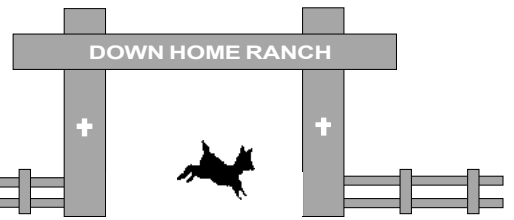


THE SPIRIT OF DOWN HOME RANCH



February 2005

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Construction Zone!

Down Home Ranch is a beehive of activity, with the Perfect Challenge funding several major building projects that will allow us to add Ranchers (residents), expand Ranch Camp, increase facilities rentals through Inn Keepers and expand our poinsettia and tree production.

Major grants from the Dodge Jones, Meadows, Mabee and Anderson foundations—along with many other generous gifts and pledges—are funding these buildings: our 4th four-bedroom home; a cottage for two residents to live independently; two more Resident Volunteer cedar cabins; the Swim and Fitness Center; a new four-bedroom Ranch Camp cabin; expansion of the Pavilion; a three-bedroom staff cottage; and the new Enterprise and Learning Center.

Several of these buildings are already dried-in, awaiting waves of volunteers who will help us finish them—supervised by Pat Tatroe, our Ranch Foreman.

We depend on volunteers to turn these shells into homes and activity centers for Ranchers and Campers. You don't need to be carpenters or plumbers, just folks with a willing heart and hand. Give a call to 888-926-2253 if you can help.



Men from the University of Texas Wranglers clear the grounds for Teresa House, funded by a grant from the Meadows Foundation, Dallas. Teresa House will be home to three women—including Kelly Horton. It will open a new section of the Village, with Timothy House and an RV cabin on one side and another cabin and the Staff Cottage on the other. When these buildings are completed and occupied the population in the Village (Ranchers, Resident Volunteers and Resident Assistants) will rise from 16 to 26.

Independent Living For Daniel and Michael

One of our long-term goals has been to not only provide housing for Ranchers, but to create an opportunity to live



Daniel and Michael will move into Timothy House this spring. Each will have a large bedroom and private bath, with shared living, kitchen, and utility room.

in Gabriel house for 2½ years. And they are getting ready.

Funds received from the Perfect Challenge are making “Timothy House” a reality. Mike and Dan are helping volunteers staple insulation, hang drywall and otherwise finish out their new home—opening this spring.

Mike and Danny are keen on their new home, but they'll need some help. We have a dried-in building but volunteers will finish it and charitable support will provide the appliances, furniture, trash cans and all the other stuff a home needs. Can you help?

independently if and when they are ready.

Daniel and Michael, who came to the first *Ranch Camp* in 1995, have been



We've launched a new event that we hope will become a Ranch tradition. It's called “First Thursday” and it means just that.

On the 1st Thursday of the month we'll gather in the Pavilion with guitars, banjos, mandolins, voices and other instruments to sing, play and generally have a good time. We'll sing folk, country, pop, gospel, whatever we want.

We'll have drinks and light snacks, or you can bring your own. Next dates are March 3, April 7, May 5, 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Ya'll come and have a good time!

director's chair

by Jerry Horton

As a boy my dad took me camping on the San Joaquin River—magic nights fishing and listening to the river roll by. Years later I backpacked in the Sierras and Rockies, but after moving to Texas I thought my camping days had come to an end.

Ranchers Mike and Jared love taking their carts down to explore the Pecan Bottoms at night and chase the wild pigs. They implored me to spend the night with them down there—with barbeque, campfire, sleeping bags—the whole shebang.

Truth be told, at my age the idea of a sleeping bag has lost its charm. But the lobbying didn't stop just because I was getting old, with creaky joints.

Finally I relented, and we set a date, one far enough out that I could pretend for a while it wasn't really coming. But it did. Yesterday.

So the three of us hauled food, ice, firewood, charcoal, sleeping bags, pillows, mattresses, coolers, plates, utensils, lanterns and assorted other items to the camp site. We could have filled a prairie schooner with our gear.

As the sun set we lit our campfire and the briquettes. Soon we were enjoying chips and salsa, with our Greek salad coming next. Then our barbecue supper. Tasty.

The air was clear and crisp, and we ate and talked and laughed as night came on. We could hear a few pig grunts far off, as well as owls, coyotes, and other critters.

