

THE RANCH VOICE

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

Summer 2024



Mr. Fjeldahl teaches students how to inspect and service the engine of the “Tom Cat,” one of two vehicles given to us by a Ranch donor whose husband built them from scratch.



www.DakotaRanch.org
1.800.344.0957

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Danny's Story, p. 3
- A Legacy of Love—Tolley, ND, p. 6
- Every Moment Counts, p. 8
- Scott Found a Place to Grow, p. 28
- Trauma and Child Development, p. 30
- 2023-24 Annual Report, p. 34

Message from Our President/CEO



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

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Dear Friends of the Ranch,

Whenever I sit down to write these openings for an issue of Ranch Voice, I fret. I want to do an honorable job of thanking you. I want to ensure that I convey the respect and gratitude and pride I feel for the people who work at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. I want to honestly represent these complicated children, their challenges, their pain, and their triumphs. I want to give glory to God.

I can spend days thinking about how to get it right.

But, sometimes, in a “God wink,” I know just what to share.

He is a handful and a delight. He is smart, witty, something of a smart aleck and always willing to help. He’s not terribly tall, maybe 5’4” with a mop of curly dark hair, wonderful, laughing dark brown eyes and a hearty voice. He would often tease me about taking my therapy dog home with him – forever! He works every day to manage his mental health and behavioral challenges.

He was a resident at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and then transitioned back home while remaining as a day student for several years at our on-site school, Dakota Memorial School. He graduated this May with a fully earned, fully accredited, honest to goodness high school diploma. It was a really big deal – his dad wore a tie to the ceremony!

A couple weeks after graduation, a letter arrived at Principal Leinen’s office.

“I wanted to write this so you all understand how truly grateful I am for everything you have done. When I first came to the Ranch, I was a mess of a person with no direction in life or drive to do anything with it, yet you all pushed me to be and do better for myself and those around me. I know I wasn’t always the easiest to work with (especially when I first arrived), but you persevered to help me realize exactly what I could achieve in life. I am incredibly grateful for the time I have spent getting to know you all, learning from you, and having great conversations about life in general. I greatly appreciate that as I got older you all treated me as an adult instead of a kid, and you always talked with me like a normal human being. That really helped me strengthen my relationships with you and improve my academics (no matter how much procrastinating I did). I’ve spoken with many of you on this, and I know some days when kids aren’t doing anything and it seems you’re making no progress at all, and that you might not be making a difference there. I want this to be a reminder that what you guys do truly does matter. I went from not wanting to live or do anything with my life to being excited to see what the next day has in store for me, and it is ALL because of you. You have truly changed my life, and I will forever be grateful. I love all of you.”

It’s a beautiful testament to God’s work here at the Ranch. Please know it is written for you, too. Without your prayers and financial support, stories like this would not be told, lives would not be changed.

Thank God and thank you.

In His love,

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

Danny's Story of Redemption and Resilience

Danny made quite an impression on me when I met him. I was just months into my time at the Ranch when I traveled from Fargo to Minot for our annual plant sale. I met him in the greenhouse where I was helping get ready for the sale. In addition to showing me what to do, he told me all about the process—germinating, watering, fertilizing, repotting, and more. When I asked about the dirt he was using, he very gently, but clearly, corrected me and explained the difference between dirt and soil.

The day of the sale, Danny was in constant motion—potting plants, carrying purchases to people's cars, bringing new plants from the greenhouses, and jumping in to do anything that was needed. Bopping around in his bright orange shirt and a huge smile on his face, Danny was a ray of sunshine to everyone he met.

When I visited with Danny this summer, nine years after we first met, he told me his story.

—Tammy Noteboom

When Danny was two years old, his parents separated. He lived with his mom and spent summers and Christmases with his dad.

"We moved to Bismarck when I was seven years old because I

had been molested," Danny said. "Looking back at it, I can see that this is where my lack of trust in people started. This person was a neighbor and my brother's friend."

Things took a turn for the worse when Danny was 11 or 12 years old.

"My mom had been doing drugs, but this is when the addiction really hit her," Danny said. "My brother and I saw the drugs. I found the dirty needles. People were coming in and out of the apartment 24/7. Eventually they took over our room [for the drugs and drug paraphernalia] so my brother and I had to sleep in the living room where all the traffic was happening."

When Danny's mom was indicted on federal drug charges, he moved to Montana to live with his dad and his then-wife.

"We had a honeymoon stage where everything was great," Danny said. "But then my dad's wife started treating me like crap. I wasn't even allowed to check out books from the library and couldn't do my homework because of all the tension in the house. My dad thought it was outrageous, but he was working 12–16-hour days and didn't have the energy at the end of the day to keep fighting with her."

When they moved back to North Dakota in 2013 and lived in a camper, Danny said it quickly got worse.

"They were constantly yelling. I was sleeping on the couch in the living area so I couldn't

go to bed until she did. Most of the time she'd be up watching TV until 11 o'clock. One time she grounded me from watching TV, so I had to face the backside of the couch," Danny said. "She was manipulating and always made me seem like the bad person."

Danny started running away, sometimes daily.

"I was a very troubled youth," Danny said. "I tried to do good, but when you're always treated badly and you're grounded from everything, it's hard. [My dad's wife] grounded me from deodorant. Who gets grounded from deodorant?"

When Danny came to the Ranch, he knew he wanted to change and was ready to get help.



Now a successful adult, Danny loves spending time with his dog, Vixen.

Our Kids

"If you truly want to change, the Ranch is a great place," Danny said. "It's a safe environment and no one judges you there."

Danny said Ranch staff didn't focus on his acting out behaviors or his past, but on his potential.

"The treatment work was really hard and personal. It was so tough because I didn't want to go back and relive all of that but writing it all down and talking about it helped me grow," Danny said. "My therapist, Boni, helped me identify thinking errors and triggers and develop coping skills. I took the work seriously and put a lot of time into it."

Danny appreciated the opportunities he had at the Ranch. He was able to focus on school and homework, and wrote a song titled, "Envious," when Grammy Award winning songwriter and recording artist, Monte Selby, spent a week at the Ranch. He also attended chapel and spiritual life group.

"I got closer to God while I was at the Ranch," he said. "He was someone I could turn to. When I didn't have anyone else, I could sit down and pray and feel like I had someone to talk to."

Danny was also proud of his work in the cottage and made strong connections with the cottage and school staff.

"We all helped out with the dining room and cottage chores, and not to be a bragger, but Miss Phyllis loved my cleaning," Danny said. "I really took pride in keeping the place clean."

"I got really close to Ms. Bartok and Mrs. Clementich. Honestly, Ms. Bartok was kind of like a grandma to me," Danny said. "She allowed me to get out of the cottage to help in the greenhouse. I hadn't done anything like that before, but I loved it. I was always the one to go in on Saturday to help repot plants or water them. One of the greenhouses had a corner with my name on it and all my favorite succulents."

While Danny freely admits he wasn't perfect while he was at the Ranch, he learned to accept the consequences of his actions.

"The Ranch really brought out the best in me," he said. "Now I'm a hard worker and very optimistic. The Ranch helped me become a happier person and accept the mistakes I made. The past doesn't have to define who we are, and we can grow from it."

Now age 25, Danny lives in Minot and works at Harley's Automotive. He loves his job and was recently promoted to General Maintenance Shift Supervisor. He is dating a woman he thinks is "the one." He visits his mom, who has been sober for 10 years, once a month or so. He talks to his dad nearly every day.

Danny enjoys taking his dog for

walks, playing video games, listening to music, and going to concerts.

"I wouldn't ever change my time at the Ranch," Danny said. "I feel like if it weren't for the Ranch, I wouldn't have learned from my mistakes, and I'd probably be in prison. The Ranch gave me a second chance."



Danny discovered a love for gardening while at the Ranch. In 2016, he managed the Potting Station during BLT Day.

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.

Foundation and Corporate Gifts

Kindred High School PaY;

\$500; Fargo Cottage Murals

Horace High School PaY;

\$1,000; Fargo Cottage Murals

Oak Grove High School PaY;

\$500; Fargo Cottage Murals

Dakota Medical Foundation;

\$3,000; Virtual DBT Group

First Lutheran Church Foundation;

\$2,500; Spiritual Life Program; Fargo

Montana District LWML;

\$3,000; Fargo Nutrition Center Updates

Cass County Electric;

\$2,547; Fargo Nutrition Center Updates

South Dakota District LWML;

\$3,000; Bismarck Chapel Furnishings

Eastern District LWML;

\$3,000; Minot Gym Floor

Iowa West District LWML;

\$2,000; Fargo Nutrition Center Updates

Iowa East District LWML;

\$3,000; Fargo Nutrition Center Updates

FM Area Foundation;

\$3,500; DMS Fargo Caring Closet

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\$500; CTE Technology Upgrades

Hector Foundation;

\$6,000; Snow Removal Equipment; Fargo



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



A Legacy of Love—Tolley, ND

When Joy Ryan and I visited Trinity Lutheran Church in Tolley, ND, the members of the congregation had many stories to tell. It is a longstanding part of our history that the first real Ranch location was the Butt farm outside of Tolley, ND. The folks who live in Tolley have much to say about the love their community shared with the boys who lived there, and even corrected some of what we thought we knew about our history.

That's not Ida and Louis

Ida and Louis Butt took boys into their home for what was then called Dakota Boys Ranch. We have a picture of the boys around the dining room table with who we always thought was Ida and Louis, but it wasn't them at all. It was Leo and Alfrieda Goldhammer, two of the Ranch's first house parents. Everyone in the group agreed that the Butts moved to town before donating the farm to the Ranch.

They do recall Ida and Louis, though, and remember them fondly.

When Judith Poppinga, Tolley, was a freshman in college, she received an assignment to interview a pioneer from the area. She chose to interview Ida and Louis Butt, and in her paper, she wrote that Louis moved from Minnesota to North Dakota in 1905. In 1907, he filed a claim on the 160-acre farm for \$14.50. When he and Ida Swenson married in 1913, they lived in a small shack until they were able to build a new house—the very house they donated years later to the Ranch.

The Butts were very active in their

church and community. Louis helped organize the Cooperative Store, the Tolley Grain Growers Elevator, and the Tolley Livestock Shipping organization. He was secretary for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tolley for 44 years and spent many years as chairman of the McKinney Township Organizations.

Ida and Louis didn't have children,

Vicki Steinke remembers them from school and said they were just normal kids.

"They were just a part of us," Vicki said. "We knew they were boys that were homeless, but we didn't really think about them as being different."

Loretta Buchholtz was a teacher at the Tolley school who says the same thing.



