

# Moments

Spring 2023

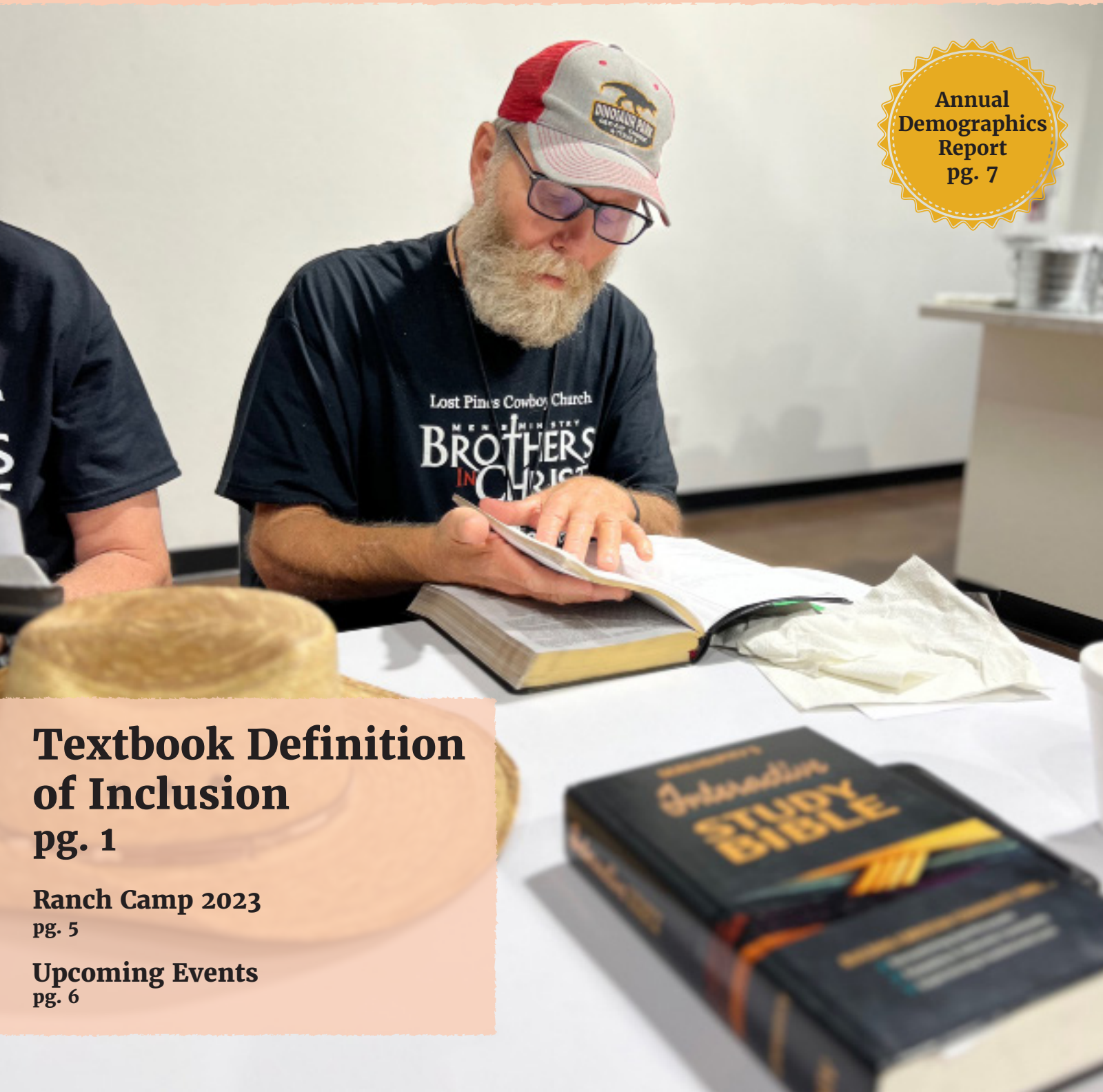


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(left) John prays in his small group alongside other attendees (right) John and Charles proudly wear their Men's Retreat t-shirts

## Textbook Definition of Inclusion

By: Kelly Clarke, Development Director

Personal choice and autonomy are two core values of Down Home Ranch programming. Ranchers are encouraged to participate in activities they enjoy, including their choice of religious services. For over a decade, a group of Ranchers have attended Sunday morning service at Lost Pines Cowboy Church (LPCC) in Elgin, TX. When attending services, Ranchers state they feel welcomed and loved by the entire church community. Some even say that attending church services at LPCC is the highlight of their week!

Last month, two Ranchers were overjoyed when they had the opportunity to attend a weekend long Men's Retreat with the LPCC members. Leader of the Men's Ministry, Mike Keller, was honored to have John and Charles attend the retreat and was thankful for the DHR staff who helped to coordinate their attendance. "It was a blessing to watch John and Charles engage, pray and give thanks to God. They were truly appreciative of the opportunity to experience and see God at work. I have already booked next year and hope they, as well as others, can attend," Mike states.

Attending the Men's Retreat goes way beyond surface level enjoyment for John and Charles. People with Intellectual and Developmental disabilities are often not included in activities or groups, a somber reality known

worldwide by the disability community. The invitation by Mike to attend the Men's Retreat is a textbook definition of inclusion. The moment John and Charles received their Men's Retreat invitation, they knew they were not only included, but they were wanted.

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**"It was truly amazing to see John and Charles worship and participate in the way that they did. The memory of when we prayed over each other in our small group is one I will never forget."**

—Layton Brooker, Residential Manager

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John's favorite part about the retreat was "Getting to know the other guys because it made me feel good." Charles stated, "I liked the Pastor and the good food. Fishing was fun!" We are extremely grateful to Mike and the LPCC congregation for including John and Charles in this memorable weekend. The moments shared at the Men's Retreat are beautiful reminders of just how good life can be when surrounded by loved ones.





