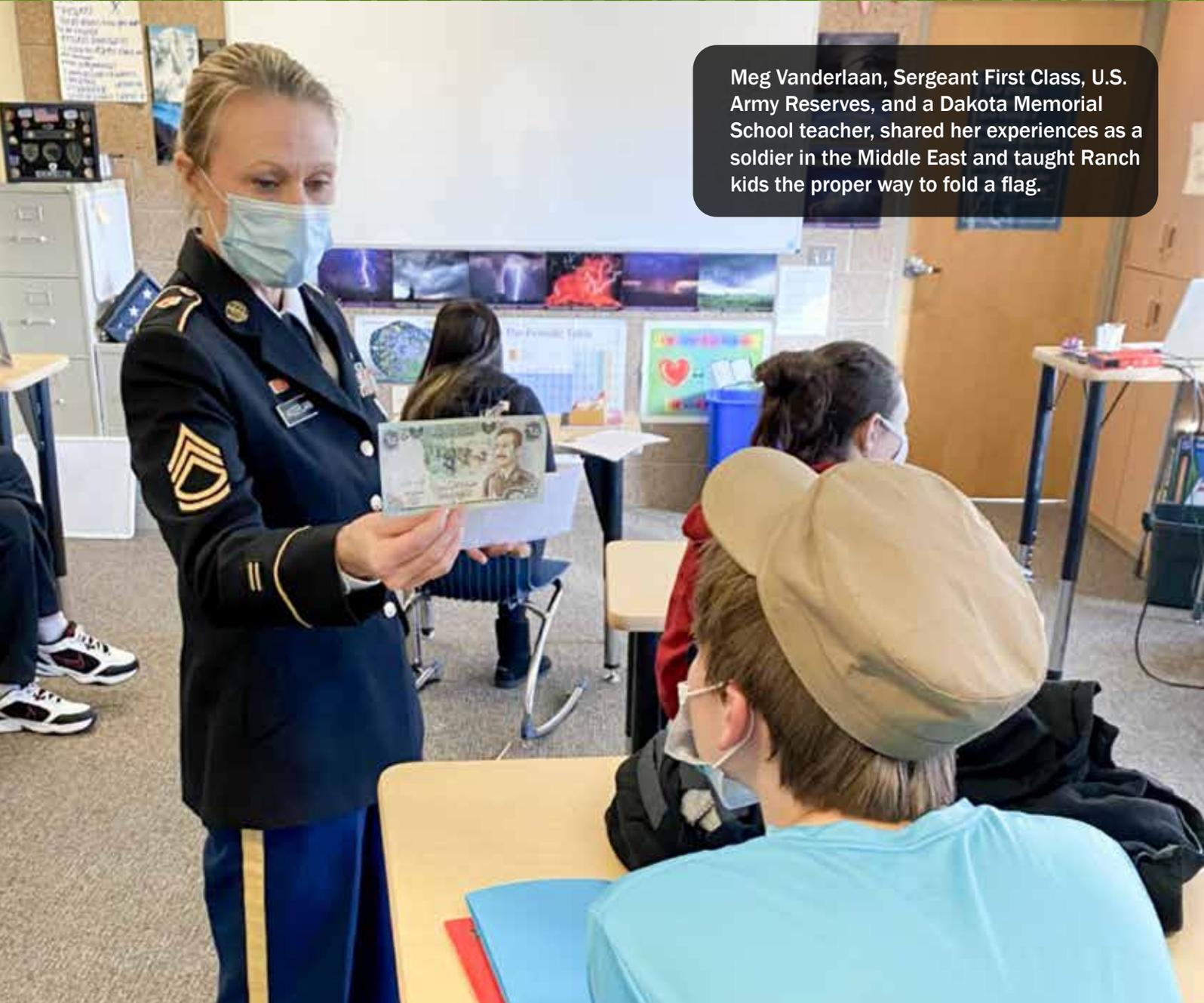


THE RANCH VOICE

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

Winter 2020



Meg Vanderlaan, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army Reserves, and a Dakota Memorial School teacher, shared her experiences as a soldier in the Middle East and taught Ranch kids the proper way to fold a flag.



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1.800.344.0957

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Message from the President/CEO



Joy Ryan, President/CEO,
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

Dear Ranch Friends,

When I first came to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, I spent a lot of time listening to Ranchers who had been here awhile. We talked about trauma informed care and the two mantras of that perspective—

First, “We never ask, ‘What is wrong with this child?’ Instead we ask, ‘What happened to this child?’”

Second, “Every behavior is a form of communication. Listen to the behavior.” When young trauma survivors have severe behavioral issues, it is so important to remember the behaviors don’t define them but are their way of communicating. Acting out, yelling, and pushing away often means, “I am scared. I can’t trust anyone. Please don’t hurt me. I am safer alone.”

One of our folks later added a third principle to my thinking: “They only know the life they are in.” Many Ranch children have only experienced poverty and abuse and loss. They don’t know what is possible and have no way to understand they can find success in school, much less dream of college. They may not have experienced someone following through on a promise. They have learned to have low, or no, expectations of the world or themselves. Even when opportunities for growth and safety and help are available, they aren’t familiar, so it takes a great deal to break through the barrier of protection.

The beauty of a child who breaks through is indescribable. Often the proof is in the little moments.

I recall one girl who was in our care for a long time. She came to us scared and full of anxiety. Her life with autism had made her the target of abuse within the family and bullying from others. She had often been left alone—hungry and uncared for. She struggled with hyperactivity and poorly developed social skills. She banged her head on the floor and talked too loudly. She had major hygiene and self-care issues.

Yet, every time I saw her she rushed over to give me a quick side-hug. She wanted to be loved and to be loveable. Ranch folks worked with her every day. Eventually, through really hard work, she healed to the point she could live with a foster family and continue therapy through the Ranch’s outpatient mental health clinic, Dakota Family Services.

When she visited for a recent appointment, we learned she is being adopted! She was overjoyed.

This young girl’s new dad brought her in for another appointment and while she was seeing her therapist, Dad ran an errand. He didn’t quite make it back before the end of the appointment, so he wasn’t in the lobby when she came from the counselor’s office. The empathetic Rancher at the lobby desk very quickly said, “He just ran an errand. I am sure he will be right back.”

The former Ranch resident looked at her and said, “Yup, he will be back soon. He is picking me up cause he is my dad.” She said it with conviction and surety. And my eyes filled up with tears.

In that little moment it was clear. Now this new, safe world, is the life she is in.

God bless her and her forever family. God bless you for caring.

In His love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joy".

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Locations

Minot
6301 19th Ave. NW
P.O. Box 5007
Minot, ND 58702

Fargo
7151 15th St. S.
Fargo, ND 58104

Bismarck
1227 N. 35th St.
Bismarck, ND 58501

Main Switchboard:
1-800-593-3098

Foundation:
1-800-344-0957

DakotaRanch.org

Former resident finds his place in the world

After a rough start in elementary school, Jaxon found his place at Dakota Memorial School (DMS), the on-campus school of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Jaxon started attending DMS in 7th grade when his public school recommended it to his mom.

“It’s hard to explain,” he said, “but I was having a tough time in school. I was having trouble focusing on things.”

The smaller school environment and one-on-one attention at DMS played to Jaxon’s strengths. He said the teachers were more focused on the students and gave him the help he needed to succeed.

When Jaxon and his mom met with school

counselor, Lauren Ballantyne, before his senior year, he had no idea what he wanted to do after graduation. Because our goal at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is not only to help children be their best selves today, next week, and next year—but to also prepare them for their best future—Lauren and other Ranchers partner with community resources that can propel kids to success.

“I talked to them about the Workforce Innovation Opportunity

Act (WIOA) program provided through Job Service and Jaxon seemed interested,” Lauren said. “I had never seen Jaxon’s face light up like that before. It was like a lightbulb came on and in that moment he found purpose. Jaxon reminded me several times throughout the year that he hadn’t forgotten our conversation and that the WIOA program was where he was headed after graduation.”

Getting into the program wasn’t a guarantee. Jaxon had to apply; interview with Linda Hull, the WIOA Youth Case Manager; contact the school and get registered; and complete all the necessary paperwork to qualify for assistance from the WIOA.

Hull said, “He was always kind of reserved but he always responded and followed through with everything he needed to do.”

With the program covering the costs of Jaxon’s tuition, room and board, and welding kit, he was able to complete the 12-week Lynnes Welding School program and graduate in September 2019. Jaxon enjoyed the hands-on program and said in addition to learning how to operate the equipment, he learned how to read blueprints and to calculate fraction math equations.

Shortly after completing the training program, Jaxon found a job at Thorsrud Supply in Minot where he has now worked a full year.

“I like it a lot,” Jaxon said. “We make steel doors and steel frames that get picked up and installed throughout North Dakota. Right now, I’m the only one working in the shop. My boss is in the building and he helps me out whenever I need something.”

Thanks to the support of his mom, the teachers and counselor at DMS,

and Hull—combined with his own determination to succeed—Jaxon is finding his place in the world.

“Without Dakota Memorial School, I feel it would have been a lot harder to get here. I wouldn’t have much help if I hadn’t gone to DMS.”



Great Support. Hard work. Proud graduate.



Jaxon all geared up and ready to weld.

The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve our nation’s public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

Hard Work and Full Hearts





While the education, therapy, treatment, psychiatric services, wellness, and spiritual life activities take center stage at the Ranch, a lot goes on behind the scenes.

