

The Spirit of



DOWN HOME RANCH

DECEMBER 2017

JOURNEY OF PURPOSE

As 2017 comes to a close, I look back on the year and reflect on the progress we have made in fulfilling the mission of Down Home Ranch. I want to say Thank You to our friends, families and supporters! It has been a phenomenal year and we couldn't have done it without you!

Early in 2017, we made a commitment to increase our focus on our Ranchers and the supports we provide. This has resulted in more choices and opportunities for everyone. The commitment we made to add direct support staff and expand our Day Program has been a huge success. After seeing a need in our community we decided to open up our Day Program to non-residents. We have since welcomed five people into our family and will continue to grow in 2018. A new partnership with Camp DRIVE has resulted in even more people from the community benefiting from respite camps at Down Home Ranch.

It is apparent that our focus in 2017 has been the people we serve. We looked at what, how and why we do things. During these conversations we started to look at our Mission Statement, "Elevating the lives of people with intellectual disabilities." As we articulated our interactions with the Ranchers, we realized our mission is more so a collaboration rather than us doing for them. We created new choices and opportunities for our Ranchers and then engaged them in the decision-making processes.

With this in mind, a new Mission Statement, that reflects this collaborative model, was established. After much discussion within the Leadership Team and the Board of Directors, we are ready to move into 2018 with a new Mission Statement: "Empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through Social, Educational, Residential and Vocational opportunities." We SERV our Ranchers!

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JOURNEY OF PURPOSE, CONTINUED

Additionally, we are looking at the various logos we have used and will be rolling out something new soon that will truly capture the uniqueness of DHR's mission.

The start of 2018 will see a continued focus on the people we serve and the programs that provide those services. We will be implementing an off-site work program opportunity for our residents. Ranch Camp will restart in 2018 with camps taking place the last three weeks of June. Applications will be available soon through our website with a limit of 30 campers per week. Year-round respite camps will continue to be offered through Camp DRIVE.

Additionally, one of our greatest challenges in 2018 and beyond is eldercare. It is a subject that will be at the forefront of our planning and discussions with our stakeholders.



Craig Russell, Executive Director



CRAIG RUSSELL
Executive Director

"Being a parent to children with intellectual disabilities is what first drove my passion for this work."

Craig's journey at Down Home Ranch started as a volunteer in 2012, assisting with technology while also fixing bikes for the Ranchers. He took his first formal position at DHR in 2013 with operations and day program while continuing to work with technology and development. Craig's involvement grew in 2014, when he accepted the position of Chief Operating Officer. He was then named Executive Director in 2017, and has focused on a commitment to increase supports provided to the Ranchers as well as creating more choices and opportunities.



MASTERY, TRIAL & ERROR AND EXPLORATION

by Director of Programs, Barry Hamilton

Over the past few months Day Program has gone through many changes to become a collaboration of various programs, including, but not limited to, continuing education, volunteerism, vocational opportunities and community engagement. These programs work hand-in-hand to support the Ranchers' right to have a full life of friendship, hard work, learning and happiness.

In the past, Day Program, Day Hab and Day Habilitation have all been used interchangeably to describe activities the Ranchers engage in Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Texas Department of Health and Human Services defines habilitation as assistance with getting, keeping or improving self-help, socialization and adaptive skills necessary to live successfully in the community and to participate in home and community life. However, the Day Program at Down Home Ranch includes much more than getting, keeping and improving; it involves mastery, trial and error, and exploration. Habilitation is a common theme throughout each of the programs, but it is used as a tool to support each Rancher in developing a stronger sense of self.

Before anything can move forward, we must always look to the past to learn from mistakes and celebrate successes. In filtering through more than eight years of computer files, countless binders, a library of curriculum, and talking with staff and Ranchers, we found the foundation for our new Day Program. By conducting interviews and interest surveys, a preferred class list slowly developed. The interests ranged widely, and luckily we have some very talented staff whose skills and expertise matched nicely. After two months of seemingly thoughtful work that was put into the development of the first quarter class schedule, it was given out to the Ranchers. The first piece of feedback on the schedule was "classes.. I already finished school." Yet another mistake to add to the list, the title of "classes" was promptly changed to "continuing education."

