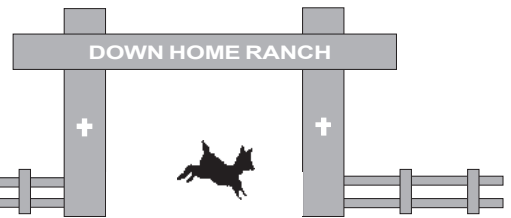


THE SPIRIT OF DOWN HOME RANCH



July 2005

Vol. 15 No. 2

Enterprise & Learning Center Opens



The Dodge Jones Enterprise and Learning Center is ready to open. Dell Computer has donated tables, chairs and desks, and Board member Dwight Baker of Dell has been helping setting up computer stations.

In November 2003 the Dodge Jones Foundation of Abilene issued a challenge to the Ranch: “Raise \$1 million and we’ll give you \$620,000 to build a pool, learning center and homes.”

So we rolled up our sleeves and went to work. Now, a year and a half later Down Home Ranch is a beehive of activity, with the Perfect Challenge grant funding big building projects—and one of the most exciting is the Dodge Jones Enterprise and Learning Center.

The Center will be where Ranch residents spend a good part of their daily routine. It has two classrooms, a teaching kitchen, breakroom, a computer lab, a large all-purpose room, offices, and lots of storage space.

The Center will house the Sanchez Library, a place for books, DVDs, videos and other print/visual materials that Ranchers can use in the Lab or check-out for home use. We’ll move all the movies that the Ranch owns to the Library—which will mean hundreds of titles.

The huge teaching kitchen in the Learning Center will be used for cooking classes, preparation of casseroles and other evening meals and will be the spot where those great DHR jellies and relishes are produced.

Thanks again to the Dodge Jones Foundation for The Perfect Challenge and the beautiful Enterprise Center.



The pool is a big hit this summer, although bathrooms and Fitness Room aren’t functional yet. Ranch Campers and residents all love having a cool pool to enjoy while temperatures climb. We’ll be using the Swim Center on September 5 for our 1st Annual Swim Fest.

Construction Projects Everywhere

The results of the 2003/2004 capital fundraising campaign are evident all over the Ranch.

Of course we have the Enterprise Center now opening and the Swim Center in full use this summer. But several other projects are completed or under way.

We have two new cedar cabins awaiting the installation of the septic system and they are ready to move into. Timothy House (for two resident men) is being insulated and sheetrocked, as is Teresa House and Benedict House. Staff and volunteers are working hard so that some can begin moving in by September.

The Pavilion has been partially remodelled, with a much larger dining and activity room, a new pantry and storage room, as well as a new activity room for *Ranch Camp*—which will become a game room this fall, replete with air-hockey, pool, foosball, pinball and X-box.

The flooring is going in to Hickory Lodge, our new four-bedroom cabin in the woods. The Lodge has two bathrooms and a full kitchen. It will be available to rent soon. Call and be one of the first to enjoy this charming new cabin.

director's chair

by Jerry Horton

I remember when we had moved to the Ranch and were living in the old mobile home—with no programs, no income and no residents (other than a tiny girl named Kelly Page Horton.)

We had read about a community in Arizona that we admired from a distance, doing the work we had chosen to do—serving the disabled.

When they started their residency program (several decades ago) they set the monthly fee at \$250 per family. But, quickly they realized that the fee was too low and had to almost double it.

The truth is, for them and for us, residency programs cost a lot. And we, too, are finding that we cannot keep up with rising costs through charitable donations or earned income.

So, the Board of Directors, at their June meeting, voted to raise monthly fees. The Board also voted to apply to become an HCS Provider, with the possibility of public support for some of our programs. (See article on page 3.)

These were difficult but practical decisions. Down Home Ranch support has always been a “three-legged stool.” We get revenue from 1) charitable donations, 2) earned income, especially greenhouse horticulture and 3) private-pay fees-for-services (*Ranch Camp*, facilities rentals, and residency.)