Two of the Ranch's first house parents, Leo and Alfrieda Goldhammer (NOT Ida and Louis Butt), gather Ranch boys around the dining table at the Ranch's first real location near Tolley, ND.

so when they retired from farming and moved to a house in Tolley, they donated their farm to Dakota Boys Ranch. Up to ten boys lived at the farm at a time. They attended the Tolley school, and many attended the Lutheran church that is now Trinity Lutheran Church. Photos of 12 Ranch boys confirmed at Trinity over the years still hang in the church library.

"I remember one of the boys who was in my fifth-grade class. He was very quiet and well behaved," she said. "If I didn't know he was from the Ranch, I would have never guessed."

Greater needs

The boys participated in school activities, basketball, Leatherman's Club, etc., and were part of the



The home where the first group of Ranch boys lived still stands (Nov. 2023).

Tolley community. However, board members recognized that the children needed more services.

Rev. Joel Brandvold, pastor at Trinity, has some insight into the move as his grandparents were close friends with Leon and Orpha Kruze.

“Leon was chairman of the board for the Ranch and was instrumental in moving the Ranch from Tolley to Minot, much to the dismay of a lot of people,” Joel said. “He took a lot of flak for that.”

“My understanding,” Joel continued, “was that Minot had more services to offer, a bigger social services department, and that they felt they would have more financial support in a larger community. They lost a lot of support and really struggled for a couple of years.”

While most of the group didn’t know why the Ranch left Tolley, they all remember the loss that was felt by the community

because the kids were part of them.

“The kids thrived here,” Loretta said. “They worked on the farm and were part of the community. I ran into a gentleman at a gun show and when he found out I was from Tolley

he said he was at the Boys Ranch in the early sixties. He told me it was the best thing that ever happened to him. The community was good for those kids.”

The Tolley community and the members of Trinity Lutheran Church played a huge role in the Ranch’s history and personally made a positive impact on many young boys. Without their love, support, and open arms, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch may never have become a reality. They are the foundation on which our mission “to help at-risk children and their families” has thrived.



The members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Tolley, ND, are proud of the role their community played in Ranch history.



Being a Residential Treatment Specialist (RTS) at the Ranch is not an easy job. The men and women who hold these positions provide around-the-clock care for Ranch kids, keeping them safe and providing as normal of an environment as possible in a treatment setting. They are the front-line staff who absorb the children's frustration and anger when they've had a difficult therapy session, a distressing phone call, news about their family, or negative interactions with the other kids.

As Ranch children work through their traumas and learn how to manage their behaviors, their behaviors can be intense—they may yell, curse, spit, hit, or break down in tears. Like most children and teenagers, they express their anger and pain where they feel the safest, which is often in the cottages under the care of the RTSs.

Despite these challenges, the treatment specialists interviewed for this article consistently recognize the potential in each child. They look beyond their outward expressions of pain to the core of who they are—their goodness, gifts, and individuality. They understand that the children's anger and rage is not directed at them, but at the circumstances of their lives that brought them to this place. They sit with them in their pain and establish themselves as dependable adults who can be trusted to provide stability, safety, and loving care.

According to the Lionheart Foundation, people working in direct care roles have experienced greater rates of childhood adversity than the general population. This rings true for many RTSs at the Ranch, as you will discover in their profiles in this article. Their personal experiences with trauma foster a deeper empathy and equip them to connect with our children in ways that lead to healing.

Asad Watson Buffalo

Bismarck

*Loves basketball,
hanging out with friends,
going to the lake, and eating
out.*

Asad Watson Buffalo has much in common with the kids at the

Ranch.

"I was one of these kids and know where they are coming from as far as family dynamics. My mom was trying her hardest, but she had her own struggles," Asad said. "My older sister moved out when I was in 8th grade, and I had four younger siblings to care for. I was on a downward path, skipping school, getting into fights, and getting kicked out of class."

Fortunately, Asad had a good friend whose family took him under their wing.

"In high school, they were really there for me," he said. "I knew if I needed food or anything, for me or my siblings, they were one call away. They were trying their hardest for me and I didn't want to disappoint them. I was able to turn it around and I want to show these kids that a brighter future is possible."

After high school, Asad attended United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck and earned an associate's degree in criminal justice. He is

now working on his bachelor's degree while working full-time at the Ranch.

As an RTS shift leader, Asad is often a float, helping

with kids who are dysregulated

or providing extra support for the staff and kids wherever he is

needed.

"I enjoy coming to work every day. Building positive relationships with the kids is my favorite part. They're full of energy but I wouldn't trade it for the world," Asad said. "They are smart and outgoing and friendly and really some of the most talented human beings out there. They amaze me every single day. They are so resilient to have faced all the trauma they've been through and still be here accepting help."

"Yes, they struggle," he continued. "But that is why we are here. We are trained to deal with their behaviors and help them through it. It's our job to help them see their true potential."

In addition to helping kids get through difficult moments, Asad said the Ranch gives them a space to be kids.

"At the of the day, they are just kids wanting to be kids. They haven't been able to live a kid's life. They are able to do a little bit of that while they are here healing from their trauma," he said.

The hardest part of the job for Asad is being involved in high-risk incidents. He recalls one incident where a kid was suicidal. Asad stayed calm during it but realized later it affected him more than he thought.

He said, "I care for these kids, and it breaks my heart seeing them like that and knowing that in that moment, they see suicide as the only way out of their pain."

With the help of Ranch supervisors and the incident debriefing, Asad was able to



process his own emotions and work through them while still being there for the kids.

“Within 24 hours after an incident, we hold a debriefing with the director, program manager, and everyone involved to talk about what happened and what we could have done better,” Asad said. “I love the debriefings because I learn so much. There are very knowledgeable people here and just being around them helps me get better at my job.”

“I came to the Ranch thinking of this as a temporary job,” Asad said. “I definitely see it as a career type of job now. There is always room to learn and grow at the Ranch.”

What Asad wants Ranch donors to know:

“I want Ranch donors to know they are donating to a great cause. We help kids through their trauma and to find healthier coping skills. They are often like brand-new kids when they discharge versus when they first arrive. One boy wouldn’t listen or talk to anyone when he got here. He is discharging on Friday and now he’ll talk to anyone.”

Brooklyn Johnson

Fargo

Loves meditation, yoga, and exercise.

Brooklyn Johnson says she was called to work at the Ranch.

“I knew about the Ranch, so it was always in the back of my

mind. But it wasn’t until I moved to Fargo and saw an ad about open positions at the Ranch, that I felt called to apply.”

As an RTS, Brooklyn sees her job as showing up for the kids every day, showing them compassion, and taking care of them the best she can.

“I feel the most present with our kiddos when they are telling their stories and talking about their home lives,” she said. “You have to take everything in and let them sit with and feel their emotions, whatever they are.”

Brooklyn recalls talking with one young girl who didn’t think anyone cared about her.

“That was a hard moment,” she said. “I knew I cared about her, and that so many other people loved and supported and cared about her, but she couldn’t feel it.”

According to Brooklyn, many kids come to the Ranch knowing they want to move forward and put in the work to change. Others must process being here before they can give themselves permission to put in the work.

“Part of their work is to hold themselves accountable for their actions. Many Ranch kids suffered serious abuse when they made the most minor of mistakes, so admitting they made a mistake and

holding themselves accountable is really hard,” Brooklyn said. “They must also work at accepting healthy coping skills into their lives. Sometimes they just don’t want to do the coping skills. They have to be willing to try and then use the skills that help.”

As an RTS, Brooklyn wakes the kids up, helps them get ready for their day, and if they have prescribed medications, makes sure they get what they need. She spends the rest of the day eating meals with them and going with them to school or other activities, depending on the day.

“I try to be the voice of reason and hold them to boundaries and expectations, so they know what to expect throughout the day.”

One of Brooklyn’s best moments with the kids was taking them to Lindenwood Park this summer.

“We played on the playground and went on the little trails,” she said. “They just seemed so in their element and it was so fun to watch them just be kids and in the present moment in a really happy way.”

She also enjoys making connections with the kids who have similar life stories as hers.

“One of the kiddos was talking about how she might be moving in with a mentor,” Brooklyn said. “I shared with her that I had to move out of my home and in with a mentor during high school too. That was something that really connected with her. When you can make that connection with a child, they feel cared for and seen.”



While most of the kids are excited to leave the Ranch and move on, discharge can bring out kids' fears.

"Sometimes they are excited," Brooklyn said, "but they are often also scared they are going to mess up again.

I assure them it is okay to mess up. We are all human. We mess up, learn from it, and life goes on."

Brooklyn was born and raised in Minot, ND, moved to Minnesota for college, and eventually landed in Fargo where she worked as a certified nursing assistant. In her six months at the Ranch, she said she has learned patience and the importance of taking care of herself.

"That's a big thing with this job," she said. "You have to take care of yourself so you can care for the kids."

What Brooklyn wants Ranch donors to know:

"These kids are so giving and kind. I've seen so many kids show up for each other and just be amazing human beings. They are so often misunderstood. We all come from different walks of life and have been dealt different cards. I hope donors can see different sides of our kids and see them as more than the labels they are given."



Chyanee Ellingson

Minot

Loves kids, cooking, baking, going to the lake with friends, and her dogs Ruger, Kimber, Echo, and Rebel.

Chyanee Ellingson came to the Ranch after working at a residential treatment facility in Montana. When she decided to move back to Minot, where she was born and raised, her experience and interest in working with kids made her a good fit.

As an RTS supervisor, Chyanee guides staff as well as the children.

"I want everyone to know that they have my support and if they need help, I'll be there," Chyanee said. "I want to learn and guide and teach and help everyone become the best versions of themselves, whether they are residents or staff."

In addition to her work at the Ranch, Chyanee is president of the board of directors for the Minot Area Recovery Community Organization (MARCO).

"I got involved with MARCO when one of my friends relapsed. He was sober when I met him and when he relapsed it hit me really hard," she said. "I did everything in my power to give him the resources he could use. Even though I can't help him now, I can help other people."

Chyanee didn't have an easy childhood and had to take on a lot of responsibilities at an early age.

"I have two biological siblings, lots of step siblings, and a couple foster siblings. I spent a lot of time not being a kid and taking on responsibilities at an early age," she said. "I was put in foster care temporarily when I was 15 because I couldn't make ends meet for my mom who wasn't working."

Chyanee was fortunate enough to have adults, her grandparents and her first boss, to support her.

