

The Spirit of



SUMMER 2019

CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS! *By Courtney Ferris, Development Director*

What was once a dream of opportunity for people with disabilities, Down Home Ranch has turned into a thriving organization that fosters community, fuels social enterprise and inspires joy for people with and without disabilities. While we cannot detail the complete journey of DHR into this one page story, we're taking some time to highlight five huge milestones since we were officially recognized by the State of Texas on May 12, 1989.

1993 - The first greenhouse was donated to the Ranch. Not only did this donation pave the way for the revenue-generating DHR Gardens program that still exists today, but it also kickstarted the DHR Day Program. After the donation, four local adults with disabilities began coming to the Ranch twice a week for the first formal Day Program. Even from the beginning, vocational skills training and paid employment were built into the core of what Day Program was built to provide. To this day, Ranchers and staff work together in the first donated greenhouse – and the twelve others that were graciously donated through the years.

1995 - Ranch Camp began serving teens and adults with disabilities. During the first week of camp, 13 Campers, ages 18 to 45, joined together for drama skits, nature walks, crafts, swimming, sports and more. Later that summer, 13 more Campers, ages 10 to 17, experienced their own joyful week at summer camp. While many of the activities have stayed consistent through the years, the facilities have been upgraded from our humble beginnings. Today's Campers will find air conditioned buildings and comfortable mattresses during their stay, but the 26 original Campers experienced a much more primitive style of camp. The Texas National Guard in Taylor, TX donated tents and cots for the first years of Ranch Camp. Through the years since, thousands of people, from across the US and even a few international

(1995 Continued) friends, have come to Camp. The 2019 season brought 101 Campers to DHR!

2002 - The first permanent residential home, Gabriel House, officially opened on the Ranch. This was the start of the Residential Program, allowing for Ranchers and staff to live in the home together, learning from one another and building community. The mission of DHR was always to be a residential community for adults with disabilities. Gabriel House's opening signaled the true beginning of this mission.

2015 - Three Ranchers moved into their very own micro house thanks to a grant from the Hoblitzelle Foundation. While the Residential Program had already been around for 13 years, this new housing style opened new doors for the people DHR serves. Each micro house is equipped with a common living and kitchen area, private bedroom and private bathroom. The newest housing option on the Ranch, micro houses provide the American dream and allow three Ranchers to live in their very own home. The demand for

this independent-living style home is high and thanks to a new grant from Still Water Foundation and a generous anonymous donation, three more micro houses are coming to DHR in late 2019.

2016 - DHR's Day Program opened up to the greater community. This was a huge milestone, as it allowed people from the community to still be a part of the social, educational and vocational opportunities that DHR provides. Whether attendees join one day a week or all five, each weekday is filled with programming that enriches the quality of life for attendees. Since the change, 13 people have been able to be a part of Down Home Ranch Day Program, no matter where they choose to live.





LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Down Home Ranch has 410 acres, 32 cattle, 65 chickens, 13 greenhouses, 3 horses, 5 mini horses, 3 donkeys, 20 vehicles, a growing residential program, a robust day program, over 30 full-time employees and about 20 part-time employees, an expanding enterprise program (including a Co2 laser), plus many buildings to maintain. It is very easy to get sidetracked with managing all of the work it takes to ensure the organization runs smoothly. A good portion of my time is spent on the computer in my office overseeing the finances and the operations of the Ranch.

One day a Rancher came to me and asked me to take him for a ride through the woods on my Ranger. My first reaction was to say that I was too busy. I took a moment and focused on the individual in front of me. I thought about his life and the mission that drives us forward.

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I asked myself why I am here. It is to serve this individual that lives here and to give him the best possible life while he is under our care.

”

It was during that moment that my priorities were realigned with the needs of the individual. It is an amazing thing when we put the needs of others before our own. This was the beginning of an idea for the “See Me” campaign.

I want everyone to see our Ranchers as individuals. I want you to explore their talents, hopes and dreams. It is through your support that we are able to embrace the desires of every Rancher. It is my hope that you share in every success that our Ranchers achieve. Take this journey with us and see our Ranchers as the amazing people that they are.