DHR Gardens, *Ranch Camp* and other programs are mostly self-supporting. The residency program never has been. But it must be.

Down Home Ranch is a success story. In 1990 we had nothing. Today we have 267 acres, 24 buildings, 9 greenhouses, 8 residents and 300 coming to *Ranch Camp 2005*. Many are benefiting from Down Home Ranch programs.

Raising fees and seeking the support of tax dollars wasn't a part of our plan. But, I believe that both are essential and that over time will help the Ranch achieve a measure of financial security that we are determined to achieve.

Our residents deserve no less.



The Board of Directors of Down Home Ranch: Judy Horton, Robert Wenske, Mike Paulsen, Dwight Baker, Genie Sorensen, David Morales. The Board is taking a more active role in setting policy, crafting a new strategic plan and helping steer the Ranch into the future.

DHR Foundation Established: A Beacon for the Future

Some time ago we had a site visit from an Austin foundation that had supported several Ranch projects.

We were talking about how the Ranch would support itself in the future and Jerry was reeling off ideas: “We’ll have greenhouse income, and money from fundraising. Some from fees-for-services. Eventually, we want to start an endowment.”

“Start the endowment now,” said the President of the foundation, very emphatically. “It’s never too early.”

So we did, creating an accounting mechanism so that donations of stock, insurance or other assets could be set aside to start the endowment.

But the Board and Staff have now created a separate entity devoted to

building a permanent endowment, the Down Home Ranch Foundation, Inc.

The DHR Foundation is a separate legal entity that will have its own Directors and governance. Its goal will be to build an endowment of \$2 or \$3 million or more, so that earnings from it can help Down Home Ranch secure its future.

All gifts to the DHR Foundation will be invested and managed to help build a Down Home Ranch that will not only endure but prosper in the years and decades to come.

We encourage all those who love and support Down Home Ranch to begin thinking of a “planned gift” to the Foundation, one that will contribute far into the future.

Legacy Gifts

A Legacy Gift is one that helps secure the Ranch's future by building an Endowment Fund managed and guided by the DHR Foundation.

Here are three simple ways to make a significant gift to the Ranch:

- *Bequests, something in a Will*
- *Stocks and bonds*
- *Paid up whole life insurance*

Please consider a Legacy Gift. It will make a world of difference.

And if you have made a decision about such a gift please let us know. We will soon be launching a Legacy Gift Society and want to identify and acknowledge all Charter Members.

Ranch Seeking HCS Provider Status

The Board of Directors voted at their most recent meeting to raise residency fees for current and prospective residents and to seek Home and Community Service (HCS) Provider status through the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). This is the first time that the Ranch has sought eligibility for public support.

The reason for these decisions is the fact that Ranch income—from greenhouse sales, fundraising and fees for services—isn't enough to cover the rising costs of residential services.

Income from the Residency Program needs to reflect actual program costs, which a combination of HCS and higher private-pay fees can provide.

Persons who have disabilities and get SSI/Medicaid can ask to be put on the HCS waiting list. This is a long list and the wait in Texas can be several years, but there are excellent benefits to people with an HCS slot: support for residential and vocational



Sue Heins has returned to the Ranch for another tour as Resident Volunteer. Sue was our very first RV way back in 1992 and has been back several times. Welcome back Sue!

services, day programs, quality-of-life services and more.

Plus, the person gets a choice in who provides the service. They don't have to take the nearest certified provider. They can shop around. Since the first criteria for living at the Ranch is the desire to do so, that's important to us.

We at the Ranch encourage all parents to talk with their local MRA and make sure their son or daughter is on the interest list.

The Ranch is applying to become a Provider, meaning a person with an HCS slot might be able to choose us to provide services. We're seeking this status to be able to serve more people, serve them well, and help the Ranch.

Mark Your
Calendar!

Yam Bake XIII

Saturday
October 1, 2005
12 noon to 9 p.m.

