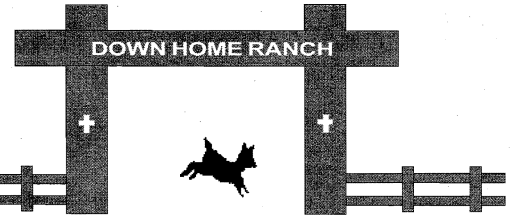


THE SPIRIT OF DOWN HOME RANCH



July 2006

Vol. 16 No. 2



Ranch residents enjoy a day of fun at Sea World.

Respite Camp Coming Soon

Mr. Pat, Ranch Foreman, recently put the finishing touches on Hickory Lodge, a beautiful, four-bedroom cabin complete with a fully-equipped kitchen, dining room and living room—including a TV with DVD/VCR.

Hickory Lodge was initiated in June by *Ranch Camp* and will be available for small retreats, family reunions, and the like. (see pg. 5) It is also available for rental to resident families and others that would like to stay in a fully equipped lodge for an overnight or weekend stay.

However, the main purpose for this lodge is to use in our *Weekend Respite Camp* program, starting this fall. *Respite Camp* allows families or caregivers a break from Friday until Sunday afternoons, as well as providing their son or daughter a great weekend experience.

Respite Camp will be staffed primarily by Ranch Camp counselors, who our campers already know. They'll cook, watch movies, play video games, basketball, bocce and go swimming or fishing or for nature hikes. In short, have an easy, fun weekend—while mom and dad rest (or play).

The fee will be \$200 for the weekend. Camps will start in September. Dates will be determined by demand and staffing. If you're interested in signing up a camper, or if you're looking for a weekend job, call: (512) 888-926-2253 or e-mail us at camps@downhomeranch.org.

Capstone Campaign on a Roll

The Capstone Campaign, started in 2005, is going strong.

In building terms, the “capstone” represents the finishing touch, the acme or completion of a project, and the Down Home Ranch Capstone Campaign will complete the Ranch's master plan developed many years ago.

Capstone is a \$2.4 million dollar project that currently stands at \$1,073,000, 45% of the goal. This includes a breathtaking \$800,000 two-for-one challenge grant from our good friends at the RGK Foundation of Austin. We have until January 1, 2007 to meet the challenge.

Projects planned for the Capstone include three homes for residents; one two-bedroom cottage for residents; six cabins for residents and volunteers; a four-bedroom lodge; a Chapel, a Performing Arts Center; a Welcoming Center; funds for infrastructure (roads, carpools, sidewalks, utility systems, etc.); greenhouses and Pavilion improvements; technology upgrades; equipment purchases.

These additions and improvements will enable the Ranch to double the resident population, increase the number served at camp by 25%, and greatly expand and improve program sites and offerings.

This is a very challenging campaign at a very exciting time for the Ranch. After fifteen years of dreams and hard work, we are now closing in on the final chapter and can see the “city on a hill” coming into being. Praise God!

We invite you to be a part of the Capstone Campaign.



We are extremely grateful to the many volunteers that offer their time and talent to the Ranch. These students from Regents School in Austin created beautiful gardens in front of the Enterprise & Learning Center. Volunteer groups of any size are always welcome.

director's chair

by Jerry Horton

Steve at the Meadows Foundation in Dallas posed a question I've been asked before: "Don't you miss teaching? Being a professor?"

I reminded him that I was never a professor, although I taught sociology for a number of years. (Mostly as an Instructor or Adjunct Faculty.)

"No," I said. "I'm happy doing what I do. I get to write, research, teach and meet a lot of people—everything I liked about teaching." But it's more than that.

I love my work and am proud of our mission. And, of course, this isn't just a job or work. It's my vocation. My life calling. And the rewards are different.

Judy and I were talking recently over all the things we've learned through Down Home Ranch. I chimed with this little tid-bit: "I've learned how to get rich," and I was serious.

All you have to do, I argued, is find something you like to do, something that pays, and devote your life to it, 24/7. All the time. Every minute of every day. You can become rich, if that is your goal.

A perfectly legitimate goal, but not *our* goal. Our goal is a community of hope and opportunity, and yes, fun, for people with special needs.

On July 4th we had a party. At 3:00 PM residents and staff dodged raindrops and showed up at Gabriel House. We played games, ate snacks, chopped up salad stuff and chickens, and barbecued.

We put on a DVD and watched the Rose Bowl, which produced white knuckles even though we knew the ending. (Our many Aggies did find it a tad hard to cheer the Longhorns.)

