

THE SPIRIT of DOWN HOME RANCH

FEBRUARY, 2007

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GEORGIA TO TEXAS WITH LOVE

Blythe Island Baptists Travel 1,100 Miles to Help Build Ranch Barn

It all started with an e-mail from Tim Brown, pastor of Blythe Island Baptist Church, located on the Atlantic coast of Georgia. They were looking for a project “serving kids with Down syndrome” and wanted to know if the Ranch needed any volunteers to help build something. We talked about our need for a barn, which had been hit by lightning in 2001 and burned to the ground.

“We can build a barn for you,” said Pastor Tim — ever, as we learned, the optimist and can-do guy.

After a visit to the Ranch — a fact-finding and get-to-know-you trip — they determined that they could do it.

So, we marshalled all available resources, and in mid-September 15 men, women and children arrived to spend a week of fellowship, food, parties and 14-hour-days framing up a raised center-aisle barn.

Our Blythe Islander friends brought gift baskets for each resident stuffed with treasures: individual letters from members of the church who weren't able to come, T-shirts commemorating the project, shells from the Georgia shore, scrapbooking supplies and scrapbooks, and many individual gifts picked out especially for the persons that received them, such as binoculars for Michael (for tracking those pesky wild pigs).

The Blythe Islanders worked with humor and grace, whether on the barn in the very hot September sun or in the kitchen helping to feed the whole community.

We finished up Friday night with an evening of talent sharing

with Pastor Tim, aka “Mr. Incredible”, proving a passable magician. We miss our new friends, and look forward to seeing them again.

The barn will have six stalls, a vet/washing bay, tack and feed room, bathroom with shower, office and small classroom. It will mean we can restart our Animal Husbandry program, focusing on breeding, raising, training and showing miniature donkeys.

Plus, thanks to the gung-ho attitude of our builders, we added a one-room apartment in the barn loft, which we'll use for overnight guests, interns and our Ranch AIR (Artist In Residence) program.

(Clockwise from top.) 1. We had rain, wind, heat, and long, long days, but the crew from Blythe Island Baptist Church, Brunswick, GA were a determined group, getting the barn framed up in five days.



2. The Blythe Island Baptist members who couldn't make the trip to Texas sent a wonderful basket for each resident. Said Danny, “This is the best present I ever got.”

3. Kara's surprise and happiness at her gift basket brought tears to her eyes.

4. Several of the 14 Dell Computer groups that volunteered at the Ranch pitched in on the barn, while other groups painted, serviced A/C units, hammered nails and potted poinsettias.

5. The welcome sounds of hammering, sawing and nail guns let us know that our new friends were hard at work.

THE NEXT THREE YEARS

I recently said to my Board of Directors "I'm not ready to retire."

Judy and I talk about such things. I'm now 68 and recently attended my 50th high school reunion. On the outside we don't look the same as we did in 1958, but all in all, we're still the same bunch. We had great fun remembering our teen-age pranks, parties, and pals. In truth, for that one evening time just melted away.

Alas, however, the aging process isn't slowing down for me or anybody else, so at some point they'll



from the
**DIRECTOR'S
CHAIR**

have to drag me off the stage. But for right now — I've got too much to do before I can even think about retirement.

First of all, we need to see the Capstone Campaign through to fulfillment. It will grow our population to 26, help us increase our operating income and begin funding an endowment to protect everything and everybody.

Most of all, I want to live to see the Ranch become one of the best communities of its kind anywhere.

Lofty goals? You bet, and nobody knows better than me that we can't do it alone.

But with faith, hard work, a lot of help and a bit of luck I have every hope that we can achieve these goals — perhaps in just three years.

In ten very important ways we're already there: our wonderful residents (and more are on the way).

They are an amazing bunch, daily proving that our initial vision was a good one. As they work, play, laugh and squabble their way through the week they bring us such joy.

But there is still much work to do and if my creaky body and leaky brain hold up, I'm ready to stay in the saddle for few years more.