The structure that we settled on is focused on continuing education courses, clubs and skills training. Continuing Education is geared towards being exposed to new interests that could potentially develop into hobbies. Continuing Education requires lesson planning and a high level of involvement by the Program Specialist. Clubs do not require in-depth planning, but rather an agenda of what would be covered, and ideally would be mostly led by the Ranchers. Skills Training is largely planned by a Program Specialist and heavily influenced by the group of Ranchers targeted to learn these new skills. Using our list of preferred continuing education courses, each one was categorized accordingly in our structure.



(left to right) Rancher Mark designs a poster for one of his Art courses. Ranchers Ashley, Charles and David help Cassie harvest fresh veggies from the garden to be served to the other Ranchers during meal time. Rancher Travis tends to one of the miniature ponies as part of his job as Ranch Hand.



(left to right) Ranchers Cody and Jason help serve lunch as a part of their kitchen assistant duties. Robert tends to the chickens for his job as Ranch hand. Sonya stays active while playing basketball with friends during leisure time.


MASTERY, TRIAL & ERROR AND EXPLORATION, CONTINUED

After a few months of practice with the structure, we then turned our attention to the Direct Support Professional (DSP) training that is offered to each of our Program Specialists. After researching important skills to have as a DSP, a reoccurring theme we found emphasized a therapeutic relationship between the DSP and the individual with the disability.

There are many ways to define “therapeutic” for Day Program – it was decided if a Rancher reports that an activity or interaction was helpful, then it was therapeutic. We had to shift our thinking away from passing blame when a challenging issue arose, to instead gathering more information and problem solving. Verbal de-escalation techniques were practiced and the DSP’s became more knowledgeable on these basic counseling skills. Additionally, the Program Specialists now take part in regular verbal de-escalation trainings to learn more about relevant information.


Over time, the focus became to empower the Program Specialist to become more comfortable in their role, feel as though they have the tools to do their job well, and know that they can depend on other Program Specialists to do their part.

An interesting question came up about midway through the summer quarter: “What are we trying to accomplish?” After a team meeting and a few conversations, movement towards a better quality of life shifted into the forefront of our attention.



Mission of Day Program:

“To create an empowering environment for adults with IDD, through access to opportunities towards the fulfillment of their best selves.”



Interestingly enough, there is a large body of research that identifies specific quality of life (QoL) domains, and how beneficial it is as humans to have a multi-dimensional life. QoL is essentially determined by how engaged one is in particular life domains.

Day Program chose to specially look at four domains: physical health, psychological, social relationship and environment. Within these four domains, the World Health Organization has developed a list of facets that inherently make up each domain. To make these categories apply directly to the Ranchers, eight were chosen that most closely align with their needs. These eight include personal development (education), social inclusion (volunteer), physical (health), self-determination (having choices/religion), rights (equality), material (skills training), interpersonal relationship (relation) and emotional (feeling/expression).

In such a short period, we have established a solid focus for our Day Program which ensures the Ranchers have the choice and ability to take part in things they feel are interesting. The DSP’s have the skills to partner with the Ranchers during time of difficulty and guide them towards a workable, self-directed solution. Moving forward, we are constantly working towards bettering the structure of the program offered. I’m humbled by what we in Day Program have accomplished in such a short time and I look forward to many more years of discovery.

VOLUNTEER VIEW: SUZANNE BICE

Suzanne has worked with adults with intellectual disabilities for many years and has a deep passion for their well-being. She found us one day through social media and never turned back! We are so happy to have her as a Day Program volunteer. Here's a little more about her story:

What motivated you to volunteer with Down Home Ranch?

When I was young, maybe 8-12 years old, I spent a lot of time with my first cousin who was blinded by a brain stem tumor. She played the piano, taught seeing children to play the piano and hopelessly tried to teach me. She loved her family, her pets, and especially loved the time I spent with her. However, she lived a pretty secluded life back then.

Cindy was my inspiration. After spending our time together, I knew special education was going to be my career.

What makes volunteering with Day Program a meaningful use of your time?

