

THE RANCH VOICE

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

Spring 2023



15-year-old James plays with one of the kittens he rescued (see p. 19 to learn more)



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- From Despair to Hope, p. 6
- Celebrations, p. 17
- Volunteer Finds Joy in Service, p. 25
- "I was not the problem," p. 26
- Living in Christ and Science, p. 28

Message from Our President/CEO



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

He is a Survivor

His picture is at the top of his admissions paperwork that I just opened on my computer screen. It absolutely delights me. He has glasses, a mop of straight hair, teeth that will need braces, and a smile that reaches from ear to ear. His chin is sort of lifted up so he's looking down his nose at the camera, and by proxy, at me. He exudes energy and good nature.

As I read below his picture, I learn his behaviors are extreme. He hurts himself and others. He yells and tears at his clothes. He gets frustrated quickly and has no capacity for delayed gratification. Patience is measured in seconds. He cries a lot. He can't function socially, has no friends, and has been unsuccessful in school. He has challenges with urinary and bowel control. He has no hygiene skills.

That's what his "file" says.

I say he is a survivor. I've said it before in these pages, but it bears repeating. Working with these precious, traumatized children requires us to say not, "What's wrong with this child?" but rather, "What happened to this child?"

Reading on, I learn what happened to him. His mom used drugs and alcohol while pregnant. He was born significantly premature and required heroic medical measures to live his first few weeks. His own brutal physical abuse and neglect started immediately when he got home. By the time he was a toddler, he had been in and out of foster homes. He witnessed severe domestic violence against other family members as well as experienced it himself. He has lived in many different communities across the country. Often, he was homeless. Often, he was hungry. He was locked in rooms and closets, alone and isolated. He was removed from his family, again, at age 9 or 10 and has spent the intervening years in and out of psychiatric hospitals and other facilities.

I hope when you read that you see past the list of behaviors and form an image of a child who, against all odds, has survived. He smiles for the camera. His eyes twinkle.

I talked to his Ranch therapist. She said, "He is really a neat kid. I know he's going to be a lot of work, but isn't he worth it? I took our therapy dog to the cottage today and he was just thrilled. It's going to take all of us."

Thank you for supporting this amazing place that is so filled with God's love and compassion.

And with amazing survivors.

In His love,

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

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DakotaRanch.org

Profanity and Our Kids



By **Gabrielle Kwiatek**,
Program
Manager, Minot

As you walk through Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, you will hear many things—laughter, encouragement, tears, anger, and sometimes profanity. It can be hard for people who don't work here every day to understand why we don't "put a stop to it." After all, as a Christ-centered organization, shouldn't profanity be off-limits?

To explain how we address profanity at the Ranch, I'd like to go back to a phrase you may have heard from us before. "Instead of asking, 'What's wrong with this child?' we ask, 'What happened to this child?'"

Our kids use profanity for many reasons—sometimes they are just being teenagers and want to see what they can get away with. Other times, it's related to what has happened to them.

Swearing can be a defense mechanism kids use in situations

that make them uncomfortable, like during difficult conversations when they are being held accountable for their actions. Other times, it's to get a reaction from staff, to release emotions, to gain negative attention, or simply because it's a habit.

Environmental factors can also impact our kids' use of profanity—for instance, parents who use profanity, unmonitored access to media (explicit games/TV/music), or a group of friends who swear and say inappropriate things. Our kids, just like all children, are impressionable and quick to pick up qualities and habits from the people around them.

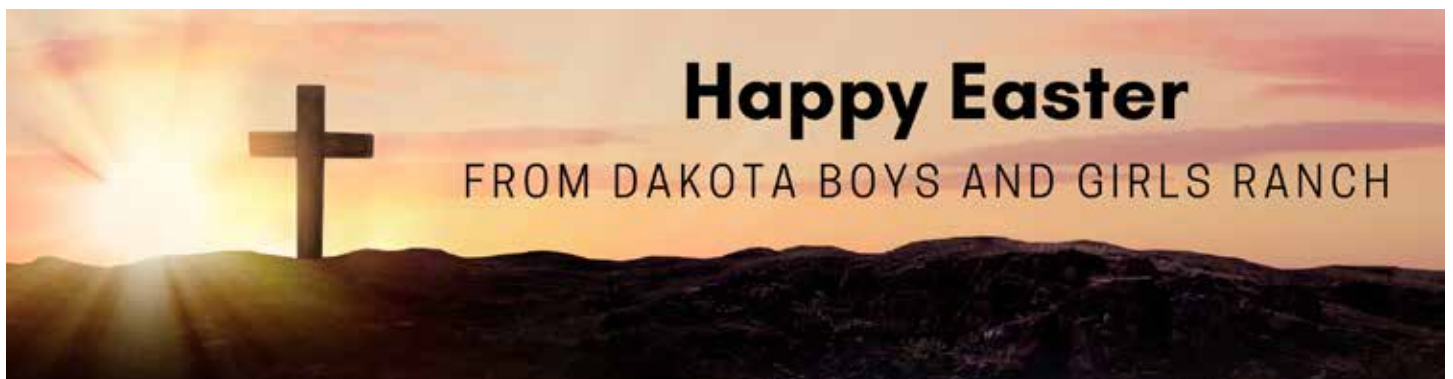
At the Ranch, we believe there is a time to redirect a child's use of profanity and there is a time to ignore it, perhaps to address later. Redirection is a good option when a resident is using profanity in a casual conversation and not demonstrating any warning signs, such as a raised voice, signs of anxiety, or an upset facial expression. We might redirect them by saying, "Language," or repeating what they said with an appropriate word in place of the profanity. Redirection is always most effective when we stay calm and use a tone of voice and nonverbal

cues that don't come off harsh or embarrassing for the child. If a child is in a pleasant mood when redirected, they often automatically correct themselves or apologize once we bring it to their attention.

We absolutely do not redirect a child when they are demonstrating defensive behaviors, such as slamming doors, yelling, or showing visible signs of distress. This is when we hear profanity the most. Again, we remain calm, remember not to take their words personally, and allow them to release their emotions in their own way. Once they can regulate their emotions, we might discuss some of the things they said and reflect on how their words made other people feel.

The use of profanity is a common defense mechanism for kids who have endured significant trauma. It's one way they can push people away so they don't get hurt, or express the big, unmanageable emotions they are feeling.

It is our job to teach our kids other, more positive ways to communicate and express their emotions. And sometimes that means waiting to address their use of profanity until the time is right.



From despair to hope



Bringing caring, collaboration, Christ,
and science together for healing

When Madison* came to the Ranch, she had already experienced a lifetime of pain and trauma. She had grown up in a home where drug use was a daily occurrence, she often didn't have food, and she had been physically and sexually abused by the people coming in and out of her home at all hours of the day or night. By the time she got to the Ranch, Madison's parents had both died, her only sibling had died by suicide, and she had lived in several different foster homes. She was angry, aggressive, suicidal, had undeveloped social skills—and had nowhere else to go.

Like Madison, the children who come to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch have experienced significant trauma, abuse, neglect; and/or suffer from acute or chronic psychiatric issues. In most cases, their caregivers (parents, grandparents, foster parents, or social service caseworkers) have tried everything to help them overcome their challenges—traditional therapy, psychiatric services, special education, and more.

At Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, professionals from all areas of expertise bring their knowledge together with the latest research in brain science, trauma, and treatment to help kids. The Ranch's multi-disciplinary approach to residential treatment, along with safety, predictability, and the highest level of evidence-based practice, wraps children and their families in the care they need to heal.

In Madison's case, the road to healing was bumpy, but she is now living successfully with the extended family we connected her with while she was with us,

attending public school, and continuing her healing through outpatient therapy and psychiatric care.

In this article, Directors of Residential Services and Program Managers at the Ranch will tell you what residential treatment is, and how it helps children and their families move from despair to hope.

Rachael Kary

Director of Residential Services
Fargo, ND



Rachael is very protective of the children at the Ranch and wants people to understand what they've been through. "They are not bad kids," she said.

"Residential treatment at the Ranch brings children into a living setting where they get constant support and services in-house. They have access to psychiatry, psychology, therapy, education, occupational therapy, spiritual life, and medical care right where they live. The people who work here go through extensive training in First Aid, CPR, trauma-informed care, and Non-violent Crisis Intervention—and that's on

top of the education our credentialed professionals have in their field. The biggest piece of residential is that children have the support of a very large team behind them."

—Rachael Kary

Rachael started at the Ranch's Bismarck campus as an intern. When she completed her internship and graduated from college, she didn't want to leave. While Rachael said the culture and the way she feels valued and supported at the Ranch are important, at the end of the day it's about the kids.

"Ninety-eight percent of our kids come in with significant trauma—abandonment, emotional abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. These kids have gone through some pretty unspeakable things," she said. "When they come here, they are defeated and don't feel like anyone is looking out for them. And to be perfectly honest, they might not want to be here so we're not their favorite people."

Despite their resistance to treatment, most residents respond to the structure of the environment and the expertise and care of the

many people who work with them.

