



THE SPIRIT of DOWN HOME RANCH

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ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

People magazine and CBS News Attract Hundreds to DHR

When Mary Rogers wrote a story about Down Home Ranch for the Dec. 3, 2006 edition of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, we could have never imagined what was coming.

A few months later we were contacted by *People* magazine, wanting to do a story on the Ranch. This was exciting news and on Sunday, April 13, Amy the wardrobe woman came, followed by photographers Alex and Eric — who barely made it out of NYC before a Nor'easter hit and closed the airport.

The crew was here for two days, shooting hundreds of photos in every conceivable place. It was a real hoot, and a thrill for all of us.

Then Judy got a call “from Katie Couric’s office,” on behalf of Steve Hartman and “Assignment America” — a regular feature on the “CBS Evening News” Friday night telecast. Steve was going to profile the Ranch and two others on his show, then invite viewers to log on to the CBS news site, and vote for the subject they most wanted him to do a full story on.

So, we emailed everybody we could, crossed our fingers, and hoped for the best. The voting went on from Friday to Sunday, and when all the votes were tallied up Down Home Ranch had won! Hot dog!

We later learned that we’d been behind on Saturday night, but then emails started rolling in and the Ranch pulled ahead. We’re aware that lots and lots of people forwarded our message to people

on their lists, and that’s what made the difference.

Steve came out with his crew and we had a great couple of days enjoying his company and admiring his skills as an interviewer. The show aired June 8, 2007.

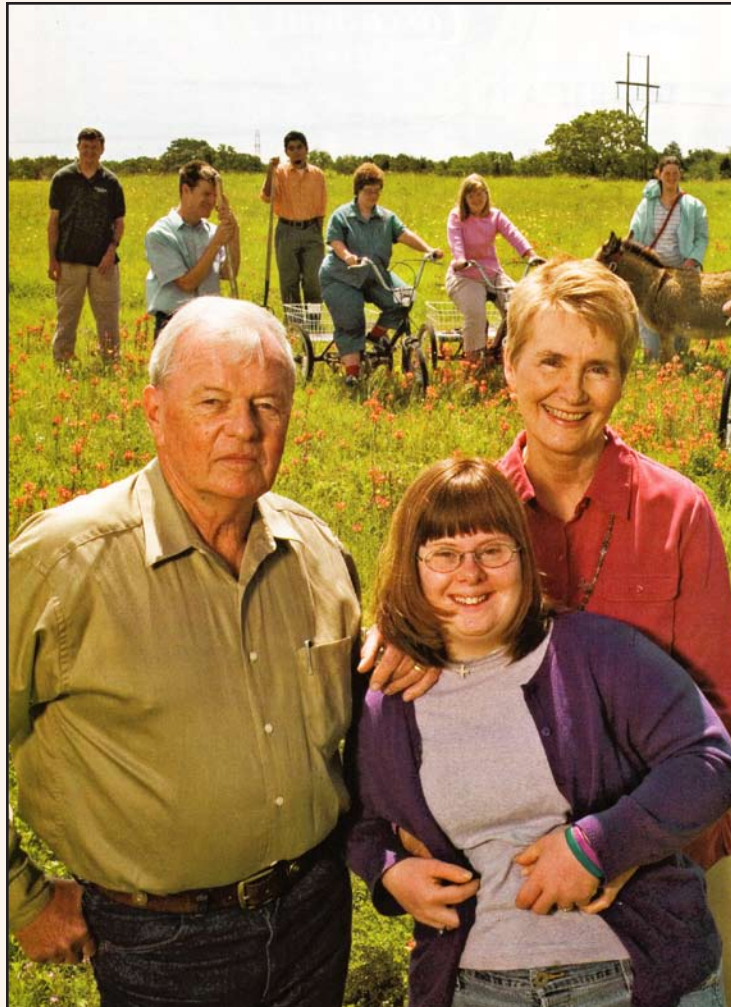


photo courtesy People magazine

When People magazine called to say they wanted to do a story about Down Home Ranch, none of us anticipated either the fun and hard work involved in doing a People “shoot” nor the response the article elicited. People got so much positive feedback that they included the Ranch in their annual “Heroes Among Us” award. And we got so many calls and emails we’re still trying to get caught up.