"My boss at the Dairy Queen was the father I never had. He helped me through a lot. He would remind me that just because things aren't okay now doesn't mean they won't end up okay. Or if it's not okay, it's not the end." Chyanee said, "Every time I would start having a panic attack, he would talk me down. 'Breathe in. Breathe out. Move on,' he would say. Now I have that tattooed on my arm to remind me to breathe."

Showing the kids that safe adults do exist is important to Chyanee.

"It's unreal the number of things these kids have gone through, and they still survive and go through every day," she said. "We give them hope by showing them we are not going to be the people who put them in those predicaments. We are going to help them learn and grow and guide them towards who they want to be rather than who they were forced to be."

Chyanee focuses on the small wins that happen every day to keep her at a job that can be very difficult.

"I walked out of CPR class not too long ago and heard the kids playing in the rain and their squeals of laughter," she said. "It reminded me once again why I'm here."

"We had a kiddo who was almost nonverbal when he arrived. One day I was taking him to an appointment, and he called me a name, and it was the happiest day of my life," Chyanee said. "He went from being nonverbal to insulting me like the rest of the boys did when they were upset with me. It's a small win, but it's still a win."

"I made it through the traumas I had in my childhood," she said. "Now I can help other kids make it through what's going on in their lives. They deserve every opportunity they can get."

What Chyanee wants Ranch donors to know:

"There is no such thing as a bad kid. Children are a product of their environment, and their behaviors are a form of communication, a way of letting us know what they've been through without actually telling us. I hope there comes a day when the Ranch doesn't have to exist. I would be perfectly happy being out of a job if it's because children were no longer being abused."

Emily Westlake

Minot

Loves being outside, playing games, lounging in the sun, spending time with family, hanging out with friends, and running.



Emily Westlake grew up in Gainesville, FL, and moved to Minot, ND, for college. Her dad grew up in Minot, her grandpa still lived there, and four generations of her family attended Minot State University. As the youngest family member of her generation, she was the last chance to keep the tradition going.

Emily's dad worked at the Ranch in the 1980s and she grew up hearing stories about the Ranch. When she graduated from college with a degree in special education, she didn't feel ready to start teaching, so she got a job at the Ranch.

"I fell in love with the Ranch," Emily said. "I fully believe in the mission and have seen kids come through the program and be successful. After a year, I left to teach special education, but was back to the Ranch three years later. I really missed being with the kids. I just love being with the kids in their most vulnerable moments and then celebrating their successes with them."

Since her return to the Ranch, Emily was promoted to RTS supervisor, which gives her the

opportunity to work with the staff as well as the kids.

"I watch how the staff are interacting with the kids and provide feedback about what they did well or some things they could work on for next time," Emily said. "The cool part about being a supervisor is getting to really know the staff and help them self-reflect and learn about themselves, so they can be better for the kids."

She said she has learned a lot about herself too, and the job gives her many opportunities to learn and grow.

"Early on in my time at the Ranch, the kids were learning about thinking errors. They were learning how to recognize negative patterns in their thinking and how they might catastrophize a small problem to be the biggest deal in the world," Emily said. "I was like, 'Holy cow, these kids are 14 and 15 and learning all kinds of crazy things about their brain and how their emotions and feelings influence their behaviors and the rest of their lives.' I was an adult and I didn't know any of the things they were learning."

Emily had a great supportive family but realized that we all have things to work on.

"That experience started me on a path to learning about myself and reflecting on who I wanted to be," she said.

As a supervisor, Emily has learned to enjoy developing staff.

"I'm a teacher by trade, so I love being able to build staff up and give them a confidence boost while

also giving feedback about other things they could try,” she said. “It is really just training them up to be comfortable and confident, and that ultimately creates a better environment for the kids.”

Emily has a passion for helping people who didn’t grow up with the same support she had and believes that all kids would do well if they could.

“Trauma affects kids in so many ways and they communicate through their behaviors. So, if right now they need to curse at me because they need a snack, fine,” she said. “We’ll talk about it and maybe next time they be able to say, ‘Hey, I’m hungry. Can I have a snack?’”

Emily’s best moments at the Ranch are getting to celebrate with the kids when they learn a new skill, have a good phone call with family, or see light at the end of the tunnel.

“You were there in the hard moments,” she said, “which makes the good moments extra special.”

What Emily wants Ranch donors to know:

“Every single dollar they give to the Ranch is used for good. The generosity from people all around the country is amazing. People from everywhere are supporting these kids and it’s really appreciated. They are doing good things by helping our kids.”

Gabe Harper

Minot

Loves meditation, his wife and four children, cooking dinner, video games, and live streaming for mental health awareness.



Gabe Harper followed in his father’s footsteps when he joined the United States Air Force. After spending a decade in military security forces and law enforcement, he and

his wife moved their family back to Minot, ND, his first post when he joined the Air Force, and where he met his wife.

“She loved it here, and I wanted a change of pace. For me it was about wanting to help kids get through their worst days,” Gabe said. “I wanted to make an influence on someone’s life, so the Ranch was a perfect fit for me.”

Gabe believes his passion for helping kids comes from living a blessed life. His father was a pastor and truck driver, and his mom was a teacher. The oldest of five children, Gabe played sports and said he was always volunteering.

Gabe tries to give Ranch kids a taste of what it is like to be cared for and loved. He has embraced the Ranch’s mentality of compassion and empathy, which is very different from the regimentation of the military. And he enjoys bringing the skills he learned in the military to his work with the kids.

“When you are in military formation, you’re told to fix your face because you’re not supposed to be showing emotion,” Gabe said. “When a kid sees that you are more freaked out than they are, you lose control of the situation, and the power struggle becomes increasingly worse. You have to show that you are that presence of calm, like, ‘I’m not mad, I’m not upset. I’m just here to support you.’”

Gabe grounds his approach with the kids in active listening and gentle inquiry.

“When you give them some space and allow them to converse, they usually calm down. They just want to feel heard. When they are kicking and screaming, I know they aren’t angry at me, but at everything that has happened to them,” Gabe said. “This is a place where they should feel safe enough to express themselves. If I can remain that calm presence, even when they are angry, I can be an example of how to behave differently.”

Gabe said every day at the Ranch is a surprise because you never know what the kids are going to be feeling that day, or if something is going to change at the last minute.

“We readjust on the fly to make sure the kids are doing okay and that we are all working together as a team. It takes a lot of compromise and conversation,” Gabe said. “Weirdly, one of my best moments here was after a kid spit in my face. When he calmed down, he came back and told me he was sorry. I feel like that was a big moment for him and I was

glad I could be here for it.”

He also enjoys watching his co-workers make a difference.

“One of our kids was having a really rough day, and one of our staff took him to the blacktop [outdoor basketball court],” Gabe said. “The kid was smiling and laughing and was really engaged in the conversation. This is a kid who was usually shy and standoffish. It was one of those moments you don’t forget.”

“These kids might have little bodies,” he continued, “but they have big emotions.”

Gabe likes taking his kids, ages 11, 9, 7, and 4, to the park and cooking dinner with his wife, who also works at the Ranch. When work and family aren’t keeping him busy, Gabe takes care of himself by working out and meditating. He also advocates for mental health awareness by live streaming on multiple online platforms.

What Gabe wants Ranch donors to know:

“Our kids are awesome. People on the outside might think they are bad kids, but they have been put in very unpredictable situations and environments where they’re always having to adjust to what is happening around them. Imagine what they can do when they are put into better situations. If they could do better, they would, and we are here to help them do that.”

Kassie Lowe

Bismarck

Loves mysteries, cats, arts and crafts, trivia league, and spending time with her family.



Kassie Lowe’s work as an RTS is more than just a job—it is a reflection of her desire to make a meaningful

impact. At one point, Kassie considered opening a bookshop and a sandwich store where kids could come to do their homework, get tutoring, and receive a free sandwich and a drink. While her dream changed, her goal of creating a safe space for kids didn’t.

“I applied at the Ranch simply because I wish I knew about places like this when I was a kid. I grew up in an abusive household and went through a lot of struggles. The Ranch would have come in handy,” Kassie said.

Kassie enjoys spending time with the kids, seeing their personalities come out the longer they are here, and watching them grow. She believes passionately in the healing power of presence and is committed to providing the consistent care the children crave.

“It’s all about consistency and just showing up. Our kids come in with a lot of trust issues,” Kassie said. “If you show up every day and don’t treat them differently, no matter what their behavior is, they eventually open up. I love being

able to give them the stability they haven’t had, to be someone who is always there helping them learn their strengths and value.”

Kassie has been surprised by how willing Ranch kids are to make connections as they participate in shared activities like arts and crafts, fishing, playing games and sports, biking, and swimming.

“I thought they would have their guard up and push us away a lot more. But if they feel safe and learn to trust you, they are absolutely willing to make bonds. Even though they might seem tough, [Ranch] kids are loving,” Kassie said. “They’ve all gone through something to give them such big hearts. They might seem like they don’t care, but once they fully trust and like you, they will give you their all. These kids are so great. Even if they don’t know it, they are great.”

One of the lessons Kassie has learned at the Ranch is patience—not only patience with the children as they work through their behaviors and emotions, but patience with herself and her own journey. She has also learned to see her own childhood from a different perspective.

“I was angry at my mom for putting me in the situations that caused trauma,” Kassie said. “But I am beginning to understand that she went through her own trauma and that she is working through that.”

As an adult, Kassie has grown close to her mom and constantly looks for ways to spend time with her family and friends. She also enjoys arts and crafts, anything

outdoors, and reading mysteries

What Kassie wants Ranch donors to know:

“The people here love working with the kids, giving them tools, interacting with them, and really learning about them. My co-workers really do want to get to the bottom of things with the kids. They don’t want to push it aside or ignore the behavior—they want to listen and understand. I’ve seen so many times when staff just sit with a kid until they are ready to talk.”

Katelyn Hamilton

Minot

Loves God, reading, horses, and pausing to notice the world around her.

Katelyn Hamilton first learned about the Ranch at a Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) conference where the Ranch had a booth. Her mom had always been involved in LWML and Katelyn liked to tag along.

When it came time to complete an internship for a minor in Director of Church Ministries at Concordia, Wisconsin, Katelyn recalled what she had learned and reached out to the Ranch. She eventually completed a summer Spiritual Life internship with Deaconess Kelly Bristow on the Ranch’s Minot campus.

“I spent time with Deaconess Kelly, but she also allowed me

to see the other aspects of the Ranch. I spent time in the cottages with the kids, with the wellness coordinator, and just all over the place,” Katelyn said. “I really saw the ins and outs of the Ranch.”

After her internship, Katelyn moved to Colorado for a job but by October, she missed the kids so much she was back at the Ranch as an RTS. In addition to her regular RTS duties, she works with a local stable to provide equine (horse) groups for Ranch residents.