Rachael said the Ranch's goal in treating each child is for them to never have to live in a treatment facility again. That starts with engaging their families in treatment from the very beginning.

"The Ranch is different from many other facilities in that we want parents here all the time. If a young lady joins us on Thursday and her parents want to visit on Saturday,

we say, 'Absolutely. Please come.' We don't place restrictions or ever use family time as a consequence for negative behaviors. Even if a kiddo is having a rough day, we want mom and dad to show up, so the child knows they aren't going through this alone."

If the child has an identified family, the Ranch team believes it's best for them to be involved from the very beginning. Ranch therapists try to build rapport with the family even before the child comes to the Ranch, and family therapy begins as soon as the family is available.

"Before you know it, we're starting to send the kids off campus with their parents and working our way towards overnight stays. It's not uncommon for our kids to have day passes during their first month of treatment with overnights within 2-3 months," Rachael said. "We want our kids and families to do as much practice as they can while they are with us. Then they can come together in family therapy to talk about those passes, set expectations, and do safety planning."

Residential treatment is intensive, with lots of people coming together to provide each child the services they need to heal. They usually have at least two sessions a week with their therapist and one appointment per week with an occupational therapist. They also meet weekly with Dr. Wayne Martinsen, Psychiatrist/Medical Director at the Ranch, for medication management.

Rachael said most Ranch children are taking psychotropic medications, so we monitor them

carefully for negative side effects and to make sure the medications are working in the way they are intended. In addition to talking to the kids about how they think they are doing, Dr. Martinsen reviews the child's chart to see if Ranch staff have noted any behaviors, symptoms, or side effects that might indicate a need for changes to their medication or treatment plan. In many cases, Dr. Martinsen is able to change or reduce a child's medications, so they have optimal impact with fewer side effects. Because they attend school on campus, children can see their therapist and psychiatrist during the school day.

After school or right after supper, residents

participate in a variety of groups including Occupational Therapy, Spiritual Life, Wellness, Nursing/Healthy Living, and Therapy. In addition to a weekly group and chapel services, Spiritual Life is incorporated into the children's weekly schedules in other ways.

"Each week we incorporate a specific moral development topic into the kid's treatment (respect, compassion, honesty, forgiveness, integrity, etc.). We have also taken kids to churches in town, as well as teen youth groups," Rachael said. "Many of our kids come in feeling hopeless. They don't feel that they have anywhere to turn. Spiritual life services provide them with a sense of safety and hope and the opportunity to feel supported."

"Kids heal here because everyone who works [at the Ranch] has chosen to learn about trauma and interventions that work. They have chosen to listen and get to know these kids."

—Rachael

"While that is a lot of intensity, we also want our kids to have some sense of normalcy so in the evenings and on weekends they have access to a TV, they can play Xbox, they go to the mall or to the movies. They do things, always with supervision, they would probably be doing if they weren't in treatment," Rachael said. "Our Wellness Coordinator does an amazing job with scheduling to create a good balance between treatment and the normal activities of being a teenager."

At the same time, Ranch case managers are working behind the scenes on discharge plans, making sure the children and their families have the resources they need in their home community.

That means finding out what services they need, setting up appointments in their home community, ensuring they go home with a 30-day supply of medications, and transferring their prescriptions to a convenient pharmacy.

"We like to start discharge planning on day one," Rachael said. "Our kids do better and there is a lesser likelihood of them returning to treatment if good discharge planning is in place."

Rachael said her biggest challenge is knowing how misunderstood the kids are by the adults in their lives and in the community.

"I get very protective because

we've got adults judging children. People are quick to chalk our kids' behaviors and challenges up to bad parenting or the kids just not knowing how to listen," she said. "We've all heard people respond to a misbehaving child with something like, 'That's what happens when you don't discipline your kids.' It's not that simple. People don't understand what these children and families have gone through."

"That is what is so great about the Ranch," Rachael continued. "Therapeutic rapport and trauma-informed care are at the forefront of our program. If you don't understand those pieces, it's not going to work. Kids heal here because everyone who works here has chosen to learn about trauma and interventions that work. They have chosen to listen and get to know these kids. I will keep showing up because I love this place and the work, but most importantly I love the kids. They are what keep me going."

Rachael is currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Florida State University.

Amber Marquardt

**Director of Residential Services
Minot, ND**

"Residential treatment is a place for children to go who need some form of hope and healing from the trauma they've experienced. We all want the children in our communities and our families to succeed, and sometimes there are barriers in the way of them reaching their goals and being successful, whatever their success

looks like. Residential treatment helps children overcome those barriers by providing therapy and psychiatric services and teaching them skills that will help them in the future."

—Amber Marquardt

Amber was new to Minot and working in construction when she saw a Ranch job ad in the paper.

"I had no idea what I was getting into," Amber said. "But I had young children and was spending a lot of time on the road. The job looked interesting, so I applied. I knew I belonged the first time one of our kids called back to tell me how he was succeeding and to thank me for everything I did. At that moment I knew the work we do makes a difference."



Amber is committed to helping every child succeed.

Amber's greatest wish is for people to understand that Ranch kids are not bad kids.

"Have these kids made bad choices? Sure. Some have," Amber said. "But they're not the 'naughty kids.' They could be your kid, my

kid, a niece, a nephew, a grandson, or a granddaughter. They are all 'our kids.' They have gone through traumatic experiences and need to work on anger management, social skills, or independent living skills. They need help and understanding and to know they are safe."

Ranch children are boys and girls, ages 10 to 18, who have gone through traumatic experiences; and have mental illness or psychiatric disorders that impact their ability to manage emotions, create meaningful relationships, and develop social and independent living skills. Amber said consistency and schedules are important for keeping kids on track. In addition to the consistency of school, therapy, occupational therapy,

spiritual life, nursing group, and wellness activities, children have time set aside every night for "phase work."

Amber said, "We have some very specific treatment programming, called phase work, that our children work through to learn skills like relationship building, identifying thinking errors, and working through some of those challenges. We also make sure our children's voices are heard in the treatment planning process by inviting them

to participate in treatment planning meetings."

While success looks different for every child, Amber said there are some common denominators.

"If they can feel safe and secure in

their environment, with who they are, and with what their future can bring, they've really accomplished something. That is success."

Amber recalls a young man who came to the Ranch with very little education and a very traumatic background.

"We didn't think he'd ever graduate, and he really lacked social skills," she said. "He was able to recover

the credits he needed to graduate and then moved to Oklahoma to live with his dad. He reached out to me last summer to tell me he graduated from the Oklahoma Highway Patrol Academy and is now an Oklahoma State Trooper."

When another young man called the Ranch a while ago, Amber was shocked to hear his voice.

"We were really worried about him," she said. "He had chronic addiction issues. He called to say, 'You guys do good things. Sometimes it takes some of us a little longer to understand why you are saying what you're saying, but when it hits you, it hits you.' That's when you know it's all worth it."

"With their education and experience, our staff could choose to work at easier jobs for more money," Amber said. "But it's not about money. It's not about prestige. It's about the rewards the kids give us and all the things we learn from them. They teach us so much."

In addition to what she learns from the kids, Amber credits the Ranch with her own continued

learning. When she started working at the Ranch in 2005, she had a high school diploma and wasn't interested in going to college.

"After a few years of watching all of these people come in with degrees and experience, I decided I wanted

to learn and grow too," she said.

While working full-time and raising a family, Amber went back to

school for a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She had barely completed that degree when she started on her master's degree, and in 2022, graduated from Western Governor's University, Millcreek, UT, with a master's in business administration (MBA).

"Without the Ranch's push and support, I don't think I would have a degree today," Amber said. "Am I done furthering my education? I haven't decided yet!"

Kaitlin Kinsella

**Director of Residential Services
Bismarck and Minot, ND**

"Residential treatment is a safe place for kids to come and work on the issues and challenges they are faced with. The Ranch helps kids learn more about who they are and develop some skills and strategies they can use to be

successful when they return home. It's all about giving kids skills for success and letting them make decisions for themselves in a place where they are supported, so when they're at home they can make good, healthy choices."

—Kaitlin Kinsella

Kaitlin said she grew up at the Ranch. She started working here when she graduated from college, and the Ranch has been a part of her life ever since.

"If I wasn't at the Ranch, I don't think I would be in this field because it's a tough line of work. But working here makes it possible to survive and thrive," Kaitlin said. "We have a great team of people and leadership that gives us the resources we need to help kids. It's unique to have that kind of support, not only above you but with the teams you work with every day. It's like a family."

Kaitlin has benefited from the Ranch's support of continuous learning (she recently completed



Kaitlin reminds other Ranchers that we are planting seeds, and to have faith in the process.

a master's degree in Leadership from the University of Jamestown, Jamestown, ND), and said that commitment to learning, expertise, and collaboration is what sets the Ranch apart.

“Other programs in the state or across the country don't have psychiatrists or psychologists on staff that they can just call or ask to join a meeting. Our clinical services really make us stand out,” Kaitlin said. “We integrate occupational therapy into treatment, which is unique to the Ranch, and we have our own on-site school. We have stayed relevant and current on best practices, we are quick and responsive, and we are always challenging ourselves to be better and do better. There is no one else out there doing what we do.”