We weren’t sure what would happen next. A little money came in, including a very generous donation from a family in Wisconsin. But we were amazed by the hundreds of calls and emails from people who had read or heard the story of Down Home Ranch and got in touch to learn about Ranch Camp, residency, or to ask us, “How did you do it?”

Later, in August, to our great surprise, while we were on vacation in California, standing atop the Tower at Stanford University, we got a call from *People* telling us that the Ranch had been chosen as one of five “Heroes Among Us” and we would be back in the magazine again. In addition, CBS would feature all five “Heroes” to coincide with the *People* features on the “CBS Early Show,” so producer Scott Fraser and crew visited on Labor Day during the Swim Fest, gathering material for the “CBS Early Show.”

Michael O’Neill followed up with his camera crew for two days of photo shoots for the second *People* story, which came out in the November 5th issue.

Scott’s feature was a 3½ minute piece, and beautifully done, as was Steve Hartman’s before him. Both pieces truly captured the elan of the Ranch and those who
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live here. (They can be viewed by going to www.cbsnews.com and going to "Assignment America" or "The Early Show," or they can be found on YouTube.com.)

People had one last treat in reserve: Judy and Jerry Horton were flown out to LA in early November to meet the other "Heroes" and be presented with an award.

The lasting impact of this priceless publicity will not be known for years, but it has amply demonstrated that families all over the world hunger for hope and help in creating a good life for the ones they love.



Scott Fraser and crew at Swim Fest on Labor Day 2008. Scott's piece aired on Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007 and can still be seen by going to the CBS website, clicking on "The Early Show" and following the links to the videos.



Michael O'Neill flew out from New York City for the People magazine shoot. It was a lot of fun and a lot of work, but we appreciated the professionalism and elan of the photo crew.

NEW WEBSITE ON THE WAY

Despite lots of positive comments on our website, it's been up for several years now and it's time to upgrade. Our new site, which is being completely reconstructed, will be more accessible, interactive, and up to date, with an articulated data base and donor options that will provide for a seamless flow of information.

New additions include a Resource Center, with click-throughs to other useful sites, and a special section where our Ranchers can blog about their lives on the Ranch and keep in touch with buddies around the world.

The CBS News email contest showed us how powerfully the Internet and email

can serve Down Home Ranch. So, we are asking everyone to please, please, please give us your current email address, as well as update your US mail address and phone numbers. There is a space on the enclosed reply card to send us this information, or you may email your contact info to info@downhomeranch.org.

We have over 11,000 addresses on our mailing list and we'd like to be able to send more e-newsletters out, to keep y'all informed while we practice a little "cost containment" from our end. As you can imagine, mailing 11,000 of anything gets expensive!



A LOCAL RANCH...

NATIONAL DS CONGRESS

Ranchers and Staff Attend Conference in KC

In October of 1984, when our Kelly was just five weeks old, we attended our first Annual Convention of the National Down Syndrome Congress (www.ndsc.org) in San Antonio.

What a huge gift that conference was, with access to the top medical, educational, and psychological professionals in their fields. The lineup even included Dr. Jerome Lejuene, the French researcher who discovered the cause of Down syndrome and — not incidentally — was a man possessed of unparalleled insight and compassion into the lives of families touched by the condition.

Over the years, the convention grew from a few hundred into the thousands. A parallel convention serving youth and adults with Downs began several years ago, so this year we decided to take our residents who have DS. The trip was funded in large part by a grant from the Trull Foundation of Palacios.