Think about the wear and tear that happens in every home, especially homes with children. Now think about bringing 20, 40, or 70 kids (depending on the campus) into your home—kids who struggle with anger and expressing their feelings due to abuse, neglect, and/or psychiatric issues. Imagine the work that goes into maintaining the spaces where these kids live, eat, learn, sleep, and play.

Across the Ranch's three campuses, a 26-person facilities team works quietly and efficiently to maintain the buildings, feed the kids, provide clean and sanitary spaces, take care of the grounds, and so much more. According to Dr. Wayne Martinsen, Ranch Psychiatrist and Medical Director, their work is vital to the healing of Ranch kids.

"We have some angry kids, and they break things," Martinsen said. "Repairing the damages quickly makes a huge difference in how these kids feel. A lot of our kids have lived in homes where people lost control and would throw things, break things, and punch holes in the walls. The more we can have an environment that doesn't display the evidence of that, the better."

Also important are the outdoor spaces on Ranch campuses, which are maintained by the facilities staff. "Nature and the outdoors can have a significant calming effect," Martinsen said. "The more exposure kids have to green spaces, the better."

According to Mike McCloud,



Denise Watson—"I love all the kids here."

Director of Facilities for all three campuses, the groundskeepers, carpenters, mechanics, housekeepers, cooks, and janitors all know they

are at the Ranch to support the children.

"Everything we do is for the kids," McCloud said. "Whether it's food to feed them, transportation to get them somewhere, or keeping the conditions safe, it's all about creating an environment for these kids that is as home-like as possible."

Read on to learn about a few of the people who make it all possible.

Denise Watson Cook, Bismarck

Through her cooking, Denise Watson tries to make the Ranch a little more like home. And the kids notice.

"When I first started," Denise said, "we were making a new menu and I suggested a Spanish rice hotdish. The first time I made it one of the kids was so excited and said, 'My grandma makes this, and I feel like I'm at home.' That is when I knew I was in the right job."

A few months ago, one of the girls left a thank you note on Denise's desk thanking her for letting the kids make pancakes in the morning—because it felt a little more like home.

"It's just those little things, the simple things we do, but they make a difference."

Denise, who has been at the Ranch

Recipe:

Denise's Pumpkin bars

Prep. Time:
15
minutes

Serves:
Makes
24 bars

Ingredients	Directions
<p style="color: #e91e63; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Bars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4 eggs ● 1 2/3 cups granulated sugar ● 1 cup vegetable oil ● 15-ounce can pumpkin ● 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour ● 2 teaspoons baking powder ● 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon ● 1 teaspoon salt ● 1 teaspoon baking soda <p style="color: #e91e63; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Icing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8-ounce package Cream Cheese, softened ● 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened ● 2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar ● 1 teaspoon vanilla extract 	<p>Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.</p> <p>Using an electric mixer at medium speed, combine the eggs, sugar, oil and pumpkin until light and fluffy. Stir together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt and baking soda. Add the dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture and mix at low speed until thoroughly combined and the batter is smooth. Spread the batter into a greased 13 by 10-inch baking pan. Bake for 30 minutes. Let cool completely before frosting. Cut into bars.</p> <p>To make the icing: Combine the Cream Cheese and butter in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the sugar and mix at low speed until combined. Stir in the vanilla and mix again. Spread on cooled pumpkin bars.</p>

for six years, knows the kids aren't all going to love everything she makes, but she does her best to adjust the menus to what the kids will eat. "Sometimes they won't want to try something because they haven't had it before. I encourage them to try just a bite and if they don't like it, I'll make them a sandwich. Most of them will try it."

"When I was growing up," Denise said, "it was 'eat what I cook or go hungry.' We don't do that to the kids here. We want them to eat."

When asked about Ranch kids, Denise recalls a young girl who was having a rough time and threatening to take her life. One night after work, Denise stopped at the cottage to say goodbye to the kids and this young girl was really struggling.

"When I sat down with her, she told me that nobody loved her and no one would miss her if she were gone. I said, 'Well, I love you. I love all the kids here.' I honestly don't think she had ever heard those words before. After that her whole demeanor changed. She started calling me mom and was happy and smiling. I'm not saying I was responsible for this, but she discharged successfully a few weeks later. That will stick out in my mind forever."

Denise had some health issues a couple years ago and spent over two months in the hospital. She has been

inspired by how Ranch staff from every level of the organization have shown up for her. The Bismarck staff set up a blood drive in her honor and have since held one every six months or so. Leadership staff visited her in the hospital and brought her



Don Boger—"He thanked me for what I did for him."

a quilt.

She said, "I've worked in larger companies and smaller companies, and none of them recognize their staff that way."

Denise loves her job. "I love to cook, and I love interacting with the kids. Working as a cook at the Ranch is perfect for me because I get to do both."

Outside of work, Denise spends a lot of time with friends and family, picnicking and playing games. She is also an animal lover and right now

shares her home with two cats and two dogs.

Don Boger Housekeeper, Minot

Don Boger has held a variety of positions in his 34 years at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. He started at the Minot Thrift Store when his neighbor asked him to work a few days before the store opened—and never left. He has worked as a driver's assistant, driver, and warehouse manager; and now works overnights as a housekeeper on the Minot campus.

Over the years, Don, a slight, gentle, hard-working, and soft-spoken man, has had the opportunity to work with a few Ranch kids. One that sticks out in his mind worked at the warehouse one summer. The young man's first day didn't go very well.

"I must say, it was probably my worst day," Don said. "It was probably his worst day too. He didn't want to do anything. But he came back the next day and he was 100 percent better, as long as he was working with me."

Don said after that disastrous first day, the young man became one of his best workers and they worked side-by-side much of the summer. "He didn't talk much at first and I told him that was OK. 'If you don't want to talk about anything, we won't. That is your business, your life.' After I said that he just went on and on about everything. I just listened while we did our work and you could tell he was getting more at ease with me; and happier."

Several years later, the young man came back to the warehouse and

asked for Don. “He thanked me for what I did for him and for what the Ranch did. At that time, he had a good job and was doing well. That just brightened my day!”

Cleaning is a never-ending job. “Sometimes you mop and vacuum and an hour later you come back and it doesn’t look like you did anything. But I know people appreciate my work—they tell me they miss me when I’m gone. I had a small stroke earlier this year and when I came back, I felt real appreciated. The Ranch has been really good to me.”

In addition to supportive co-workers, Don said he has great bosses at the Ranch. “Dalen, my current boss, is flexible and just an all-around good guy to work for. It makes my job a lot nicer when you have nice people to work for.”

As for the kids, when a child makes a mess of something he just cleaned, Don said he thinks to himself, “Everybody has troubles. Everybody deals with their problems in a different way. They had a bad day. Tomorrow is going to be a better day. You gotta have a positive attitude or you won’t make it here.”

When he’s not working, Don likes working in his yard, going for walks and bike rides, and spending time with his family. His sister and father both live in Minot—the three of them live within five blocks of each other—so they spend a lot of time together. He also enjoys visiting his brother in Bismarck and spending time with his other sister when she visits from Florida.

“I’m happy here,” Don said. “The Ranch is like a second home to me. This place is just beautiful. I love it here. I love what I do.”

Tim Kruckenberg Facilities Manager, Bismarck

Tim Kruckenberg, who has worked at the Ranch a little over nine years, knows what we do for the kids is important.

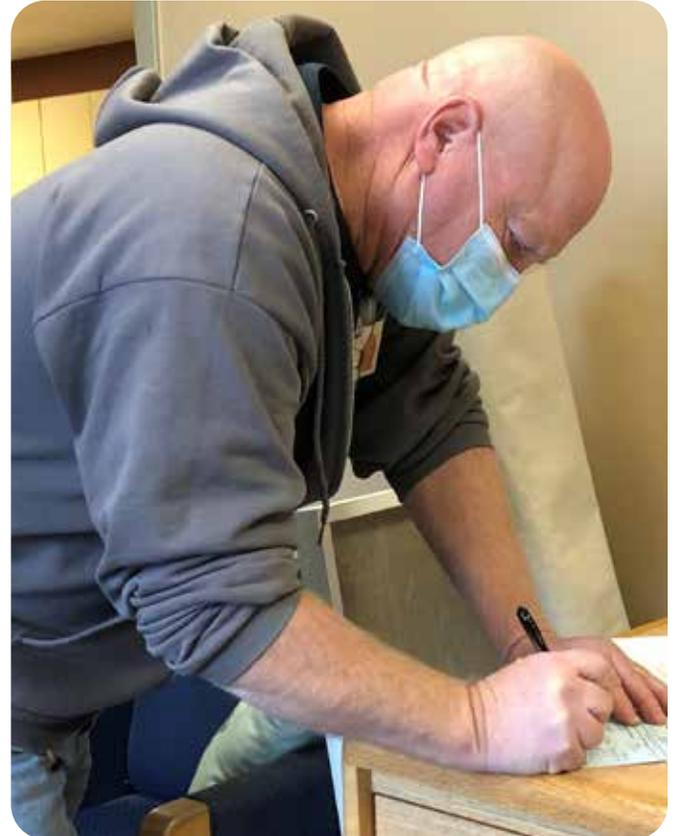
“The kids here have had a rough time,” Tim said. “They didn’t have anybody to follow, maybe they didn’t have parents.”

As Facilities Manager on the Ranch’s Bismarck campus, it’s Tim’s job, along with a small staff, to maintain the facility and the grounds, keep the spaces clean and sanitary, and plan and cook healthy meals. He takes pride in the work they do to keep the campus clean, maintained, and beautiful for the Ranch residents and staff.