Katelyn didn’t have an easy childhood, so she can relate to what the kids are feeling. Her difficulties started before her birth when they found out she had congestive heart failure. They did an emergency Cesarean and when they sent her home after a long stay at the hospital, they told her parents she would be in a wheelchair and never be able to take care of herself.

“I am not in a wheelchair, and I can take care of myself,” she said, “but it put a lot of strain on my family.”

Her family also survived a broken water pipe that flooded and destroyed their home, Katelyn’s parents divorced, and during her freshman year of college, Katelyn’s oldest brother died unexpectedly.

“My brother was one of the main people who stood by me

and took care of me, so his death turned my world upside down,” she said. “Most Ranch kids have felt similar losses through death or abandonment, but they don’t have the support I had. I was blessed to be surrounded by people who cared and took time for me.”

“Everything the Ranch does for these kids is something someone in my life tried to do for me. Working here gives me the opportunity to be that person in someone’s life. I can use the pain I’ve been through to help someone else.”

Growing up in a small town 45 minutes from St. Louis, MO, Katelyn is a long way from home. While she enjoys living in Minot, the main thing that keeps her at the Ranch is the kids.

As she held back tears, Katelyn said, “I love the connection to the kids and understanding parts of what they’ve been through. Everyone should know what it’s like for someone to sit there and care about you no matter what. Someone who says, ‘I care about you enough to help when you are bawling on the floor. I care about you enough to help you when you are screaming at me. I care about you and I’m not going anywhere.’”

Katelyn knows that kids don’t leave the Ranch perfect but believes they do leave better than when they came and with an understanding of their potential.

“Our main priority is to help these kids take baby steps, sometimes an inch or half an inch every day. That is why I am here,” Katelyn said. “Right now, there is nowhere else I need to be and

nothing else I need to be doing. I think this is where God is telling me stay.”

What Katelyn wants Ranch donors to know:

“Every little thing you do for these kids makes a difference. Your monetary donations allow us to get new things for the cottages, like washable rugs for their rooms. They are so excited to have soft and fluffy area rugs in their rooms. Even writing a little pen pal note makes a big difference. When we bring in the mail that’s the first question they ask, ‘Did my pen pal write? When do you think I’ll get a letter?’ It’s easy to forget that a lot of these kids haven’t had a childhood. At the end of the day, they are still kids, and they want to have a childhood, even if they deny it.”

Savannah Koontz

Fargo

Loves her cat, music, writing poetry, video games, puzzles, and spending time with friends.

Savannah Koontz came to the Ranch after meeting a couple former Ranch residents while she was working at Fraser, Ltd. She started her work here as an RTS and has since been promoted to RTS supervisor.

As a supervisor, Savannah said her main job is to support the staff who work directly with the kids.

“We are building the team so they can be confident on the floor, and our job as supervisors is to support

them,” Savannah said. “If our residential treatment specialists are not their best selves when they come to work, the kids suffer, and that is the last thing we want.”

Savannah enjoys being a positive role model to Ranch staff and helping them learn and grow and build their knowledge—giving them the tools to make decisions with confidence.

“We have a great team, and everyone has each other’s backs,” she said. “They are really good with the kids and put their whole heart and soul into their work. There’s not a day that goes by where they aren’t willing to help each other, even when it’s a struggle. They don’t give up. They are resilient. And

they advocate for the children’s safety no matter what.”

As for the kids, Savannah says they are awesome.

They are smart and they are resourceful.

“Because they’ve been living in survival brain, they tend to be very resourceful,” she said. “These kids want the same things everyone wants—to be cared for, to feel safe, to feel heard, and to feel valued. Ultimately, what we are here to do is to show them there are people in the world who can give them those things in a positive and healthy way, and who can be trusted.”

In their time here, Savannah

would like the kids to understand that not every situation is going to be safe. We can’t promise them everything will be perfect when they leave here, or that they’ll always feel comfortable and listened to.

“What we can do is give them the tools to prepare for those moments so they can cope in positive ways—like music, walks, exercise, games, and relationships with friends—instead of finding drugs or alcohol or doing other things that will negatively impact their life long term,” Savannah said. “Life throws us all curve balls. When this happens, I want them to know they don’t have to keep the burden all to themselves and that they can make better choices.”

Savannah has been surprised at how even the littlest things Ranch staff do can have a big impact.

“Even remembering their favorite snack can make a difference,” she said. “It’s a little thing but it shows them you care. You never know the impact you are going to have on a kid.”

It is difficult for Savannah to choose a “best moment” at the Ranch.

“Any time I can walk away at the end of the night, no matter what happened, and know the kids are all safe and in bed, is a great moment,” she said. “Some days, we might say, ‘This is a lot to handle.’ On those days, the easiest thing would be to give up. But we don’t. Those moments when the team comes together are really great.”

Savannah earned an undergraduate degree in



Psychology from North Dakota State University, Fargo, and a master's degree in forensic psychology from Southern New Hampshire University. She is taking a short break before going on to get her Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology, with a long-term goal of helping kids get back to their families.

What Savannah wants Ranch donors to know:

“Most of the kids who come here have many different struggles and families who don't know how to support them. Kids come here and

we help not only them, but their families. These kids are human and the mistakes they make do not define them. They might have the best intentions, but they were never given the tools to handle certain situations. Despite that, they are awesome, funny, and incredibly smart.”

“Every child would do well if they could.”

The stories of Asad, Kassie, Brooklyn, Savannah, Chyanee, Emily, Gabe, and Katelyn reflect the belief of everyone at the Ranch that every child deserves a chance

to heal and grow. As you visit with the Residential Treatment Specialists at the Ranch, the words, “every child would do well if they could,” come up over and over again. They not only believe every child deserves a chance to heal, but that given the right tools, healing is possible.

While the journey might be long and filled with baby steps, it is clear that every gesture, big or small, makes a difference in reshaping the futures of the precious children who come through the Ranch's doors.

Building emotional intelligence

Most organizations working with at-risk youth spend considerable energy and resources equipping youth with the social and emotional skills they need to heal and lead productive lives. Yet little energy and resources are allocated to helping staff develop these same skills.

Knowing that a greater number of people working in residential treatment centers have experienced many of the same childhood traumas as the children they serve, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is committed to providing emotional intelligence (EQ) training and support for every Ranch employee who works with the residents. To do this, the Ranch partners with the Lionheart Foundation to provide EQ2, an interactive training and support program for all Ranch employees who work with the kids.

The Lionheart Foundation website describes it like this: “EQ2 refers to the combined emotional intelligence of staff and the youth they serve. Research shows that the relationships youth create with caregiving adults hold enormous potential for healing and transformation. Yet, unless the adults engaging in these moment-to-moment, day to day interactions possess the self-regulation and relational skills required to nurture safety and promote growth, creating truly trauma-sensitive environments is unlikely. EQ2 is uniquely designed to help staff build the essential and often complex social and emotional regulation skills required to actively manage how they respond to youths' traumatic stress reactions and challenging behavior.”

As you walk through the halls of the Ranch, you will hear the EQ2 language like, “Flip the Switch,” “Fix Your Face,” and “Cool Thoughts,” used regularly as staff support each other and remind themselves that everything they say and do impacts the kids—positively or negatively.

Celebrations

Art for all

Kids on the Bismarck campus attended several art classes with Miranda from Arts for All, a local nonprofit organization that believes all individuals at any ability level should have the opportunity to participate in art, whether it's visual art, writing, dance, drama, or music.

After one art lesson, Talbott Pollert, Wellness Coordinator, said, "Some of our kids were able to express themselves in a familiar way, while others learned a new way to express themselves, but everyone had a great time!"



Art provides kids at the Ranch with a positive means of expressing themselves. It can be a great coping skill for dealing with big emotions.

Learning about culture

Stuart James, a Native American hip-hop artist, visited Dakota Memorial School, Minot, where he shared his story and some of his songs with the kids and staff, along with great words of encouragement.



Stuart, along with his father and brother, shared blessing songs with the group.

Preparing for her future

One of our students visited a local daycare center to learn about careers in child development. She assisted the children in several activities including voting on their favorite Girl Scout cookie and making cookie hats. She also planned and taught a spring art project.



Giving kids opportunities to explore different career paths while in school prepares them for life after graduation.

Growing creativity

During their Case Management group, kids in Minot decorated flower pots and planted succulents! Projects like these allow kids the chance to be creative, as well as introduce a little nature into their lives!



Bowling!

Everyone loves Family Fun Night!

Kids in Fargo ventured out to a local bowling alley for a night out with their families and Ranch staff. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed the opportunity to bond with their peers.



Renowned poet visits DMS, Minot

Nationally renowned poet, Joe Davis, stopped by our Minot campus to talk to the students at Dakota Memorial School. He shared his story along with some words of hope and resiliency, plus a few of his poems.



Learning empathy through nature

Members of the Wildlife Club spent a few days early this spring maintaining Wood Duck nesting boxes in Minot's Oak Park. In addition to ensuring they were in good shape, they also changed out the shavings and counted the number of eggs that hatched and those that did not. Caring for living things teaches kids at the Ranch about empathy and responsibility.



Through projects like building and maintaining Wood Duck nesting boxes, kids in Wildlife Club learn the joy of giving back to the community.

Celebrations

Keep those teeth!

This spring, Maple Family Dental visited our Fargo campus! Kids (and staff!) learned about the importance of proper brushing and flossing.



Fun Fact: if you don't floss, 40% of your teeth are not being cleaned!

Sun dance

Despite quite a bit of cloud cover, students in Minot still got to view the recent solar eclipse, with the help of some fancy solar glasses from the Minot Public Library!



May Day traditions

Becca Grondahl, Wellness Coordinator on the Minot campus, spent an afternoon with the Kiwanis Club of Minot. She talked about the work we do at the Ranch and helped them put together May Day baskets for the students at Dakota Memorial School.



Fun on the farm

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, took a trip to Farm in the Dell. They toured the greenhouse, worked on a drip line that waters the plants,



and packed down the tarps with dirt. The kids worked hard and left exhausted, but had so much fun!

Ranch kids experienced purposeful work at Farm in the Dell.



A new home for the pheasants

We have a new brooder house for the pheasant chicks on our Minot campus! Thanks to grant funds from the Inspiritus Community Health Foundation's Twice Blessed campaign, we were able to purchase this cozy house for the pheasant chicks we raise each year. Additional funds raised through the campaign will be used to purchase summer and ice fishing gear, winter clothing, a wildlife camera, and a trailer for storing and transporting equipment for the Wildlife Club.



