE PEOPLE AT THE RANCH

LaVerne Seefeld

TOM & DONNA LINNERTZ

Warren & Sonya Fried

VERNON & ELIZABETH KEUNE

Laura Montgomery

WARREN & SONYA FRIED

Tom & Donna Linnertz

WAYNE & BETTY REINHART

Mark & Jane Solseng

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Artwork by Ranch resident

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.



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

Change Service Requested

Woodburning
created by
Dakota Boys
and Girls Ranch
resident



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

www.DakotaRanch.org

Main Switchboard: 1-800-593-3098

Foundation: 1-800-344-0957