Tim also takes it upon himself to make sure the Ranch is a good neighbor and community member. Because Bismarck is a smaller campus and sits right in a residential neighborhood, Tim can make a neighborhood difference, especially during the winter months. When he plows snow, he doesn’t stop at the edge of Ranch property.

“A lot of times we’ll plow the whole block of sidewalk. It’s elderly people who live in this area and it helps them out,” Tim said. “The condo is right north of us, and they

appreciate it too. One day they came to the front door with a big box of homemade cookies and just told us how much they appreciate us for keeping the sidewalk clear.”



Tim Kruckenberg—“Why not do it?”

Tim said he doesn’t think twice about the extra work. “It’s just right there. Why not do it?”

“One time the state Ag Commissioner toured the campus and he was so impressed with our bushes out front,” Tim said. “He commented how nice things looked. You hear those things and it makes you really want to keep this place looking nice.”

Last year, Tim was able to get the sidewalk replaced. “We have elderly people who walk in the neighborhood and our sidewalks

were cracked really bad. I don't want to see someone fall and break a hip, just for a simple crack that could be fixed. I feel really good about getting that accomplished this year."

His neighborly attitude extends to keeping communication lines open with the neighbors. "The key thing is to just talk to them. They ask all kinds of questions [about what we do and who we are] and you just explain it to them. They understand."

Dan Sexton Maintenance Technician, Minot

Dan Sexton has been at the Ranch about 18 months. In his role as a maintenance technician on the Minot campus, Dan does a lot of building repairs and remodeling of the campuses 22 buildings.

Over the past year he has helped remodel the chapel bathrooms, the portable classroom, and the foundation office, as well as spent time in the resident cottages.

"I'm in the cottages every day. There is always something going on, whether it's an alarm or a doorknob or a hole in the wall."

Dan is also the self-proclaimed "safety guru" for the Minot campus.

"I go around and check the smoke alarms and the fire extinguishers to make sure they all work. Really everything we do is about safety. We keep the facilities safe for the residents and the staff. Safety is a top priority. And we maintain the buildings, instead of letting everything just crumble."

Dan and his wife, Tara, who also works at the Ranch, were born and raised in Minnesota. Dan learned

construction and repair skills years ago when he worked at a resort.

"I got in with a good crew there and worked with them about 10 years. I'd get with one guy and learn some plumbing, then the next day I'd get with other guy and do electrical. Another guy liked to tinker with things so I'd watch him take things apart and put them back together. And then you're always fixing something at home. When something breaks, I want to be able to fix it."

Dan and Tara moved to Minot when Dan got a job on the railroad. After a few years as an engine operator, he got laid off and Tara, who was already working at the Ranch, encouraged him to apply for an opening.

Dan already knew about the Ranch through Tara, so it wasn't a surprise when he was told at his interview that he might repair a whole room and come back the next day to do it all over again. "They told me it wouldn't be because I messed up or did a bad job, but that's just the type of place this is. It doesn't happen all the time, but it does happen. The kids get rambunctious and stuff happens."

Dan doesn't have much one-on-one contact with Ranch kids, but he does try to set a good example. "I try to

say 'hi,'—and with COVID, I keep my mask on and stay six feet away. I'm always driving the speed limit through the parking lot."

He recalls one young man who was at the Ranch a year or so ago. "He was good with the younger kids. A lot of the other kids looked up to him and it seemed like while he was here the destruction was down. If one of the kids was going off towards another kid, he would step in and be like, 'No, you're not going to do this today.' He was just an all-around good kid."



Dan Sexton—"I know my work matters because it's all about keeping everyone safe."

Dan enjoys fishing, camping, and golfing with his wife, Tara. They have four dogs and two cats that keep them busy. And he is happy at the Ranch.

"I like the work, and I feel

appreciated here. I know my work matters because it's all about keeping everyone safe."

Bryan Fern Facilities Manager, Fargo

Bryan Fern's many jobs over the years have all come together to prepare him for the Facilities Manager position at the Ranch. He managed apartments—now he manages an entire facility. He cooked and served tables—now he manages the kitchen staff. He's done mechanic work—now he makes sure the Fargo fleet of Ranch vehicles are maintained and road-safe.

In addition, Bryan and his staff clean the buildings, mow the lawn, plow and shovel snow, manage any on-campus construction projects, maintain the landscaping, make

building repairs, change lightbulbs, and put ice melt on the sidewalk so kids and staff stay safe.

He is also the campus safety manager, which consists of holding monthly safety team meetings, problem-solving any near-miss safety incidents, and tracking the cleaning supplies and chemicals (which must all be documented and stored in locked cabinets).

It's a big job, and Bryan is confident in his team to get the job done. "My staff are amazing. I have a lot of great people around me."

While Bryan likes the work, that's not the only reason he stays at the Ranch. For him it's all about the kids. "It's nice to feel like you are doing something. When a kid comes in, I like to be there the first day to introduce myself. Once you develop

that little bit of relationship, you can work from there to make sure they respect what you are doing."

Agency Facilities Director, Mike McCloud, said the kids in Fargo know and respect Bryan, which has allowed him to de-escalate several situations. "One of the kids had something in his hand and was damaging something. Bryan just walked up and calmly spoke to the young man, and asked, 'Can I have that?' He just handed it to Bryan."

Still, making peace with the destruction kids do when they are in a bad place is hard. Bryan said a lot of times they joke about it. "We say that the kids didn't like the way we fixed that, or they decided that light wasn't in the right position."

Sometimes, with the permission of their treatment team, Bryan has enlisted a child to help fix what they broke. "One boy kicked a hole in the wall, so I said, 'Let's go fix it.' When they see the work it takes to fix it, they tend to take more ownership."

Bryan said the Ranch is different than anywhere else he has worked. "If you make a mistake, everybody tries to learn from it and move past it. There is a lot of understanding."

Bryan keeps pretty busy in his spare time too. He and his two young boys like to bike, go to parks, camp, fish, and play video games. On his own, he kayaks, golfs, and rides motorcycle.

Tara Anderson Cook, Fargo

Tara Anderson chokes up when she talks about the Ranch and the impact it's made on her life. "I can't even express how much this place means to me," she said. "I've never worked at a place that is so uplifting all the time. It's such a feel-good place, helping kids and making their family lives better."

As a cook on the Fargo campus, Tara officially prepares and serves meals to Ranch residents and staff. Unofficially, but maybe more importantly, she provides comfort. "Food is like comfort. I'm just very passionate about feeding the kids and making sure they are eating healthy."



Bryan Fern—“There is a lot of understanding.”

“I know there are certain things in all of these pre-bought items that can make autistic and ADHD behaviors worse. So, we make as much as we can homemade. And if one of the kids doesn't like what I've made, I try to find something else they will eat so they don't go hungry.”

Tara brings much life experience to her job at the Ranch. She is raising a son who is autistic and has a younger brother who had drug and alcohol issues beginning at age 13.

“I wish we'd have known about the Ranch. This would have been an awesome place for my brother



Tara Anderson—“This place is like their safe house.”

to go. Working here has helped me understand both my brother and my son better,” Tara said. “I've learned so many ways to deal with my son.”

Tara recalls one day where a young resident was struggling, and he flipped over three or four tables. The next day he went to her and apologized, saying, “Tara, I'm really sorry I did that to the kitchen. That was really disrespectful.”

She said to him, “It's no big thing. We all struggle, and then we move on. It's life.”

“I have these moments at home with my son because he also struggles with anger. I used to get upset because I didn't understand. Now, being with these kids, I realize they aren't doing it on purpose. They don't mean to. They just get to a point where they are so upset, and they don't have the tools to sort it out.”

Tara said you don't have to be a direct care staff to bond with Ranch kids. “It's the little things that make a difference. Even tapping one of the kids on the shoulder and saying, ‘Hey. I hope you have a great day.’ Or ‘letting’ them sweep the kitchen floor. One of the boys used to ask to clean the kitchen floors to get his mind off things. I always said, ‘Bring him down,’ even if I'd just finished sweeping the floors.”

Tara wishes Ranch donors could see how great the kids are and what the Ranch is doing for them. “This place is like their safe house,” she said. “It means everything for a kid to feel safe and loved, and the donors are doing that for these kids. They are giving them this place and helping them get the things they need.”

“There is just so much that goes into this place. I love watching the changes in the kids. They come here and they are just so tightly wound. And then you watch them loosen up and by the time they leave they are

Recipe: Tara's Tacos, taco in a bag, or taco salad

Prep. Time:
15 minutes

Serves:
Serves 90

Ingredients	Directions										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 lbs. of ground beef 116 oz. salsa 4 to 5 cups taco seasoning <i>(I start with 4 cups and then taste and sometimes will add another cup)</i> 2 cups water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step 1: Cook the beef and then drain Step 2: Add salsa, taco seasoning and water. Stir together. If it seems a little thick, add a bit more water. Step 3: Heat through and serve with soft and/or hard shell tacos and toppings. <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Toppings</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Lettuce</td> <td>Cheese</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Olives</td> <td>Tomatoes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Onions</td> <td>Jalepenos</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sourcream</td> <td>Salsa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mild sauce</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Lettuce	Cheese	Olives	Tomatoes	Onions	Jalepenos	Sourcream	Salsa	Mild sauce	
Lettuce	Cheese										
Olives	Tomatoes										
Onions	Jalepenos										
Sourcream	Salsa										
Mild sauce											

doing really well.”

“This is where I’m meant to be,” Tara said. “This is my place.”