Kaitlin said the Spiritual Life Program also differentiates the Ranch from other treatment facilities.

“Spiritual Life can have a big impact on our kids' ability to find and strengthen their faith, which is important for a lot of reasons, but in many ways, because there are so many unknowns for these kids,” she said. “Giving up those worries and stresses to something bigger than themselves can be really freeing. It can be just enough to help kids get through the tough moments in treatment and find the energy and momentum to do the work. Our Chaplain, Vicars, and Deaconesses are game changers in their ability to reach our kids and build up their faith in ways that can sustain kids in their darkest moments and help them find the light on the other end.”

In some ways, Kaitlin says what we offer in our programs is like what you see in a typical home environment.

“We wake kids up and help them get ready for school,” she said.

“We make sure they have a good breakfast and that they start off their day with good hygiene. Did they shower? Did they brush their hair, use deodorant, and brush their teeth? Are they wearing clean clothes? I think most parents go through these same routines getting their kids ready for school.”

For many Ranch kids whose home lives were everything but typical, these routines are unfamiliar. They

“Our Chaplain, Vicars, and Deaconesses are game changers in their ability to reach our kids and build up their faith in ways that can sustain kids in their darkest moments and help them find the light on the other end.”

—Kaitlin

may not have grown up in a home where their parents modeled healthy eating, hygiene, and getting to school on time. In many cases, they were on their own or taking care of younger siblings.

What differentiates treatment from home is that throughout the day and after school children are having individual therapy, psychiatry, and occupational therapy appointments. After school, they participate in therapeutic groups, and in the evenings, participate in recreational activities.

Kaitlin said, “We keep our kids active and engaged and give them access to things they've

never experienced before. These activities also help them build their relationship skills with their peers and staff. They learn things like how to talk to strangers, and how to ask for and order popcorn when they go to the movie theater.”

“It's also different in that they have 15 other brothers and sisters, essentially, that they move through the day with, as well as the staff—therapists, nurses, teachers, and direct care staff—who are always around and ready to support them.”

Kaitlin said every child responds differently to treatment.

“Some come in and leave a completely different kid,” she said. “And it's never one thing or one person that makes that happen. It could be changing their medication regimen along with the therapeutic and staff support that makes a difference. Or maybe they've really struggled in school and Dakota Memorial School (our on-campus school) is a game-changer for them. It can be anything.”

“For other kids, it takes time to really internalize therapy, and the positive changes may not come to fruition for years after they leave us,” Kaitlin said. “It's harder for us that way, but it's more typical.”

One of the first kids Kaitlin worked with at the Ranch stopped by years later to tell her about all the good things that have happened in her life because of her time at the Ranch.

“We have to remember that we are planting seeds and have faith in the process,” Kaitlin said. “Some days it's going to be really hard, but we know there is always that

light at the end of the tunnel. We expect our kids to struggle. They wouldn't be here if they were perfect human beings. I think it's the hard moments that allow us to appreciate how great it can be on the other side."

Marisa Rudie

Program Manager
Bismarck, ND



Marisa's face lights up when she is asked about the kids.

"Residential treatment is a safe place for kids to come and heal when they aren't able to do that on their own because of lagging skills or roadblocks they have in their personal lives. It's a safe place for them to work through some of their mental health and behavioral issues—to grow and develop and get rid of some of the roadblocks so they can be the kids they are meant to be. It's a place for them to be with other kids who have similar struggles, so they don't feel so alone."

—Marisa Rudie

Marisa chose to work in a helping profession because of her own background.

"I come from a divorced-parent household, and like most kids, I struggled with that. Unlike so many of our Ranch kids, I had a supportive family and community. Without those strong relationships and support from the people around me, I would've probably been where our kids are. Being able to be part of a support system for kids was a huge motivator for me in choosing this as my career."

In 2010, Marisa started working at the Ranch's Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) in Bismarck after earning a triple major in psychology, addiction counseling, and social work at the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND. Within three months she had been promoted to Residential Supervisor, and in 2021 she took on the Program Manager role.

In her current position, Marisa trains, grows, manages,

and develops the Residential Treatment Specialists and Residential Supervisors who work directly with the children throughout their treatment.

"One of my favorite things about the Ranch is the philosophy that kids would do well if they could," Marisa said.

"I work heavily with the people in the building to help them understand that our kids

aren't acting out to frustrate them or make their workday harder. They just haven't had the opportunity or ability to figure out how to handle their emotions on their own. It's our job to care for our kids, make sure they are okay, and help them develop those lagging skills."

Helping kids regulate those emotions and develop new skills requires structure, an important part of treatment at the Ranch. Waking up, breakfast, school, therapy, chapel, wellness activities, and groups are all scheduled at consistent times.

Marisa said, "Knowing what to expect naturally decreases some of our kids' anxiety. We also work with families to help them build structure into their home lives. We have several families who say they struggle with their kids running around, not listening, and not meeting the expectations they are setting. We tell them what helps their child when they are with us and help them incorporate those things so their child can do better at

home. We aren't just here for the kids. We are here for the families too."

At the same time, Marisa said there is no such thing as a typical day at the Ranch. For instance, while there is always a wellness activity in the evening, the types of

activities vary from day to day.

"It's not all therapy and hard

"Our kids are the best kids ever. They are unique. They are artists. They are comedians. They are some of the most talented humans I've ever interacted with. But they come from tough backgrounds."
—Marisa

work. We do fun stuff with the kids too,” Marisa said. “During the summer, we go swimming at the lake. Last week we took the kids to the golf simulator so they could hit golf balls. The other day we had planned to go sledding, but it was a 40-degree day, so we went outside and jumped in puddles.”

When asked about the children, Marisa lights up.

“Our kids are the best kids ever. They are unique. They are artists.

They’re comedians. They are some of the most talented humans I’ve ever interacted with. But they come from tough backgrounds. We see a lot of abuse and neglect with the kids we have here. You add mental health diagnoses to that, and they are just kids who need help getting over the hurdles. These are kids who have been dealt a tough hand and they need positive grownups to help them work through some of their trials in a safe manner.”

Marisa said most children come to the Ranch with a pretty good understanding that they don’t feel good and don’t like the path they are on, but they don’t know how to fix it. This willingness to engage in treatment helps them be successful.

“We only have our kids for a millisecond of their entire lifetime, so we can’t expect them all to completely change their behaviors. Success might be limiting crisis just a little bit. Maybe we help them decrease some of their aggression, open lines of communication with

a family member, or find some positive qualities about themselves. Those are all successes. If a kid runs whenever they get upset, success might be leaving the building but not leaving campus.”

Marisa talks about one young girl who came to the Ranch aggressive and suicidal and with very poor social skills.

“You talk about success—she made leaps and bounds,” Marisa said. “By the time she left the Ranch, she was able to go live with a foster family. She was making friends. She wasn’t suicidal. She is

creative, artistic, loving, and caring. She didn’t have the love and support growing up because she had so much trauma. And to see her still have such a light and shine about her is one of the neatest things.”

Gabrielle Kwiatek

Program Manager
Minot, ND



The kids at the Ranch grabbed Gabrielle’s heart, and now she can’t imagine being anywhere else.

“Residential treatment is where kids come to receive in-depth services away from their home environment. These kids are usually lagging in skills, like communication, flexible thinking, and self-regulation. While they are at the Ranch, we help them develop those skills so they can be successful in their home environment.”

—Gabrielle Kwiatek

Gabrielle moved to Minot, ND, from western New York to play college soccer. She moved back home after college but was drawn back to North Dakota by the people and the opportunity to work for a nonprofit like the Ranch.

“I was interested in the Ranch because I knew people who had previously worked here. Looking back, I initially planned to stay for a few months and then join the Peace Corps,” Gabrielle said. “But then I met our kids, and I couldn’t leave. The kids just grabbed my heart. I never expected to be in this type of position, and now I can’t imagine my life without it. Watching these kids learn and grow is unlike anything else you’ll ever experience.”

As Program Manager of the two cottages that serve the Ranch’s youngest residents, Gabrielle oversees programming and staff to help children ages 10-14 heal from traumatic experiences and psychiatric issues and to develop their lagging skills.

“One of the main skills our kids need to develop is self-regulation,” Gabrielle said. “These

are skills most of us learn early on in life but unfortunately, our kids haven't had the chance to develop them. For one of our kids, it's really going back and teaching him skills you learned when you were a toddler. This young boy gets easily frustrated over tying his shoes, so we encourage him, praise him, and coach him through the task, even as he visibly becomes dysregulated."

"I feel like people think the Ranch is for bad kids, and that just breaks my heart. These aren't bad kids."

—Gabrielle

Dysregulation looks different in each of our kids. For some kids, it's yelling or swearing. For others it's more physical and can include pushing, shoving, slamming doors, or punching walls. Gabrielle said the best way to deal with dysregulation is to pick up on early signs of anxiety, like pacing or tapping their foot, and intervene with a supportive approach.

The interventions are also different for every child.