Pretty simple, the “why” of my wanting to volunteer in the DHR Day Program. First, I love what DHR stands for, what their focus is, what they strive for each day – offering the Ranchers the opportunity to see, experience and be a real part of their big boundless outside world. But, mostly, I absolutely love being around these Ranchers. Love it. And wow have I learned so much from them and the amazingly caring and dedicated staff that make it all happen each and every day.



What is the biggest personal benefit that you've received as a volunteer?

I immediately learned that I don't know as much about these “special needs” folks as I thought I did. They amaze me, entertain me, move me, inspire me to be better, to know more and to add to their life experience however possible. The feeling that I get the moment I drive onto that property is quite possibly the best part of it all. I feel happy. I feel joyful. I feel hopeful for the now and the future for these special, special people.

What do you wish other people knew about working with individuals with disabilities?

If there is one thing I wish everyone knew and understood about the Ranchers at DHR, it is that these amazing people are just like us. They want the same things we want... to be happy and to have fulfilled lives. The disabilities that brought the Ranchers to DHR are not what define these incredible folks. They are so much more than their disability.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering at the Ranch?

When someone asks me “why”, I have lots to say. When someone asks if it's a good place for them to check out as a volunteer opportunity, I say yes! When they tell me they don't know anything about special needs folks, I just say, come out and let's get started. All we need to make a difference in their lives is a willingness to learn and a heart to say welcome. That little empty spot in your world just may need a little Down Home Ranch time. Fill yourself up! Sure fills my soul. We all have a special fit someplace. For me it's the Day Program, interacting with these amazing Ranchers and their ultra-amazing staff.



(left to right) Ashley, John and Rebekah show off some of the beautiful fresh cut flowers they helped to produce!

LOCALLY GROWN FLOWERS *By Lead Gardener, Cassie Franke*

I will be the first to admit that at one time I thought growing beautiful cut flowers here in the USA was not possible. Surely all the gorgeous blooms seen in grocery stores and florist shops had to be grown somewhere tropical. I realize now that is simply not true! The year I was born, 1991, 64% of the nation's flower sales came from domestic sources. However, that same year, the Andean Trade Preference Agreement was certified, eliminating the tariffs on certain imports from countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Columbia. Twenty-six years later, Columbia alone now supplies 78% of our nation's cut flowers. But something is changing.

Much like the rampant rise in interest for locally sourced and grown food, people are starting to take notice of where cut flowers are being produced. Locally sourced food is not only healthier and better for the environment, but it also supports local businesses. This same awareness movement is being seen in the floral industry. Brides, event planners, even florists themselves are taking an interest in locally-grown flowers. Not only are they fresher, usually picked just a day or two before delivery, but in most cases they are cheaper without the high shipping costs. Local flower farmers can grow unique specialty flowers that big growers cannot spend time cultivating. Learning what grows in different seasons gives farmers and consumers alike a better understanding of their environment and unique climate.

All of this is great news, but how does it affect our sweet Down Home Ranch? Since May of 2017, we have started growing our own cut flowers. We saw interest in some flowers grown in our garden at a fair this past year, and decided to take a chance to expand our revenue sources for the ranch. The response has been great so far! The florists love our unique, fresh blooms, and appreciate being able to support the ranch and the great cause we stand for. Though our flower garden is small at the present, we plan on expanding for the 2018 season in hopes of bringing more bountiful blooms not only to local florists, but to you guys as well! We are just starting out in this new endeavor, but we appreciate all the support we have received so far. Personally, I am excited to see what next season will bring!

Check out our website to find locally grown flowers in your area!

ART FROM THE HEART *By Mark Smith, Ph.D*

The Ranchers at Down Home Ranch have been making arts & crafts for a long time. There are some very talented artists among them, but no matter their skill level or native talent, all the art students enjoy being creative in the Enterprise Art Studios.

As a new art teacher with a background in printmaking and mixed-media, I am working to broaden the artistic experiences of my Rancher students. We do this by introducing several new media and techniques. One of those is Caran d' Ache color crayons and pencils. Made in Switzerland, these allow the students to easily apply color in a dry form. Then, minimal water is applied by brush, creating painterly watercolors. Many of the works created are on archival "rag" paper, but canvases and other supports – such as metal and wood – are also used. In these mixed-media classes, we use many other art materials and processes, such as acrylic paint, color markers, graphite and collage. One of the popular techniques is to create backgrounds of literary book pages, then draw and paint on top of them, creating unique combinations of literature and visual art.