Tara, along with her husband and three boys, keeps busy going to baseball games and spending time at the lake. She and her husband both like to cook, so they enjoy inviting their friends and family over for dinner. During the winter, they play board games and cards, and just enjoy each other’s company.

“We had a lot of issues with our son, starting when he was in third grade. He screamed and yelled and nothing was his fault. It got worse as he got older, and when he was in 8th grade, he spent a year at the Ranch.

Scott said being at the Ranch really helped his son and his family. “We could talk with Dr. Martinsen about how to talk to our son and how to call [our son] on things. He graduated from high school and now has a full-time job. He is doing OK,” Scott said.

That special tie, along with his love of the work, makes the Ranch a perfect work home for Scott, a tall man who is quick to smile and always calm.

“I enjoy what I do. You’re not doing the same thing all the time and I like the maintenance end of. I like the challenge of fixing and building things. You get things done and people tell you how nice it looks. And my boss, Dalen, appreciates us. We also get appreciation from the kids—like when a kid sends a note thanking us for fixing something

they broke.”

Scott knows the work he does here makes a difference. “We are keeping things together and safe for the kids we serve. If we weren’t around, there would probably be huge safety issues. The kids break things because

they are so angry, but I’ve always said, that’s job security. You go and repair it and make it stronger.”

Working at the Ranch is different than anywhere else because of the precautions facilities staff have to take every day. “You can’t just walk away and come back after lunch or the next day. To keep the kids safe, we pick up everything whenever we walk away. You come back and have to set up your tools again.”

Scott says the kids have changed since he started 20 years ago.

“It seems like the kids are more troubled now.”

Scott was born and raised in Sawyer, ND, and now lives south of Velva, ND. He enjoys working in his yard and gardening, as well as fixing and building things. “I’m not a town person. I have my garden and my dogs, and pretty much just stay around home.”

Tara Sexton Facility Support, Minot

Tara Sexton knew the Ranch was a different kind of workplace from the beginning.

“I noticed right away that everyone is trying to do a good job and do right for the kids,” she said. “I appreciate the opportunity to work for such a great place. Everybody deals with hardships and things happen, but it’s a real strong Ranch family. We stick together and do really good things for kids. And they need it.”

Tara prides herself on keeping things clean and presentable. And she appreciates when the kids and other Ranch staff notice. “People are always telling me I’m doing a good job. Even the kiddos. When I clean



Scott Westman—“We also get appreciation from the kids.”

Scott Westman Maintenance Lead, Minot

Scott Westman has a special tie to the Ranch. In addition to working in Ranch Facilities for nearly 20 years, he experienced the Ranch as a parent when his son lived on campus.

their bathrooms, they thank me. Or when I spray air freshener, they're like, 'Oh, and you're making it smell really good.'"

"My work matters because it's about keeping things clean and healthy," Tara said. "Some of these kids haven't lived anywhere that's been clean."

The work isn't always easy. Some days Tara cleans or fixes something, goes home, and comes back the next day to a mess.



Tara Sexton—“The little moments of connection make the job awesome.”

“The way I make peace with that is that we all have to be role models,” Tara said. “Marching back in there and fixing something again shows determination and strength—we are determined to make a safe, clean, and special living environment for these kids. We’re not going to

throw up our hands and give up. We are showing them how be adults themselves someday.”

In addition to cleaning cottage bathrooms and the Family Living Unit (apartments where families can stay when they visit), Tara does laundry, chairs the safety team, and puts together the welcome baskets for new residents.

She puts a little special effort into each job, for instance, adding special touches to make the Family Living Unit apartments cozy and comfortable, and picking out fun Welcome Basket items.

“The Welcome Baskets have two towels, two washcloths, sheets, a pillow, pillowcase, and a quilt. I try to make them fun. The other day I found sheets with video game controllers for the boys and unicorns for the girls. I try to not be too boring.”

Tara said she doesn't have the skills, training, or temperament to work with the kids all day, but she loves

that she can use her skills to impact their lives.

“One gal awhile back would come up behind me and clear her throat when she wanted to get my attention. I would turn around and say, ‘Yes, little miss. What can I do for you?’ She just wanted to

connect. One time she handed me a picture she'd drawn and said, ‘I made this for you and want you to keep it.’ I have it hanging in my office. Another time she wrote me a note thanking me for cleaning her bathroom. The little moments of connection make the job awesome.”

Tara and her husband, Dan, who also works at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, enjoy video games, camping, fishing, golfing, and spending time with their four dogs and two cats. They both grew up in Minnesota and moved to western North Dakota when Dan got a job working on the railroad.

“Now this is home. It's good. We found good jobs and we get to carpool!”

In addition to the cooking, cleaning, gardening, repairing, and remodeling everyone talked about above, facilities staff also take care of the greenhouses (three in Minot and one in Bismarck), bale hay on the Minot campus to feed the horses, and process and bottle nearly 14,000 bottles of honey used for Honey Sunday and Ranch donors each year.

And, as McCloud said, it's all to support the kids.

“We do everything we can to make this place feel as home-like and inviting as possible. Coming into an institution isn't easy for these kids,” he said. “We want them to feel safe, secure, fed, and comfortable.”

With a lot of hard work and hearts full of love, they do just that.

Celebrations

Building Spaces for Learning

The Career and Technical Education classes on our Minot campus have been busy making tables for the Learning Commons area on our Bismarck campus. From cutting to sanding to assembling the tables, our Career and Technical Education classes focus on safety first. The Learning Commons was added during a renovation of the Bismarck campus this past summer, creating additional spaces for students to learn and work.



Career and Technical Education classes at Dakota Memorial School teach skills Ranch kids can use for a lifetime.

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle



Ranch residents show off a recycling bin packed full thanks to excellent participation in the newly revamped recycling program on the Bismarck Campus.

Celebrating Kindness

On our Bismarck campus, Ms. Barman and Mrs. Vanderlaan worked with students to create a Kindness Calendar for the month of November. Students were encouraged to come up with an act of kindness they could do each day for someone special in their life. From writing thank you notes to complimenting a friend, students at Dakota Memorial School showcased their

compassion and appreciation for not only their family and friends, but also for Ranch employees.



Ranch kids practice kindness...



...and compassion.

Honoring our Veterans



Students were fascinated by the symbolism of the American flag.

As part of their activities for Veteran's Day, students at Dakota Memorial School in Bismarck participated in an "Americanism Essay Contest" with the topic, "How can we be supportive and respectful to our military?"

Meg Vanderlaan, Sergeant First Class U.S. Army Reserves, who teaches science at DMS Bismarck, did a flag presentation and taught the students how to properly fold an American flag. She also shared her experience being deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and explained the impact that deployment had on her family and the life of a soldier in the Middle East. Following her presentation, the top three writers from the essay contest read their work to the group. To end the presentation, each student presented Mrs. Vanderlaan with a hand-made thank you card.

Bountiful Harvest

The gardens on the Bismarck campus produced a bountiful harvest; and a huge sense of accomplishment for the kids, many who had never before gardened. With the guidance of Tal Pollert, Wellness Coordinator, Bismarck, the kids enjoyed harvesting the vegetables, sharing them with the Ranch cooks to use in meal preparation, and setting up a roadside vegetable stand.



Selling the bounty is another part of the learning in gardening.



Every kid likes to dig in the dirt.

A Special, Spicy Treat



Dakota Memorial School Paraprofessional, Grace Baggett, made jalapeño poppers with peppers from her garden. Now that the students have experienced the final result, they are excited to grow peppers from seed and cook another batch of poppers.

Back on the bikes

The National Youth Project Using Minibikes (NYPUM) program, on the Ranch's Minot and Bismarck campuses, got a late start this year. COVID restrictions by the national organization limited us to classroom learning and caring for the bikes. In August, we were finally able to get kids on the bikes for training—kids in Bismarck and Minot all had a blast!



Caring for and riding the minibikes teaches kids responsibility and builds their confidence.



The kindness of our kids

In their weekly STAR group, the Fargo girls focused on Morality and Resilience. Each of them wrote down positive words, an affirmation, or a simple quote to give to each of their peers. They decorated index cards with paper and magazine clippings to make something creative as a background for the kind words and then laminated them.

The laminated cards will be going in the “feel-good boxes” they are creating with our therapists. When they need reminders of positive traits, they can open their box and look back on the things their peers wrote about them, knowing that being kind and staying positive is important for everyone.

From Katelyn Hanson, case manager, “A lot of my girls took this activity pretty seriously and wrote some great words to pass on. It’s wonderful seeing them understand the importance of being kind to one another!”



Starting the day with prayer



Each morning, teachers and staff gather in the hallways of Dakota Memorial School to pray over the kids, the teachers, and the day.

Running on Generosity



Tal Pollert, Wellness Coordinator, Bismarck, accepts a \$500 donation from the Bismarck Marathon. The marathon was cancelled this year due to COVID-19 concerns, but the committee continued their tradition of donating to local nonprofits.

A spirit of giving

A four-person Servant Team from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa, spent a week redoing the flower beds at the Minot campus entrance. The two couples also helped sort and organization donations at the Minot thrift store warehouse and the Minot thrift store.



Minot thrift store warehouse and the Minot thrift store.



The Cedar Falls, IA, volunteers put their hands and feet to work for God.

Ron Kelderman, Laverne Kelderman, Linda Huss (White), and Bob White participated in a chapel service while on campus.

First time voters cast their ballots

Two of our HOME Program residents were proud to vote, for the first time, in the November election! The HOME Program (Hope, Opportunity, Mentoring, Experience) is the Ranch's 18+ transitional living facility in Minot, ND. HOME provides a supportive living environment for young adults who have been in the foster care system—helping them transition into adulthood.