Craig Russell, Executive Director

I would like to personally invite you to take an insiders look into the Social, Educational, Residential and Vocational opportunities we offer here at Down Home Ranch. On the first Wednesday of every month, we host a Tour of SERVICE that is open to the public. I hope to see you out at the Ranch!

RSVP ONLINE AT: WWW.DOWNHOMERANCH.ORG/TOURS

BEYOND THE OFFICE

By Kelly Clarke, Development Associate
An inside look in the life of the Executive Director

Hanging on the walls in Craig's office are a handful of Rancher paintings, pictures of his family and various certificates and awards. For Craig, when he looks at those sentimental items, there is one in particular that instills the foundation of why he is at Down Home Ranch. When Craig was in 6th grade, he had the choice to goof off during study hall period (which most middle school kids would do!), or spend the hour volunteering in a classroom for children with disabilities. Craig chose the latter. The certificate hanging on his wall is to honor his "dedication to the welfare of his community in educational distinction," a commitment which became a core component in his personal and professional life. Craig's journey to Down Home Ranch began with that certificate.

Immediately after graduating high school, Craig joined the military and dedicated the next 3 years of his life serving in the Marines. Spending time overseas and specializing in communications helped to prepare him for his next step in life. He ended up in California where he spent the next 11 years working in retail security and management, learning hard lessons in what it means to be a successful leader. As time passed, Craig eventually worked his way into the technology department at ARCO (now known as BP oil and gas). Over the next 13 years, Craig developed a powerful understanding of technology, analytics and financials. A milestone in his career came when he and his team were recognized for saving BP \$1.0 million in maintenance expenses by incorporating technology processes and procedures into their point of sale system. Due to his dedication and expertise, Craig earned a handful of recognitions during his career with BP, including being a part of a team that was nominated for the prestigious BP Helios Award.

During his time in California, Craig and his wife Naomi, along with their son Daniel and step-son Austin, made the decision to move to Texas. After researching opportunities for Daniel and Austin, both of whom have an intellectual disability, they became convinced that Round Rock, TX was the right choice for their family. In 2009, they made the move! Shortly after relocating, Naomi accepted a position at Down Home Ranch as Residential Manager. As a condition of employment, Craig and his family came to live on Ranch property. This move became the start of Craig's involvement with the Ranch. While working odd hours for the IRS, Craig found spare time during the day to repair and maintain Ranchers' bicycles. Not long after he began volunteering, he was filled with a desire to do more. On a leap of passion, he quit his job at the IRS and began working for the DHR Operations team. Shortly after accepting this position, his analytical and financial skills were put to better use when he shifted roles and started managing Ranch technologies and helping in 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 his efforts on increasing the supports provided to the Ranchers by creating more choices and opportunities.

Craig contributes to his role as the Executive Director in two ways – one as a leader and the other as a parent. This unique outlook has allowed for growth while still staying true to the mission. As he moves the organization forward, Craig believes that every single step must revolve around providing the highest quality of life for the Ranchers. Through this belief, he has put person centered planning at the forefront when creating the Ranch's vision and strategic plan. He allows for collaboration within the organization, ensuring that he is accessible and approachable to all. In the end, it is imperative to him that Down Home Ranch continues to provide a community of opportunity with respect, compassion and empowerment for all.



OFF-SITE EMPLOYMENT

By Robert Schier, Enterprise Program Manager
Cultivating community relationships

While the Ranch has always been proud of our ability to offer onsite employment to Ranchers, much interest has grown in having jobs off the Ranch, even for few hours a week. The need to support and engage those who desire to pursue this work is an incredibly important part of our mission. DHR currently supports four Ranchers with part-time employment in Elgin, as well as part-time vocational training for one additional Rancher. Join me in learning more about Travis, Kyle, Mark, Crystal and Natalie and the ways that off-site vocations are unique to each.



Travis has worked for H-E-B grocery stores since 2006. He began his career in San Antonio, TX, learning how to bag groceries, stock shelves and greet customers. When he moved to Down Home Ranch in 2008, he transferred to the Elgin H-E-B, where he currently works every Thursday. Working in such a vital store in the community gives Travis fulfillment and pride. His skills have increased through the years and he has formed relationships with coworkers and customers alike.