FRIENDS OLD AND NEW

FOUNDERS FEATURED IN NEW BOOK

The Horton family is featured in a book just published by The University of Texas Press — *The Amazing Faith of Texas: Common Ground on Higher Ground*.

The book profiles Texans from every corner of the state and every walk of life, describing how and why they believe what they believe.

The book was written by Roy Spence, founder of GSD&M, assisted by Mike Blair.



NEW STAFF

New staff members have come on-board in the past few months. Most we've known as counselors, volunteers and part-time workers.

Denise Churchill is the new Resident Assistant (RA) in Gabriel House, Syndy Green is RA in Martha House and Beth Gonella has taken over Teresa House.

Don Churchill, Denise's husband, is now Director of DHR Gardens (bringing in a fine poinsettia crop on his first try). Miles Chumbley re-upped as a Resident Volunteer (RV), and we welcomed Sarah Hasley as a new RV. Miles has been around as volunteer, counselor, and nature teacher since high school days. Sarah is an Aggie and has worked as camp counselor and weekend relief staff for the past several months.

It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.

— Mother Teresa

A CHANCE TO LIVE AT DOWN HOME RANCH

We are recruiting for two live-in positions at Down Home Ranch: Resident Assistant (RA) and Resident Volunteer (RV). The RA lives in a home with three residents. This is a permanent position. RVs live alone in a cedar cabin and are typically college students giving six months or a year of service. Both positions offer salary and benefits, and are demanding but highly rewarding.

Living in the Village at Down Home Ranch is an extraordinary experience, therefore we're looking for a few extraordinary individuals to join us. If you are interested call (888) 926-2253 or e-mail leann@downhomeranch.org.



A GOOD FRIEND



Enrique Lobo Guerrero has been a member of the Ranch community for many years. Mr. Lobo repairs tractors, services vehicles, mows and shreds, hauls dirt, keeps golf carts running, and when necessary has helped chase stray donkeys!

Whatever Mr. Lobo does, it's always done with a smile and never a complaint. Best of all, he's a true friend of our residents, always looking out for their safety and happiness.

Thanks, Mr. Lobo!

GOLF AND GALA COMING

Mark Your Calendars Now!

It may be February, but Golf and Gala will be here before you know it.

Friday, April 27, we'll tee up at Teravista in Round Rock for our annual tourney and bar-b-que. Then on Saturday the 28th we'll wine-taste, bid on auction items, tour the Texas Disposal Systems Exotic Game Ranch and Pavilion, shoot skeet, eat steak, and rock 'n roll to Johnnie Dee & the Rocket 88s.

Don't miss this action packed weekend; it's the highlight of our year, and great fun. Registration for the Golf Tournament and tickets to the Gala are now available by calling (888) 926-2253 or e-mailing info@downhomeranch.org.



BECOME A GOLF/GALA SPONSOR FOR BIG PERKS

The opportunity to be a sponsor for the Golf Tournament and the Gala could provide your company with considerable recognition to hundreds of people. Sponsorship opportunities range from \$250 to \$10,000 and come with a wide range of benefits. For more information on sponsorships call LeAnn at (888) 926-2253 or e-mail at leann@downhomeranch.org.



Steve and George getting ready for the golf tournament at Teravista.



Johnnie Dee and the Rocket 88s are a huge hit. Everybody enjoys their infectious brand of vintage rock'n roll.



Pat Tatroe, Down Home Ranch Foreman, tries his hand at skeet shooting.



As I write, I hear some of our residents laughing uproariously with one another during Sewing Class. They are learning to sew on buttons, a mundane activity that most people just couldn't imagine occasioning so much hilarity.

That's the greatest thing about what we do, however. Our residents plant us firmly in the here and now and resist our every effort to move out of the immediacy of the moment.

We are constantly delighted by the things they do and say, not the least when we give inadequate instructions that can produce unexpected results.

Like the time Jerry, cooking dinner, asked Mark to go to Gabriel House and borrow some flour. Mark disappeared for the longest time, and just as Jerry was headed out the door to go find him Mark appeared beaming on the porch, holding a beautiful poinsettia fresh from the greenhouse – a flower, not flour.