HOME Program residents vote for the first time!

Back-to-school with new supplies



Dakota Memorial School-Bismarck was the recipient of donated school supplies from the Mercy Box. The Mercy Box started as a one-time donation event and now collects donations monthly for various nonprofits and schools.



Brad Yoder and Megan Awalt, CPAs with Brady Martz & Associates, the accounting firm that conducts the Ranch's annual audit, donated several boxes of school supplies.

Celebrations

Robots on the move

The boys in Cornelsen cottage designed and built Lego robots. Therapist Taylor Keller and Youth Care Worker Natasha Uran put them in teams of two to build the robots; and judged their creations on three criteria: the robot that won in a battle, how well the team communicated, and attitude.

Keller said, “We were so impressed with their creativity and also with how well they interacted with each other. We had NO fights, NO yelling, and positive attitudes all around. It was one of those days that gave me the warm fuzzies: We are doing good work!”



Robotic challenge teaches Ranch kids problem-solving, teamwork, science and technology skills, and creativity.

Quilted in love

Members of the Trinity Lutheran Church Ladies Circle, Long Prairie, MN, support the Ranch by making and donating beautiful quilts. Every Ranch resident receives a quilt when they arrive at the Ranch...covering them in the love and care of our precious quilters.



Tim Unsinn, Development Officer, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, with quilters Marilyn Freie, Shirley Haberkorn, Jessica Haberkorn, Janna Floerke, Peg Kortuem, Karen Tesch, and Mavis Zellgert.

Artful hygiene

Students at Dakota Memorial School–Fargo created these beautiful pieces of art during Hygiene Week. Why during Hygiene Week? Because...they're actually soap! During the lesson, they also discussed the importance of handwashing. Art teacher, Alana Wilhelm, makes a point to incorporate other subject areas into every art lesson, so for handwashing she introduced the science concepts of hydrophilic, hydrophobic, and micelles of soap.



Ranch Olympics

Our Fargo and Minot campuses held their own mini-Olympics this summer. In Fargo, the kids competed in Rock, Paper, Scissors; Relay Race; Ping Pong; Connect 4; and Oversized Jenga challenges. Minot campus held a full week of Ranch Olympics. One day was field day, with events such as a vertical jump, long jump, fastest sprint, longest hula hoop, softball throw, football throw, soccer kick, softball hit, and a relay race. Another day they had a sand volleyball tournament. They also held a basketball tournament, a campus-wide kickball game, an inflatable obstacle course, and Sumo wrestling.



Over-sized Jenga is always a favorite with the kids.

In addition to the field events, basketball tournament, and campus-wide kickball game, the kids (and let's be honest...staff too), ran an inflatable obstacle course and did Sumo wrestling.

Ranch opens two new thrift stores



The North University Store has generated a lot of excitement and traffic. Store manager, Marney (pictured above), and her team have been staying busy since it's October opening.

Over the years, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Thrift Stores have underwritten millions of dollars of psychiatric and educational services provided to at-risk kids by the Ranch. Since July, the Ranch opened TWO new thrift stores in the Fargo/Moorhead area—expanding to ten thrift stores



throughout North Dakota and western Minnesota.

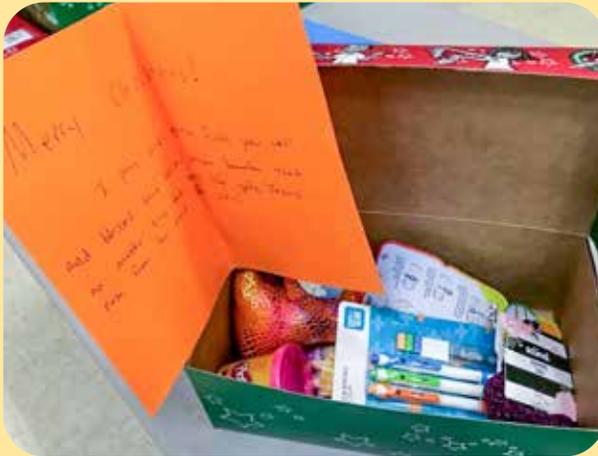
The new outlet store is a great option for shoppers who don't mind digging a little to find great deals.

Celebrations

Kids and staff give back through Operation Christmas Child

Ranch staff and children took part in Operation Christmas Child once again this year. Ranch kids decorated collection boxes to distribute across the Minot campus; and Ranch employees filled them to overflowing. In late October, kids and staff from several cottages came together (appropriately distanced and wearing masks) to pack the boxes and write

encouraging notes. We put together more than 100 boxes this year—to help Samaritan's Purse reach this year's goal of reaching 11 million children in countries throughout the world.



The spirit of giving is alive and well at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.



By the time they were finished, Ranch kids packed over 100 boxes for this year's Operation Christmas Child.

Dino Zoo takes over Minot campus



The elementary students at Dakota Memorial School completed a unit on dinosaurs and paleontology. They learned about fault lines and how they move, how rock layers form, and many types of dinosaurs. Each student completed a final project about the most interesting thing they learned. Scan the QR code to watch a video overview of the project, narrated by DMS Day Student, David O.



**SCAN
THIS!**





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Minot, ND 58703
1-800-344-0957

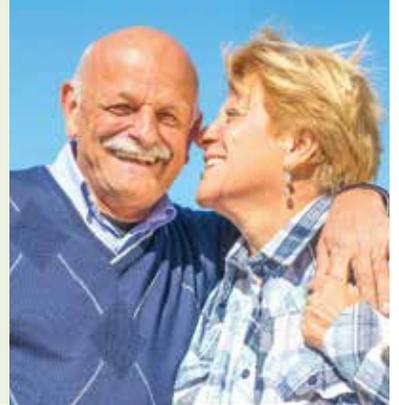
DakotaRanch.org

A Bequest of **LIFE INSURANCE** *Is Easier Than You Think*

INSURING A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

You will likely own insurance sometime during your life. However, as time goes on, you may no longer need your life insurance policy for its original use. If you would like to use your policy to benefit kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, a number of charitable life insurance options are available for you to consider.

INSURANCE GIFT BENEFITS—When you make a charitable gift of life insurance, you benefit from a current charitable income tax deduction with tax savings that may be enjoyed for up to six years. You also have the satisfaction of knowing that your policy proceeds are going to benefit a worthy cause.



OPTIONS FOR GIFTS OF INSURANCE

You can give through life insurance in a variety of ways.

MAKING A GIFT OF LIFE INSURANCE

It's easy to make an outright gift of a life insurance policy. Simply contact your insurance company and fill out the proper change of ownership form, designating Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch as the new owner. If we decide to hold onto the policy, you may make cash contributions each year to cover the policy premiums. You may be entitled to an additional charitable income tax deduction for each of these gifts.

INSURANCE UNITRUST

Perhaps you do not want to give your life insurance policy outright to the Ranch, but instead desire life income. An excellent option is to transfer your policy to fund a charitable remainder unitrust. The unitrust will provide you with a current income stream for your lifetime or for a term of years. You may receive a charitable income tax deduction in the year the trust is established and benefit from tax savings that could be spread over a number of years. The Ranch will benefit from the future remaining trust value.

INSURANCE FOR A GIFT ANNUITY

Another life insurance income option is a charitable gift annuity. Your insurance may be transferred to fund a charitable gift annuity, providing you with fixed payments for your life. The payments can be quite high depending on your age and a portion of your payments may be tax free. Your income stream may begin right away or in the future. Either way, you may benefit from a current charitable deduction in the year the gift annuity is set up. We will receive the policy proceeds at your death.

BEQUEST OF INSURANCE

Life insurance proceeds can make a wonderful gift to charity. The gift of life insurance can be made by simply naming Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch the beneficiary of your policy. Your life insurance proceeds will help further our good work and your estate may benefit from an estate tax charitable deduction based on the value of the proceeds paid.

To learn more about making a gift of life insurance, please call 1-800-344-0957 or visit DakotaRanch.org.

The Healing Power of Nature

At Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, we spend a lot of time getting the kids outside and into nature. That is intentional—because spending time in nature is healing, leading to higher levels of happiness and well-being.

Referencing a study published this spring in the journal, *Frontiers in Psychology*, David G. Allan wrote, “Researchers found that children who felt connected to nature—feeling pleasure when seeing wildflowers and animals, hearing sounds of nature—engaged in altruism, or actions that helped other people. These children actively cared for the environment by recycling,

reusing objects, and saving water. They were also more likely to say they believed in equality among sexes, races, and socioeconomic conditions.

Finally, these children score high on a happiness scale.”

The kids at the Ranch live with high levels of stress—they are away from friends and family and working through difficult psychiatric and behavioral issues. Spending time in nature can take them away from the fears and burdens that weigh them down.

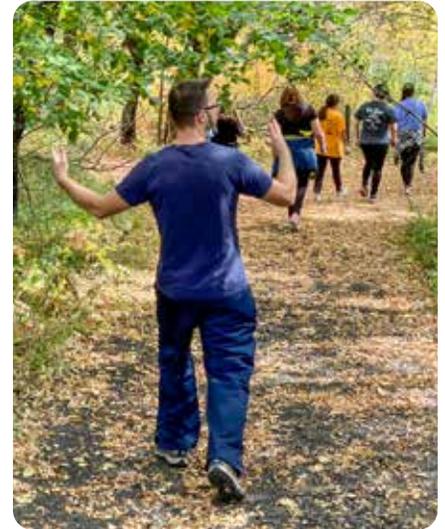
Rev. Paul Krueger, who helps teacher Andrew Meier facilitate the

Ranch Wildlife Club, sees a spiritual benefit to the outdoors as well.