Similar to his fellow Rancher, Kyle also works for H-E-B in Elgin, TX. He began working there in 2018 and looks forward to many more years of employment. Kyle spends his shifts bagging groceries, bringing in carts and happily greeting customers. Working at H-E-B makes Kyle feel like a valued member of the community by networking with people off the Ranch who appreciate him for all his hard work.



In 2018, Mark became the Recreation Facilities Assistant at the newly built Elgin Recreation Center. His duties include cleaning gym equipment, maintaining the bathrooms and completing sports equipment checks. For Mark, working at the Rec Center gives him a sense of purpose. He feels proud putting on his uniform and finds joy in the job duties. His favorite part about working at the Rec is getting to shoot a few hoops with people from the community before leaving for the day!



Crystal's unique perspective has allowed her to excel in her role as a Peer Support Specialist for Camp DRIVE, a weekend respite camp for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities held on the Down Home Ranch property. Crystal has worked one weekend a month since 2018. She spends her time assisting the Campers with crafts or sports activities, encouraging them when they are nervous or upset and supporting them to build friendships. To Crystal, working for Camp DRIVE fills her with pride. She adores the Campers and enjoys interacting with them and their families.



For vocational skills training and volunteer efforts, Natalie desired to work at the Elgin Public Library. She was given the opportunity back in 2018 and is overjoyed to be able to work there every Wednesday. She spends her time checking in books, making library cards, tagging books and chatting with visitors. As an author herself, Natalie blossoms when she is around books. She treasures her time spent at the library and looks forward

Working in the community gives these five Ranchers a special bond with the people they encounter. By having a job in the community, they are more connected to the community as a whole, benefitting everyone involved. Down Home Ranch does have several other Ranchers seeking employment opportunities off the Ranch. If your business is interested in learning more about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, please contact us today at Robert@downhomeranch.org.

RANCH CAMP 2019 *By Ashley Oliver, Camp Co-Director*

Year two of Ranch Camp has come and gone and our hearts are full. This summer we welcomed both first time campers and old pros. As always, the moment we began to see their faces, we knew that the past year's work was more than worth it.

Over three week-long sessions, we welcomed over 100 Campers to Down Home Ranch. During this time, we enjoyed hayrides, arts and crafts, working with the animals, kayaking, fishing, pool parties, our famous Western Dance and so much more. However, the best part about camp was the community that formed in such a short amount of time.

“

We run Camp similar to others, but what separates us from the rest is that our counselors truly take time to meet each Camper at their individual need.

”

Our counselors know the importance of celebrating these needs and empowering each Camper, whether it be displaying their gifts at the talent show or sharing their hearts during team building.

“C-A-M-P, camp is the place for me. C-A-M-P, camp is the place for you and me. C-A-M-P, camp is the place for EVERYBODY!” This chant was the theme for this summer. A place for everyone to come and know they belong. As we have already started prepping for next summer, we continue with this mindset.



LOOKING FOR A FALL FUNDRAISER?

Fundraise with Down Home Ranch Poinsettias and Double Your Impact



- » While raising money for your program, you are directly supporting vocational skills training and paid employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- » By taking advantage of quantity discounts, you can boost your profit margin up to 50%
- » We provide flexible delivery dates Monday - Saturday, between Thanksgiving & Christmas
- » We provide personalized user-friendly order forms that you can edit to fit your needs
- » Many schools and organizations such as Veritas Academy and University United Methodist Church have had proven success selling DHR Poinsettias as their Fall fundraiser year after year

Contact Laura at LauraZ@downhomeranch.org or visit our website at downhomeranch.org/poinsettias for more information!

LEAVE YOUR MARK ON DOWN HOME RANCH!