All of the Ranchers enjoyed meeting other young adults from around the world

who have similar life experiences and interests. Each Rancher followed a pre-selected track which included topics as varied as staying safe, leisure activities, the latest dance moves, tae kwan do, and drama involving the Wicked Witch of the East!

While the Ranchers were busy with their conference, staff members attended the parents and professionals track.

The workshops generating the greatest excitement concerned Stanford University Professor William Mobley's research into the brain chemistry of Down syndrome. (see the related story below) and the innovative Mission Project, a parents-take-charge initiative to create affordable, sustainable and lifelong housing, community, educational, and vocational opportunities for their adult children.

Thank you to the Trull Foundation for supporting the Ranch's participation in this important conference.



The Hortons rearranged a vacation trip to California to include the Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation. At the left is Dr. Michael Harpold, DSRTF CEO, Jerry Horton, Dr. William Mobley of Stanford University and Na'eem Salaam, DSRTF Executive Director.

EXCITING RESEARCH AT STANFORD

Since Kelly's birth in 1984, Jerry and Judy have listened to a number of people pitch treatments and cures for their daughter's Down syndrome — all of them non-scientific and worthless.

So it was a great surprise and a highlight of the National Down Syndrome Congress to hear and meet Dr. William Mobley of Stanford University, whose presentation was on "The Neuroscience of Down Syndrome."

Dr. Mobley's team is part of a multi-disciplinary research effort that holds out a realistic promise of understanding exactly what is not working right in the circuitry of the Down syndrome brain, and of ultimately developing treatments that might help improve learning, memory and speech.

This is a daunting challenge, so much so that it has been largely neglected for many years. Now, however, research at the highest levels is beginning to make progress, with very exciting implications for people with Down syndrome and other disabilities.

One researcher thinks Mobley's findings will aid in understanding Fragile X. Others think it may advance the understanding of autism spectrum disorders. Mobley himself is hoping that his research can be a start in reducing the Alzheimer's risk that all with Down syndrome face.

The DS Research and Treatment Foundation can be found at www.dsrtf.org. Dr. Mobley's website at Stanford University is <http://dsresearch.stanford.edu/about.html>.



Down Home Ranchers Kelly Horton, Julia Burns, Kara Banta, Mark Struby and Mike Larcher had a great time at the NDSC convention in KC — including meeting Chris Burke, star of the "Life Goes On" TV series.

A NATIONAL IMPACT

FIRST ANNUAL TEXAS CHAINSAW MANICURE IS A BIG “CUT UP”

While working with the Texas Forest Service on a plan to thin trees, cut and remove brush and otherwise make the ranch look better, reduce fire danger, have more protection for buildings, and open up wooded areas for more recreation use, we had this thought: This is a perfect project for volunteers! At that moment, the Texas Chainsaw Manicure was conceived and launched.

We had about 60 workers helping out the first Saturday in November as we cut trees, yaupon holly and other brush and hauled load after load to the burn pile — as the Coupland Volunteer Fire Department monitored the proceedings — and generally had a very good time.

As the “sawyers” cut and the “swampers” loaded the 16’ flatbed, we dragged the cuttings off with a chain, pushed them onto the hot coals and watched it burn to ashes in a matter of minutes. Load after load after load came in. It was a terrific day and we got all the clearing done around Hickory Lodge and the soon-to-be-built Post Oak Lodge.



Rancher Andrew Holton (left), one of the Gabriel House guys, pitching in at the Manicure. We had a big burn pile we lit at 8 a.m., to get a good hot fire going.



Down Home Ranch is working with the Texas Forest Service to become a “Firewise Community,” and, ultimately, a model community for fire safety. The first step is thinning trees and removing much of the brush that can become fuel for fast moving fires, to protect homes and other structures. Clearing the “pecan bottoms” will be a part of this effort, as we seek to be a safer, more beautiful and accessible ranch.

Frontier Bank of Texas in Elgin provided some underwriting so we were able to have Meyers B-B-Q cater the event and provide a “I Survived the Texas Chainsaw Manicure at Down Home Ranch” tee shirt for each laborer.