We sang *God Bless America* for a table blessing and proceeded to eat and chatter, with jibes and kidding in abundance.

It is . . . well, a dream come true. A terrific party among wonderful friends. I thanked God for my good fortune and a great party, and slept like a baby.

Looking for the most rewarding job? Sorry, I've already got it.

Barn Raising Among New Projects

On St. Patrick's Day March 17, 2000, we were wakened by a huge crash of thunder. In a flash our barn was on fire and in no time was gone.

For years we've longed for the day when we'd get a new barn and be able to offer our Ranchers the opportunities of working with our horses and miniature donkeys.

At last that day is coming. We're getting ready to build a new barn, and we're going to do it with an old fashioned barn raising.

No date is set but we will need lots of volunteers and other support. We're also asking lumber yards and other vendors to donate materials.

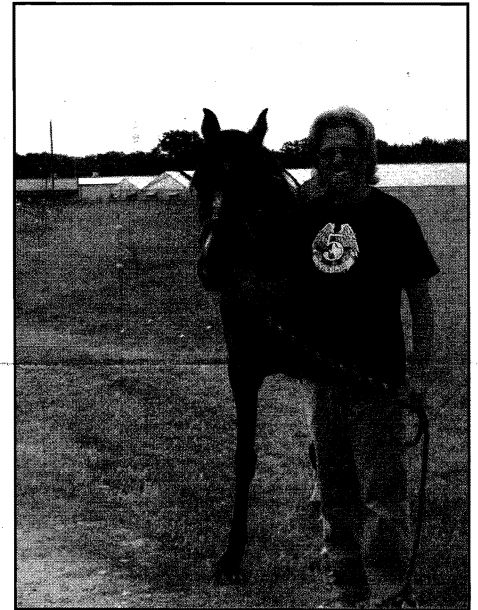
Other projects that have been delayed are now moving to the front burners.

Another two-bedroom home for the Independent Living program will be framed-up soon and we'll be looking for volunteers to do all the inside work we can get done.

We're interviewing prospective residents for this cozy cottage so it's important that we make good progress. They won't want to wait.

We also plan to start work on Post Oak Lodge, a second four-bedroom cabin. The slab is poured and we hope to be framing up this fall. We need this cabin for the Respite Program and for Ranch Camp '07.

Once completed, we'll have 16 residents, five RVs, room for more campers and a new barn. These projects will make a great Christmas present if we can get the job done.



Jared loves caring for Rocky the Arab.

Spare Sailboat Cluttering Up Your Driveway?

Some residents want to learn to sail and our foreman has volunteered to be Captain Pat.

If you have a sailboat in good condition that you might consider donating (or loaning) to the Ranch, please contact Jerry Horton at 888-926-2253.

Eat Campbell's Products and Help Us Get a Minivan

Daughters of the King in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas have taken on the task of gathering 1,500,000 Campbell's product labels so that the Ranch can get a minivan through the Campbell's Labels for Education program.

This may sound like a rather lofty goal, but project chair, Vivian Young, has already banked over 19,000 labels and she has only just started spreading the word. Go to www.labelsforeducation.com for eligible Campbell's products.

Will you help us get the van? We really need vans to transport our residents and one in our little clutch of vans is ancient and about to expire. Help!

Simply send the entire label of the eligible Campbell's product labels to Down Home Ranch, 20250 FM 619, Elgin, TX 78621 or Vivian Young, 6718 Oak Masters, Spring, TX 77379. Vivian will cut, count and bank the labels for Down Home Ranch. Thank you Vivian and the Daughters of the King!

2nd Annual Swim Fest Set for Labor Day

We began Swim Fest as a way to raise funds for our house vacations, so the residents and their caregivers can enjoy a little getaway.

A trophy was acquired for the winning house, and the Barnabas Buccaneers, Martha's Mermaids, and Gabriel's Hornblowers began signing up pledges for the swim.

Jerry Horton showed up as Horatio Hornblower, and Steve Powers as a (hairy) mermaid.

The 50 laps (one mile) were performed by residents, friends, staff, and relatives, and a great time was had by all.

So mark your calendars now - Monday, September 4th! The fun begins at 10 a.m. Following the 50 lap swim by the DHR teams we invite you and your family and friends to splash away in the pool or just enjoy a poolside lunch. We'll have the pool open until 3 p.m. and food will be available to purchase.



Martha's Mermaids will return to defend their title as winners of the First Annual Down Home Ranch SwimFest. Scarey, no?