When we turned out the lanterns we realized the moon was so bright we really didn't need them. Later the moon set, and the night sky was mesmerizing. No TV. No computer. Not even a book.

At 2:00 AM I awakened for an instant when Michael exclaimed "Wow! A shooting star!"

Just three guys, at home on the range. It was sweet. I think my camping days have returned, thanks to Mike and Jared.

Ranch Round-Up: Golf and Gala!

Avery Ranch and Johnny Dee & the Rocket 88's. Wow!

Last year we launched the Ranch Round-Up golf tournament, a real hoot for all who participated. It was so much fun we're doing it again.

This year we decided to make it a **Weekend Round-Up**, and we added a great new event at the beautiful Texas Disposal System Exotic Game Ranch and Pavilion.

Golf!

Friday, April 15 we'll kick off the **Ranch Round-Up** with the **2nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament**, this year at Avery Ranch, one of the premier golf courses in Austin.

A best ball scramble, the tourney will offer lots of prizes, goodies and a hole in one that will win you an impressive prize!

We hope to have two teams at each hole this year, 144 golfers. The putting contest will start at 10:30 a.m. and tee-time is 1:30 p.m. Call 888-926-2253 to register today!

Gala!

On Saturday evening **Johnny Dee and the Rocket 88's** will wow the crowd at the Texas Disposal Systems Exotic Game Ranch south of Austin.

This portion of the weekend will

feature music, dancing, skeet shooting, a golf contest and safari tours all around the TDS's extensive properties to get up close and personal with the big game animals.

Inside the beautiful pavilion the hot **Johnny Dee and the Rocket 88's**, a sensational Austin retro band, will play classic 50s and 60s tunes as you dance your cares away. And you won't want to miss the silent and live auctions or the great buffet supper.

This event is sponsored by the Down Home Ranch Board of Directors and proceeds will go to help build another two-bedroom cottage for Ranchers to enjoy independent living. Call 888-926-2253 for tickets!

Be a Sponsor!

We're looking for businesses, clubs, and individuals to sponsor the **Weekend Ranch Round-Up**. Sponsors will receive publicity in all media—radio, television, and print—as well as in event and general Ranch mailouts. Levels are:

- \$10,000 Foreman
- \$ 5,000 Trail Boss
- \$ 2,500 Outpost
- \$ 1,000 Ranch Hand
- \$ 1,000 Wagon Trail (Golf Cart)
- \$ 250-500 Trail Guide

To become a sponsor, call LeAnn at 888-926-2253 and she'll sign you up at the level that's right for you!

WISH LIST

- Minivan w/ low mileage;
- Pontoon "Party" Boat;
- Foosball & air hockey tables;
- Gym and Fitness equipment: stationary bikes, Bow-Flex or similar machines; dumb-bells, especially small ones in 1 lb. increments;
- Swimming pool balls, floats, leg floats, paddle boards;
- Teresa and Timothy Houses: registered at Wal-Mart and Lack's Furniture Mart;
- Riding mowers, garden and landscape tools/equipment.



Nikki, KJ, and Jackie sharing a happy moment at a local restaurant. We could make some money if we could bottle and sell those smiles.

Why Houses at DHR Have Names

Ever wonder about the names of our houses at Down Home Ranch, and why our houses have names at all?

Well, it started with “Mustard Seed,” a tiny mobile home that served as the Horton home, Ranch office, and *Ranch Camp* headquarters (all at the same time!) for many years. It comes from Matthew 13:31-32:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

That mobile home has been supplanted by a host of buildings—at the heart of which is The Village, where we have our homes.

Here our homes are named for angels, saints, and places in the Bible, bearing witness to the faith of so many people that if we persisted that little seed would grow, and many *would* find a home in its branches.

The names of our houses are:

- Gabriel, for men—the first home built for residents, named after the Archangel Gabriel, harbinger of new beginnings;
- Martha, for women—named after Jesus’ friend, considered the patron saint of housekeepers and hospitality;
- Barnabas, “The Encourager,” for men, —named for Paul’s friend;
- Teresa, for women—for Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who cherished and defended all human life;
- Timothy, for men—for Paul’s young friend, whom he loved like a son.

More homes are on the way, but we don’t think we’ll run out of names any time soon. Overhearing “Barnabas is coming for dinner tonight” might confuse the outsider, but here in the Village we know just what’s going on. The names of our homes are just one way we remind ourselves of the awesome faith that has sustained us over the many years it has taken to build the Ranch.