"If I pick up on warning signs in a child, I might offer them a weighted blanket, or to go on a walk, or another one of coping skills they've identified as something that helps calm them," Gabrielle said. "Sometimes it's just checking in with them to see if they are OK and asking if I can get them anything. If they are yelling and swearing, I might let them release their emotions, but also be there, be directive, setting limits, and meet them where they are at."

Gabrielle said the whole Ranch team comes together to find

strategies that work for each child. Just last week, one of the occupational therapists suggested turning the lights down and giving a child a weighted blanket when they start becoming dysregulated.

"I tried it with another child, and it worked. It might not work for every child, but at that moment, it's what that child needed," said Gabrielle. "It's nice to see staff trained

in different specialties all come together with the same purpose of treating our kids. Our main goal is to make sure we are working as a team to help these kids get to where they need to be."

As Program Manager, Gabrielle works closely with people across campus to create a healing environment. Facility staff make repairs and building updates, nurses make sure kids get to their appointments and get the treatment they need, and case managers stay in close contact with the kids, parents, and treatment team so everyone is on the same page. Gabrielle also manages the day-to-day function and flow of the cottage, oversees the Residential Supervisors, and connects with the principal to share information about things they've found that help a specific child stay on track.

"We all bring our own education, skills, and experiences to the table as we find ways to help each child

succeed," Gabrielle said. "These kids have had it rough. I feel like people think the Ranch is for bad kids, and that just breaks my heart. These aren't bad kids, they are troubled. They've had really hard experiences. I wish everyone could see how amazing they are and take the time to invest in them and help them grow into the people they are meant to be."

Tracey Watson

Program Manager
Minot, ND



Tracey's therapy dog, Oakley, sometimes joins her at the Ranch where she focuses on helping kids heal.

"Residential treatment is a place where children's basic needs are met so they feel safe and able to work through their past trauma. At the Ranch, we look at the foundational steps kids missed when they were growing up and help them develop those basic skills. We work with them on social skills and teach them to use their voices instead of reacting with fight or flight. We show them that not every

adult is mean, not every situation is bad, and they are not their past. Residential treatment is a place where kids can figure out what they want their future to look like, and then lean on us to help them get there.”

—Tracey Watson

Tracey spent 20 years as a classroom teacher and always had a passion for kids that struggled. When she decided to leave teaching and was looking for what came next, she was drawn to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

“I believe it was a calling,” Tracey said. “My son had gotten into the wrong crowd and was a resident at the Ranch. I loved what they did for him. I loved the support, the family involvement, and the strategies they gave us.”

Tracey applied at the Ranch, was offered a case management position, and quickly fell in love with the kids and the work. With a bachelor’s degree in education and three master’s degrees in related fields, Tracey was well-suited for the Program Manager position when it became available.

“I love that God is so much a part of our program and that we fight for the rights of kids. This is home. This is where I was meant to be,” she said.

As Program Manager, Tracey said her job is to look at what is best for the kids while supporting and guiding the staff.

“My biggest role is making sure our staff and kids have the support they need, and that we’re all finding ways to work together simultaneously,” Tracey said. “We look at the big picture and take in all the information we have from

what’s going on in the cottage, at school, and in therapy. We’ve got some brilliant people here working with our kids, and I love that we listen to everyone’s ideas and input.”

In Seegers and Challenge cottages, the kids work through the CHAMPION program. The phases on the journey to becoming a Champion are:

- C:** Introduction
- H:** Overcoming Old Behaviors
- A:** Being Proactive
- M:** Personal Mission
- P:** Personal Relationships
- I:** Win-Win
- O:** Collaboration
- N:** The New You

As they work through the phases, residents identify major problem areas in their lives, start to understand the impact of their actions, and develop plans to manage these struggles. They identify triggers, thinking errors, feelings, and behaviors, and learn ways to break out of negative behavior cycles. Ranch staff also work with them to identify their strengths and natural abilities and discover ways to grow these skills and use them to build positive relationships.

In the final phase, they reassess

their values to determine if they have changed over the course of treatment. They identify areas where they want to continue to grow, identify life goals, and create a plan to reach those goals.

Tracey said it’s not always a smooth transition through the phases. When kids revert to behaviors they were having early on, everyone comes together to help them figure out what is going on and how to change the thought processes related to their behaviors.

“We have a lot of parents who go through the phases with their children. They often identify things in themselves that create conflict with their kids and practice new ways to interact,” she said. “Kids’ challenges may be very different in the home setting than they are here, so if parents have gone through the phases, they can use what they’ve learned to help their kids.”

While many Ranch children aren’t able to live with their immediate families when they leave treatment, Tracey said most of them have some sort of family connection.

“I wouldn’t say every child does, but we strive to make sure there’s some sort of family involvement for every kid, even if it’s a distant relative,” Tracey said. “Just because they are in the care of the county or the

state doesn’t mean they don’t have a family. For a lot of kids, living with mom or dad might not be an option, but they can still have supervised visits.”

Tracey knows there are easier places to work, places where when the day is done you can go home and

“I love that God is so much a part of our program and that we fight for the rights of kids.”

—Tracey

not think about work until you go back the next day, but they're not as rewarding.

"I don't look at easy," Tracey said. "I look at impactful. This place is so impactful, and the kids deserve our very best. Kids are not born wanting to do bad. There is a reason why they make the choices they do and once you get to the root of that reason, you can start building on the positive things and get them going in the right direction."

Before Christmas, Tracey received a call from a former resident who told her he was getting ready to get out of the Youth Correctional Center and was going to live with his dad. A couple of weeks ago he called again to tell her he had hit a bump in the road and his time at YCC was extended.

"He kept telling me he was sorry, that he got really mad and couldn't control himself, but he was doing better again," Tracey said. "I told him he didn't have to apologize to me and that I would always support and help guide him. Then he told me the Ranch saved his life. It really touched my heart."

"The kids here can be any kid. It was my kid," she continued. "It's

not because as parents we didn't care or want the best for him. I was a helicopter mom. I thought I was doing everything right. But they make choices and if they make the wrong choice, it can affect every part of their lives. Those choices don't define who they are—it's just a wrong choice and they need help finding their way back."

Comprehensive approach leads to healing

While placing a child at the Ranch is always a difficult decision, the benefits can be life changing. Every person who works at the Ranch has their own stories of children whose lives they touched—and in every case, they were as impacted by the child as the child was by them.

With a focus on individualized care, evidence-based therapies, and a supportive Christ-centered environment, the

Ranch's residential treatment centers offer a comprehensive approach to treatment that addresses the underlying issues contributing to the adolescent's difficulties—helping them move from despair and hopelessness to hope and healing.

FAQ about adolescent residential treatment

How can residential treatment help children? At the Ranch, children find a structured and safe environment where they can heal from mental and behavioral health issues, such as anxiety and depression, suicidal thoughts and actions, self-harm, and aggression.

Why would a child need residential treatment? Residential treatment is for children who have experienced severe trauma due to abuse, neglect, violence, and other adverse experiences; and/or who are experiencing severe mental health and behavioral challenges.

Can parents voluntarily place their children in residential treatment? Yes, parents who are concerned about their child's mental health and well-being can refer their child for residential treatment.

How is residential treatment paid for? At the Ranch, Private Health Insurance Plans and/or State Programs typically cover about 65% of the provided services, with parents often responsible for recipient liability or co-pays. The remaining 35% is underwritten by gifts from our generous donors, giving us the ability to provide additional resources that lead to greater success. Additional resources include spiritual life programs, trauma-sensitive school environments, horse programs, advanced training opportunities, and more.

Celebrations

Luncheons of love

In February, Friends of the Ranch gathered in Mesa and Sun City, Arizona for the Ranch's annual Arizona Donor Appreciation Luncheons. Attendees heard from President/CEO, Joy Ryan; Tina DeGree, Director of Education; and Andrew, a current Day Student who will be graduating from Dakota Memorial School in May 2023.



Donor Appreciation Luncheons are a long-standing tradition at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, to thank our donors, and celebrate the good work they support.



"The staff and the teachers [at Dakota Memorial School] are really helpful and really nice. They're easy to get along with and they'll help you with schoolwork or if you just need to get something off your chest, they're there to support you. It is very nice to know that at [DMS], you'll have everyone behind your back setting you up for success in your future." —Andrew, Day Student, Dakota Memorial School



From left: Vicki Reiner; Larry Knutson, President Emeritus; Lisa Cole, Mission Advancement Officer; Laurie Dannewitz, Senior Development Officer



So much of our work depends on the generosity and love from our friends, and this is our opportunity to say "thank you!"



Luncheon attendees each received a special Valentine's Day card from a Ranch child.

Joy Ryan, President/CEO, shared stories about the hard work of healing our amazing kids do each day, and the incredible Ranch staff who walk alongside them through the good and the bad.



Celebrations

A delicious Easter treat

Each Easter, kids in Minot take part in Cottage Cake Wars, working together to create the most delicious and festive Easter Cakes. Here's a look back at Easter 2022!



Thatcher Cottage took 1st place in creativity with their Easter bunny cake, complete with chocolate carrots and green coconut grass.