At other times they just don't get it when we are stressing over things that go wrong.



For example, one mom of an adult son with Downs told me of the time her son had flown by himself to attend an important meeting. Severe storms moved into the area before his return flight. Planes were being cancelled, delayed, and re-routed all over the east coast.

Soon she learned that his flight had been routed to Newark instead of Philadelphia, where she was waiting.

She was frantic. How would he know what to do? Who would help him? She was frantically dialing, trying to page him at the Newark airport when there came a tap on her shoulder. Inexplicably, there was her son standing there beaming. "Hi, Mom!" he said.

"Brian!" she gasped. "How on earth did you find me?" "Well, duh, Mom," Brian replied. "I've known you all my life."

RANCHERS JOIN THE CRUISING CROWD

Our Ranchers wrote letters, got family and friends to sponsor them, made goofy costumes and then one after another jumped in our lap pool for Swim Fest '06. They swam and swam and swam, until they were exhausted but happy – having swum a mile! No small feat.

To give our residents a few days of vacation (before we put them to work in the greenhouses) we held our second annual Swim Fest. After the success of last year's effort, we decided once again to let the residents raise money to go on a vacation that is not part of the Ranch budget. When we asked them "What do you want to do for a vacation?" many weeks before, the answer was unanimous. "A cruise, a cruise" was the chorus that greeted the question. "We wanna go on a cruise!" No shrinking violets in this crowd.

This highly motivated lot raised all the money they would need by forming teams, getting pledges and swimming for the better part of a day. The beautiful Swim Fest trophy went to Martha House for the second year in a row. (Boy, those Aggies stick together!)

We got a great deal on a four-day cruise out of Houston, so although the idea sounded extravagant at first, it turned out to be very cost-effective. Once our gang was on the ship, all expenses were covered, and they had a blast on board the *Carnival Ecstasy*: eating, swimming, dancing, being entertained and going to Mexican mercados. "Hey," said Mark, "they can't speak English over there." But the language barrier didn't stop them from having a great time.

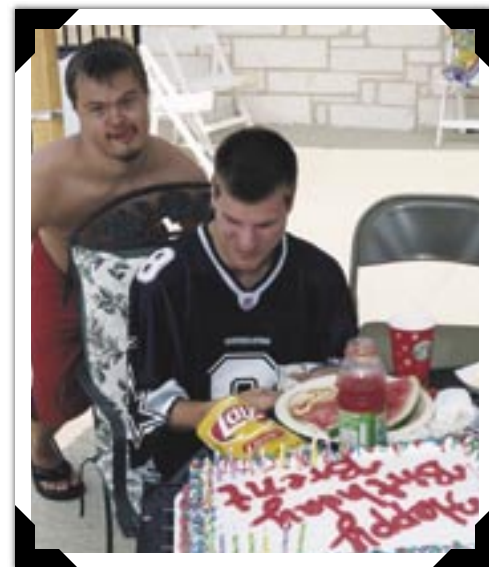
The cruise staff could not have been more attentive or helpful. It was a great experience, and the residents are already planning for Cruise '07!



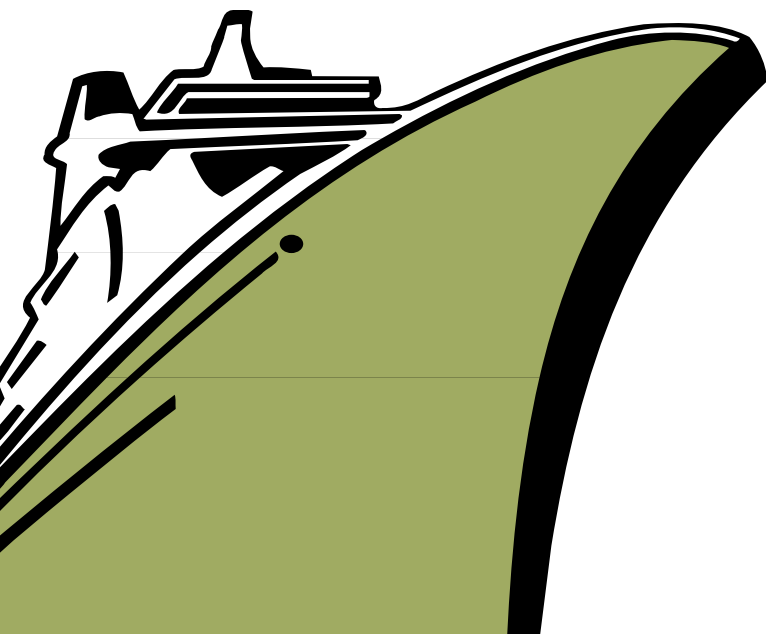
The Ranch Swim and Fitness Center — built with funds from the Dodge Jones Foundation, Abilene and a generous gift from Jerome and Suzanne Fischer — is a popular destination. We're hoping to raise money to put a greenhouse-type cover on it so we can swim year-round.