Lots of fun, food
and music!

WISH LIST

- Older mini-van we can convert into a tool-van for use only on the Ranch
- Late-model 7-8 passenger van with less than 60,000 miles for Residential use

judy's views

Changes...

In the article on this page and in Jerry's *Director's Chair* column, we write about the practical realities that have caused us to seek public funding for at least some of our present and future residents.

The Board of Directors took the action it did because it felt it was in the best fiduciary interests of the Ranch.

As a Board member and officer, I concurred, even though for years we have been wary of the government interference that comes with government money.

There were two compelling reasons, however, to take this unprecedented step.

For one, we have been moving toward seeking accreditation through a national agency and as it turns out, the HCS standards are very similar. Both seek to ensure the rights, freedoms, and dignity of people with mental handicaps, and we've found nothing we can't live with.

The other is this: For all the years we have been holding *Ranch Camp*, a certain number of campers ask to speak to me before their week at camp is over.

I know what they're going to say before they even say it: *Miss Judy, do you think I could live here some day?*

Usually I know whether that is even a remote possibility, and frankly, it usually is not, because their families do not have the means to meet the substantial private co-pay. This has been a real heartbreak, especially when there's a consensus that the camper would be a perfect fit for the Ranch and benefit from living here.

This decision changes nothing about the Ranch. Our mission remains the same. But if we become an HCS Provider we might reach more deserving young people than before.

And that's a very good thing.

Golf Tourney & Johnny Dee Gala: Great Fun for All

One thing we're certain about is that more people will participate in the Golf and Gala next April than did this year. It was that good!

April 15th was the perfect day for golf, even if it was tax day. Twenty-three teams played in the second annual Ranch Roundup Charity Golf Tournament that was held this year at Avery Ranch Golf Club. Golfers enjoyed the camaraderie, the beautiful weather and the gorgeous golf course.

Thanks to our sponsors and golfers we were able to raise a gross amount of \$25,000, benefiting the programs at Down Home Ranch.

Our first year for the Gala, held at the beautiful Texas Disposal Systems property in Creedmore, was also a smashing success!

Everyone had so much fun at the Silent Auction, touring the exotic game ranch, eating the delicious dinner, and dancing way into the night to Johnny Dee & the Rocket 88s, that they all swore they'd come next year and bring all their friends with them.

Simply put, it was the best party ever! And nobody had more fun than our residents and all the other folks with special needs who attended with their families.

Our girls became the backup singers, and a few of our guys even got to sing songs with the band.

Everyone came away with treasures bearing the band members' autographs: T-shirts, drumsticks, CDs, etc. (And the old folks danced the most, 'cause it was *our* music!)



Golfers await the start of the 2nd annual Ranch Roundup Charity Golf Tournament held at Avery Ranch Golf Club. Where should we play next year? Call us with your idea.



Kelly H., Heidi M. & Kelly J. sing with Johnny Dee and the Rocket 88s at the first annual Down Home Ranch Gala, held at the TDS Exotic Game Ranch.

A BIG THANKS TO OUR GOLF TOURNAMENT AND GALA SPONSORS!

FOREMAN

The Holliday Family & the Fischer Family

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RANCH HAND

Thomas Graphics

College Students Serve Selflessly with a Smile

Close to 40 students from Texas A&M's student group ASSIST (right) staffed the Winter Weekend Camp at

Down Home Ranch. Under the leadership of Nikki Powers, longtime DHR camp volunteer, the Aggies planned, prepared and carried out an awesome weekend camp for 35 campers - even introducing the campers to the Aggie War Hymn.



Fifty-five students (below) from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Texas A&M, UT Austin, Texas Tech, Texas Wesleyan, and Sam Houston State worked side by side serving Down Home Ranch during their spring break in March. While thousands of college students headed to the beach, this awesome group collectively gave close to 2,000 hours of service to those with



mental disabilities. They dismantled greenhouses, hung drywall, cleared brush, painted, dug water lines, and so much more.