The new brooder house is equipped with heating lamps and a powered vent fan to keep the chicks warm and cozy as they grow.



Scan the QR code above to see the chicks shortly after they arrived at the Ranch.

Career exploration

Matt from All Terrain Landscaping visited students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo. He spoke with them mostly about his work in landscaping, but he also touched on the importance of skill building and networking with others to further a future career.



Matt wanted to teach the kids a skill before he left, so he gave each student a bag of grass seed as well as instructions on how to properly grow grass.

Learning and encouraging

The St. Andrews Lutheran Church Confirmation class, and their parents, toured the Fargo campus to learn more about the Ranch from Senior Development Officer, Tim Unsinn. After their tour, they wrote encouraging notes to Ranch kids.



Pastor Jahnke and Steph Chapa, St. Andrews' Youth Relations Director, sometimes lead the Ranch's on-campus chapel services.

Celebrations

G.R.O.W. grants

Funds from G.R.O.W. Day 2023 were distributed by the Student Council at Dakota Memorial School, Minot. With almost \$3,200 to distribute, departments across campus applied for grants, and after deliberations by the Student Council, some very special grants were funded. Here's a full list of the funded projects:

- Independent Living Class; \$147.88 for new bowls and dishes
- Nursing Department; \$189.83 for fidgets
- Photography Club; \$912.19 for a photo printer and supplies
- School Store; \$596.72 for store supplies
- Foundation employees; \$300 for utility carts in the Honey Room
- Dakota Memorial School; \$500 for Meta Quest VR
- Dakota Family Services; \$500 for a waterfall fountain

Quilted with love

The TLC Quilters from Trinity Lutheran Church in Algona, IA, pray every day for kids and staff at the Ranch. They also enjoy creating and gifting a variety of items for the kids. Their recent gift included cosmetic bags, pillowcases, sensory quilts, marble mazes, and quilts.



The TLC Quilters have been donating quilts to the Ranch for over 10 years.

Appreciating educators

At Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, the theme for Teacher Appreciation Week was, "We could not have PICKED better teachers!" with each day having a different "pick" theme. One of those days was, "You have been PICKED to receive a car wash." Throughout the day, students washed, rinsed, and hand-dried nine teacher vehicles, a nurse's vehicle (it was also Nurse Appreciation Week), and a Ranch facility vehicle (for practice), for a total of 11 vehicles washed!



Shea Durham, Coordinator of Students Services, said, "With purpose, the kids had a blast, learned a valuable skill, and practiced caring for some very meaningful people in their lives."

G.R.O.W. Day 2024

In mid-May, Dakota Memorial School, Minot, hosted its 5th Annual G.R.O.W. (God Rewards Our Work) Day Garden Sale. A variety of plants were for sale including potted plants, tomatoes, geraniums, aloe, bush cucumbers, and more! All plants were grown by Ranch kids in our on-campus greenhouses.

The kids also made items in shop classes including benches, mancala games, small and large toolboxes, and bike planters that were sold at the G.R.O.W. Day sale.

Suzanne Erz, science and botany teacher at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, and one of the G.R.O.W. Day supervisors, said, "The students gain a feeling of self-worth as they begin to care for the plants and take ownership of their work. It's a blessing to see the students blossom in the greenhouse, just as their plants bloom and blossom."



To prepare for G.R.O.W. Day, members of the Student Council decorated the front windows of our Minot Thrift Store with beautiful, bright images to welcome shoppers.



The gorgeous weather allowed for the garden sale to happen outside!

Mathletes

Two students from Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, traveled to Valley City State University, Valley City, ND, to compete in the 1st Annual VCSU Math Competition. The competition, open to students in grades 7-12 across the state, welcomed nearly 550 participants. The students from DMS had a great time competing against other students their age!

Nature and healing

While the healing journey looks different for each of our kids, being in nature can be healing. This is the case for Victor* who finds peace and calm through one-on-one outings with staff to go fishing and look for turtles.



If you look really close, you can see a snapping turtle in the water!

Celebrations

Hands-on history

The 8th grade students at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, took a field trip to the Heritage Center as part of their North Dakota Studies class, and took a deeper dive into the history of North Dakota.



In addition to the knowledgeable Heritage Center staff, Mr. McKenney, a teacher at Dakota Memorial School who worked at the Heritage Center, was able to provide even more information for the students.

Sharing mercy

Rev. Rick Jones, Chaplain at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, presented a breakout session on Mercy Care at the Minnesota North LWML Convention.



That's so vintage!

The Shop Dakota Ranch team attended the Dead Threads Vintage Market at Brewhalla earlier this spring. The market featured vintage dealers from all over the Midwest bringing their finest vintage and antique clothing, jewelry, records, books, and more! Shop Dakota Ranch is the Ranch's online thrift store and offers a wide selection of hand-selected modern and vintage goods.



Scan the QR Code to shop now! Each purchase supports trauma-informed treatment and care for kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Markets and Pop-Up events like this are an excellent opportunity for locals to shop merchandise that is typically only available through our online stores.

Filling baskets and bellies

Haley Palmer, Case Manager, organized a food drive at the end of last school year to provide food baskets for the Day Students at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck.



Healthy eating for a healthy life

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, learned about making healthy choices and healthy eating! They researched the importance of healthy eating, compared different diets, and learned how to make healthier food choices at their favorite restaurants.



Eating out might seem like an unhealthy choice, but students learned ways to be healthy and enjoy food from their favorite restaurants.



Students learned about and compared the pros and cons of different "fad diets."

Graphic arts

In Art class, students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, learned about screen printing, designed and printed their own sweatshirts in-house, and then visited a local commercial screen-printing company to compare the two processes.



A special thanks to 3X Gear in Fargo who welcomed our students and showed them the process of traditional screen printing from start to finish.

School is out!

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, challenged their teachers to a friendly game of kickball during their end of the school year fun day. There was a lot of laughter and joy happening on the kickball field, and a little friendly competition, of course!



Activities like these are a fun way to celebrate the end of the school year and enjoy the beautiful North Dakota weather.

Affirming faith through baptism

Cara* was recently baptized at a local church of her denomination. One of our direct care staff said, “Cara has been dedicated to learning more about her faith, building relationships with people of the ministry,

and searching to find a new way of living. I am so proud to watch this journey unfold for her.”



Spiritual Life programming at the Ranch is an integral part of healing for many of our kids.

Philanthropy and Youth groups support Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

The Ranch received funds from the Philanthropy and Youth groups from Kindred High School, Oak Grove High School, and Horace High School. A total of \$2,000 in grant funds will be used to purchase materials to paint murals in the living spaces on the Fargo campus. The murals will depict social emotional coping skills the kids use each day to regulate their bodies and emotions.

Budding entrepreneurs

Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, held an Entrepreneur Fair where kids learned about a handful of local small businesses. The event featured writers, a comic book artist, handmade goods retailers, a martial arts studio/construction business owner, and more! The presenters shared their reasons for starting a small business, what the process has looked like for them, and why they enjoy it so much.



Lyzzy Harpster, a middle school teacher at Dakota Memorial School, also owns a business selling 3D printed goods.



Whether it's a side-gig or a full-time occupation, starting a small business allows business owners to turn their passions and pastimes into a rewarding career.

Fueling the future

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, toured Basin Electric's Antelope Valley Station near Beulah, ND, which is part of an energy complex that includes the Synfuels Plant and the Freedom Mine. Students learned about the many uses of coal and how it impacts our lives. Mallory Halvorson, Principal, said, “If you ask any of the students, the highlight was being able to see the explosion at the mine!”



Summer Programming at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

Summer Programming looks a little different this year as program and education professionals collaborate to create consistency, enrichment, and enhanced learning opportunities for kids at the Ranch.

The **Empower Education** program provides a unique summer learning experience for students who need credit recovery, education intervention, and personalized skill development. It allows instructors time to address individual academic needs, while also building creativity, resilience, and problem-solving skills. Throughout programming, students are involved in project-based learning through STEM lessons, Life Skills activities, Credit Recovery Curriculum, GED prep, and more!



Photography gives children at the Ranch a positive outlet to express themselves and an opportunity to see the world from a new point of view.

SPARK Summer Programming offers kids the chance to engage in enrichment and fun activities, including gardening, life skills, field trips, and more! Kids are provided with meaningful opportunities to build skills, learn, get excited, have fun, and be their best selves.



Kids in Minot enjoyed a field trip to the local zoo.



Kids in Fargo studied the lifecycle of butterflies as they observed the transformation of their own caterpillars.



Kids in Minot have been busy fixing up homemade vehicles donated by a friend of the Ranch from southern Minnesota.



Gardening is a therapeutic activity for kids at the Ranch and gives them the opportunity to learn valuable life skills.

More than a place to be At the Ranch, Scott found a place to grow

From the outside looking in, Scott seemed to have an idyllic life. A surgeon father, a stay-at-home mother, and eight siblings, built-in friends for life. But as he grew older, things quickly changed, and he began lashing out for attention.

“I think a lot of it had to do with desire for attention in the home. At an early age, I realized that negative attention was still attention,” Scott said.

Scott’s father worked a lot, and despite having his mom at home, Scott said she didn’t have a lot of time for him.

“It was more of siblings raising each other in our house. My mom was so busy trying to keep her head above water with the tiny infants or the teenagers, [the kids] in the middle just took care of each other or an older sibling watched after us.”

When his negative attention-seeking started moving from home to school, Scott’s parents began looking for resources to help him work on coping skills and get his behaviors under control.

“I ended up going to Manchester House; I think I was seven or eight and spent the summer there. And from there, I just kind of snowballed

from one place to the next,” Scott said. “I tended to do really well when I was in a residential center, but as soon as I went home, the behaviors would come right back.”

Scott was placed at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch when he was 11 years old and spent the better part of three years there. Having been in other residential treatment centers, Scott was no stranger to what would be expected of him at the Ranch. But he did notice something special about it.

his anger and negative attention seeking, but it was more than that.

“At the time, I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do for a career. There were all kinds of programs my [Ranch] therapist was able to put in place, several different job shadows through the Humane Society, a local vet’s office. I even spent a summer volunteering at the zoo.”

Despite his progress in treatment, Scott struggled to transition from

the Ranch back home with his family.

“Every six months or so, they would try to transition me back into the house, but it was really abrupt,” Scott said.

Eventually, Scott moved to the Transitional Living Home in Minot where he built independent living skills in

a less restrictive environment. Finding success there, Scott again began the transition home. This time he was supported by Ranch staff who went home with him to help ease the transition for both Scott and his family.