Kelly, Kara, Julia and Syndy (back) with Cozumel in the background, on board the Carnival cruise ship Ecstasy.



Brent got a BIG cake for his birthday, which we celebrated the day of the Swim Fest!



Dean, Brent, Mark, Brian and Miles (in back), aka as The Buccaneers of Barnabas House were a fearsome lot at Swim Fest 2006.

CAMP IS COMING!!!

When summer arrives so does Ranch Camp! Those fun-filled days of summer may be several months away, but the staff at Down Home Ranch is busy planning another fantastic summer camp program.

There will be lots of games, singing and dancing going on starting May 27th and continuing on through six weeks of Ranch Camp. Yes, six weeks! We offer so many opportunities to learn new skills and make new friends. Campers will have the chance to: make crafts, participate in all sorts of sports, go swimming in our pool, show off their dancing, music and drama skills, participate in the care of our animals, and see the beautiful Texas Hill Country on hayrides and nature walks.

Ranch Camp has become increasingly popular and there always seems to be a waiting list, so this year two weeks of camps have been added. The schedule looks like this:

- May 27 – June 1 (mixed ages)
- June 3 – 8 (mixed ages)
- June 17-22 (teens ages 13-22)
- June 24 – 29 (mixed ages)
- July 8 – 13 (teens ages 13-22)
- July 15 -20 (mixed ages)

Interested campers and camper families will want to go to the Ranch Camp page on our website and download the required application (www.downhomeranch.org).



Once the application is sent in with the \$100 deposit, your spot will be reserved. Camp applications are already arriving daily, so if there is a particular week that you are hoping to attend, get your application in early! If you have any questions please feel free to call Stephanie at (888) 926-2253 or e-mail camps@downhomeranch.org.



BUILDING
OUR
MEMORIES

THE SEASONS OF THE GREENHOUSE

The Christmas season starts early at Down Home Ranch. In the middle of the hottest month, Ranchers, staff and volunteers begin the process of growing beautiful holiday poinsettias. More than 12,000 baby plants arrive in large trucks, and we whip into action to get the seedlings planted, watered and sheltered. Then we wait.

We were more than a little anxious this year, after the terrible loss of much of last year's crop. But even after enduring scorching heat and a terrible storm that ripped off part of the greenhouse roof, we ended up with one of the largest, and most beautiful, crops of poinsettias we've ever had.

Of course, this annual adventure in horticulture means much more to us than the money we raise or the hard work we invest. It is a sign that the hot Texas summer will come to an end (although never soon enough) and that the holidays will be here before we know it. It reminds us to start thinking about gifts and family and travel plans. But more than any of those things, it reminds us that when Down Home Ranchers put their minds to something, they do things that none of us could do on our own.

NEED A FUNDRAISER? SELL SPRING BASKETS!

Now that the poinsettia crop has been sold and the greenhouse is empty, it's time to think about the spring! We're growing



Brian, Mike and Danny unload and get ready to transport 12,000 poinsettia plugs to those who will pot them.



Thousands of hanging baskets of petunias, impatiens & begonias sit comfortably in the greenhouses. Order yours today!

