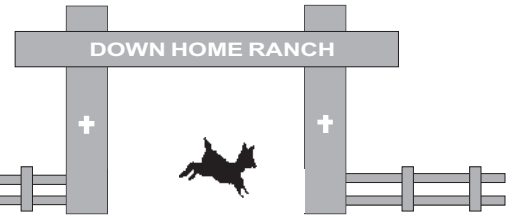


THE SPIRIT OF DOWN HOME RANCH



December 2003

Vol. 13 No. 4

Merry Christmas from Down Home Ranch!



Heidi, Kelly J., Hannah, Linda, Ryan and Joe send Christmas greetings from Martha House.

Early Morning Fire Consumes Donated RV

At 4:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, December 7th, a loud noise awakened most everyone at Down Home Ranch. That noise was the result of a fire that began in a recreational vehicle that



was donated to the Ranch by Charlie West. No one was in the RV at the time and the fire was contained to that location, thanks to the wonderful work of volunteer fire departments from Coupland, Blue and Lexington.

Martha House Opens

In November we opened our second residence home, Martha House, welcoming Hannah, Kelly J. and Heidi to the Ranch.

The parents of each girl had put in many hours of labor getting the house ready and the Anderson Foundation of Austin had awarded a grant that gave us the money to complete the cabinet work, flooring and other finish work. The Northwest Kiwanis Club of Austin gave a grant for appliances and A&A Appliances gave us a great deal on new equipment.

Rosalie Hibbs, a Resident Volunteer, served as the Resident Assistant (RA) for a few weeks, until Linda and Joe Potts, and son Ryan, moved down from Fort Worth. The Potts clan is happily making the adjustment to living on a working farm and ranch. They are already becoming indispensable helpers. Linda is the RA but Joe and Ryan have been helping with poinsettia deliveries.

We plan to open our third house early next year.



Kelly, Robert, Michael, Daniel, Jerry and Judy—the Gabriel House gang—wish you all a Feliz Navidad and Prospero Año Nuevo.

Your support of Down Home Ranch is one of our greatest gifts of this Christmas season. On behalf of those who truly benefit, our Ranchers, THANK YOU!

director's chair

by Jerry Horton

A friend once said, "Yeah, it's easy for you, you've got your life's work."

His point was, that unlike me, he hadn't found a compelling goal, a focus. He didn't know what he wanted to do. I was lucky.

I pointed out that when Kelly was born I was 46, an academic transient with no clue what tomorrow might bring. Six years later, at 52, Judy and I decided to go for it, to try to build the Ranch.

So, I came to my life's work late. But, my friend was right, I am a lucky man. My goals are clear.

Some also say I'm a driven man, a workaholic. True. I don't care about the length of the day or of the week. It's irrelevant to me.

In this regard—and this one only—I am like Mother Theresa. I, like she, love my work. It's my life. It is fun, it is challenging, it is rewarding. And I can do it. Not always well. But I can do it. And I love it. Again: it's my life.

Mother Theresa said in an interview—and I paraphrase—"I'm not totally selfless. I'm good at what I do and I love doing it."

That's me. Give me a choice and I'll write a proposal, help deliver poinsettias or get on the tractor and move dirt. I'll do whatever it takes. Anytime.

But, I'm now 65 with a late start on my work and a lot to do. Can I fulfill my promise to Kelly, Michael, Daniel and Robert? I have promised them a safe, caring, secure and challenging community. Others are heir to these promises.

I don't know. My eyes are set on 2008 when I will be 70. Old yes, but not retirement bound. No I'll still be working to fulfill those promises.



Even LeAnn Powers' mom, Jane, (as well as dad Jerome) got recruited to help prep poinsettias for the annual Christmas delivery rush. Over 8,000 were sold this year.

Speaking Out

Over the last year Jerry, Judy and LeAnn have spoken to about 40 service clubs like Rotary, Kiwanis, Sertoma and Lions, as well as churches and church groups. This is a great opportunity to tell the story of Down Home Ranch and is resulting in many new volunteers and supporters—not to mention families that are interested in Ranch Camp or in the Residency Program.

Jerry does most of the presentations and would be happy to speak to your group. Just give us a call at (512) 856-2246 and we'll get your group on our calendar.

Update on "Grandpa" Charlie West

In our last newsletter we reported that Charlie West, official "Grandpa" of Ranch Camp, had returned to his home to enter hospice care after being hospitalized for congestive heart failure.

We are happy to report that his health has improved and he no longer is in hospice care. He has even made a couple of visits to the Ranch to see "his kids". He is grateful for everyone's prayers and truly believes those prayers were instrumental in his recovery. He's looking forward to planting a few more acorns this winter.



Matching Gifts—does your company make them? Some companies also match volunteer hours with a cash donation.