“They were there in the moment when I started having behaviors



Twenty years later, Scott and his family continue to benefit from the healing and growth he experienced at the Ranch.

“Looking back, I feel like the time I spent at the Ranch was just different than every other residential treatment center I was at,” he said. “The Ranch felt like a place I could grow, not just a place to be.”

Scott was at the Ranch to learn positive coping skills for dealing with

in the house,” Scott said. “It wasn’t a ‘let’s go meet with them once a week and talk about how your week was.’ We could actually apply some of those coping skills and de-escalate situations in the moment.”

The Transitional Living Home closed when the building flooded in 2011. Today, children and their families are supported through the Aftercare Program when they leave treatment at the Ranch. Care Coordinators help children and their families continue to find success by connecting them to community resources, and community-based and in-home services.

Scott attributes his successful transition home to the special care the Ranch took to meet him where he was at.

“It was different from anything else we had tried. I think it’s a lot of the reason why my last time home was successful, and I didn’t end up going to another center afterwards,” Scott said.

After leaving the Ranch, Scott graduated from high school at 16 and began taking classes at Bismarck State College (BSC). He found it was a bit more challenging to focus on schoolwork and only finished one semester.

“I spent too much time playing around and not enough time studying,” Scott said.

Scott continued to live at home but found the dynamic with his parents to still be a challenge.

“I was still living at home until I was 18 and I was still not 100% independent,” Scott said. “But

after I moved out of the house, the relationship between me and my parents turned overnight. I think having some space really helped with that.”

Scott went back to BSC in 2009 to complete a two-year degree, where he met his wife, Danielle. They both graduated and were married in 2011. Since then, they have added two daughters to their family, Hartley, age 6, and Eleanor, age 4. In addition to family life and working full-time, Scott is also pursuing a four-year degree in Cybersecurity and Information Technology at BSC.

Although he’s enrolled in a four-year program, Scott is hoping to finish his degree in just two and half years, thanks, in large part, to scholarship funds he received from the Ranch.

“I have some federal grants, but the Ranch was able to pick up the tab for pretty much the rest of it,” Scott said. “Taking an accelerated course load adds to the cost of tuition, so the Ranch scholarship really allowed me to speed up the process rather than having to take just the bare minimum course load. I can take extra courses and overload my schedule without having to worry about the additional tuition cost.”

When he’s not busy with schoolwork, Scott and his family enjoy being outside, camping, and fishing.

Scott also sits on the System of Care Board for the Department of Human Services, serving as a voice of individuals served in the juvenile justice system.

“The majority of people at that table are program administrators or juvenile court administrators,” Scott said. “It’s nice to be able to voice my opinion and be a sounding board for them when they’re trying to figure out what to fund and where we can put some of these system of care dollars.”

Scott is grateful for all the Ranch has given him.

“The [Knutson Family] scholarship has been huge because it’ll allow me to continue to grow and support not just myself, but my family as well. But even the program in the first place,” Scott said. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without the time I spent at the Ranch, because it’s more than just a place to be. Sometimes you don’t see that until years later.”

Knutson Family Scholarship Fund

Originally started as a fund for the children of Ranch employees by President Emeritus Larry Knutson, the Knutson Family Scholarship Fund now provides scholarships for past, present, and future residents of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch who wish to attend vocational schools or other schools of higher education. Applicants must write a letter to the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation asking for a scholarship and outlining their educational plans, as well as demonstrating a need for the funds.

Frequently Asked Questions

Trauma and child development



**By Megan
Spencer,
PsyD,
Licensed
Psychologist**

How does trauma impact an adolescent's development?

Adolescence is a time of significant growth as it relates to personal, interpersonal, and family dynamics. Children are growing and developing physically and emotionally; and the many changes brought on by puberty can be exciting, scary, and confusing—all at the same time.

When children come to the Ranch, we assess their development by looking at their physical, cognitive, and psychosocial functioning.

Physical Development: Puberty is a biological event that typically occurs between ages 10 and 12 for females and between ages 12 and 14 for males. During puberty, growth continues rapidly for 3 to 4 years, with females reaching close to full stature/physical development by age 15/16 and males by age 17/18.

Trauma and adversity can impact a child's physical development, showing up as tremors, difficulty with drawing and handwriting, becoming easily dizzy, and/or

displaying awkward movements and/or clumsiness. It can impact a child's sleep, making it difficult for them to fall asleep, stay asleep, or sleep alone, as well as cause nightmares.

They might also face problems like feeling too hot or too cold, unusual changes in appetite or thirst, growing too little or too much, starting puberty too early or late, gaining or losing a lot of weight, or not being able to smell.

Cognitive Development: During adolescence, major cognitive changes in the brain create significant and rapid advances. Adolescents want to assert more independence from family or caregivers, and friends and peers become a major focus. At the same time, their emotional worlds become volatile.

Neurons in the frontal lobe of the brain rapidly develop, grow, and interconnect during adolescence, leading to more complex and sophisticated thinking. This growth and connectedness give us the ability to consider long-term consequences, manage impulses, and conduct abstract reasoning and planning.

During this time, adolescents are capable of complex and sophisticated thinking and problem solving. At the same time, their thinking can seem confusing and immature because they don't have a lot of experience with abstract reasoning and thought. A "normal" adolescent may defy or find fault

with authority, feel invulnerable, and be argumentative, indecisive, and self-conscious. Many think they are invincible or that bad things won't happen to them even when they engage in risky or dangerous behaviors.

When trauma and adversity impact an adolescent's cognitive development, it might be difficult for them to deal with strong feelings. This can lead to panic attacks, self-harm, and physical pain like stomachaches or headaches without a clear reason. They may feel constantly scared or ready to run away or fight, causing them to be jumpy, act without thinking, have trouble moving from one task to another, and misunderstand social cues. Finally, trauma can mess with how they view themselves and others, potentially leading to confusion and inappropriate sexual behavior.

Psychosocial Development: Adolescence is a very important period of identity development and formation. Adolescents take on and try out many different roles and responsibilities in order to answer the always present question, "Who am I?" Self-esteem and confidence become more prominent and "normal" adolescents spend a lot of time comparing themselves to their peers. When an adolescent is successful in navigating this exciting, confusing and difficult time, they develop a sense of personal identity and direction for the future.

Trauma and related challenges can slow down social development, causing problems like trouble sharing, making and keeping friends, and knowing how to interact socially. Sometimes children who have experienced trauma show too much affection without caution. It can also affect how they see and feel about themselves—like how they view their body, how confident they feel, and how well they think they measure up to others.

In addition to affecting what they think about themselves, trauma can

affect how children and adolescents think and feel about others. They might have a hard time trusting people, feeling safe with others, or knowing how to interact in healthy ways. This can make it hard for them to make friends and keep them, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Finally, trauma can affect how they think about the world around them. They might have trouble understanding other people's feelings or intentions, which can make it hard for them to develop empathy. This might show up as a lack of interest in others

or an inability to understand why someone is upset by something

From trauma to resilience

While life is filled with challenges for most adolescents, trauma and adversity can introduce additional hurdles. At the Ranch, we uncover how trauma has impacted each child so we can tailor our treatment and care to build resilience, foster healthy relationships, and develop positive coping strategies that allow them to achieve their full potential.



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

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

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



*Multiply and magnify
your generosity
through asset-based
charitable gifts.*

Making an Impact Gifts of Assets



Are you looking for a way to make a significant impact in the lives of children served by Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch but don't know how? One option to consider is to gift an asset rather than cash or a check—for instance, Appreciated Securities or Mutual Funds, Real Estate, Business Interests, Collectibles, or Artwork.

You can gift your assets to the Ranch ministry in a number of ways. Here are some options to consider.

Outright Gift

One of the simplest ways to give is by making an outright gift of an asset. If you are not ready to give away the entire asset, consider gifting a portion of the asset.

Fund a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)

When you gift an asset to create or fund a donor advised fund (DAF), you can use the DAF to recommend grants to support the charities and causes you care about.

Part Gift, Part Sale

If you would like to sell an asset, consider giving part of the asset to us first. You may be entitled to take a charitable tax deduction for your gift, which may offset any tax owed on the cash you receive from your share of the sales proceeds.

Direct Gift from Your IRA

If you are at least 70½ years old, you can make a gift of up to \$105,000 per year from your IRA account directly to charity. This may be the easiest way to make a gift to help our cause. Because your gift may count toward your required minimum distribution, it can reduce your income and taxes this year.

Benefits

You can benefit in a number of ways from gifting an asset:

- You can bypass capital gains tax when gifting an appreciated asset.
- You can reduce income and taxes this year with an IRA rollover gift.
- Your gift will have no impact on your cash flow or standard of living.
- You can make a larger charitable gift than you ever thought possible.
- You may be entitled to take a tax deduction for the value of your gift.

To learn more, contact
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch
at 1-800-344-0957



Understanding and treating adolescents with bipolar disorder



**By Aisha
Santiago de la
Villa, LPC**

Bipolar Disorder is a relatively common, and lifelong, mental health condition characterized by extreme fluctuations in mood, energy levels, thought processes, and behavior. These fluctuations can persist for hours, days, weeks, or even months and can disrupt an individual's ability to perform everyday tasks.

About 46 million people around the world are dealing with bipolar disorder. And, according to research conducted by Cleveland Clinic (named by U.S. News as one of the top five medical centers in the country), 4% of children under the age of 18, including children as young as five, have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Unlike the typical mood swings and ups and downs common among children and teens, the mood changes associated with bipolar disorder are more severe, often unprovoked, and involve altered sleep patterns, extreme fluctuations in energy levels, and difficulties with concentration and clear thinking.

While adults with bipolar disorder often experience distinct episodes of mania or depression lasting a week or more, children may have more rapid

shifts between episodes. For instance, a child might display giddiness and silliness, anger outbursts, and unprovoked crying all in a single day. In some cases, they engage in self-harm, have suicidal tendencies, and/or engage in extreme and risky behaviors to manage their emotional pain.

By the time children with a bipolar disorder diagnosis come to the Ranch, their symptoms have significantly impacted their ability to succeed in school and maintain healthy relationships with friends and family.

When Ava was admitted to the Ranch, her mom had exhausted all resources in the community. She could not understand Ava's uncontrollable violent outbursts, self-harming behavior, and constant emotional dysregulation. Simultaneously, Ava didn't understand why she acted and felt the way she did, or what she needed to regulate her emotions.

At the Ranch, we work with children and parents like Ava and her mother, to develop treatment plans to address their current behaviors, stabilize them emotionally and physically, and set them up for lifelong success by helping them access community resources for ongoing treatment.