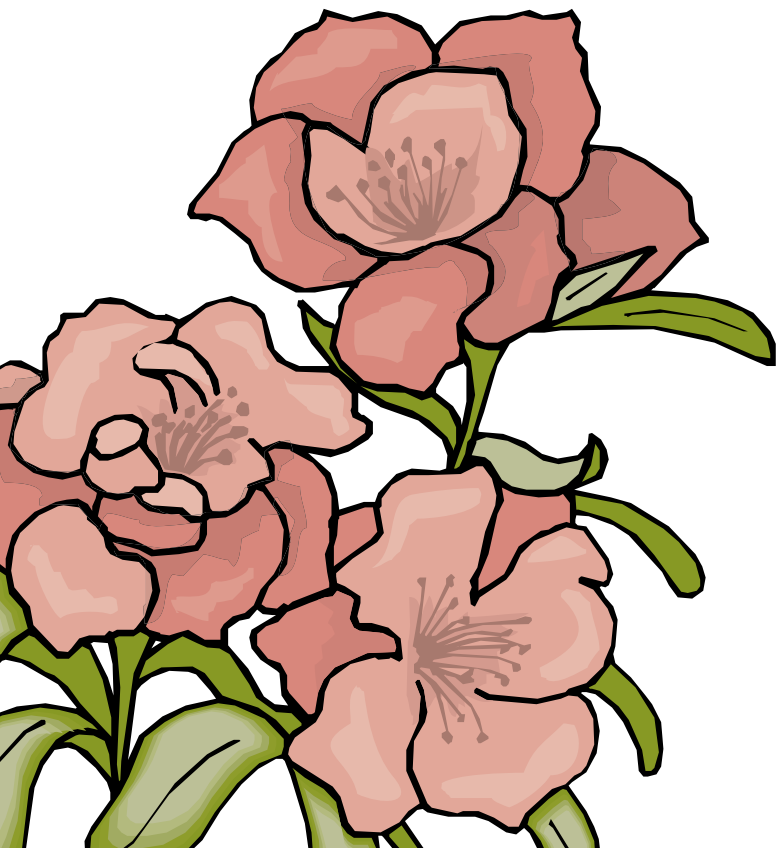
5,000 hanging baskets this year: begonias, impatiens and petunias of many colors. These baskets can provide your church, troop, band or other group a great way to raise funds. You can pocket about \$4 a plant for each plant you sell. Sell 100 and make \$400!

We will be happy to help you plan your fund raiser. We have ideas, order forms and colorful print materials you can use to spread the word. Plus, we'll even deliver the baskets to your site for you to distribute.

Let us help you make some money this spring. Contact LeAnn Powers at (888) 926-2253 or e-mail leann@downhomeranch.org.



Rebekah wheels a cart to transport seedlings. Rebekah's not only a great worker, she has one of the prettiest smiles you'll ever see.



Poinsettia season begins in the heat of August when thousands of tiny plugs are trucked in and hordes of staff and volunteers plant them in 6" containers. Here Ranchers and volunteers soak the soil before planting.

A DELL-IGHTFUL PARTNERSHIP



Dell employees team up to paint the Swim & Fitness Center.



DHR residents show off their new Dell t-shirts, donated to them by a team of Dell employees and the Dell Foundation.



Mark and Julia enjoy a warm winter day as they clean the weeds out of containers.

In '04 we went to our first Dell Community Fair. There we met a lot of Dell employees and groups looking for volunteer opportunities.

Out of that little foray a few Dell groups made their way to DHR the next year. The following year even more came, and in '06 we had 14 Dell groups come out, donating over 1,000 hours of volunteer labor!

Pat, our Foreman, says he likes Dell volunteers because they are so organized and goal oriented. "They're as good as the pros," says Pat.

And the Dell folks like to volunteer at Down Home Ranch because they can perform real work with visible results and know they're making a difference.

Through Dell connections we also met Dwight Baker, now a much-valued member of the Board of Directors.

All in all, a great partnership.



Dell employees work together on Jacob House, installing insulation and sheetrock.