Leave a Legacy

Please think of Down Home Ranch as you consider your will and how your estate will be gifted. We will put all "Legacy Gifts" into our Endowment. Gifts of cash, stock, real property, valuables and other items can provide a lifetime of support for our Ranchers.



New E-mail Addresses

Please use the new e-mails for staff at Down Home Ranch: the old thr@flash.net is being phased out.

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jerry@downhomeranch.org

Judy Horton, Program Director
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LeAnn Powers, Development Director
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Glynda Wester, Office Manager
glynda@downhomeranch.org

General e-mail
info@downhomeranch.org

Down Home Ranch Christmas Wish List

- Golf Carts
- Bike Racks
- Wooden rocking chairs
- Road base (delivered)
- Good fridges, for seed storage
- Cutting torch, bottles
- Tickets to games, theatre, etc.
- Pontoon boat
- Fire extinguishers
- Volunteers

THANK YOU!

Our thanks to the individuals and groups that volunteer and give in other ways to the Ranch:

Knights of Columbus, Austin
Lamda Omega Alpha, UT
Dell volunteer groups that came out three consecutive Fridays
St. Luke's Youth Group, Temple
St. Joseph's Youth Group, Manor
First Baptist Church, College Station
A&M Baptist Student Center
First United Methodist Youth Group, Marble Falls
United Methodist Church Youth Group, Cedar Creek

Several full-time RVers have taken the opportunity to park for free and volunteer many hours of service: **Marj & Gordy Berg, Roger Laviolette, Lonnie & Marcia Green.**

Thanks to all those that came out to celebrate the dedication and opening of Martha House, especially the **Glory Bound Singers.**

Thanks to all the **volunteers** that helped to clean up the cemetery.

Thanks to all the **volunteers** and staff that helped to make Yam Bake X a success!

Thanks to the **volunteers** that have helped us deliver poinsettias.

Thanks to **Selco** for donating desks, cabinets, carts and numerous other useful items.



Tyler was one of many Ranch Campers enjoying the weekend Christmas camp that featured a hayride and campfire, plus a Saturday night dance with a visit by the bearded one, Santa Claus!

Team 404 Builds New Website

Down Home Ranch was one of the two dozen participants in the AIR-Austin program on Oct. 19. Team 404—Mike, Jason, Sherri & Sherida—built a new website in the eight-hour competition.



In addition to a beautiful new website, it is now accessible to those with all kinds of disabilities. Thanks to Team 404 for their volunteer time! They have also committed to assisting with the updates and any changes to the site.

The new website is beautiful and accessible! Check it out at www.downhomeranch.org

judy's views

by Judy Horton

Well, Martha House opened up November 1 and “the girls” moved in.

I know, they’re not “girls,” they’re three young women in their early 20s, but in the informal talk of the Ranch that’s how we refer to them.

Hannah, Heidi, and Kelly Renee live in Martha House, and “the guys,” Michael, Daniel, and Robert, live in Gabriel House.

Kelly Horton lives in Gabriel House with Jerry and me and the guys, and Ryan lives in Martha House with his mom and dad, Joe and Linda, and the girls.

Our Kelly enjoys her “queen bee” status in a house otherwise populated by men, sighing and rolling her eyes in exasperation over those pesky “house brothers.” When we do plan a ladies night out, she tells them they can stay at home and “do their manly thing.” This sets Michael, Daniel and Jerry to making plans that generally include burning meat, football, cigars and brandy (all in jest, of course).

The guys have been patient in showing the newcomers the ropes on how to run the Ranch—what food the pig eats, how to curry and brush a donkey, the right way to prep a poinsettia for delivery.

It’s not all smooth sailing, of course. The guys have been at the Ranch for over two years now, and the girls have a bit of catching up to do. We’re confident, though, that they’ll soon be old-timers themselves, introducing newcomers to life at the Ranch.

It is a wonderful life. Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from all of us here at the Ranch

calendar

Dec. 22-Jan 2	Christmas Break
March 15-19	College Mission Week
June 14-18	Summer Camp I
June 21-25	Summer Camp II
June 28-July 2	Summer Camp III

Campers on Mission Spend Two Weeks at Down Home Ranch

Campers on Mission, a group affiliated with the Baptist Church, usually travel around Texas working on projects at Baptist encampments, but broke routine and rolled into Down Home Ranch in their recreational vehicles on November 2nd.

Five couples spent two weeks at the Ranch—the men hanging drywall, taping and floating, while the ladies helped DHR residents make hundreds of items that can be seen in our gift shop. We are grateful for their wonderful gifts of time and talent to Down Home Ranch!



A warm November afternoon and Ranchers are down picking pecans for Christmas.

Are you receiving our e-newsletter? Stay current on the happenings at Down Home Ranch by signing up. Send an e-mail to newsletter@downhomeranch.org.

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