Jared, Mike, Pat, Danny and Tyler putting in the cooling wall in the Nursery to help keep the temperatures down and the shopping more comfortable. We’ll have a few vegetables and other spring plants for sale by the first of March.



A three-bedroom staff cottage, yet unnamed, nears dry-in. Having some administrative staff live in The Village has always been a part of the master plan.

Wanted: A Few Good Board Members

A few years ago some directors of charitable foundations began asking about plans for “transition” as the Ranch grows in size, service, and organizational complexity.

“What happens after the Hortons are gone?” “How will the Ranch survive the transition?”

All organizations must move beyond the initial dream and impetus of the founders, and Down Home Ranch is no exception.

Hence, the Board of Directors, Board committees, volunteers and staff are taking on more and more responsibility for daily management and for crafting the Ranch’s future.

Increasingly we need dedicated, committed people to serve on the Board and its committees and on the Advisory Board. These are challenging positions, but they are positions that can and will take Down Home Ranch to the next level.

Jerry and Judy are still here for a while, but they are asking others to start getting into harness—their pulling days are getting shorter.

If you have an interest in this service please call (512) 856-0128.

Planned Giving

Please consider Down Home Ranch as you plan 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.

As of today, 2005, we estimate that a \$200,000 estate, a lot of money, would sustain one Rancher at Down Home Ranch in perpetuity!

CARF Accreditation Sought

The Ranch is starting the process leading to accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

CARF is a national organization that will assist the Ranch in moving to a higher level of organization and service.

Our Ranchers and campers will be the primary beneficiaries, but all who support the Ranch will find that the CARF accreditation process will create a stronger Down Home Ranch and that being certified by CARF will provide a new measure of quality.



Daniel and Jared leading errant donkeys back to their confines.



View of the Pavilion dining room after the old cinderblock wall was demolished and the new trusses installed. The expansion doubles the size of the dining room.

The 10K: Will You Go The Distance With Us?

Yes, we frequently ask affluent people for help. And some do. Most of our building grants are from foundations that give significant gifts—and we are translating these gifts into homes, work, recreation and income.

But, these major gifts don't support day-to-day operations. For this we rely on enterprise income from our greenhouses, camps, facilities rentals and fees for services and on charitable giving by individuals, churches and others.

Needless to say, with expanded operations, costs are rising, but that is good. It means we are growing and able to provide more services.

But we also need to increase the daily support for those being served by the Ranch. They're doing their best, but they need your help. The 10K is the answer.

The idea is simple: *10K and a quarter a day*. We need 10,000 people to pledge at least a quarter a day to help meet the rising needs of residents at Down Home Ranch.

We do have people that have joined us and are giving 25 or 50 cents a day. Some give a dollar a day or more. Won't *you* sign up? Join the 10K and you'll know you are changing a life for a lifetime!

Resident Volunteers Needed

Two new Resident Volunteer cabins will soon be ready for RVs. We are taking applications now for terms beginning June 1, before the start of



Ranch Camp. RVs get a private cabin, utilities, and a monthly stipend in return for a year of being friends to Ranchers and Campers and helping Ranch programs and enterprises.

More Golf

Special Olympics (SO) is encouraging special needs people to try golf as a sport. We support this effort.

SO competition includes a short putt, long putt, chip, pitch, iron and wood off the tee. Many can do this.

And so we're in the planning stage for building a putting green, with pitch and chip areas, a couple of sand traps and a little pond (to avoid).

Jerry is looking for a few people to help plan and build the putting green. It will be great for our Special Olympics program, for Campers, and a new attraction for retreatants, guests and others. Call (512) 856-2246 if you want to help.

Volunteers Needed

Simply put, we need help. Lots and lots of help.

Timothy House, Teresa House, the Pool House and Fitness Room, the staff cottage and the camp cabin are dried-in shells that we will be working on right up to Ranch Camp, by which time they need to be ready.

Could your group please put a few volunteer days on the calendar? All skill levels are needed and welcome. Give us a call at 888-926-2253 today! You can make a **huge** difference!



The Swim and Fitness Center will feature a splash pool and a 52' lap pool, with bathrooms, changing rooms and showers

The Center will have a perimeter security fence and gates—locked when not in use and supervised by Ranch staff.