Yam Bake Laid Down

You may have heard a rumor that the Yam Bake is no more, and sad to say, it's true.

The Yam Bake was a great party, but it was also too large a drain on resources—both material and staff—and didn't generate much income.

Common sense dictated that we move on to other ways of spending our time and efforts in sustaining the Ranch. Thanks for all who participated over the years in the Bake. It lasted for 13 years, and leaves us with wonderful memories.

Leave a Legacy

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

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

- Bequests, specified in your will
- Stocks and bonds
- Paid up whole life insurance

Please consider a Legacy Gift.

Our Heartfelt Thanks to . . .

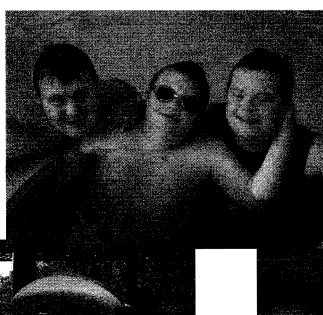
- **Phoenix Blinds:** window blinds
- **Stone Solutions:** for ceramic tile
- **Wilsonart:** flooring and transitions
- **Lasco:** shower stalls
- **Arrowood:** kitchen cabinets
- **Advanced Filtration Systems:** new filters each month
- **Paul's Pool Service:** for skimmer
- **Dwight Baker:** for loaning us his party boat for camp
 - **J.W. Riza:** for strummin' and singing every Sunday evening of camp.
 - **Bo:** for fishing poles and a helping hand on the Dock
 - **Volunteers:** Each and every gift of time and talent makes a difference!

Call Anytime!

The Ranch has a new phone system with extension numbers. If someone doesn't answer we invite you to use the extension numbers listed below. The main office numbers are the same: 512-856-0128 or 888-926-2253. At the prompt, enter one of the following extension numbers.

- 123 Jerry Horton, Executive Director
- 121 Judy Horton, Program Director
- 124 LeAnn Powers, Director of Development & Administration
- 126 Stephanie Powers, Program Coordinator
- 128 Pat Tatroe, Foreman & Property Manager
- 122 Jackie Simmons, Office Manager
- 0 General Mailbox

Ranch Camp 2006 Fun!



Employment Opportunities at Ranch

Resident Assistant (RA). Private room and bath, housing, food, utilities, salary, health coverage, retirement plan. Live in beautiful home, provide supervision and assistance for three same-sex residents with mental handicaps. Minimum age 22. Minimum length of service: one year. One position requires a female RA, the other a male or older (40+) female.

Resident Volunteer (RV). Private cedar cabin. Monthly stipend, utilities, most meals, entertainment, and travel opportunities provided. Help Residents in Day Program; serve as relief staff for RAs. Minimum age 21. Minimum length of service: six months. Current openings for two females.

Ranch amenities include 267 beautiful acres for hiking, biking, fishing and exploring. Pool and gym on site. Horses, donkeys, chickens.

Both positions require: excellent moral character; ability to pass in-depth criminal background and employment screening; good housekeeping skills; ability to cook; good reading and writing skills; excellent driving record, ability to drive in Austin and at night. No pets. No smoking. Flexibility, patience, ability to get along with others, and a good sense of humor essential.

If interested call toll-free 888-926-2253, or contact LeAnn Powers at: leann@downhomeranch.org.

Needs...and a few wants

- Good-quality furniture & beds
- Golf-carts, gas or electric
- A kiln and pottery tools
- Low-mileage mini-vans in good condition
- Garden tools
- Saddles, tack, grooming tools
- DVDs and videos for our library
- Beads and old costume jewelry
- Art supplies, paints, brushes, etc.
- Riding mowers in good condition
- Costumes, hats, etc. for plays
- Tickets to sporting/cultural events
- Christmas lights
- Cattle: looking for 3-5 bred cows



Andrew Spraklin and Jerry in front of Motel Chicks (aka the Chicken Hilton), a chicken coop that was Andrew's Eagle Scout project. Andrew helped with the design,

raised the money for materials and supervised the volunteers (including his dad Pat) who built it. We're looking forward to fresh eggs coming soon. We'll leave the light on for ya!

Photo Exhibit Held

Last fall we got a call from Meg Loucks, a UT grad student in photojournalism needing a project. Meg planned a few afternoons at the Ranch but, as often happens, fell in love with the Ranch and our residents and visited for months.

Meg's work was so good we had to share it, so in May we hosted an exhibit at the Rose Minn Gallery, Elgin, graciously lent by owner Susie Hettleman.