Smithville Tigers
Softball
Champions 2018

**HONOR YOUR FAVORITE
TEAM OR BUSINESS**

Happy Anniversary
Laura and Brad!
Love, Perry and Peyton

**COMMEMORATE A SPECIAL
EVENT OR MEMORY**

In Loving Memory
of Steve Smith
Love, Mom

**MEMORIALIZE A LOVED
ONE**

By making a \$200 gift, you will become a Cornerstone Member of the DHR Memorial Garden, receiving a signed certificate of membership and permanent recognition at the entrance of the garden.

www.downhomeranch.org/memorial-garden

The Kienlen Family
Supports
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Bricks are 100% tax deductible!



BUILDING STABLE RELATIONSHIPS

Showcasing the horsemanship programs offered through DHR

Off-Site Programs By Cedric Wilson, Program Specialist

Casa De Miel and Healing with Horses are the two off-site equestrian facilities that the Ranchers attend. As their mentor in both horse programs, I've noticed the mental and physical progress the Ranchers are making with every lesson. The one improvement I have seen for each Rancher is increased confidence overall. The joy they express before and after each lesson is contagious. Through increased involvement in these programs, many more Ranchers will be able to experience these life-changing lessons.



At Healing for Horses in Manor, TX the lessons are structured around Equine therapy. During the lesson an equine professional works with the Ranchers to develop a strong relationship between the Rancher and the horse by teaching them basic horsemanship, grooming techniques and trail riding practices. As the Rancher's individual skill sets improve, they are encouraged by their improvement and it motivates them to foster further progress.



Casa De Miel is known as the first ever eco-therapy center in Texas, with lessons focusing on mindfulness and understanding by creating a bond between the Ranchers and horses. Instructors Aliyah and Timea teach the Ranchers to practice awareness in the present moment, while calmly acknowledging the horses natural herd instincts. The Ranchers have brought enthusiasm, curiosity and kindness to this new facility and the program staff continue to be impressed at what their unique life experiences bring to the program.



On-Site Program By Naomi Russell, Animal Care Specialist

The program I teach is called a Horsemanship Class, which is a non-horse riding class. The Ranchers go through a 12 week long course where they are taught everything from horse safety to horse care. The lessons focus on learning the horses natural instincts, how they sense their surroundings and how they communicate. Through these main points of focus, the Ranchers will learn basic horsemanship, horse body parts, grooming, bridling, saddling and how to lead and desensitize a horse. The Ranchers benefit physically, mentally and emotionally from these lessons through increased walking, motor coordination, confidence building, and bonding. By learning to work together as a team around the horses the Ranchers also experience positive shifts in their cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being.

SWIM FEST & FIELD DAY 2019

The competition was hot!

On June 1st, 65 athletes competed in track and field, golf, swimming, flag football and basketball, showing off their best skills while having an absolute blast alongside their teammates and friends. We were so excited to have two outside teams come from the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas (DSACT) and LiveOak Living Community to join in on the fun! At the end of the day, the scores were tallied from all of the sporting events and medals were presented to the following winning teams:

1ST PLACE - DHR Silver Fins

2ND PLACE - LiveOak Living Community

3RD PLACE - DHR Riptides

BEST SPORTSMANSHIP - DHR Day Program Barracudas

AWESOME ATTITUDE AWARD - DSACT Dynamo

MOST HUSTLE - DHR Tidal Waves

BEST TEAMWORK - DHR Tiger Sharks

*Save the Date for
Swim Fest & Field Day!
June 6, 2020*

In addition to the sports competitions, the DHR teams all went head to head in a fundraising challenge. Congratulations to the ***Tidal Waves*** for taking the top spot! In total, the teams raised \$12,035 to support the mission of Down Home Ranch!

We want to send out a special thank you to Mineral Springs Baptist Church in Lockhart, TX and all of the volunteers who helped make this event run smoothly, as well as the coaches & athletes who helped make it such a fun day. We look forward to seeing you all next year for Swim Fest & Field Day 2020!



SCHWABBIES BACK IN ACTION!

Charles Schwab Volunteer Week 2019

For the second year in a row, we had the pleasure of hosting Austin area Schwabbies at Down Home Ranch for their annual Charles Schwab volunteer week! This generous group of volunteers spent the day moving cattle, cleaning up old fence lines, clearing brush and securing a more durable shelter for our three beloved donkeys.