“Being in nature helps a person pause and gain perspective,” Krueger said. “As you watch a baby pheasant’s wings get longer and watch it start chasing around—you see that we’re part of something much bigger than our troubles. Sitting by a stream catching fish, or hiking through the woods and looking at the paths the animals



Ranch kids get outdoors even during the cold North Dakota winters.



A walk in the park might be just what the doctor ordered.

make, are an invitation for our spirits and souls to rest in the strong hands of a very mighty, very gracious, very wise, and very caring God.”

The Ranch’s Wildlife Club introduces participants to a variety of outdoor activities and experiences. They fish off



The kids learn new skills, get some fresh air, and sometimes even catch some fish!



A nature walk through Buffalo River State Park is more than just a long walk outdoors. Interpretive signs teach Ranch kids about the geology of the park, the native prairie landscape, and the wildlife that makes its home there.

the shores of local lakes and streams, go ice fishing, raise baby pheasants, and build and install wood duck houses in a local wildlife area.

Krueger said participating in Wildlife Club teaches kids new skills, and at the same time, lowers barriers to relationships. “In the process of gaining a new skill or talking about something that is awe-inspiring, we are building bridges that allow caring hearts to connect.”

Wildlife Club activities also give kids a way to move away from their pain.

“So we’re out fishing and Joanie* has her line in the spot where I know the fish are going to be,” Krueger said. “I say, ‘Just jiggle it, Joanie.’ ‘What do you mean, like this?’ she asks. And she catches the fish and all of a sudden she has a sense of accomplishment and she



Fishing is a popular summer pasttime for the kids on all three campuses.



Taking a hike can alleviate stress, improve sleep, and connect Ranch kids to nature.

isn’t locked into her hurts.”

“Those simple joys that come from being out and away from the day-to-day pressure or heaviness of life allow real joy to flourish. It is an honor to watch,” Krueger said.

Experiencing nature isn’t limited to the kids in the Minot campus’ Wildlife Club. Wellness Coordinators on all three campuses find ways to get the kids outdoors. Gabrielle Kwiatek, wellness coordinator on the Ranch’s Minot campus, took a group of kids to Fort

Stevenson State Park this summer.

“It was pretty chilly, but the kids had so much fun throwing rocks in the lake. Something so simple,” Kwiatek said. “You could just see the joy on their faces from getting off campus and being somewhere new. Nature is extremely therapeutic. Some of our kids list it as a coping skill, so when their emotions start to heighten they’ll ask if they can go for a walk. Getting out of the building into the fresh air and sun, seeing the clouds, even the snow, is a very therapeutic exercise for some of our kids.”

Bismarck Wellness Coordinator, Tal Pollert, helped the kids plant, grow, and harvest a huge garden this summer. They loved digging in the dirt and watching the plants grow from little sprouts just poking out of the ground to full grown vegetables—which they harvested and gave to kitchen staff to include in their meals.



Ranch kids love connecting with animals at the zoo.

In Fargo, Wellness Coordinator, Christian Kjelland, took a group of kids to Maplewood State Park and also arranged a lake outing where the kids could ride in the boat, waterski, and play in the water.

Gardening, swimming, x-country skiing, hiking, biking, and exploring local parks are all ways the Ranch gets kids outside where they can experience the healing power of nature.

**Name changed to protect confidentiality*



It doesn’t get any better than outdoors AND animals.

Understanding our Kids

Relating to Kids with Autism



**By Meryl Willert,
PhD, Clinical
Psychologist,
Dakota Family
Services**

Many of the kids who come to the Ranch for treatment struggle with autistic difficulties. Whether you're a parent, teacher, therapist, or friend, relating to kids on the autism spectrum can be challenging because of the unique relationship dynamics created by autism. Read on to understand what makes the relationships difficult and things you can do to support these children.

Diagnostically, autism involves social/communication impairment as its cardinal feature, which can range from mild to severe depending on where the child lands on the autism spectrum.

Over years of working with children on the autism spectrum, I've developed a continuum based on three subtypes of autistic kids that denote their preferred social style. Understanding where a child lands on this continuum can help you relate to them.

The subtypes are (1) socially driven, (2) socially indifferent, and (3) socially disengaged.

Kids with the "socially driven" style want social interaction and desire friendships and relationships, but their social skills deficits make it very difficult for them to satisfy these needs. As a result, they are often frustrated and sometimes depressed

because social interactions frequently do not go well. In the past, these "socially driven" kids were most often diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. They tend to be highly verbal, have average or above intelligence, are preoccupied with special interests, seek or engage in social interaction, and are viewed as "quirky" by their peers.

In contrast, the "socially indifferent" kids have an, "I can take it or leave it," approach to social interaction and relationships. They are in the middle or neutral position on the continuum because they sometimes accept social interaction, but they do not have the social motivation or skills to consistently participate in it, so they tend to gravitate away from it to rejuvenate. In most cases, they are willing to engage socially when another person initiates the contact or pursues them, or if a social interaction spontaneously occurs, but they are unlikely to seek it out. Most of their peer relationships and friendships develop out of a shared interest involving activities or objects. Examples would be playing video games with others or collecting and playing Magic

cards with peers.

Finally, the "socially disengaged" style represents the most severe form of autism, and this is its classic formulation. These kids are seen by their peers as "loners" and spend most of their time engaged in solitary activities that become preoccupying. They usually have a very narrow range of functioning and are not set up to tolerate social stimulation. In fact, too much social interaction will stress them out. When they are overloaded with stress, they are usually agitated or aggressive.

Having a sense of a child's social style can help you relate to them.



Dr. Willert builds relationships with kids in a variety of ways.

For example, if you are parenting or working with a kid who seems more “socially driven,” your interactions with them become a vehicle for teaching social skills that will ultimately help them develop relationships. Eye contact, active listening, and beginning and ending a conversation, are just a few of the skills you can teach. Once you gain their trust, these kids will usually accept your feedback because they want to be successful.

Relating to the “socially indifferent” kids can be more difficult because they are in the middle regarding whether to participate in social interaction and value relationships. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don’t. You may feel like you are getting closer to a socially indifferent kid, only to experience a sense of distancing. When this happens, it’s usually because they are getting too much social stimulation, which creates stress. It is not because you didn’t do enough

or the right thing. Your challenge is to find acceptance of that middle position and join them there. That is where they feel most comfortable.

Finally, when relating to the “socially disengaged” kids, you need to be keenly aware of their social hypersensitivity and vulnerability to stress overload. Keep your goals and expectations realistic about how much social interaction they can tolerate and direct them away from social situations when you see early warning signs of escalation.

The following metaphor often gives insight into what the severely autistic person feels in social situations. If you have ever been hiking in the woods and suddenly were lost and didn’t have a clue about which direction to go, you probably felt anxious, stressed, fearful, or frustrated. Similarly, in many social situations, the severely autistic kids wonder what way to go, or what to say or do. They become

anxious and maybe agitated. The best thing you can do for them is to provide a map showing them how to get out of the woods when they need it and help them cope. In treatment, we strive to expand the skills and functioning of kids with autism, but we must also be aware of their limitations and how far they can actually “stretch” while seeking change.

Autism has a significant impact on social functioning, but it does not eliminate a child’s personality. When relating to these kids, it is important to recognize their social style, accept it, and meet them where they are at. Just like any other child, these children need to be respected and treasured and loved for the unique people they are.

MONTHLY GIVING MATTERS

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

Make your giving an even greater blessing when you join the Ranch as a *Honeycomb Partner*.

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

It’s easy to join. Just visit DakotaRanch.org/MonthlySupport.



Bee Kind. Everyone has a story.

Once again, Ranch staff, kids, and friends took a stand against bullying during National Bullying Prevention Month. On World Day of Bullying Prevention (October 5th), our campuses in Minot, Fargo, and Bismarck, and thrift stores across the state of North Dakota, were flooded with vivid gold shirts and a timely reminder to “Bee kind,” because everyone has a story.

All month long, kids and staff engaged in conversations and activities about bullying. In Fargo, our Youth Home kids decorated masks to stand up against bullying while keeping themselves and others safe; and the girls in our STARS group shared positive words with each other, highlighting the importance of being kind. Our Bismarck campus held a dress-up week, including a hat day for “Hats off to Kindness,” wacky outfit day because “Bullying is Wack,” and superhero day to “Be a Hero – Don’t Bully.” In Minot, kids participated in a Bee Kind scavenger hunt and made encouragement posters for when they are bullied or just need a little extra encouragement.



Staff and kids on our Fargo campus did their part on World Day of Bullying Prevention by wearing their Bee Kind shirts.



A resident from the Minot campus helped create a Bee Kind display at our Minot Thrift Store. Bee Kind shirts were sold at all of our thrift stores to raise money for future anti-bullying campaigns.



Board member, Jerry Leeseberg.



Thrift Store staff from across the state participated in World Day of Bullying Prevention by wearing their gold shirts on October 5th.



A delicious Bee Kind cake made by our Fargo Kitchen staff.



Masks made by Fargo Youth Home kids and staff.



Therapy dog, Mack, and his human, Lucas Mitzel, a therapist at Dakota Family Services.

Frequently Asked Questions

When Trust is Broken



Amber Nelson, MS/LAC, LPCC, Therapist

How can kids who have been abused and neglected still love their parents?