Meg's a great photographer and friend. The Houston Chronicle agreed, and hired Meg on the spot.



judy's views

A New Generation

Jerry and I know that someday, not far off, the reins of Down Home Ranch will pass over entirely into the hands of those who will carry it into the future—and with it, our daughter and the other residents we have come to love so dearly.

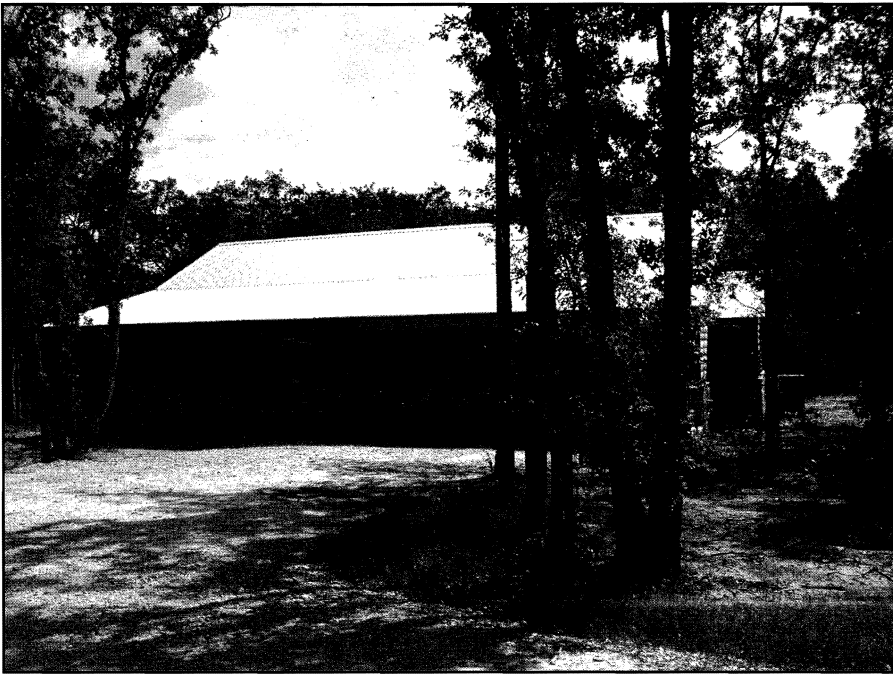
Yet I've found that even when you expect big changes to come, it's still surprising when they do. This came home to me looking around the dining hall at camp and realizing the next generation has begun taking over:

- Program Coordinator (and Camp Director) Stephanie, daughter of LeAnn Powers, our Development Director, and husband Steve.
- Camp Cook, Rebecca Brymer, daughter of Pat Tatroe, our Ranch Foreman, and Jill. (Son Naaman is a counselor, as were older brothers Jonathan and Paul before him.)
- Camp Nurse (or "Medicine Woman" as the campers like to call her) Ann Harris, daughter of Mickey and Gay Harris, who partnered with us for many years in camping and other high adventures.
- Resident Volunteer Miles Chumbley, son of Lise Chumbley, for years our stalwart Head Female Counselor.

So now, instead of running around trying to find arrows for the bows or garlic powder for the kitchen, I get to sit in a corner of the dining room with LeAnn, Gay, Lise, and Pat marveling at the energy and efficiency of all these talented, conscientious young people.

We swell with pride as we see our kids (*kids!*) taking on positions of awesome responsibility and doing as well or better than we ever did.

To think we've lived to see this. Praise God, from whom *all* blessings flow!



Need a Place to Get Away?

Hickory Lodge, above, is now available to rent. Able to sleep 20, this lovely, fully air-conditioned building has four bedrooms, combined kitchen, dining, and living area, plus two baths with four showers, four toilets and six sinks. Hidden among the trees, Hickory Lodge is perfect for family getaways, reunions, retreats, overnight meetings and more. For pricing information and availability visit our website at www.downhomeranch.org or call 888-926-2253.

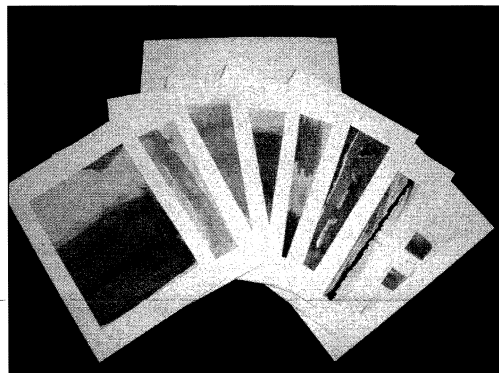
Elegant Note Cards Make Debut

You'll want to be the first on your block to purchase the elegant new note cards being created by the residents at Down Home Ranch.