Advancements in psychology and psychiatry over the last decade have greatly improved the assessment and treatment of bipolar disorder in children and teens. Effective treatment plans often include psychotherapy, medication, and healthy lifestyle habits (exercise,

meditation, and maintaining consistent routines).

Our kids participate in individual and group therapy, often focused on addressing the trauma they have experienced. Our therapists are trained to provide a variety of evidence-based therapies and tailor each child's treatment plan to their individual needs. We help children identify and manage their troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors; and provide support, education, and guidance to them and their families.

Medication management is also essential for managing the symptoms of bipolar disorder. Dr. Wayne Martinsen, the Ranch's psychiatrist, works very closely with children and their families to find medications that will control symptoms with the least number of side effects.

When children have been through extensive trauma, their behaviors, brought on by their need to survive, can mimic other mental health disorders, like bipolar disorder. Our professional treatment staff works within a medical criteria framework to ensure each child receives the support and services they need. That is critical whether the child has a bipolar disorder or any mental health diagnosis. The right care is important both while they are at the Ranch and when they return home.

While bipolar disorder is a lifelong condition, with treatment and ongoing support, children and teens can manage their symptoms and live full and active lives.



DAKOTA
BOYS AND GIRLS
RANCH

FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

1,971
PEOPLE
SERVED

40,282
MEALS
SERVED

49

CHURCH
PRESENTATIONS

416

SPIRITUAL
LIFE
GROUPS

CURRENTLY SERVING KIDS FROM
ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, FLORIDA,
MONTANA, NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA,
WASHINGTON, KANSAS, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI

*Birthplace of kids currently in care

155 CHAPEL
SERVICES

138,888
CLASSROOM HOURS

718
HOPE
NOTES
PARTICIPANTS

2.5 MILLION
POUNDS OF
CLOTHING
RECYCLED
AT RANCH
THRIFT STORES

136,293
DONATION DROP-OFFS

149,541 POUNDS
OF SHOES RECYCLED

Generations of generosity



Dottie and Jackie Nelson

wrote, 'The Dakota Boys Ranch of North Dakota was, and is, one of my most cherished endeavors.' When Dad believed in something, he went full tilt, and he believed in the work of the Ranch."

Ervin was on the board of directors early in the Ranch's history and was instrumental in raising the funds to build a chapel on the Ranch's Minot campus. Each of the board members was tasked with raising \$25,000 for the chapel project, which Dottie points out was a lot of money at the time. Ervin wasn't one to back down from a challenge and was proud of the part he played in making the chapel a reality.

"My dad was a businessman slash

Dottie and Jackie Nelson's generational link to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch begins with Ervin Schumacher, Dottie's father and Jackie's grandfather.

"Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is like family," Dottie said. "It's just in the blood. My dad wrote his life story and there is a paragraph about what an honor it was for him to be involved with the Ranch. He

farmer slash politician," Dottie said. "He had one of the largest farms in the Drayton, ND, area at the time, and was involved in all of the clubs and associations, including the Farmer's Union, the Grain Terminal Association, and the PCA [Production Credit Association]."

Dottie said her father was a man ahead of his time.

"He saw the future and made it so our family was comfortable," Dottie said. "We had our own generator and had running water and electricity long before most people had those things."

Ervin also had a heart for older men down on their luck.

"These guys had alcohol problems or were homeless, or things like that. I don't know how they found dad, but when they did, he would give them a chance," Dottie said. "He gave them a job and a place to live, and Mom fed them. He kept a lot of them on until they couldn't work anymore and then he'd make sure they got to a nursing home and were taken care of there."

Ervin and Anna were very involved in their church, Trinity Lutheran Church of Drayton, and Dottie thinks that must be how her dad got involved with the Ranch.

"It's kind of neat that it's generational from Grandpa to Mom to me," Jackie said.

And it doesn't stop there. Brent Mattson, Dottie's cousin's son, is also a long-time supporter of the Ranch and is currently on the Ranch board of directors.

“Dad would be so proud of him,” Dottie said.

In addition to carrying on her father’s love for the Ranch, Dottie inherited his business mind. When she and her husband moved back to North Dakota after living in California for ten years, Dottie opened a beauty salon.

“I’m not a beautician, so I was just the owner,” she said.

Dottie later opened a gourmet cheese shop, the Nibble Nook, and her daughter, Jackie, was the mascot.

“I was Melissa the Mouse,” Jackie said. “I’d dress up and we’d take a tray of meat and cheese to a business every week.”

In addition to running two businesses and raising three children, Dottie had, and continues to have, many interests.

“I love to cook and bake, and my husband and I square danced,” Dottie said. “When we lived in California, I made some of my kids’ clothes. I also made stained glass, crocheted, and knitted. I tried everything but majored in nothing!”

About the time Dottie retired, Jackie bought The Olive Barrel, a business in Grand Forks that sold ultra-premium olive oils and balsamic vinegars.

“I was working in nutrition research at UND at the time, but I couldn’t let The Olive Barrel close down because the product was too good. My mom and sister helped run it, and during COVID, my position [at UND] was eliminated, and I

was able to put all of my energy into the business,” Jackie said. “The good Lord was looking out for me, knowing what was going to happen and making sure I had something to do. The Olive Barrel is my little happy place.”

Dottie’s husband died in 2008 and she has lived with Jackie in Grand Forks since 2010. At 95 years old, she continues to help at the store, despite health issues that limit her mobility. She goes to work with Jackie on Mondays and Fridays, and other days if she is needed. When it comes to ordering and the business side of things, Jackie said her mom is a great sounding board.

“I like to get out a bit,” Dottie said. “I like to read and watch TV a little bit when I can, although it’s getting

harder for me to see. But you can’t just sit here all day. That’s the thing. If you sit here all day by yourself, you’re gonna mold.”

Dottie and Jackie both continue to support the Ranch financially.

Jackie said, “Growing up, memorials always went to the Boys Ranch. It’s just second nature.”

“I give to the Ranch because it’s in our state and I know where the money will go. It’s the right thing to do. We have so much and can use that to help someone in need,” Dottie said. “It’s a very important job you are doing at the Ranch, and that’s why I continue to be involved.”



Dottie, pictured here with her dad, carries on the family tradition Ervin started when he served on the Ranch board of directors in the 1960s.

Wired to help



Roger and Sandy Ploeger

Roger and Sandy Ploeger, West Des Moines, IA, are both retired from paid work, but they haven't stopped using their talents for good. In addition to their ongoing support of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, they volunteer for several charities supported by their church, Gloria Day Lutheran Church in Urbandale, IA.

Roger and Sandy have financially supported the Ranch for 24 years with annual gifts, and recently contributed to both the Bismarck Chapel and Minot

Zurcher Cottage campaigns. Sandy grew up in North Dakota and recalls her parents talking about the Ranch.

"We were in survival mode on the farm, but they had giving hearts and I'm sure they contributed from time to time," Sandy said.

Roger and Sandy both grew up going to church and Sunday School and said the values they learned stuck with them.

"We have been blessed financially, so when someone from the Ranch spoke at our church in Denison, IA, we decided to start supporting the Ranch," Roger said. "It just seemed like the thing to do."

Growing up in agricultural communities, Sandy and Roger both learned the value of hard work. Sandy's family owned a small grains and dairy farm near Wahpeton, ND, where Sandy recalls walking bean fields.

"My dad was very particular," she

said, "so I walked through the fields and picked weeds. He also didn't want rocks in the field, so I helped with that."

Roger lived on a farm until he was eight years old when his dad bought into a John Deere dealership. When he was old enough, he worked for farmers during haying season and found other paying jobs.

"We had a small four-lane bowling alley in our town, with semi-automatic pin setters," Roger said. "On Sunday afternoons I would make 10 cents a line setting pins for people."

They both graduated from college with degrees in education, Sandy from Concordia St. Paul and Roger from Beuna Vista University in Storm Lake, IA, and met through a mutual friend in Denison. Sandy moved there after college to teach at a Lutheran school and Roger was working at United Parcel Service (UPS), where he spent most of his career in supervision and management at UPS delivery centers. When he took early retirement, he drove a school bus for the Denison school district for 19 years.

Sandy had a fulfilling 31-year career teaching 4th graders, first in a Lutheran school and later in the public school.

They raised their four daughters in Denison and now have five grandchildren and one great grandchild. Three of their daughters are married and live in Iowa and one daughter is a graphic artist living in Great Britain.

At ages 80 and 82, Roger and Sandy show no signs of slowing down. They

are living their best lives traveling, cheering on their grandchildren, and supporting the many ministries, like the Ranch, that have captured their hearts.

The Christian foundation of the Ranch is important to the Ploegers, as is meeting the psychological needs of kids.

Roger said, "It seems like kids have more trauma and abuse and the family unit has broken down more in this day and age. It is important to serve the psychological needs of kids, and it is important to us that the Ranch is a Christian-based ministry."

"It breaks our heart to read that children have been neglected, and emotionally and physically abused, when they should be loved and cherished," Sandy said. "It is heartbreaking."

They recently made a second gift to the Zurcher Cottage campaign.

"This new cottage is very much needed to help these kids who have been abused," Roger said. "We are required to take a minimum distribution from our IRAs every year. Since we don't really need the extra income, we can take a qualified charitable distribution and give it to the Ranch for the new cottage."

In addition to their annual giving and support of the building projects, Roger and Sandy have named the Ranch as a beneficiary in their will.

"We are both wired to give," Sandy said. "We kind of feed off each other because we both like helping people. When a need arises, we step up when we can."

Zurcher Cottage: a new 20-bed Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility

The campaign to raise funds for Zurcher Cottage, a new 20-bed PRTF cottage on the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch's Minot campus, is well underway and to date, we have raised 70% of the funds needed to complete the project. Due to the significant and continuing increase in construction costs, the unsuitability of our current buildings for the kids now in our care, and the need for costly repairs for our current cottages, our board of directors recently voted to move forward with the Zurcher Cottage project.

We are committed to only building what we can pay for as we go and continue to need your support to complete the project.

Please consider a gift to build Zurcher Cottage, a place where children can heal and become their best selves.

Ways to Give

The Zurcher Cottage Project is a debt-free undertaking.

You can help us complete the campaign to build this healing space.

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

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

Give online: Go to DakotaRanch.org/ZurcherCottage or scan the QR code.



A heart for children



By Nonda Mack
Senior Engagement
Officer

“[Jesus] said to them, ‘Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.’” —Mark 10:14-15

I have always had a heart for children. Growing up as the only girl in a family of boys, I created whole worlds with my dolls: nurseries, schools, hospitals, and daycares all made appearances in my room at one time or another. I dreamed of being a mother someday.