According to recent statistics from Nationalchildrensalliance.org, nearly 700,000 children are abused in the United States every year. Studies have also shown that roughly 78% of these children were abused by a parent.

Trauma impacts children in many ways, and the feelings and emotions created by the trauma are more complicated when the abuser is someone who is supposed to love and protect them.

To deal with the conflicting emotions, children often blame themselves for what happened; and are humiliated because they were not able to protect themselves, their siblings, or the family. They seek to understand their feelings by explaining away what happened, taking on negative thought patterns (“I deserve this.” “I am unlovable.”) and protecting the perpetrator. In many cases, the abused child will do anything they can to be “worthy” of their parents’ love.

For those of us who haven’t experienced parental abuse, it’s difficult to understand. Can’t we just remove them from their parents’ home and put them in a family where they’ll be loved and treated well? Unfortunately, it’s just not that simple.

The bonding between a parent and child begins at birth, and that love doesn’t go away when they are abused or removed from the home. Despite the trauma, they love their parents.

At the same time, the trauma impacts their ability to build other relationships. Children who don’t build secure attachments with their parents can have lasting attachment issues. Living in environments of abuse and neglect often lead to one of three styles of attachment.

1. Avoidant Attachment, where the child may be dismissive, pull away from closeness, and be uncomfortable depending on others due to the belief that relationships are not safe.

2. Anxious/Insecure Attachment, where the child clings to their caregiver, yet is distrustful and anxious because they don’t know what to expect.

3. Disorganized attachment, a combination of avoidant and anxious attachment. Children with disorganized attachment vacillate between clinging to their caregivers and pushing them away. This tends to be the most common attachment style in children who have experienced complex developmental trauma.

At the Ranch, we help children work through their conflicting emotions. We work toward self-compassion, and through a variety of therapeutic approaches, help to heal the hurt and shame associated with the trauma. This often includes repairing their relationships with their parents. Whenever possible, we encourage parents to participate in family therapy with their child.

Even if children don’t go home to live with their parents when they leave the Ranch, it is important for them to work through their conflicting emotions and begin healing the parent/child relationship so they can have healthy relationships in the future.

Healthy attachments form between infants and their caregivers when children can trust the caregiver to respond to their needs—both physical and emotional. The childhood trauma experienced by most children who come to the Ranch can damage their ability to meaningfully attach to others. In treatment, children with attachment and trauma issues often push back or reject the very help we are trying to provide.

Establishing a meaningful relationship with a child, a necessary first step in therapy, can be difficult with children who are actively trying to push us away. Ranch therapists must combine patience, compassion, and skill—with proven therapeutic approaches—to build these relationships. While this is a challenge, it is not impossible—our therapists are very skilled in choosing and using the approach that will work best for each child. The payoff for being successful is truly amazing and has positive life-long effects for these youth.

— By Tim Gienger, LCSW,
Clinical Director



Jim and Elaine Rider



Jim and Elaine Rider have donated thousands of neck warmers to ministries like Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Joyful Lives of Service

Jim and Elaine Rider are spending their retirement years joyfully serving others.

One of their endeavors is making fleece neck warmers to donate to veteran's organizations, homeless shelters, and the kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. It all started when Elaine volunteered at the Marie Sandvik Center in Minneapolis, MN. She was helping give away coats, hats, scarves, and mittens.

"Everyone was asking for a scarf and we ran out of scarves," Elaine said. "I can't knit fast enough to make all the scarves they needed. I came home and was talking to Jim and he said, 'Why don't you make neck warmers, like those fleece Harley Davidson ones we have?' So, I got some material and made a neck warmer. And then I made lots of neck warmers!"

When Jim and Elaine's church family heard what they were doing, volunteers stepped up to help. As Thrivent members, Jim and Elaine formed a Thrivent Action Team, used the funds received from Thrivent to purchase fabric, and brought the volunteers together to make the neck warmers. In the nine years they've been doing it, they've made and distributed thousands to Christian ministries like the Ranch.

"It's more than a neck warmer," Elaine said. "It's the whole package. We want it to be for more than just physical comfort so we provide a Bible verse and an angel to provide spiritual comfort as well."

Jim and Elaine also make thank you cards for men and women in the armed forces. They send about

200 cards and paper clamp angels at a time to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ministry to the Armed Forces. And lately, because of COVID, they've started making "thinking of you" cards for people in local nursing homes. Jim and Elaine include an encouraging note, Bible verse, and an angel, to brighten the recipient's day and stave off loneliness.

This amazing duo met on a bus. After both of them changed hours at their jobs, they ended up riding the same bus to and from work. "When you ride the bus every day you start seeing who is on the bus regularly," Elaine said. "We just started to talk. Our first date was going to a play, 'The Gospel According to Scrooge.' We kept riding the bus together and then he proposed. We've been married 34 years."

The couple started supporting Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch after Elaine saw a bottle of Ranch honey or a Ranch logo somewhere. "I recall having Ranch honey in the cupboard when I was growing up. My parents must have donated to the Ranch to have the honey. I decided to look into it and learned that the Ranch fills in some of the gaps children's parents aren't able to provide."

Jim's heart for the Ranch is very personal. "When I was the age of Ranch kids, I would probably have been one of them. That was my childhood: alcohol and abuse. I had a little brother and sister I pretty much had to care for. One reason I support the Ranch is because no child should have to go through a situation like that."



A well-timed foster family placement pulled Jim out of the situation when he was 15. He and his siblings were placed in different foster homes while his Mom went through treatment. “Pete and Kathy Vanderploeg, who already had four kids of their own, were a very strong Christian family and that was new to me. I heard a lot of the Gospel really quick.”

On a road trip last spring, right before COVID hit, Jim and Elaine toured the Fargo and Minot campuses of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch; as well as the Grand Forks thrift store. The tours made quite the impression.

“It was really eye-opening,” Elaine said. “You could just feel the Lord there.”

Jim was impressed by the love and dedication of the teachers they visited with at the Ranch in Minot. “Their love and dedication for the children was plainly evident. They had a passion. They wanted to be there. That is the kind of thing I want to support. And we like the honey.”

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.

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 in one of the following ways:

Online at DakotaRanch.org:

Select Memorial/Honorarium when completing the donation form.

Phone: Call 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 a Development Officer 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

You can 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, go to DakotaRanch.org and choose “Many Ways to Give” from the dropdown menu. Or call 1-800-344-0957—we can send you an order form or take your information over the phone.

Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

See blue box below.

Amazon Smile

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

Thrivent Choice

One of the ways Jim and Elaine Rider support Ranch kids is by directing a portion of their Thrivent Choice Dollars® to the Ranch. As people of faith, they like to support Christian organizations like the Ranch.

All Thrivent Choice Dollars® directed to the Ranch support our Spiritual Life Program—teaching our kids that Christ made them, loves them, and has a plan for their lives. This incredible truth aids in their healing, provides a foundation of hope, and helps our children be successful in their treatment.

If you are an eligible Thrivent Financial member with Choice Dollars® to direct, consider directing them to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. Simply go to Thrivent.com/thriventchoice, login, and choose Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. To direct Choice Dollars® over the phone, call 1-800-847-4836 and say “Thrivent Choice” after the prompt. You can direct your Choice Dollars® to one or more charities.

Start of the Journey

Writing and faith are seeded at the Ranch

Justin Arnold didn't come to the Ranch and leave a year later with every problem solved and ready to lead a perfect life. Most kids don't. The goal is to plant seeds that can sprout and grow at the right time and place.

Justin had grown up in a broken home where his dad and mom (who were divorced) fought for custody. Spending his childhood in and out of courts, and watching his parents constantly fight, Justin lacked a sense of stability and did not know who to trust. In defiance, he began running away from home as a young teen and ended up at the Ranch.

"Nothing was making sense at that period in my life," Justin said. "But the Ranch's emphasis on church, and interactions with two schoolteachers who cultivated my interests in writing and computer design, made a big impact on me."

After leaving the Ranch, Justin went home to his father's house and tried to focus on high school. But, without the spiritual purpose or mentoring teachers that he had at the Ranch, he ended up leaving home for good and trying to live on his own. He spent the next several years sleeping on friend's couches, being homeless, or staying at flop houses.

At 20 years old, he had had enough of hard living. He went to God in prayer and said, "If you are real, let me know, and I will serve you." After that, he committed his life to Christ. By putting his trust in God, and believing in the Biblical wisdom of

good living, he found the safety and security he had been looking for.

Justin joined a church, received training to be a minister, and began mentoring other young people. Through his volunteer work, Justin noticed that the missing piece in people's lives was education.

"I began to see that the limitations in my life and the obstacles faced by those I was mentoring—not knowing how to get a job or pay bills or make a budget or raise children or be a husband—came from a lack of education. I decided to research economic development, business, and the family and consumer sciences, so I went to college in my late 20s."

Several degrees later, Dr. Justin Arnold is a Workforce Development Director for a regional planning commission in Illinois.

Justin said getting his Ph.D. was easier for him than most of his fellow students because he'd been practicing writing since his time at the Ranch. His Ranch English teacher, Jim Miller, (now retired), saw he didn't

do well with structure, but that he enjoyed writing.

"Mr. Miller had me write short stories, and then we'd review and discuss them. It wasn't so much that he inspired me to be a writer, but that I was always a writer and he took the time to engage me and give me something to focus on. I've written 15-20 books and am still writing. A big part of getting my Ph.D. was wanting to be a better

writer in my field."