Each note card showcases a one-of-a-kind watercolor design created exclusively by one of the residents at the Ranch. The watercolor design sits atop a note card of ivory linen and comes with matching ivory linen envelopes. The note cards are blank on the inside.

Each packet contains eight originally designed note cards and eight matching envelopes. The packets of note cards sell for \$5 each.

To order your note cards today call 888-926-2253. Shipping & handling is \$3 for one packet, \$5 for 2 or 3 packets and \$7 for 4 to 6 packets.



Grant provides Ranch with AED device

The Office of Rural Community Affairs has provided Down Home Ranch with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) through the Emergency Devices Grant Program.

An AED device is used in emergency situations where a person's heart has developed a rhythm incompatible with sustaining life, or has stopped altogether. A training grant was also provided with the device.

DHR Going to Aggieland for Fall Golf: Help Needed

Friends in Bryan/College Station have been meeting and planning a great celebrity golf tournament in the heart of Texas A & M country.

Set for Friday, Oct. 27 at the Briarcrest Country Club, the Celebrity Golf Tournament will be a four-person scramble, with great food, great prizes and a wonderful day of golf.

We have a tentative "yes" from Heisman trophy winner John David Crow and famous Aggie referee Red Cashion, to sign a few autographs and play in the tournament. Other A & M celebrities are being courted, which will add excitement to the day.

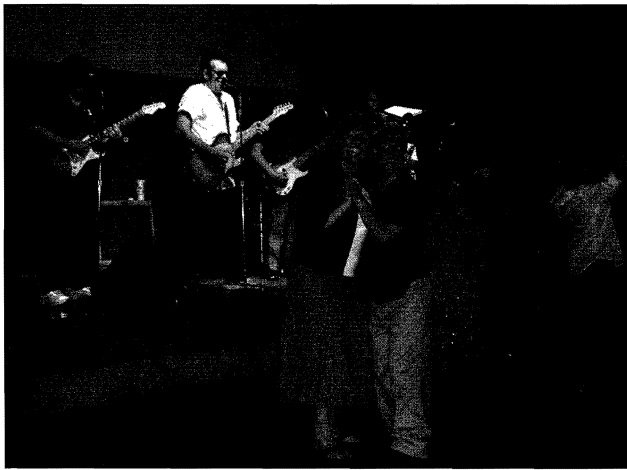
The planning committee would welcome anyone (even Longhorns!) who can help make this first year a great start for an annual event. If you have an idea or two, or would like to lend a hand, give LeAnn a call at (888) 925-5328.

Ranch to Partner with Texas Forest Service

The Texas Forest Service has invited the Ranch to become a "Fire Wise Community." Jan Fulkerson and colleagues with the Forest Service have done an environmental inventory/survey to help us set some initial goals for fire safety and prevention, a major goal of the Fire Wise program.

We're beginning to clear underbrush and thin trees to reduce the fuel sources that can feed even a simple grass fire. House and cabin landscaping is incorporating some ideas from the Forest Service too, using gravel garden beds next to homes and fire-resistant horticultural plants.

Down Home Ranch is honored to be partnering with the Forest Service, and with the Urban Foresters Association, and looks forward to many years of collaboration with both groups.



Stephanie Powers, DHR Program Coordinator, and Kevin Ward, friend of the Ranch, dance to Johnny Dee and the Rocket 88s at our second annual Charity Gala. This annual event can only be described as INCREDIBLE! Great fun, great food, great music and great dancing. You won't want to miss next year's Gala so mark your calendars now - Saturday, April 28, 2007, at the Texas Disposal Systems Exotic Game Ranch & Pavilion.

George and Ginny Saip showed up a few months ago with their big pickup truck and travel trailer. They thought and we thought they'd be here a few days, maybe a few weeks, but... stayed for several months. Wonderful folks and great volunteers, they are headed to Colorado, Nebraska and then home to Michigan. Bon Voyage to our good friends Ginny and George!



Poinsettias in July?

Yes, it's true. In just a few weeks over 12,000 poinsettia plugs will arrive and we'll be planting.

Meanwhile, we've got a lot of greenhouse clean up and repair before we're ready, so if you been thinking of a hot summer project give a call.

And put a note on your calendar to order your poinsettias early by calling 888-926-2253. We're going to have a great crop this year and expect to sell out early so don't miss the boat.

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