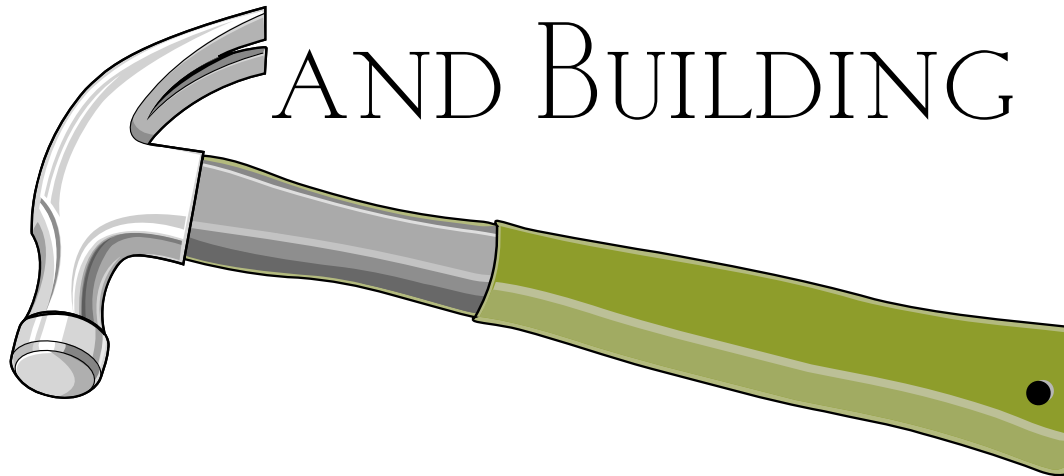
WORKPLACE GIVING HOLDS PROMISE FOR RANCH

For the first time public and private-sector employees can select DHR as recipient of an automatic contribution through workplace giving.

It has taken years, but now city, county, state and some corporate employees can simply write our number (different for each employer) or name on the form and *voilà*, our residents will benefit from this painless way of supporting the Ranch. (Next year we should be on the federal list as well.)

It's also the case that if where you work is a part of United Way, you can actually write in "Down Home Ranch" and we'll get the gift.

GROWING AND BUILDING



WANT A WEEKEND OFF? CALL ABOUT RESPITE CAMP

If you'd like some time off from being a parent (or other) caregiver, how about taking a break? Bring your camper out on Friday and pick her/him up on Sunday, and enjoy a weekend in Austin, or stay home, eat comfort food and keep the TV remote on your lap.

Call Stephanie for details: (888) 926-2253 or e-mail her at stephanie@downhomeranch.org.



Hickory Lodge is nestled in the woods, ready for Respite campers, visitors, and travelers. It has four bedrooms, two large bathrooms, a full kitchen and a living room with TV and DVD/VHS. It's perfect for a small retreat or family reunion. For information, visit www.downhomeranch.org or call (888) 926-2253

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

We've had nine young men earn their Eagle Scout badges at the Ranch and we welcome inquiries from those looking for a project. We have lots of projects. Here are a few:

- Small deck for Timothy House
- Pergola for fire pit
- Landscaping Teresa House
- Expand Primitive Campsite
- Improve two nature trails
- Build a volleyball court
- Repair and improve Koi pond
- Improve and decorate the Game Room

Contact Jerry Horton at (888) 926-2253 or jerry@downhomeranch.org.



WISH LIST

Artificial Christmas Trees – lights too.

Jigsaw puzzles – 100 to 1000 pieces.

Several Ranchers and staff really like 'em.

Seeds – Wildflower or garden seeds that are last season's. We'll plant or feed birds.

Kodak Carousel slide projector and trays.

Good blankets, linens, towels and such.

We have several homes to supply.

New pots and pans – for homes and cabins that are using old hand-me-downs.

Chipper/shredder – gas or electric.

Mac computer – for graphics work and to use disks from our defunct Power Mac.

Treadmill – motorized, new or lightly used.

Hand weights – in 2, 5, 8, and 10 lbs.

DVDs & videos – G, PG and PG-13.

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