Cornelsen Cottage took 1st place in taste with their rainbow swirl cake.



Challenge Cottage took 1st place in appearance with their Easter Basket creation.

Butt Cottage wowed the judges with a delicious chocolate cake with hints of coffee.



GROW Day preparations

It might be cold and snowy outside, but our greenhouses are bursting with life! Kids in the Botany class at Dakota Memorial School, Minot, have been busy in the greenhouses learning how to propagate plants in preparation for GROW Day 2023!



GROW Day, a yearly event at our Minot Thrift Store, gives the community a chance to purchase flowers, plants, and various garden planters and signs grown and made by Ranch kids.



A snowy hike

We've had a lot of snow in North Dakota this winter, but that doesn't stop our kids and staff from getting out and enjoying nature. A couple kids experienced the calm between storms on a wintry walk with Mitchel, one of our Residential Treatment Specialists.



Back-to-back blizzards left our campuses covered in lots of good snow for hiking, building snowmen, and other fun winter activities that give our kids a sense of "normalcy."

A rocking good time

Science classes at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, had a visit from Anna Nieuwsma, a Geologist at Barr Engineering Firm. She talked with the kids about the differences between rocks and minerals and let them explore her collection.



Giving kids at the Ranch real-life, hands-on experiences like this allow them to explore potential career choices they might not have considered before.

Wildlife Club is a "step" above the rest

The Wildlife Club has been busy working on their winter project, folding stools! They'll use the stools when they go fishing. Through incredible teamwork, the kids were able to put together a dozen stools in just a couple hours. After assembling the stools, each kid got to decorate and personalize a stool using wood burning tools.



Wildlife Club gives kids the opportunity to interact with nature and learn new skills.

Celebrations

James to the rescue!

Earlier this winter, 15-year-old James was out for a walk with Ranch staff when he heard kittens meowing. After a little investigating, he found three kittens—one of them was frozen to the railroad tracks! Working together, they rescued the kittens, and got them inside, warm, and fed.



The kittens are doing well and now live with Residential Supervisor, Paige, and her mom.



“When James shared the story with me, he had tears - well, so did I,” said Jan Nelson, Residential Treatment Specialist at the Ranch. “It’s so cool for a young boy to be here at the Ranch to ‘rescue’ himself from the trauma he has endured, to then show such compassion in the rescue of these helpless kittens. Great job, James and everyone who helped!”

Building empathy

At the Ranch, kids learn many skills, including giving back and showing empathy for others. Mathew was delighted to give back to Ranch therapy dog, Sydney, by making her a bandana as his Art Class project.



Prepping for pheasants

Students at Dakota Memorial School are busy building new boxes they’ll use to transport and release pheasants this spring.



While building the boxes, kids work with various power tools, learn good wood-working practices, and engage in positive teamwork to get the job done!



Sydney was so thrilled by the bandana Mathew made for her, she had to wear it right away, and thank him with a hug!

Animal Empowerment League visits the Ranch

The Animal Empowerment League paid a visit to Dakota Memorial School, Minot, to talk with kids about animal rescue, how to be safe around dogs, and modern-day tools such as microchips and martingale collars.



Miss Myrtle had an excellent time visiting the Ranch and had to stop for a photo to remember the occasion!

Getting fit!

Kids at Dakota Memorial School, Bismarck, had the opportunity to try a Cross Fit class at Big Muddy Cross Fit! Coach Chris and Coach Kristy led them through a rigorous workout, but the kids had a blast and many of them wanted to do it again!



Physical fitness is important for kids at the Ranch as they develop healthy habits and learn to take care of themselves. These are important skills they can take with them when they leave our care.

ReadBowl 2023

Congratulations to our Mighty Middle School Readers for being the ND State Champions in the Middle School Conference ReadBowl competition!

As a reward for their hard work and dedication, they will receive 10 books from Malcolm Mitchell, Superbowl Champion, Author, Keynote Speaker, and Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation.

Mrs. Nelson's and Mrs. Beach's Elementary Readers also had a very successful ReadBowl, clocking almost 88 hours of reading!



Celebrations

Thank you for giving books!

In the last issue of Ranch Voice, we shared the importance of reading at Dakota Memorial School, and asked for your help in filling the shelves of our school libraries. We're very grateful for our Ranch friends who purchased over 250 books for our Dakota Memorial School libraries and classrooms!



Kids at the Ranch love to read and are excited to have a wider variety of books to choose from!



Ranch friends from across the country donated books that will be loved and read by our kids.

"I'm just a kid with an IEP."

Jordan Toma, a motivational speaker and published author, spoke to kids on our Minot campus about his struggles being a kid on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Jordan also talked with them about the importance of their stories and how their stories are their strength, even when they're going through hard things. He even brought special gifts for each of our kids. Scan the QR code to hear what Jordan had to say about meeting our kids!



A special Valentine's Day

Kids on our Fargo campus decorated Valentine's Day boxes, which were then filled with notes of encouragement and sweet treats by Ranch staff. For some Ranch kids, this was the first Valentine's box they'd ever had.



One child included affirmations at the bottom of their box as a reminder of how loved they are.



Our kids tapped into their creativity as they decorated their special Valentine's Day boxes.

Winter fun

Getting outside is important for kids at the Ranch, even during the cold winter months! Wildlife Club is a great way for kids to get into nature and learn new skills. One of their favorite outdoor winter activities is ice fishing!



They don't always catch many fish, but sitting in the ice houses telling stories is a great way for kids to connect with others and to learn healthy relationships skills, both important to their healing.

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



facebook.com/
dakotaranch1952



Instagram.com/
dbgr52

Field trips for their future

Students at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, took a field trip to Lynnes Welding where they learned about welding and the type of schooling required to become a welder. They toured the school, met some of the current students, and even got to watch a welding demonstration!



Many kids come to the Ranch with no goals for the future, so learning about different career paths opens their eyes to the possibilities.

Connecting kids to culture

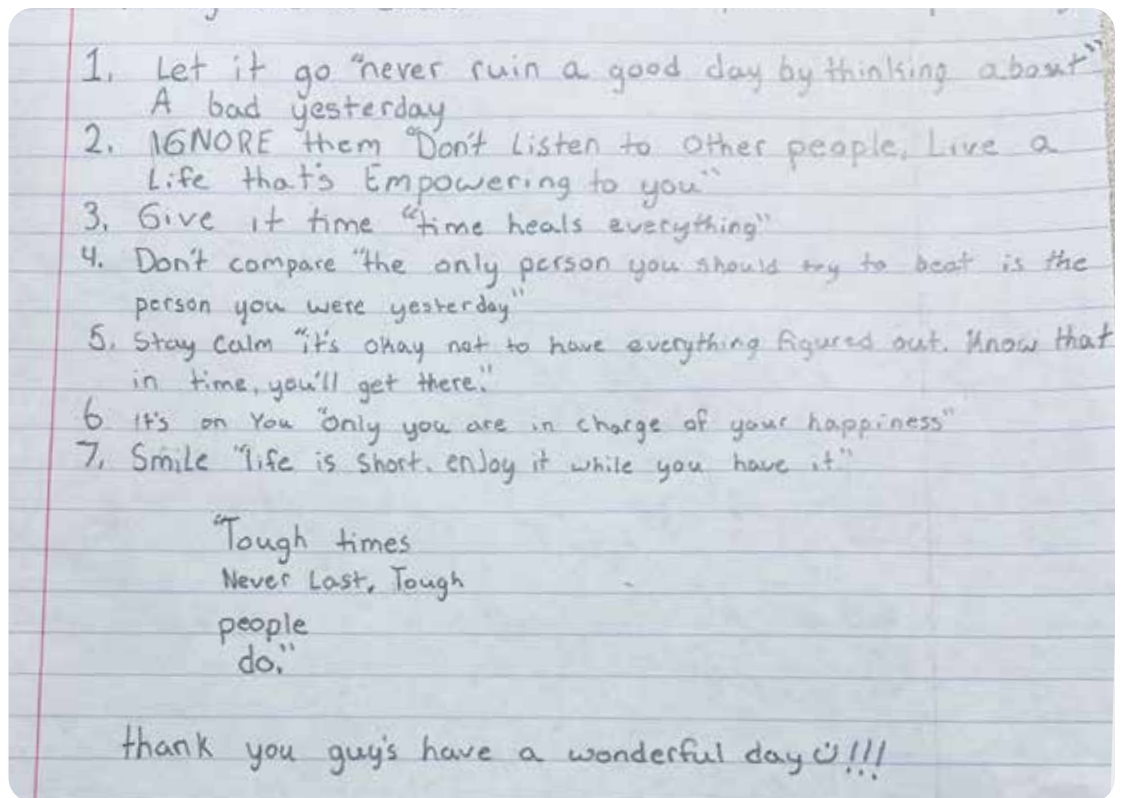
Kids at Dakota Memorial School, Fargo, had a special visit from Ricky White, Cultural Specialist at Fargo Public Schools. He shared his story, told how his experiences have shaped who he is, and stressed the importance of each of their stories. He even taught the students some phrases in his native language, Ojibwe. Scan the QR code to hear the special song he shared with the kids at the end of his talk!



