

THE SPIRIT OF DOWN HOME RANCH

DOWN HOME RANCH



October 2004

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A Swimming Idea!

Fourteen years ago we dreamed of the day when we'd be able to build a swimming pool. That day has come.

We are very grateful to the Dodge Jones Foundation of Abilene, which provided major funding, and also to Suzanne and Jerome Fischer of San Antonio, who made major gifts toward the pool in honor of their son David, an avid *Ranch Camper*.

The pool is being built by Elite Pools of Austin. It will be L-shaped, with a large splash pool, a spa, a 52' lap pool, and changing rooms, showers and bathrooms.

The pool area will include a Fitness Center with eight workout stations—including stationary bikes, a treadmill or two, weights and other exercise equipment.

The Swim Center will be central to numerous Ranch activities—*Ranch Camp*, residents, staff, retreatants, and visitors. We are especially excited to be able to begin to train for Special Olympics aquatics.

The Swim Center will be a huge asset for the Ranch and we are so thankful to the Dodge Jones Foundation, the Fischer family, and all who helped us make the match.



Down Home Ranchers getting ready for ground-breaking for a long-awaited event--the building of the DHR Swim Center. Right now it's a field of weeds but soon will be transformed into an L-shaped pool, bath-house, patio and Fitness Center--with eight exercise stations, including stationary bikes, weights and more.

The Perfect Challenge: A Transforming Event

July 2004 we submitted a bold request to the Dodge Jones Foundation in Abilene. We wanted to build another home for residents, an Enterprise and Learning Center, a staff house and a swimming pool. The budget? \$616,000.

On November 18, 2003 they wrote: "Raise \$1 million and we'll give you \$620,000!" It was The Perfect Challenge.

So we rolled up our sleeves and went to work. We asked everyone to help. We had wine and cheese parties, spoke at service clubs, sent letters to thousands, visited with churches and wrote proposals to foundations. We had special events and anything we could think of to meet the challenge.

And the response was heartening. Our Board pledged \$100,000. The Anderson, Meadows and Mabee Foundations made major pledges, and other foundations joined in. Many churches, businesses and individuals made gifts or pledges. Finally, six families of residents pledged to raise \$7,000 each in 2005, giving us \$42,000 to bring the total in pledges and gifts to \$1,004,000. We had met the challenge.

Many of the awards are in the form of pledges that will

be paid out in the next three years, but some grants have already been received, including the Dodge Jones award—so we will be starting a number of major construction projects. Tentmaker Country Homes is our general contractor for much of the construction.

Perfect Challenge funds are restricted to capital expenditures, they are not for day-to-day operating costs. Our operating budget is going to rise with each new structure so we will be redoubling our efforts in asking all who love Down Home Ranch to rally to support our mission of serving those with special needs.



Ranchers look on at a \$620,000 check from the Dodge Jones Foundation. These funds will be used to build the Enterprise Center, two Rancher homes, a staff cottage, swimming pool and Fitness Center

director's chair

By Jerry Horton

We are in the process of revisiting our "mission statement" again. This is something every organization needs to do once in a while.

At the heart of Down Home Ranch are our residents, those for whom we labor and serve. Our mission isn't to grow poinsettias or trees. Nor is it to rent facilities or to have fundraisers. All these things are what we do to try to give our Ranchers a good and decent life—a life in community, a life among friends.

Judy likes to say that "we are an old fashioned neighborhood, where help is never far away."

Four residents have passed their golf-cart driving lessons and are getting their DHR "license." This is a very big deal for them. It means freedom and adulthood.

Last night Judy was riding her bike down in the Pecan Bottoms, and heard Mike, Jared and Ryan down there on Jared's Mule (a golf cart with a wide seat and pickup bed). They were whooping and hollering, hoping to stir up one of the wild pigs that provide endless entertainment.

We laughed too when she got back home. These are the kinds of things we see and hear daily, the funny and sometimes touching things that are making life at the Ranch good.

Our hope and dream has always been that as we grew and got more Ranchers it would give everyone the chance of making friends to share life's journey with, and finding places to go and things to do that give satisfaction and pleasure.

This is our mission. Now that we see it happening it brings great joy to us. You too share in this great venture. Enjoy it with us.



Down Home Ranchers in the pecan bottoms picking wild Mustang grapes. Later we steamed them, getting five gallons of juice to make our famous (someday) Wild Mustang Grape Jelly.

WISH LIST

- * Pool toys, items, games
- * Good Foosball or game tables
- * Stationary bikes, weights, Bowflex, other exercise equip.
- * Baker's Rack for Gift Shop
- * Bike racks
- * Garden tools
- * Land clearing (volunteers)

Looking for a Great Meeting Place?



The new Dockhouse is the perfect spot for meetings of groups of 20 or fewer. The Dockhouse features three sides of windows overlooking the DHR pond, a small kitchen & bathroom, TV with DVD/VCR player. We're even adding a washer/dryer and shower. For \$75 per day, this is the perfect place for your next meeting.

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.

Volunteers, volunteers! Oh we love our volunteers!

We are so grateful for those who choose to share their time and talent at Down Home Ranch. From groups of one to over one hundred, volunteers help to move us forward in our mission to serve those with mental handicaps. Whether its for one hour, one day or once a month, volunteers are key to Down Home Ranch. Thank you!



Cory Dillingham's Eagle Scout Project

First Baptist Church, College Station



Dell Community Service Day



Texas A&M chapter of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars

Ranch Camp News!