Some of the Ranchers are very experienced artists who have been making impressive art for years. Others are making art for the first time, and yet, are creating some powerful works. Sometimes, the beginners create some of the most amazing art, once they have been allowed to unlock their inner aesthetics.

*I teach on the theory that every human is an artist;
all we need to do is help each one find the artist within.*

Some of the Ranchers' works are purchased by the organization, to be used on greeting cards and other products. Others will be framed to decorate the ranch buildings or sold in the gift shop. There are even embroidered items that Director of Programs and Behavioral Services Barry Hamilton is developing, along with some stained-glass works. New medias are constantly being added.

Currently, we are preparing a new art studio that will feature printmaking processes such as dry-point engraving, monotypes, linoleum cuts and silkscreen. Located within a red barn in the "Spur" area of the property, it is in an idyllic setting, with Japanese Wagyu cattle as our fellow neighbors.

One thing is for sure: no matter the skill level of the student, or the media used, there will be some intriguing art produced in the ranch's art studios.

ART CLASS MANTRA - COURTESY OF DAVID BYRNE:

"STOP MAKING SENSE"



Mark works hand-in-hand with our Ranchers in creating their masterpieces.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

We are very excited to announce that we are expanding our sales this year, exclusively partnering with H-E-B in Elgin to offer our poinsettias in store! If you are an Elgin local or just passing through, this is your opportunity to pick up a last-minute hostess gift for a holiday party or a nice surprise for your neighbor! Starting November 20, you will find our beautiful red and white holiday blooms adorning the floral department of H-E-B Elgin!



Want to donate supplies, but live too far to drop them off? Our **Amazon Wishlist** is the perfect solution! Your gifts can be shipped directly to us with no hassle!

Simply search Down Home Ranch under "Find a list or registry" on Amazon and our wishlist will pop right up.



Also, don't forget to shop for everyone on your gift list this holiday season at smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2536461 and Amazon donates a percentage of your purchase to Down Home Ranch!



TOM AND SONYA TAKE WASHINGTON!

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competitions for children and adults throughout our state. All of our Ranchers participate in at least one sport each year! We're very excited to announce that two of our Ranchers have been chosen to attend the National competition next year in Seattle, WA, alongside 148 other Team Texas athletes.

Tom will be competing in unified bowling, alongside his partner, Matt. He has been wanting to attend Nationals for years and is anxiously waiting for the day to come! **Sonya** will be competing in the paddle boarding competition and is proud to be one of the first Texas athletes to compete in this sport at Nationals!



If you'd like to financially support our athletes' journey to Nationals 2018, you can do so by contacting Casey@downhomeranch.org

VILLAGE COUNCIL

BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER



Village Council is a weekly opportunity for Ranchers to work together to identify and resolve issues in their community and be represented by their peers to DHR administration. Ranchers hold elections each year to select their council members, and those who serve on the Village Council gain valuable leadership and communication skills throughout their term. In addition to gaining organizational and time management skills, serving as an example to their fellow Ranchers and practicing listening skills are key elements to service on the Village Council. It is an opportunity for creative problem-solving and working towards positive change for everyone at Down Home Ranch.



ALAINA
Mayor

"I enjoy serving as mayor so that I can be a positive influence on my friends."

Alaina's job as Mayor is to represent the views of her fellow Ranchers and serve as their voice in monthly meetings with the DHR leadership team. She also conducts votes when issues arise and speaks on behalf of her community.



JOHN
Vice Mayor

"I chose to serve to help other people by creating a more positive environment."

John gathers announcements and organizes the order for speakers at Village Council meetings in his role as Vice Mayor. He also coordinates with DHR staff on weekend activities and fills in for the Mayor when she is not available.



SONYA
Secretary

"Being involved in a group activity that serves the Ranchers makes me happy."