Donated Greenhouses Find New Home at Down Home Ranch

DHR friend Charles Dickerson donated two greenhouses from his property in Llano. Hardworking college students dismantled and transported the greenhouses during College Mission Week last March (below left). Then Methodist youth from Schertz doing mission work for a week at the Ranch re-erected the first of the two houses (below right). The greenhouses will be home to some of our poinsettia crop this fall.



Methodist & Episcopal Youth Serve in Mission Week at DHR

We've had a lot of great volunteer groups at the Ranch over the years but the youth from United Methodist Church in Schertz and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Lake Jackson, are among the best.

Between the two groups, thirty-four young people and seven adults sweated in the Texas sun and never complained! Each spent a week at the Ranch, working as hard as any group we've seen. They potted trees, they erected a new donated greenhouse, they hung drywall and dug trenches and helped get power and water to homes. They made bunkbeds and moved trees, moved boxes and more to get the warehouse organized.

Two awesome groups of teens.
Thanks, guys!

Volunteers: the Key to Getting It All Done

How do you grow 80,000 trees, several greenhouses full of poinsettias, take care of 267 acres and a historical cemetery, provide quality programs for residents, finish out homes, build docks and cabins, and do everything else we do at the Ranch with a small, if dedicated, staff?

Yep, it's the "V" word. Our volunteers gave over 12,000 hours last year. And this year is even more amazing.

Volunteers bring fresh energy, vision, enthusiasm, and know-how to everything we do. This has been an especially great year with 55 students here during College Mission Week, Campers on Mission, men from Ascension Episcopal Church in Houston, Methodist Youth from Schertz and many, many more have volunteered. *Ranch Camp* nurses are volunteers, Dell volunteers help install and service A/C units, Knights of Columbus men install insulation and dry wall, construction workers from First Baptist, College Station, volunteer the 1st Saturday of each month.

Whew! The list is long. So in addition to those already mentioned we offer a warm thanks to these volunteers and any we may have inadvertently left off:

Thanks to . . .

- St. Timothy's Episcopal, Lake Jackson
- Steve Powers, Mr. Saturday
- Jackie Barnes, Resident Volunteer (RV) 2004-2005
- Brian Loer, for signing on for another year as RV!
- Jim Phelan, for office furniture and other things
- UT Texas Wranglers
- Riverbend Baptist Youth
- St. Austin's 8th Grade
- Lambda Omega Alpha
- UT Interfaith Council
- Texas Senate staff
- St. Mary's Cathedral Youth
- St. Thomas More Youth
- NW Austin Kiwanis
- A&M Bible Study
- Aggie ASSIST
- St. Mary's A&M
- King of Kings Church
- Diocese of Austin Crosstraining
- Lonnie & Marcia Green
- Ruth & Len Henry



Swim Fest Coming Soon to DHR

We'll be looking for sponsors soon for the *1st Annual Down Home Ranch Swim Fest* that will be held at the beautiful, new DHR Swim Center. The *Swim Fest* will take place on Labor Day, Monday, September 5th beginning at 10 a.m.

The *Swim Fest* will include a lap swim fundraiser from 10 a.m. to noon. The lap swimmers will be from three exciting teams of DHR residents, staff and friends. These teams of five swimmers will each collectively swim 50 laps raising funds for the Ranch through team sponsorships of \$25. Following the lap swim the pool will be opened for public swimming until 3 p.m. Hotdogs, sandwiches, chips and sodas will also be available to purchase.

So plan now to bring your family and friends out to Down Home Ranch on Labor Day to cheer on your favorite DHR team (or all the teams). Sponsorship information will be coming soon but make plans now to sponsor one team, two teams or all three teams!

Ranch Camp Fun!

Over 250 campers with mental disabilities have been taking in a week of

Ranch fun this summer as they swim, dance, fish, sing, make crafts, learn to care for donkeys, take nature walks, play fun games and so much more.



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