The word is out. *Ranch Camp* at Down Home Ranch IS awesome! Shortly into our registration process for *Camp* last spring, it became apparent that our original plan to have three weeks of *Ranch Camp* just wouldn't be enough. So we expanded to five weeks and still had a waiting list. With this in mind, we have scheduled six camps for next summer. The schedule is listed below. Registration for *Ranch Camp 2005* will begin next spring.

For those wishing to sneak in a weekend camp yet this year, registration is now open for the Fall Camp, October 22-24. Christmas Camp will be December 10-12 with registration beginning November 1.

To register for the Fall Camp call Glynda at 888-926-2253.

Camp Calendar

2004 Weekend Camps

October 22-24 Fall Camp
December 10-12 Christmas Camp

2005 Summer Camps

June 12-17 Camp Session I
June 19-24 Camp Session II
June 26-July 1 Camp Session III
July 10-15 Camp Session IV
July 17-22 Camp Session V
July 24-29 Camp Session VI



Ranch Campers from Session V strike a silly pose for their group photo.

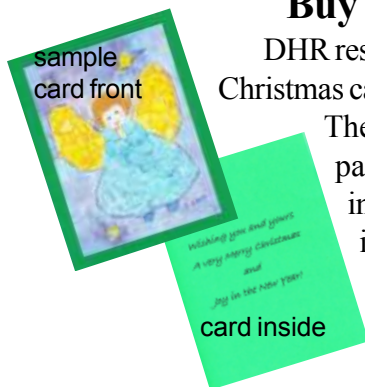
Jerry Horton (center) accepts a handshake and a check for \$13,500 from Commander Kurt Nilsson of the Elgin American Legion Post 295. The money was raised at a benefit for Down Home Ranch. Robert Wenske, right, is on the Ranch Board of Directors and is a member of the American Legion--and did much of the work for the successful benefit. Thanks to Bob and our friends at the Elgin American Legion Post 295!



Buy Your Christmas Cards Now!

DHR residents have been very busy making recreated Christmas cards and they are now available for you to buy!

They are sold in packets of 10 for \$7.50 per packet. Cards can be purchased with the sample inside text or they can be purchased with a blank inside. Shipping & handling is \$4 for one packet, \$6 for 2-3 packets and \$8 for 4-6 packets. Call Glynda at 888-926-2253 to order yours today!



judy's views

Dogs

There's another member of the Down Home Ranch family hanging around these days. His name is either Birdie or Buddy. He answers to both.

He's an English Pointer, and a little "long in the tooth." He showed up trailing a scrawny rope tied too tight around his neck, malnourished, with eyes gummed shut, ear mites and many sores and skin irritations.

He flopped down in front of the office door, and Glynda called me to come deal with him. I stomped over, annoyed to have to deal with yet another stray, determined to drive the critter off the property.

I stood over him sternly and demanded that he depart. He lifted his head, regarded me with a mournful eye, then let his head drop heavily back to the pavement, clearly not intending to go anywhere.

"Oh well," we said, and dispatched Danny to put a sign up on the marquee down by the highway. "Found hound" it said.

We fed the poor dog and cut off the rope digging into his neck. The ladies from Martha House declared him "precious" and began babying him and feeding him. Nobody responded to the sign.

After a few days Birdie began to feel better, and took to accompanying Jerry and me on our 6 AM walks around the Ranch. I told Jerry I wanted to replace the "Found hound" sign with a warning: "Hound has name."

A week later Stephanie told me that Birdie was dying on the back porch of Martha House. I was heartbroken for the girls and went down after a few hours to check on him and remove him if necessary.

Birdie was deathly still, sprawled in a corner. I crouched down and began to stroke his neck. He opened one eye but didn't move. I talked a little more and he thumped his tail a few times.

"Want to go for a walk, Birdie?" I offered, and he stood up and stretched, walked over to his bowl, and took a drink. He then looked up, ready to go. He'd just been being a hound dog!

Dr. Graef gave him his shots and declared him a fine dog, albeit a little elderly. Our new sign? "Forget hound!"

Poinsettias, Poinsettias! Have you ordered yours yet?

The greenhouses are chock full of poinsettias growing tall and spreading their leaves, on their way to becoming beautiful plants that will adorn churches, businesses, and homes throughout Central Texas this December. You will want to be sure to get your order in by November 1st. We sell out each year and we don't want you to miss out on yours. To order call Glynda at 888-926-2253.



Several generations of Grandpa Charlie West's family came out on a hot August morning to help Ranchers and other volunteers plant 9,000 poinsettias in 6" pots. We were happy to see Nancy, Bob and all the rest working away in memory of Charlie. He loved his poinsettias!

Resident Volunteers

Over the years we've had lots of Resident Volunteers (RVs) from all over Texas and elsewhere. Late this spring we added two new college-age RVs. Jackie (picking grapes) comes to the Ranch from Indianapolis.

A recent high school grad, Jackie wanted to get a year of volunteerism under her belt before starting college. (We're already talking about making her an Aggie or Longhorn!)

Brian is a Longhorn. He

graduated in mathematics in May, and is giving a year to the Ranch before deciding whether to work or go on to grad school.

We've known Brian for many years, as he's a member of a Lambda Omega Alpha, the Catholic service and spirituality fraternity at UT.

Through LOA, Brian has participated in the construction of all three resident houses at the Ranch.

Jackie and Brian are big favorites of residents and staff alike.

We're already on the lookout for other great candidates like Jackie and Brian.

The RV program gives us great and dedicated people of service for a year or more. They are vital to the work of Down Home Ranch. Thanks to Jackie and Brian!



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