Jerry meets with Lexi (left) and Jan (right) of the Forest Service.

LEND A HAND!



D-DAY MEANS THAT DELL IS HERE!

A few years ago, we went to one of Dell's "Community Fairs," trying to stir up some volunteers. Boy, did we ever!

The multitude of Dell workers on various campuses has provided a wonderful groundswell of volunteers — we estimate over 400 individuals each working four to six (or more) hours in labor.

They have skinned greenhouses, clipped pointsettias, landscaped, pulled weeds, cleared brush, painted, hooked up technical equipment, hung sheetrock and done just about everything else asked of them.

And they've done it all well. We continue to be grateful for their wonderful help.



(Above) Dell volunteers putting new skin on the Llano greenhouses. Two layers of plastic are installed and then a pump blows air between the layers, inflating a space that helps keep the houses cooler in the summer and warmer in winter.

(Left) Dell volunteers finishing up a rock garden around Timothy House — which is now the bachelor pad of Michael and Mark.



SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION TO CAPSTONE CAMPAIGN ... LET THE BUILDING BEGIN!

The Capstone Campaign was about out of gas, sputtering along, when the Gala took place and some very wonderful pledges were made, finally putting us over the top.

A few of the pending awards were then released, and we've begun several projects that will be funded by Capstone.

Major work on greenhouses has been completed, and A/C in the Pavilion has been re-done as we prepare to remodel. We hope to be seeing our fifth cedar cabin going up soon, thanks to Joe and Abby of Rustic Cedar Cabins in Smithville.

And Mike Jack of Tentmaker Country Homes is working with us to get Post Oak Lodge, a four-bedroom cabin, built in time for Ranch Camp 2008.

This is an exciting time for the Ranch and we are thankful to all who made the Capstone Campaign the success it was. Joe, Abby, Mike, and many other suppliers and contractors have graciously pledged to the Capstone, continuing a partnership that has developed over the past decade.



The new barn welcomes the day beneath a beautiful sunrise. The old barn burned down several years ago when it was hit by lightning, and the new barn was funded by donations to the Perfect Challenge. Today, Ranchers on the "Barnstormers" work team spend each morning feeding and grooming the horses and donkeys. If time permits, they saddle up and ride a bit. Soon, chickens will be purchased for egg production, and dwarf dairy goats have been offered to the Ranch for milk. Pastures are being readied for beef cattle, which will provide top-quality, grass-fed, hormone-free meat for the Ranch.

OFF TO COLLEGE!

We met Danny when he first came to Ranch Camp in 1995. He declared then and there that he wanted to live here with his best buddy Michael. That dream came true in 2001.

After a few years in Gabriel House with Judy, Kelly, and me, Danny and Mike moved to Timothy House, the first independent living home on the Ranch.

Last year, Danny approached me and asked if he could speak with me about something. "Sure," I said. "You can talk to me about anything, Danny."

Haltingly, Danny said that he'd been thinking that he might want to move into Austin and get his own apartment. He was worried that my feelings would be hurt, but I assured him that, on the contrary, I was delighted to know he felt ready for a new challenge in life.

We talked with the Arc of Texas' Real Life Program while working on other important matters that had to be resolved before Danny's plans could go forward.

Then, in early August, Judy told me about a program she thought might prove to be a good intermediate step for Danny on his route to life in the big city on his own.