Ricky speaks to students and teachers across the state about the importance of Native culture in our schools and communities.

Spreading Positivity

Each of our residents has a "primary staff" with whom they have regular one-on-one activities and outings. One of our former residents worked with his primary staff, Bre Sattler, Residential Treatment Specialist, on a list of positive statements he wanted to share with the other residents and staff. This activity was not only a great bonding activity, but a way for the young boy to focus on positive statements he could claim as his own and draw from on difficult days.



SHOP DAKOTA RANCH

Each Purchase Provides Hope and Healing

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



Scan to start
shopping now!



Long-time Volunteer Finds Joy in Service

Small acts of kindness like showing customers fabric measurements or offering people carts when their hands are full, bring Bonnie Ackerman the most joy.

“When somebody tells me thank you, it makes me feel so good to know I helped them,” she said.

When Bonnie retired from a successful career, she, like many people, wasn't ready to step away from meaningful work. Instead of looking for a paid position, she stopped by the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Thrift Store in West Fargo, ND to inquire about volunteer opportunities, and was “hired” on the spot.

Because she already had a love of quilting, she was asked to merchandise and assist in the arts, crafts, and fabrics department. For the last ten years, that has been her domain... and where she finds her joy in helping people!

“I love everything I do,” she said. “Sometimes I go to bed at night and I'm trying to get to sleep and I'm thinking, ‘Oh, I think I better do this tomorrow or that tomorrow.’”

Bonnie developed her work ethic growing up on a farm in North Dakota. She had three brothers and simply did what they did. Back then, she says, she would have been called a “tomboy.” Membership in 4-H was how kids were typically introduced to farming practices at that time, but girls were not yet allowed to be members. Her dad gave her calves to raise, anyway, and those calves later paid for her higher education.

Her desire for more education is

what took her off the farm and to the big city of Minneapolis, MN. At that time, Northwest Airlines ran a business school in the Twin Cities, where Bonnie learned to be a teletypist. Then, just as her career with Northwest was starting, the company experienced a strike. Looking for stability, she took her office skills to an insurance company that needed a filer. She bloomed in the office work environment and soon became the company's receptionist, what we would now call the “Director of First Impressions.” She fell in love with working in an office, being around people, and providing others with information.

When she moved to Fargo, ND, she applied her skills to office work at MeritCare Health Systems (now Sanford Health). For 25 years, she blessed her employer and co-workers with her warmth, kindness, and good work.

In her years as a dedicated volunteer, Bonnie has been named “Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Volunteer of the Year” three times and gained the appreciation of everyone who has worked with her. Her co-workers are the first to benefit from her attitude.

South Fargo Store Manager, Alicia Ackerson, who previously worked at the West Fargo store said, “Bonnie's not only committed, but she always

asks how you're doing before getting right to work.”

West Fargo Store Manager, Kirk Hawley, said, “Aside from being caring and positive, Bonnie is a dedicated volunteer who gives her all.”

In addition to volunteering at the Ranch, Bonnie makes and donates quilts to various nonprofits in the community.

When asked what advice she would give to someone who is planning to retire, Bonnie laughed and said,



As a volunteer at a Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch thrift store, Bonnie brings her warm and caring spirit to everything she does.

“I do not like telling people what to do. But just keep yourself busy, live longer, and be happy. The best thing that ever happened to me is volunteering at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. It keeps my life going.”

It seems that underlying everything is Bonnie's love of being of service. “I think my favorite part about the whole situation is helping customers,” she said.

“I was not the problem!”

At 18 years old, Jules is living with a good family, on track to graduate from high school, and hopeful about her future. But, while she is in a good place in her life now, the road has been difficult. During most of Jules’ childhood, her mom was an active alcoholic and married to a man who also drank and was physically violent.

“Sometimes we’d find ourselves leaving the house at like five in the morning to go to my uncle’s house. We’d stay there for a while, but that wasn’t very good either because he was also an alcoholic,” Jules said. “My mom never had a stable job. She often used her money on drinking to the point where we wouldn’t have food to eat.”

She recalls nights when she was seven or eight years old when she’d wait all night for her mom to come home from barhopping.

“I used to cry that I wanted my mom back and I wanted to be in a happy, sober family,” Jules said. “My mom and my uncle are both sober now, but they missed out on a good portion of my life, especially my mom. She was gone for so much of my life, especially my teenage years when I feel like a child really needs a parent.”

In 2017, her mom left, and Jules went to live with her aunt.

“That’s when I started realizing my life for what it was and understanding that I grew up in a toxic household,” Jules said. “My mom and uncle had tried to get me to drink with them when I was in elementary school, but it wasn’t

really my thing. But, as a teenager living with my aunt, I started getting into drugs and just overall bad behavior—not doing well in school and lying a lot.”

When Jules and her aunt’s relationship reached the breaking point, she was placed in foster care, eventually making her way to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

“One of the things I learned at the Ranch is that I’m a lot smarter than I like to think I am,” Jules said. “And I learned a lot from the groups. I can’t really describe what they were like, but we would just learn different things or talk about safety concerns. I feel like after a while your brain subconsciously picks up that information and ultimately keeps it.”

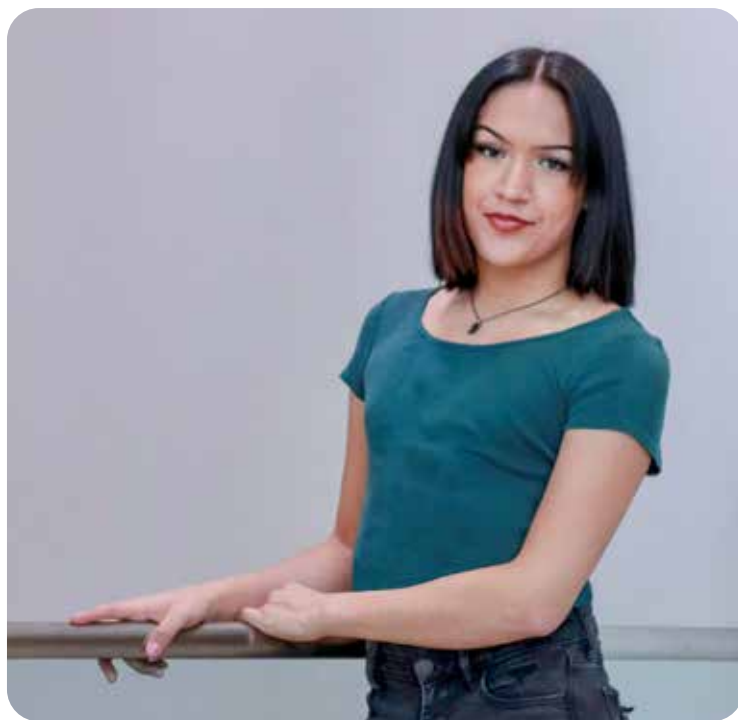
“The Ranch was a place for me to recollect myself, reflect back on my childhood trauma, and realize that none of it was my fault. My mom and uncle were always telling me I was the problem. It took me years to realize I wasn’t the problem—I was just a kid.”

Jules said the Ranch was a place where she could feel safe, something

she hadn’t always felt growing up. And Ranch staff helped her believe in herself.

“The staff members play a huge role in adolescent lives,” Jules said. “They helped me see the potential of my future.”

Jules now meets weekly with



At the Ranch, Jules learned that she does not have to be defined by her past.

Kaitlyn Schelske, a Youth and Family Engagement Specialist with the Ranch’s Aftercare Program, which helps kids transition back into the community after being at the Ranch.

At age 18, Jules signed herself back into the foster care program and is living with a foster family, who is planning to adopt her, while she finishes high school.

Kaitlyn said, “Jules is working so hard on accomplishing her education goals and just got her



dream job at Ulta. She is attending a virtual school academy to get the final credits she needs to walk for graduation and is so excited to attend the prom and walk with her friends to get her diploma.”

Jules doesn't know what comes next. She thought she wanted to go to cosmetology school but now isn't so sure. For a while, she thought she might want to work at the Ranch and pursue a helping career. She is still figuring it all out and hates when people ask her what she wants to do when she grows up.

“I'm like, can I graduate from high school first? I don't even know what I'm going to eat tonight, let alone what I'll be doing in ten years!”

But she does know she can choose her future path and that who she becomes does not have to be defined by her past.

She has a final thank you for the people who donate to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

“I am grateful for whatever you can offer these kids, kids like me, who may have issues with themselves or issues in their family,” Jules said. “Anything and everything you donate is definitely for a good cause.”

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.

Ways to Give

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

Give Now

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

Prayers

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

Memorials and Honorariums

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

Planned and Estate Gifts

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

Tree of Life

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



Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars® to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

If you are a Thrivent Financial member, you may have Thrivent Choice Dollars® available to direct to your favorite enrolled charity. Directing Choice Dollars® to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch helps us teach Christian values to the amazing children of the Ranch—values that aid in their healing, provide a foundation of hope, and help them be successful in their treatment.

Living in Christ and Science



Dennis and Claudia have a heart for working with kids and have been blessed by their connection with the Ranch.