In my early teens, I successfully completed a child safety course, and quickly became the neighborhood’s most reliable babysitter. The boys and girls I babysat were treated to games, giggles, and scores of bedtime stories. We ate pizza, played hide-and-seek, and watered flowers. I gave baths, bundled kids in pajamas, and packed lunches. These were some of the most precious experiences of my life. I am still in touch with most of those kids today, though they are now grown, with children of their own. It is miraculous to look back and see the trajectory of their lives, and of mine. I, too, went on to have children of my own: raising my two sons has been the single most important blessing of my life.

I joined Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch in April of this year, after working for many years advancing the mission of two local universities, assisting donors in their desire to fund scholarships. Providing educational opportunities to those who may not otherwise be able to pursue their dreams was a very rewarding experience and fit well with my love of children.

While my career choices have always been mission driven, it wasn’t until I joined the Ranch that I found an inspiring passionate group truly invested in the most important aspect of their work – the kids.

The children who come to us at the Ranch have had dramatically different life experiences than those of my sons, or the kids I babysat, or even myself. I now realize how very fortunate I’ve been to have been loved and supported and to have been able to provide love and support to young people in their formative years.

Ranch kids, on the contrary, have experienced significant trauma in their lives, and many are missing the foundational structure of a healthy, stable home life. The Ranch staff is well-versed in providing trauma-informed care: focusing on healing the trauma that creates disordered thought and action rather than disciplining the resulting behavior.

Imagine the relief these kids must feel to have the validation and compassion they have been lacking, the empathy of people who meet them on their level, and the knowledge that they are not alone.

I am so excited and humbled to join a team that gives their all every single day to ensure that the children we serve at the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch receive all the love and support they deserve. My heart overflows for this place, my coworkers, and most importantly, the kids who come here seeking love and healing.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” —Mark 9:37

Thank you to each of you for supporting this great mission in your own way: your prayers, positive evangelism, support, and donations of time, talent, and treasure are making a difference in the lives of deserving children of God.

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.

Your prayers for our kids are a source of healing and hope. If you have any questions about the Ranch, contact Nonda Mack, 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.



Dennis Aune
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Officer



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Mission Advancement
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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

March 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

ABERLE, SHIRLEY ANN

Mrs. Richard Carow

Violet Podenski

ABRAHAM, BRUCE

Carolyn Feldman

ACHTERBERG, MELVA

Connie Sayers

ALBERT, ROBERT J.

Violet Podenski

ALLARD, RICHARD

Jackie & Dottie Nelson

ALM, ROBERT

Beverly Berg

ALWIN, REX

Betsy Alwin

ANDERSON, DARLENE

Linda Hegseth

AVERY, AMANDA

Mark Avery

BAKER, JR. WALTER THOMAS

Liz Stonitsch Ravenscroft

BAKKE, JEROME "JERRY"

Marilyn Bakke

BALLMAN, GLEN

Darlene Ballman

BAUER, DOROTHY

Gary & Maxine Beckwith

Max & Marge Guenther

Michelle Jansen

BAUER, ROBERT

Jeff Givens

BECHTOLD, BENNIE & VELMA

Mark & LeeAnne Daucsavage

BEECK, DELORES

Shelia Gerry

BERDAHL, DAVID DONALD

Arlene Berdahl

BERNTSON, HELEN

Carol Haugen

BISCHOFF, GAIL

Kathleen Alvashere

Gordon Bischoff

Ross & Tonia Bollingberg

Jack & Vi Egan

Janet Eagan

Nancy Fletcher

Lloyd & Yvonne Fuglestad

Randy & Penny Gengler

Kevin & Colleen Koehn

James & Stephanie Meyers

Paul & Wendy Meyers

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Kim & Del Mari Runck

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Marlys Boettner

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Liz Stonitsch Ravenscroft

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Jan Grabinger

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Gloria Breward

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Merle Heidenreich

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BURGAD, JAFORD

Chris & Jean Hansen

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Phyllis Burt

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Linda J. Calliott

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Tim & JoAnne Rehborg

CAROW, HARLAN

Violet Podenski

Mary Siedschlag

CARSON, JOYCE

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Gwen Roffler

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Eileen Cornelsen

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Vanessa Palmer

DESMOND, ROBERT

Susan Mysliwicz

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 Martha Maiers-Tillquist
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 Donald & Kathy Raap
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 Maxine Christianson
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 FEIST, ALEX
 Chris Hansen
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 June Hayer
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 Violet Podenski
 HEINTZ, ROBERTA
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 Aaron Fortney
 MATTISON, IDA
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 Bill & Joan Ferguson

Memorials/Honorariums

MCCULLOUGH, GREG

Marilyn J. Frank

MCMAHON, JACQUELINE

Elda Kastner

Jackie & Dottie Nelson

METZGER, ARNOLD

Olivia Mueller

MILLER, WILLIAM & ADELINE

Donald & Eleanor Miller

NELSON, JOEL

Rosella Debele

NOVOTNY, HELEN

Linda Hegseth

OLSON, JANICE

Bruce & Pam Smith

ONSTOTT, EDD

Sue Hylland

OPPEDAHL, GRANT DAVID

David & Janice Oppedahl

PANKOW, CHERYL

Dolores Simdorn

PECK, MATTHEW

Kathleen Peck

PIERCE, ELYZABETH

Marisa Knudson

RASSIER, JUDY

Carrie Anderson

RAVNAAS, BRIAN

Mary L. Anderson

REGISTER, WINSTON "CASH"

Lyle & Susan Hangsleben

RICHARDS, CORA "SCOTTIE"

Kenneth Anderson

Jeffrey & Rebecca Galt

Bruce Meyers

Robert & Marlene Scott

Tom & Janet Stepes

RIEMER, CINDY

Eugene Heckendorf

RIEMER, PATRICIA

Roger & Lori Wachter

ROLF, ARLENE

Domingo & Ann Contreras

James & Lois Draper

Randy & Audrey Helbling

David & Barbara Pucel

ROMANG, JEAN MARIE

Eugene Heckendorf

Deb Nass

ROMEREIM, CORINNE

Lynda Neuman

ROORDA, ARNOLD

Ruby Peterson

ROSSOW, REBECCA

LaDonna Rossow

ROWAN, JERRY

Lisa Aisenbrey

Roger & Lisa Cole

Linda Medhus

Jay & Joy Ryan

John & Denise Schwartz

Shereen Stark

RUBBERT, ARMIN

Mark & Pamela Herschlip

SANDERS, LINDA

Paul & Elaine Carlson

SANDO, RONALD "RON" D.

Al & Johnne Bierdeman

Genevieve Kirmis

SANSTEAD, MARY JANE

Joyce Brey

Roger & Lisa Cole

Sandi Hillig

Joyce Hinman

Mitchell & Cindy Kaelberer

Muriel Larson

David & Donna Lee

Audrey Lilly

Gerald & Jean Newborg

Gary Rath

Joy Ryan

Dale Sandstrom

Joseph & Katherine Satrom

John Vanmiddlesworth

Kathleen Wachter

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Chris Hansen

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SCHUMACHER, MILTON

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Ruth Mattson

Dottie & Jackie Nelson

Jean Peppard

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SCHUMACHER, RUSSELL

Irene Anderson

Jean Peppard

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LaVerne Seefeld

SEIBEL, FLOYD

Doris Saeman

Larry & Tracy Wolf

SHERECK, DARREL

Cynthia Shereck

SITZER, BRENT

Lou & Myrna Mitchell

STEPHENS, JOHN

Lance & Gina Gibson

STRAND, BARNEY

Doris Saeman

SZEWCZAK II, CASIMER "CASEY"

Patricia Szewczak

TARNASKY, RUBEN

Lynda Neuman

TEWKSBURY, JUANITA "NITA"

Violet Podenski

TREVINO, DIANE

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TRUE, GLENN H.

Lois A. True

VANDERHOEF, AIDAN

Dennis & Mitzie Nay

Shane & Anna Oas

VAN WINKLE, ROSEMARIE

Ilene Bussler

VETTER, JIM

Gary Vetter

VIRATA, JANET ROEHR

Barbara Pingel

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Delano & Linda Meyer

George & Nancy Reimers

Stephanie J. Rohloff-Reese

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David & Sharon Wallman

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Lyle & Susan Hangsleben

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Kenneth A. Farnham

WEIGAND, DANNY

Derek & Holly Weigand

WEISS, JIMMY

Norma Von Osterheldt

WEST, RONALD

Robert & Grace Swanson

WOLF, DARLENE

Joy Ryan

WOLF, LEO

Chris Hansen

YOST, EILEEN

Ardys A. Horner

YOUNG, ARTHUR & BEATA

Rev. David & Mary Ann Young

Honorariums

March 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

25TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

DARON & PIERETTE JOHNSON

Violet Podenski

BOB & MARCY LUDWIG

Laura Just

CASIMER "CASEY" SZEWCZAK, III

Patricia Szewczak

CECILIA POCZERWINSKI

Janet Poczerwinski

ELLIE ROGNESS'S GRADUATION

Linda Medhus

DAKOTA MEMORIAL SCHOOL,

MINOT

Dakota Memorial School, Minot Staff

DOROTHY ROMEO

Mr. Bob James

DUSTIN & SARA REESE

Sharon Eversvik

HARPER HUNDLEY

Sara Cusack

JIM & MARGARET CALCUTTA

Mark French

JOHN & AMANDA THOMAS AND
FAMILY

Cynthia J. Eggl

JOY RYAN

Kole & Quin Seiler

JOY, TAMMY, & MINOT

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT TEAM

Janet Zinke

MARK FRENCH

Russell Behrends

MITZIE EHLEN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

Jan Reinhart

REV. DR. PAUL A. KRUEGER

Mr. Paul League

SUE MILLER

Brandon Klein

TOM DECKER

ShaRell Nelson

SHOP DAKOTA RANCH

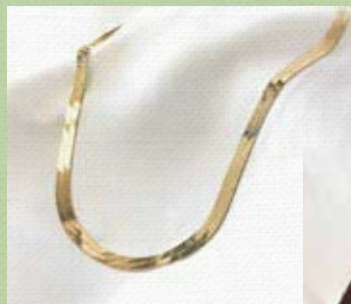
Each Purchase Provides Hope and Healing

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hand-selected modern and vintage goods.

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Scan to start
shopping now!



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© 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.

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



Double Pinch
Pot Highland
Cow (named
Chocolate)
created by
Ranch Student

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



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