As secretary, Sonya records notes for changes and requests expressed by her fellow Ranchers and shares that information with the Mayor. She also makes announcements during Village Council meetings and helps with meeting planning.



KRISTEN
Spokesperson

"Talking about everyone's Good Deeds makes me feel happy and special."

Kristen's role as Spokesperson includes recording Good Deeds performed by Ranchers and recognizing those actions during weekly Village Council meetings. She also makes lunch announcements when needed.



NATALIE
Activities Coordinator

"I like getting to know the Ranchers a little better by hearing their favorite activities."

Natalie's work as Activities Coordinator includes soliciting input from Ranchers for weekend activity ideas, coordinating plans, writing up activities lists, communicating activity offerings to the Ranchers and assisting with meeting logistics.

14TH ANNUAL GALA

We thank our lucky stars for all those who helped make the 2017 Gala a special, record-breaking event!

This year's Gala had the largest attendance in history and we have YOU to thank for that! Your generous support helps ensure that our Ranchers will forever have a place to live, work, learn and play.



A special shout-out goes to our compassionate

★ GOLD SPONSORS ★

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Bastrop County's Bank...Since 1889
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Heidi & Gary Holliday

DHR MONTHLY DONORS - OUR VOICE FOR CHOICE DHR

Are you considering joining the ranks of our most passionate and dedicated supporters?
If so, your automatic monthly gift will help provide the sustained resources needed to accelerate the ways Down Home Ranch elevates the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Choice of Activity

\$10 a month provides a fun and exciting community outing for a Rancher. Whether it's attending a collegiate baseball game or exploring a Texas State Park, you're giving Ranchers the chance to make long lasting memories with friends.

JOIN



Choice of Education

For just \$25 a month, you'll help us offer a wide range of enriching, vital courses, including technology, mixed media arts, outdoor exploration, sports, animal science and much, much more.

JOIN



Choice of Job

For \$50 per month, you'll give our Ranchers the choice of working in a vocation that they love, and training to help them further their skills. We currently offer jobs in culinary arts, animal care, administration, grounds keeping/maintenance, janitorial and horticulture.

JOIN



Choice of Housing

Our community provides personalized living arrangements while giving our Ranchers all the benefits and opportunities of living in a communal setting. For \$100 per month, you give our Ranchers a choice of residence in a safe, supportive community.

JOIN



Donor's Choice

We welcome your support at whatever level best suits your family. However much you decide to give, know that the entire DHR community is deeply grateful.

JOIN



Check this out!

The Memorial Garden project starting in 2018 will be an ongoing venture into the everlasting tributes that monogrammed bricks and stones can provide. We want to give a way for our families and friends of the Ranch to have permanent recognition of their dedication to the mission of Down Home Ranch. One goal of this endeavor is to create a landscaped memorial garden, as a place of rest, repose and reflection that everyone can enjoy.

By purchasing one of the first 400 bricks, you will become a *Cornerstone Member* of this project, receiving a signed certificate of membership and permanent recognition at the garden's entrance!



☒ Yes, I would like to make an everlasting tribute!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____



Make checks payable to
Down Home Ranch
20250 FM 619
Elgin, TX 78621



Information to be laser engraved on a 4" x 8" brick:
Up to 20 characters per line, including spaces and punctuation.
A completed form is required for each brick.

Please print clearly

If you would like to dedicate this donation, please email development@downhomeranch.org with the name and mailing address of the person you would like to be notified.

**Save a stamp,
order online!**

Bricks are 100% tax deductible!

www.downhomeranch.org/memorial-garden

_____ Cornerstone Bricks x \$200 = \$_____ Total

To: Our Closest Friend

"He relishes the stars in the rural night sky. The ability to wear boots and a cowboy hat as a daily uniform is delightful. His purpose now is to help wherever he can, whenever he can, because he can. There is a feel at the ranch that is peaceful, loving, inclusive and welcoming. Everyone has a place or a role."
– Elizabeth, sister of Rancher John (featured on the right)



DOWN HOME RANCH, INC.

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downhomeranch



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If you would like to change your mailing preferences, please email development@downhomeranch.org

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Craig Russell.....Board Member
Martha AdamsBoard Member
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