Dennis and Claudia Chamberland



Aquanaut Dennis Chamberland as Mission Commander of a NASA undersea habitat.

Dennis and Claudia Chamberland, Cocoa, FL, had never heard of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch when they received a letter from the Ranch in the mail.

“We almost never open unsolicited mail,” Dennis said, “but I guess the Lord was prompting us. We read the letter and were extremely impressed with your Christ-centered work. We prayed about it and were moved to become monthly sponsors.”

They signed up to receive weekly emails from Joy Ryan, Ranch President/CEO, and said the stories she shared helped them develop a personal bond with the Ranch.

“Joy’s emails give you a weekly account of what’s going on, what the needs are, the celebrations, and the victories you all experience because of your ministry,” Dennis said.

In one of her weekly emails, Joy told the story of a young man at the Ranch whose ultimate goal was to work at NASA.

“I wrote back to Joy immediately and told her that was right up my alley,” Dennis said. “I worked for NASA as a Space Life Sciences Engineer with a focus on building Lunar and Mars-based advanced life support systems.”

Dennis was interested in mentoring this young man at the Ranch, hoping he could pay forward the support and guidance he received in reaching his own goal of working at NASA, eventually developing undersea

habitats, growing the world’s first agricultural crop inside an underwater habitat on the seafloor off Key Largo, FL. Dennis also designed and built the Scott Carpenter Space Analog Station, an undersea habitat which, among many endeavors, was used for NASA’s SEEDS in Space Program, a project that has given millions of students the opportunity to conduct hands-on science experiments with tomato seeds that had been used to test space life support systems for growth of plants in remote and extreme environments such as in outer space and undersea habitats.

“After getting all the appropriate permissions, Joy got me together with him and we had half a dozen phone calls over the course of several months. I was very happy to be able to mentor and minister to him.”*

Claudia, who met Dennis at a singles Sunday School class at her church, had lived near the Kennedy Space Center since the 1960s when her father went to work as an engineer at the Space Center. She was a single mom with three young children and didn’t ever intend to remarry. But Dennis started praying and she said she “didn’t have a chance.”

At the time, Claudia was a Major in the Army reserves as a Security Officer for the Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC) at Ft. McClellan, AL. She had attended college on an Army ROTC scholarship and was on active duty for four years before joining the reserves.

“When we married in 1992 and blended our families of three children each, we decided I would separate

from the military to stay home with the children,” Claudia said.

Raising six children, including homeschooling, was a big job, but Claudia found the time to join Dennis in his work by volunteering for NASA’s outreach and education program for schoolchildren. Together, they connected with schoolchildren across the country, giving them the opportunity to conduct hands-on science experiments with tomato seeds that had been used to test life support systems for plant growth in outer space and undersea habitats.

Claudia said, “We’ve always had a real heart for working with kids and helping direct them in any way we can towards to the love of God. A lot of people don’t think you can be a real scientist and still be a committed Christian. It’s fun to be able to show young people that those are not incompatible.”

In retirement, Dennis and Claudia are busier than ever. Dennis has published 18 books, with Claudia as his editor, and has several others in the works. They also continue to be involved in undersea colonization through the Atlantica Expedition, with a mission to launch the first permanent human undersea colony in history.

In addition to their scientific research and writing, Dennis and Claudia are committed to serving God through their support of the Ranch and other Christ-centered organizations. Their commitment to doing God’s work was born out of the seeds planted in their

childhood.

“When my family moved to the Space Coast, it was nothing but cow pastures and orange groves and it suddenly became the center of scientific advancement,” Claudia said. “They were building schools and homes and all the infrastructure necessary to make a place out of nothing. My parents ingrained in me from the beginning to support and help and give and never judge people—we are all equals who sometimes need a little help.”

Dennis grew up in a small community in Oklahoma that “wasn’t exactly prosperous.”

“There was this rural area near us that was especially poor,” Dennis said. “My parents would put me and my sister in the car and drive there with groceries and other offerings for them. We would sit down and visit with them, talk about life, and find out what their needs were. I could see in my mom and dad’s eyes that they would do whatever they could to help

our neighbors. I guess that’s my first glimpse into philanthropy, although it makes me uncomfortable to apply such a big word to that. I give because I have the heart of Christ who lives within me.”

They both say the Ranch ministry lines up with their Christ-centered worldview, and they have been blessed by their connection.

“The work the Ranch is doing aligns with Scripture. And, I have never seen a ministry that is so involving of their supporters,” Dennis said. “The money we have is not our hard-earned money, it’s the Lord’s. He put us in charge of His dollars and it’s our responsibility to send those out for the good of the Kingdom. Supporting the Ranch is one way we can do that.”

As for a final message to the children at the Ranch, Dennis said, “I would tell them the same thing I told my kids. And that is: ‘God is where life begins. He is where life ends. He is all that there is. He is the summation.

There is nothing else and nothing else matters. Cling to Him always.’ God is the only way you can possibly be successful in life. All other paths lead to destruction.”

**The young man Dennis connected with is graduating from Minot State University (MSU) this spring with a degree in Chemistry. He has been involved in many leadership and student government activities and plans to attend graduate school in the fall. He is well on his way to reaching his goal to work for NASA.*



Dennis stands in front of the Mars Rover Curiosity prior to its launch at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

A Place of Hope and Healing



By Laurie Dannewitz
Senior Development Officer

One of my favorite things to do as a senior development officer is to show people around our Minot campus—our first and largest Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch location.

Depending on the season, we usually begin at the school, where we see the many learning spaces created with our children's needs in mind—small classrooms, sensory rooms, special lighting, teachers and staff trained to work with children who have experienced trauma, and more. I also point out one of our four beautiful Trees of Life (the others are on our Bismarck and Fargo campuses).

The Trees have leaves, acorns, and stones with the names of people who have been honored or memorialized through a donation to the Ranch.

From the school, we walk into the Kruse Memorial Chapel, where we hold worship, have guest speakers, and hold talent shows. Children come to us to heal, and our Spiritual Life Program is an important aspect of that healing. We give Ranch kids the opportunity to find the love, hope, faith, and trust that can only come from Christ.

As we circle around the campus, I point out the cottages where the residents live. We have five cottages—Thatcher, Seegers, Challenge, Butt, and Cornelsen—each designed to serve a different group of children. East of the cottages is the Bremer Building.

The Bremer building was first built as a residence hall for Ranch children and over the years has served many purposes. Currently, the Bremer building houses our therapists and treatment staff, Dakota Family Services (our outpatient clinic), and a dining center.

From the Bremer building, we walk past our greenhouses and maintenance buildings to the wildlife area where our kids raise pheasants, fish on the river, and just relax. Students in our shop class made wooden benches for the wildlife area and planted a flower garden area where children, families, and staff can visit in a peaceful, healing space. The Wildlife Club introduces Ranch kids to the positive impact nature can have on their lives.

Returning from the Wildlife area, we see the thrift store warehouse,

career and technology center, portable classroom, and the Family Living Unit (FLU). The FLU houses our Spiritual Life and Occupational Therapy departments and has two apartments where families can stay when they visit their children. Ranch employees visiting from other campuses also stay in the FLU whenever possible.

I love leading tours because I get to talk about our kids, our staff, and the amazing work we've been doing since 1952. I also enjoy connecting with like-minded people who support our mission of serving children and families in the name of Christ! As a Ranch donor, you are part of a very special group of people who care about children and want to give them the support they need to become their best selves. We could not do any of this important work without your help.

If you have any questions about the Ranch, contact Laurie Dannewitz, or any member of our team, at 1-800-344-0957 or info@dakotaranch.org. We would love to visit with you about the many ways you can support our

mission of helping at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.



Lisa Cole
Mission Advancement Officer



Anne Compere
Director of Mission Advancement



Paul Krueger
Senior Development Officer



Linda Medhus
Senior Engagement Officer



Tim Unsinn
Senior Development Officer



Dennis Aune
Senior Development Officer



Angela Kargbo
Development Officer

Boards of Directors

If you are in the area and would like a tour of any of our three campuses, or if you want to learn more about how you can further support the mission of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, please contact us at 1-800-344-0957 or learn more at <https://www.dakotaranch.org/giving-to-dbgr/>

Please pray for our children and staff.

Colossians 4:2-6 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ... Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

Grants and Corporate Donations

WSI Ergonomic Initiative Grant; Recycling Automation; \$28,007.25 (Thrift Stores)

Robert E. Herman Charitable Trust; Zurcher Cottage; \$51,000 (Minot)

Department of Public Instruction; Heating Cabinet; \$2,566 (Minot)

American Lutheran Church; Bismarck Chapel; \$5,000 (Bismarck)

MDU Resources Foundation; Fire Alarm Panel; \$5,000 (Bismarck)

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Home Life

By Ida Caroline Butt (1878-1966)

Mothers, Fathers, tend your task
Heeding God's instruction.
Trust Jesus as you ask
For His benediction.
Lead to Him each child at home
Both by word and action.
Wisdom, strength from God must come
Plead for His direction.