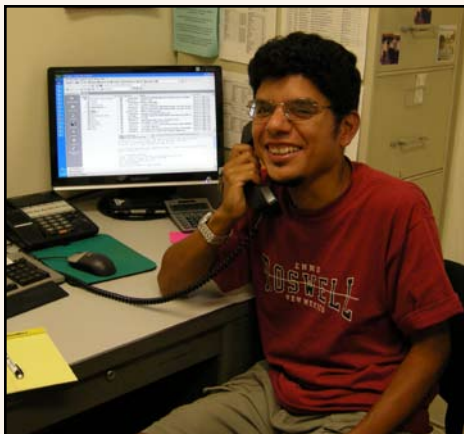
Shortly thereafter, Danny and I headed for Roswell, NM to



from the
**DIRECTOR'S
CHAIR**



Danny playing guitar at the home of new church friends in Roswell. Daniel always wanted to play the guitar and Judy Horton got him started. He took lessons in Austin, too, and has developed into a competent guitarist through hard practice and dedication. Danny knows more words to songs than anybody else at the Ranch and is enjoying the chance to sing and play with new people.



Daniel comes from a family of nine children. His mom always hoped her kids would go to college some day, and Danny is the first, enrolling at East New Mexico University in Roswell in August. Danny enjoys dorm life, has made friends at school and church, and is working mornings as an intern on a military base.

check out East New Mexico University's vocational certificate program. It looked like a good fit for Danny, and though he's hit a few rough patches, he's enjoying his classes, his working internship, and campus life. He's made friends in the community through the church he's attending, and found an outlet for his interest in music, too.

And what do you know — he only calls home when he needs more money. How typical is that!

This time next year, Danny will be living in Austin on his own and working a regular job. He's a smart, talented guy, and worth the investment that has been made in him over the years by the Ranch and its supporters.

Danny's story is unique, but we are dedicated to creating opportunities for lifelong learning — in every sense of the phrase — available to all our residents.

Contributions dedicated to the Continuing/Higher Education Fund will help this story come true for others along the way, in the time and manner appropriate for them.

We thank you for your support.



L. B. Harden of the Elgin Lion's Club presents Jerry and Judy with a contribution from the club and its thrift store. The Elgin Lions have been helping out the Ranch for as many years as it has been in operation, and was one of the very first service clubs to do so.



Sometimes it seems like it's always poinsettia season. This year we have invested major efforts to get eleven greenhouses up to speed with new fans, vents, heaters, plastic skin and shade cloth, thanks to funding from the Capstone Campaign.

THE WISH LIST

- Sewing machines in good working order
- Cloth material and scraps for quilting
- Bred Santa Gertrudis purebred cows
- Low mileage mini-van
- Barbed wire fencing
- Tickets to events
- DVDs & VHS tapes

Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.

Sir Winston Churchill

IT'S THE HIGH SEAS FOR THE SWIM FEST CREW AGAIN

Swim Fest was a big hit again this year, not the least because of the film crew from CBS taping and interviewing everybody.

Each house performed their one mile in the pool. Then it was time for awarding of the coveted Swim Fest trophy, which for two years in a row went to the Aggie-motivated women of Martha House. But they were bested by the guys from Barnabas House, who put forth an extraordinary effort!

Then it was time for hot dogs and hamburgers and more time in the pool.

The Swim Fest raises funds for the Ranchers' annual vacation, and the Village Council has decided by unanimous vote on another cruise, going out of Galveston the Monday after Thanksgiving. Bon voyage!



The Barnabas Buccaneers were not to be denied. They raised the most loot and absconded with the Swim Fest booty. "Aargh!" said Martha's Mermaids!



A LITTLE CULTURE IN THE SUMMER



Shakespeare at Winedale is a favorite summer outing for the Down Home crew. We bring a picnic dinner, enjoyed under the towering oaks, and then laugh and cry at a great production by University of Texas students. This year it was Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"MUST READ" BOOKS

When our daughter Kelly was born with Down syndrome in 1984, our first stop was the library. But, alas, what we found was mostly out-of-date and presented a very gloomy prospect for our new baby's life.