In addition to their volunteer efforts, Charles Schwab has donated \$6,000 since June 2018 towards the mission of Down Home Ranch! We are so grateful for these spectacular Schwabbies who have given back to DHR year after year. Through your service and dedication you have created empowering opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. On behalf of all the staff, Ranchers and animals of DHR, we thank you!



DINE FOR GOOD WITH DOWN HOME RANCH

Dine for Good is a year long series of awareness fundraisers for Down Home Ranch. The goal of the series is to spread the word about the residential, summer camp, respite and day program services we offer to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, while also driving business to the partner that is kindly collaborating on each event.

UPCOMING EVENTS



SEPT. 3RD & 24TH



NOVEMBER 4TH

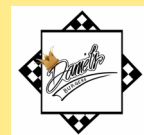


OCT. 2ND, 9TH, 16TH, 23RD & 30TH



DECEMBER 5TH

THANKS TO OUR PAST PARTNERS





JOIN US FOR A

DOWN HOME COUNTY FAIR

celebrating thirty years of empowering the lives of people with disabilities

PRESENTED BY:



Gary & Heidi Holliday

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 21ST 5 - 10 PM

BASTROP CONVENTION & EXHIBIT CENTER

09-21-2019	HAPPY HOUR	09-21-2019	LIVE & SILENT AUCTIONS	09-21-2019	CATERED DINNER	09-21-2019	FAIR GAMES	09-21-2019	FAMILY FRIENDLY	09-21-2019
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BLAKE TORREY BAND!

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COUPLES TICKET \$190

CHILD TICKET \$50 (12 & UNDER)

RESERVED TABLE FOR EIGHT \$700

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OF CHAMPIONS**



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I Give Here®**
Amplify Austin

Through the 2019 online fundraising event, Amplify Austin, \$25,488 was raised through the generosity of 214 friends of Down Home Ranch!



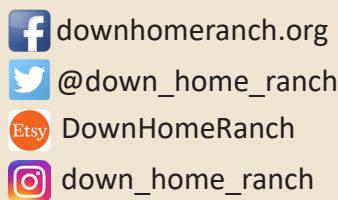
DOWN HOME RANCH, INC.

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888-926-2253 or 512-856-0128

Website: www.DownHomeRanch.org

Email: info@DownHomeRanch.org



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gary Holliday.....	Chairman of the Board
Martha Adams.....	Board Member
Gena Carter.....	Board Member
Jason Free.....	Board Member
Craig Russell.....	Board Member
Mat Rybicki.....	Board Member

ADMINISTRATION & FULLTIME STAFF

Cynthia Alonzo	Day Program Supervisor
Layton Booker.....	DSP Isaiah House
Clarissa Chapa	HCS/IL Residential Manager
Kelly Clarke	Development Associate
Sara Dare	Kitchen Assistant
Casey Dickerson, QIDP ..	Director of Client Services
Cami Erickson	Kitchen Supervisor
Cortney Ferris	Development Director
Stephanie Figueroa	Registered Nurse
Ashley Fleming	DSP Wilderness House
Jacquie Gallagher	Accountant
Erin Garner	DSP Anderson House
William Hamilton	DSP Barnabas House
Barry Hamilton, LCSW	Chief Operations Officer
Benjamin Herald.....	Maintenance Specialist
Brian Loer	Head Grower
Sydney Luna	DSP Teresa House
Danny Marin	Program Specialist
Johnny Meredith	DSP Gabriel House
Kelley Moore	Medical Coordinator
Kirsten Nadeau, QIDP	Case Manager/Care Coordinator
Annette Ragan	Office Administrator
Craig Russell	Executive Director
Naomi Russell.....	Animal Husbandry Supervisor
Thomas Salmela	Maintenance Manager
Christi Sanchez	DSP Eagle House
Robert Schier III	Enterprise Program Manager
Barbara Sloan	Residential Weekend Supervisor
Brandie Smith	Program Specialist
Angie Torres.....	Program Manager
Megan Torres	Program Specialist
Tomea Walker	Arts & Craft Job Coach
Ariel Warlick	DSP Anderson House
Cedric Wilson	Program Specialist
Laura Zipoy	Executive Assistant