In the photo the Fitness Center is on the right.

Ranch Camp News!

The word is out. *Ranch Camp* at Down Home Ranch IS awesome! Early last spring it became apparent that the original plan to have three weeks of *Ranch Camp* just wouldn't be enough.

We expanded first to four, then five weeks and still turned people away. This year we have scheduled six camps for summer, possibly a seventh. The schedule is listed here and registration has begun.

Families must fill out a new application and health form, and because of the high volume of applications, no space can be reserved for a camper until deposit, health, immunization, and application forms have all been received.

Fultz Hall, used for group activities and dining, has been enlarged, as has the kitchen. And a new 16-person cabin built in the woods behind the existing camp will be ready by summer, as will our lovely new Swim and Fitness Center.

With all the new facilities and amenities we expect *Ranch Camp* to be bigger and better than ever, so please register early. We don't want to lose any of those that have come to love *Ranch Camp*.

Ranch Camp 2005

5/30-6/3 Staff Orientation
 6/12-17 Session I (Adults)
 6/19-24 Session II (Teens)
 6/26-7/1 Session III (Mixed)
 7/10-15 Session IV (Adults)
 7/17-22 Session V (Teens)
 7/24-29 Session VI (Mixed)
 7/31-8/5 Possible Camp (Mixed)

Ranch Camp Staff Openings

Interested in having the best summer of your life? Then check out the possibility of being part of the *Ranch Camp* staff. Positions are available for Camp Director, Head Female Counselor, Head Male Counselor, Program Counselors, Cabin Counselors and Counselors-in-Training. For more information or to apply call 888-926-2253 or e-mail camps@downhomeranch.org.



The Fitness Center has large picture windows on three sides, with views of the pool area and the woods. We need stationary bikes and other exercise equipment—not to mention carpet and mats. We also need a couple of TVs for "sweatin' to the oldies" and maybe a little kick boxing (if you've got any old yoga, tai chi, aerobic dance, etc. tapes or DVDs to send our way, please do!)

judy's views

Life as we know it...

I wish I had time to write a blog and share a bit of our daily life at the Ranch with the world. But the following will have to do:

Sharon, Barnabas House RA, had a birthday a few months ago. Her three guys—Jared, Tyler, and Mark—made and signed a card.

After presenting it and singing "Happy Birthday" Mark said, very formally, "Miss Sharon, there is something we would like to know." "Yeah," said Tyler. "We want to know how old you are."

"Well, Tyler," said Sharon teasingly, "I am very, very, *very* old."

Tyler nodded sagely and said, "We thought so."

Michael was a little nervous over performing in his first concert with "We Are the Chorus."

"Don't worry, Mike," said Danny. "Just think of the audience in their underwear and then you won't be nervous."

Michael pondered that for a minute, and then said, "But Danny, what if I see a pretty girl sitting there and think about her in her underwear? Then the only song I'll remember is "Love Me Tender!"

When Sharon was escorting Mark to his seat on the plane to join his family at Christmas, he suddenly asked with great concern, "Sharon, is my seat first class?"

Sharon's reply: "Honey, on Southwest they're ALL first class."

"Oh," said Mark with relief, "I'm so glad to hear it."

Know an RVer Needing a Parking Place?

Over the past few years we've been blessed with RVers—people with Recreational Vehicles—coming to the Ranch to volunteer.

It's been so good for the Ranch that we've built seven hook-ups, with water, electricity and sewage dumps.

RVers can also use the Dock House to meet, play cards, or have a Bible study. It has a bathroom, kitchenette and meeting room, all sitting next to our pond—where fishing and fish-feeding are popular.

A shower and washer/dryer will be installed soon.

Anyone coming out to volunteer gets free hookups and services, and we're excited about getting lots of individuals and groups involved.

We're applying to groups from Campers On Mission, Mobile Missionary Assistance Program, NOMADS and others. But, we welcome individuals as well as groups. Ya'll come visit!

Call if you'd like more information about volunteer opportunities during your RV travels 888-926-2253.



View of the Gazebo, pond and Dock House from one of the seven RV sites. We're adding a shower and washer/dryer to the Dock House to make it more amenable to volunteers with RVs.



Marj and Gordie Berg from Wisconsin, read about the Ranch in an issue of Escapees, an RV magazine. They came down in the fall of 2003 for several weeks and have been back several times.

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