Today, with the Internet, new parents immediately connect with families who have stood in their shoes, and who are now flourishing. What a blessing! Now the challenge is to separate the wheat from the chaff, to find a true picture of the joys and challenges of raising a son or daughter with Downs. Two excellent books that belong in the hands of every parent of a child with DS are: *Mental Wellness in Adults with Down Syndrome*, by Chicoine/McGuire (Woodbine House, 2006), and *A Good Life*, edited by Al Etmanski (Orwell Cove and PLAN, 2004) which is appropriate for families of loved ones with any disability.

These two recent works address the issues young adults face after they leave high school and take up their adult lives, and do so with remarkable grace, compassion, and insight.

The educational, work, and social settings in which young adults without disabilities find themselves post-high school are laboratories for learning the myriad skills necessary to become a healthy, self-sufficient adult. This is a natural unfolding of the typical life

cycle, but one that is often not available to or required of young adults with disabilities. A major benefit of living in a community like Down Home Ranch is the opportunity of doing this hard work among peers who are facing similar challenges.



JUDY'S VIEWS

Our kids have every right to expect that their lives will grow and change over the years. These books provide excellent guidance for all who want to help them as they navigate life's uncertain journey.

We've always said we wanted our residents to enjoy the same opportunities and standard of living as their siblings – nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

CHURCHILLS HELPING TAKE RANCH REINS IN HAND

Denise and Don Churchill have been well acquainted with the Ranch over the years, as volunteers, camp cooks, and all-round wranglers of donkeys and other equines.

The Churchills, along with Donald III, Denae, and Donlyn, moved onto the Ranch property September 1 of last year. Don and Denise run Gabriel House and the younger D's live in the old camp center across the street.

Don and Denise have brought new energy, focus, and ideas to their work at the Ranch, in addition to a high level of competence and commitment.

Don immediately took over as manager of greenhouse operations, without any growing experience but with dedication to the task at hand and a fierce determination to do things right, bringing in the most beautiful crop of poinsettias to date.

In recognition of the Churchills' value and commitment to the Ranch, Don was named Director of Operations and Denise appointed Director of Programs. Denise

enjoys broad experience as a home educator and leader in 4H and other programs.

Judy Horton has moved into the Director of Development position and, with Executive Director Jerry Horton, will concentrate on fund development.



Kara Banta, Teresa House, with Denae, daughter of Don and Denise. Denae lives with her sister Donyln and brother Drei in the Camp Center, aka "Teen Heaven."

HORTONS BEGIN NEW JOURNEY ON FAMILIAR ROAD

by Jerry and Judy Horton

For many years we have labored to get to where we are today: 14 Ranchers enjoying a good life of opportunity, challenge, fun, work and friends.

Daniel is off to college, Kara wants to do some modeling and Julia is proud of her work as an Office Assistant Trainee. Each Rancher has a unique story and a personal, individualized life at the Ranch. This is their home, their place in the sun. This is their ranch.

We have long planned to delegate to competent others the day-to-day operations, and to return to the work we do best and which built the Ranch: fundraising. That day has now come.

Here is the truth. It is one thing to envision, create and build. We have done and are doing that.

But it is another — equally important

— to sustain what one has built. Benjamin Franklin told the people after the writing of the Constitution, "You have a republic, if you can keep it."

For that young country, and for this young organization, this is the task now before us. The doing of it will complete our journey. But, we have many miles to go.

We must build on the foundation laid and find many others to join us in being a part of Down Home Ranch far into the future.

We have the vehicle that will take us there, The 10K: 10,000 people giving 25 cents a day will give the Ranch the security it needs to ensure that our Ranchers will have a home for life.

Will you be one of those people? Will you ask others to help? We will go anywhere, talk to anyone, and do anything ethical to get there. Please, please help.

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GOODBYE TO THE FABULOUS POWERS WOMEN

With sadness but many happy (some hilarious) memories over several years of creative collaboration, we bid farewell to LeAnn Powers and daughter Stephanie as they assumed new positions this summer.

LeAnn has become VP in charge of Development for Lone Star Circle of Care, based in Georgetown, and Stephanie has finished her certification as a Special Education teacher. We wish them well.