Justin remembers two other people at the Ranch who taught him things he still uses today. One was a technology teacher who saw he wasn't doing so great in class, so she gave him a digital camera, a computer with Photoshop, and told him to figure it out.

"She instilled in me the confidence that no matter what it is, I can figure it out," Justin said.

The other big influence on Justin's life was a Ranch staff who took him off campus to go to his church. "I think his name was Dennis. He was an African American man, and I would hang out with him. I didn't have a lot of exposure to different cultures and different races. He took



A former Ranch resident, Dr. Justin Arnold is a Workforce Development Director in Illinois.



Justin draws from his Ranch experiences to parent his four children.

us to his church which opened my eyes to a whole different group of people. He built a foundation in my life of being comfortable with other cultures.”

“Now that I’m older and can look back at it,” Justin said, “I see that the Ranch provided a safe place to be where people were trying to help me and keep me safe. I didn’t have that at home.”

“I didn’t like [the Ranch] at the time, but where else could I go? It was better than jail. It was better than being on the streets. At least someone was watching out for me. I got fed and people gave me routines as far as you have to go to school, you have to go to church. The Ranch provided a place for me to safely start dealing with my issues.”

Justin, now 38, was back in North Dakota earlier this year taking care of his dad who is dealing with health issues. While in North Dakota, he made the trip to Minot to tour the Ranch.

“I needed to process what happened. How did I get here? Why was I at the Ranch? Who do I want to be now? It was a really great experience because the receptionist got a staff member to give me a tour and show me around my old stomping grounds.”

The seeds planted at the Ranch are still bearing fruit in Justin’s life today. When he thinks about youth struggling with emotional and behavioral issues, he thinks about the kindness of Dennis. When he sees a young person struggling, he tries

to help them like Jim helped him. And when he looks at the world, with all of its problems and conflict, he thinks about how trusting God provides a sense of purpose and security that can’t be shaken.

“I am thankful for my experiences at the Ranch. I am empathetic to the difficult job and need for strength faced by the staff to deal with troubled teens. Now, as an adult, I can appreciate the care and thought they put in to helping youth heal and learn.”

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

Making Christmas Special



**By Anne Compere,
Director
of Mission
Advancement**

Because my husband is an active duty Air Force officer, we've lived in three different states over the last nine years—Texas, Montana, and North Dakota. Long drives, expensive flights, and/or winter roads deterring travel means we, with our four children, have spent Christmas together, but alone, without cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

Part of me has a little pity party on Christmas Eve, especially if I check social media and see folks having amazing times with extended family. The other side of me deliberately works to make the days special for my tribe. We play games, eat lots of goodies, see a movie, attend a Christmas Eve service, and eat brunch at a local dive on Christmas Day (our favorite is the Waffle House).

The children in our care at the Ranch are without their immediate family members, never mind their extended family. Tragically, many of them have no hope of being reunited with biological relatives. I'm so grateful that care workers, teachers, and staff at the Ranch work thoughtfully and diligently to make the holiday season a special time for these precious kids. As I do with my tribe, the Ranch intentionally plans games, movie nights, talent shows, special chapels,

and service opportunities.

Last Christmas, my oldest son spent Christmas with his new in-laws. For the first time, I didn't have my tribe together, so my daughter and I spent a few hours at the Ranch making candy. My daughter and one of the girls had a long, involved conversation about a TV series. I was clueless. As I watched them interacting, I was so grateful for

such a place as the Ranch. A place where kids experience Christmas, sometimes for the first time.

Thank you for your support which enables us to wrap our troubled, amazing kids in every single service they need to heal. Thank you for helping us go above and beyond to help them find their best selves. Merry Christmas to you and your tribe!

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



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Senior Development Officer



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Wyoming LWML;

\$3,000; Bismarck Chapel Furnishings

Montana LWML;

\$2,100; Bismarck Salad Bar

Capital Electric Cooperative;

\$2,000; Bismarck DMS Remodel

Kiwanis Club of Fargo;

\$3,500; Network Switches

Martha Beckenholdt

Charitable Endowment Fund;

\$2,722

Elmer & Kaya Berg

Foundation No. 2;

\$1,000; DMS Fargo School Supplies

Mercy Box;

DMS Bismarck School Supplies

Lutheran Social Services;

Restorative Practices Training

Robert E. Herman Charitable Trust;

\$43,000; Marketing and Education for Dakota Family Services

ND Department of Commerce; Economic Resiliency Grant—Foundation;

\$30,533.51

ND Department of Commerce; Economic Resiliency Grant—Programs;

\$69,464.49

Midco Foundation; PPE for Bismarck Dakota Memorial School;

\$1,000

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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, by helping us teach them 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

July 1, 2020 - Oct 31, 2020

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Lonnie Henke

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ALBERS, ARTHUR & ROSE

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Arizona Donor Appreciation Luncheons Postponed until 2022

For many years, the Ranch has held Valentine-themed donor appreciation luncheons in Mesa and Sun City West, Arizona. The Mesa luncheon is always on Valentine's Day, with the Sun City West luncheon coming the day before or after, depending on the year.

After much deliberation by our Arizona Steering Committee and Leadership Team, we have decided to postpone the 2021 Arizona Luncheons. As much as we'll miss seeing everyone and celebrating our amazing donors, we can't find a safe way to bring people together.

Mark Valentine's Day 2022 on your calendar and plan to attend.

Memorials/Honorariums

SWANGLER, THOMAS A.

Sandra Morken

SWANSON, PATRICIA

Harold Blume

SWEARSON, BILL & AGNES

Brad Hofmann

SWENSON, ORLAN

Melvin O. Anderson

Arlys Torgerson

CASEY SZEWCZAK

Patricia Szewczak

TANDSATER, GARY

Florence Wiest

TESCH, CIRT

Ms. Darleen Klemp

TSCHAEKOFKSKE, MARLENE

John & Patricia Sebastian

TSCHAEKOFKSKE, SARAH

Jim & Judith Mittelstadt

TED E.

Rev. James & Norma Kretzmann

TEETERS, MARY

Florence Hopp

THOMAS, RAY

Edwin & Jane Porter

THOMPSON, LILA G.

Richard Gust

THOMPSON, LYLE

Joyce & Sharon Knudsvig

THOMPSON, TOM

Robert & Dianne Cummings

THORSELL, DARRELL

Dick & Myrna Thorsell

VOIGT, SISTER FRANCES MARIE

Lynn & Mary Lou Bueling

VOORHEES, WEBB & JOYCE

Pastor Jack & Joneen Richards

WARD, DONALD

Tim Ward

WEISS, JIMMY

Norma Von Osterheldt

WESTLIE, JAMES HART

Dale & Laurie Dannewitz

WIK, RICHARD

Jean Wick

WILLETT, TOM

Dolores Simdorn

WITTE, FAY

Dick & Nancy Strakbein

Janet Witte

ZIEGELMAN, MARK

Ruth Mattson

ZURCHER, ELMER & CONNIE

Carol Townsend

Honorariums

July 1, 2020 - Oct 31, 2020

ALL ABUSED CHILDREN

Janet Riley-Dalton

CINDY

Clara Heinemann

DR. & MRS. CARL HOLL, JR.

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Milukas

DOROTHY ROMEO

Bob James

ERIKA TUCKER

Sue-Anna Tucker

GAVIN MOE'S BIRTHDAY

Tom & Donna Schneider

GRACE LARSON

Catherine Langston

IRENE WEBSTER

Larry D. Knutson

IRMA FUERSTENAU'S 91ST

BIRTHDAY

Darwin & Mary Bettman

JAMES & MILLIE DICK'S 60TH

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Janna Diggs

JAMES STANDIFER

Summer Standifer

JANINE MCCLUSKY

Marika Porter

JOSHUA DEYOUNG

Allison DeYoung

JOY RYAN

Quin and Kole Seiler

KAREN ENGELTER

Margaret Engelter

KNUTSON FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP
FUND

Nancy Fessler

LINDA HILL

Marilyn Schilling

LYNN MATHENA

John Catani

MARILYN SCHILLING

Linda Hill

NICHOLAS "DBGR RESIDENT &
PEN PAL"

Marian Milks

PARENTS, RISCHE-

WIESEHAN

Henry & Marian Rische

REV. LOREN VOGLER

Scott Lyftogt

RICHARD & CAROL WIGNESS'S
50TH ANNIVERSARY

Robert & Dianne Cummings

ROBERT C. LONANO

Deborah Graziano

ROG ROBERTS

Nancy Houghton

"YOUR STAFF"

David Juve

**Please help us
reach you!**



As people move from landline telephones to mobile phones, it is getting more difficult to say "thank you" to our donors. Please call us with your phone number so we can update our files. We would love the opportunity to thank you over the phone or in person—so we can tell you real stories about our kids and make the ministry come alive.

Call 1-800-344-0957



A Prayer for Healing

At every moment of our existence
You are present to us, God,
In gentle compassion.
Help us to be present to one another
So that our presence may be a strength
That heals the wounds of time,
And gives hope that is for all persons,
Through Jesus our compassionate brother.

We keep all donors, kids, and Ranch staff in our prayers. If you have a special intention or prayer request, please contact us at 1-800-344-0957 or info@DakotaRanch.org. When we receive your request, we will distribute it to our pastors and spiritual life specialists who will pray for you during our chapel services on all three campuses.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to pray for you.

Your Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Your Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please pray for _____



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

Change Service Requested



Bee Kind poster drawn and colored by Ranch resident.

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

www.DakotaRanch.org

Main Switchboard: 1-800-593-3098

Foundation: 1-800-344-0957