Teach God's Bible every day
In child language, clearly.
For your meals take time to pray
Thanking God sincerely.
Gathered daily round His Word
Pray for one another.
Then, to practice what you heard
Prompt and help each other.

Love each other in the Lord.
Show each child affection.
Gentleness and praise accord
Though he needs correction.
As you see our Father do
With forbearance chasten.
Should some failure harass you
To God's mercy hasten.

Let your home life thus be spent
With the Lord to guide you.
Peace and comfort, heaven sent
Will stand guard beside you.
Days will blossom in God's care,
Sweet with flow'rs of pleasure.
You and yours at last will share
Heaven's crown and treasure.

In the early 1950s, Dakota Boys Ranch started near Mapleton, ND, and two years later moved to a 960-acre ranch, owned by Ida and Louis Butt, near Tolley, ND. Eight to ten boys lived with the Butt's and helped with the day-to-day activities of the working ranch. In these early years, the boys participated in work-study, spiritual life, recreation, and public school. Ida and Louis later donated their farm to the Ranch, and it was sold to build the Louis and Ida Butt Cottage on the Minot, ND, campus. Ida published a book of poetry titled, "Memories in Verse." This poem was slipped inside the pages of the Ranch's copy of Ida's poetry book.



Above: Children gathered around the table for daily devotion and prayer, led by Ida and Louis Butt. Below: The Butt farm in Tolley, ND.



IRA ROLLOVER TO GIFT ANNUITY

Helping You Increase Your Income and Giving

Do you own an IRA?

Would you like to give more to charity but need the retirement income?

Have you considered a charitable gift annuity in the past but weren't ready?

If you answered “yes” to the questions above, consider taking advantage of the recently passed Secure 2.0 Act to create a charitable gift annuity using a tax-free distribution from your IRA.

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



How Does a Charitable Gift Annuity Work?

A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is a simple written agreement signed by you and our organization.

Once you contribute cash from your IRA, the CGA begins to make monthly or quarterly payments to you for your lifetime. The payment rate is based on your age on your nearest birthday. Upon your passing, the annuity ceases and the remaining principal is used to further our mission.

What Does the Secure 2.0 Act Provide?

- Once-in-a-lifetime tax-free distribution from your IRA for a gift annuity.
- Maximum allowable distribution amount of \$50,000 in 2023.
- Lifetime income payments of 5% or greater.
- Lowers your taxable estate.

Other Considerations:

- Charitable gift annuities may be set up to pay income to you or your spouse.
- Under the Act's provisions, you must be 70 1/2 or older to take advantage of this opportunity.
- A charitable gift annuity is a general obligation of our organization and is backed by all of our assets.

Is This Strategy Right for You?

If you would like to increase your retirement income and leave an impactful gift to our organization, a charitable gift annuity is a worthwhile option to consider. Contact us to learn more.



1-800-344-0957 • DakotaRanch.org

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Memorials/Honorariums

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

Memorials

November 1, 2022 - February 28, 2023

ALTRINGER, ARLENE

Gordon & Gail Bischoff

ALWIN, REX

Betsy Alwin

ANDERSON, FLOYD

Randy & Elizabeth Bina

Paul Marek

David & Candace Meyer

Stephanie Olson

Delores Ravnass

ANDERSON,

JAMES

Linda

Hegseth

ANDERSON,

MALCOLM

Douglas &

Mary Anderson

ANDERSON, VIRGINIA

Janice Coggiola

AUCH, VERA

Loren & Lori Hoffman

AVERY, AMANDA

Mark Avery

BARGMANN, ELROY E.

Ilene Bussler

BAUER, ROBERT

Jeff Givens

BAUKOL, WENDY

Scott & Kathy Howe

BAUMANN, DIANE

Grace Saints

BECKER, ROBERT "BOB"

Barry Kenyon

BECKMAN, LOUISE

Joyce Lukens

BENGSON, LA VONNE

Rian Luehe

BENSON, EDWARD

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BENZ, ROSA

Jim & Judy Mittelstadt

BERDAHL, DAVID

Arlene Berdahl

BJORKE, JAN

Les & Jerine Miller

BLACK, MINDY

Edwin Drew

BLIKRE, SUE

Marjorie Wing

BRENTON, VIRGIL

POOG

Judith A. Brenton

BREWARD, JOHN C.

Gloria Breward

BUCKMAN, LESTER

& CAROLINE

Austin & Sarah Buckman

CALLIOTT, EDWARD "EDDIE" L.

Linda Mittelstadt-Calliott

CARLSON, DIANE "JILL"

Loren & Lori Hoffman

CAROW, RAYMOND "RAY"

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Carow

CHAMLEY, WILLIAM

Richard & Linda Schmidt

CORNELSEN, DAVID

Eileen Cornelsen

CORSON, PHILIP "PHIL"

Arnold & Ann Register

CROSBY, BRUCE

Don & Arlene Schumacher

William & Doris Wegner

CROSE, KAY

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Scott & Sherry Ehle

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Terry & Carol Noland

Gary & Lyla Paulson

Helen Peterson

Mark & Erica Ruzicka

Karl & Esperanza Schmidt

Lyle & Kathy Stone

Robert & Joyce Stutterheim

Kimmo & Susan Tarkka

DESMOND, ROBERT

Susan Mysliwicz

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

—Ephesians 1:16

"Jesus said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.'"

—Mark 10:14-15

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Adrian & Colleen Fitchner

ECKROTH, PRISCILLA
Richard & Linda Schmidt

EFFERTZ, NORMA
Joan Fiechtner

ELLINGSON, ARLEN
Lynda Neuman

ELLINGSON, NORMAN
Amy Ellingson

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Dean Fatland

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David Rawls

GREINER, RON
Vanessa Kummer

GREWE, LE ROY
Ilene Bussler

GUTSCHE, LAURA
Sarah Richau

GUTSCHMIDT, ART
Bob Rudolph

HANE BUTT, DIANE
Kerry Horton

*"May the Lord, the God of Israel,
under whose wings you have
come to take refuge, reward you
fully for what you have done."
—Ruth 2:12*

HAUG, JIM
Marlene Larsen

HAUGEN, LUELLA
Debbie Eraas

HAYER, HARRY
June B. Hayer

HECK, GOTTFRIED & IRENE
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Kent Hild

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KENNEDY, THOMAS
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KERSTETTER, RAY
Merle Heidenreich

KETTERLING, LAURA
Maynard & Ardella Krause

*"I always thank God for you
because of his grace given you
in Christ Jesus."
—1 Corinthians 1:4*

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Duane and Shirley Larson

KOHL, MELVIN
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*“May the Lord reward
you for your kindness.”*

—Philippians 1:3

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Richard Gust

LOESEL, CAROL

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LONG, DEAN

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Robert & Judy Rice

NATZKE, NORM & ELLIE

Kathryn Natzke

*“Train up a child in the way he should
go; even when he is old he will not
depart from it.”*

—Proverbs 22:6

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TURMON, GEORGE
Joy Ryan
TWETE, DEREK
Jerry & Shirley Hacker

*"We always thank God,
the Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, when we
pray for you."*

—Colossians 1:3

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”*

—Numbers 6:24-26

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GARY & LYNDA SKELTON

James & Eleanor Coomber

GREG VASEK FAMILY

Gary & Nancy Vasek

IN HONOR OF THEIR

GRANDCHILDREN

James & Ruth Ann Lehfeldt

JAN NOBLIN

Wayne & Betty Reinhart

JAMES GREY

Joan Fiechtner

JESUS CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER,

SAVIOR & LORD

Gloria Trim

JOHN & BETH MANESIS

Mary Manesis

JOHN HEFTER

Debra Engley

JOY RYAN

Dr. Melanie M. Waller

Kole & Quin Seiler

MARK & JANE SOLSENG

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MARK & JUDY WEHRSPANN

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MAVIS LYSAKER

Kari Sundberg

MELISSA KLEIN & FAMILY

Sue Miller

MILTON & ESTHER AUGUSTIN

The Family of Milton & Esther

Augustin

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NOAH GREY

Joan Fiechtner

NOLAN & EILEEN BODE

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PASTOR DOUGLAS BERGELIN

Allen & Debbie Behl

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Paul League

RHONDA LIVEDALEN & FAMILY

Sue Miller

ROBERT LENZ

Kenneth & Kathleen Lenz

STAN & JOYCE VACHAL

Joel Vachal

STERLING GRONDAHL

Joan Fiechtner

THOMAS R. DECKER

ShaRell Nelson

TOM & DONNA LINNERTZ

Warren & Sonja Fried

TOOTIE LARSON

Alan & Gillian Larson

VERNON & ELIZABETH KEUNE

Laura Montgomery

WALTER L. KING

Mark King

Honorariums

November 1, 2022 - February 28, 2023

ALL ABUSED CHILDREN

Janet Riley-Dalton

ARJA MAY

Joan Fiechtner

BLAINE CHARLES JOHNER &
FAMILY

Sue Miller

BRENT HENSLIN

Barbara Pingel

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.

#DakotaRanch

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



Ceramic slab plate, "Be a Good One," created by Fargo DMS art 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