(left) Hale and Alex smiling for the camera

(right) Alex shows Hale how to hug the horses at Casa de Miel on the day they became best friends

# Finding Friendship

By: Kelly Clarke, Development Director

There is truly something special about the friendships that form at Down Home Ranch. When one of the newest Ranchers, Hale, joined the DHR residential program in August 2022, he not only found a community of many new friends, but he found his best friend too. “They immediately had their own unique way of communicating with each other and they quickly became friends,” DHR Program Specialist, Kaitlin, states. Alex and Hale first met on a sunny summer day when they traveled to Casa de Miel in Manor, TX. Every week a group of Ranchers go to Casa de Miel for restorative horse-facilitated and nature-based experiences that foster pause, presence and connection for people.

The memorable moments shared between Alex and Hale while grooming the horses helped build the foundation for the beautiful friendship they

have today. Kaitlin will never forget the joy on their faces that day as their friendship blossomed. “Alex liked to show Hale how to pet and hug the horses. Neither of them said much, but Hale would mimic what Alex was doing and they both giggled,” Kaitlin states. “Alex is able to understand Hale’s soft-spoken ways and she is always quick to help Hale advocate for himself.”

The mission of Casa de Miel is to “Promote mindfulness and deep connection to one’s self, community, and the earth through nature-based experiences.” There is no doubt that the welcoming atmosphere and staff at Casa de Miel encouraged this special bond between Alex and Hale. These two best buds will always be able to look back fondly on the moments they shared that day – moments we can all relate to.



## New Quarter Classes

From spa days to history to money management, the DHR Day Program has an education course for every interest! Day Program attendees select their own schedules from a menu of 50+ courses each quarter. Programming focuses on providing appropriately ambitious goals and high-quality instruction to foster purposeful personal growth.

Here are a few of the courses being offered this quarter:

- SAFE Class - Ranchers learn about building healthy relationships, setting boundaries, and respecting themselves
- Weather & Climate Science
- Hog Task Force
- How to Cricut
- Pen Pals with Germany
- .... and so much more!

The DHR Day Program promotes a sense of community and encourages meaningful social connections while supporting autonomy and leadership skills. We are always looking for volunteers to share their passions with the Ranchers in Day Program. Interested in learning more? Contact [volunteers@downhomeranch.org](mailto:volunteers@downhomeranch.org).

## Tear-Jerking Gold

Amplify Austin is the biggest day of giving in Central Texas when over 700 nonprofits come together to raise funds for their mission. The inspiring day of giving was on March 1-2, 2023 -- and the DHR supporters rallied together for a record-breaking event! Donors not only helped DHR unlock \$28K in matching funds, but also helped crush the goal of \$55K -- raising a total of \$68,620+ for the mission!

For our Amplify campaign, we showcased some of the Rancher's sweet memories and moments that helped define who they are today. We are honored to share these moments with you again and if you haven't seen them already, we hope you join us on this journey down memory lane. \*Warning\* these memories are tear-jerking gold!

Visit here to see the Rancher childhood photos and read a snippet of their story:

- [downhomeranch.org/amplifyphotos](https://downhomeranch.org/amplifyphotos)

We also encourage you to check out three brand-new videos where a few of the Ranchers tell you why they love their lives at Down Home Ranch.

- [downhomeranch.org/connor](https://downhomeranch.org/connor)
- [downhomeranch.org/terry](https://downhomeranch.org/terry)
- [downhomeranch.org/eileenvicki](https://downhomeranch.org/eileenvicki)







## Animal Husbandry Team Expansion

Animal Care Specialist, Naomi Russell, has led the DHR animal husbandry program for the last 12 years, serving as the supervisor for Ranchers employed in the barn. In February 2022, she was excited to have the opportunity to hire a few more Ranchers for the barn team. Naomi posted the job opportunity and conducted interviews with the Ranchers who applied. She was honored to offer the position to not only one Rancher, but to seven applicants!

After officially accepting their job offers, Alaina, Brandon, Jonathan, Kelly, Kristen, Kyle and Mark all excitedly grabbed a pitchfork and got ready to work. Long-time barn employee, Travis, shared how he was looking forward to helping train his new co-workers and excited he would have someone to assist him with the daily tasks.

Alaina, Brandon, and Kelly are taking charge of the chicken coop in a big way! Twice a week, they gather eggs and feed DHR's prized hens. Afterwards, they head to the kitchen to wash and package eggs for customers. Brandon and Alaina especially love collecting eggs, and Kelly is most excited about earning a paycheck. Mark's favorite part of the job is getting to spend more time with his favorite mini ponies. Kristen feels most proud after cleaning up the mini pony pen, but the Longhorns hold a special place in her heart. Rancher Kyle loves hanging out with one of the horses because "Buttons is cute and laid-back like me."

In a world where it can be difficult to slow down and appreciate the life around you, we are thankful for Rancher employees who are choosing to do just that. The moments Ranchers spend learning alongside the Ranch animals are times they will cherish in their hearts forever.



## DSP Learning Hub

Residential Manager, Ashley Fleming, completed The Arc of Texas Partners in Disability Leadership program in November 2022 and is now putting her skills into action! Ashley's idea for the DSP Learning Hub came from her desire to "do something that would not only help the Ranch, but would have an impact on a critical nationwide issue of DSP staff retention." The mission of the DSP Learning Hub is to support DSP's in their access of high quality education, while providing a career ladder for growth. The main goal is for staff to complete all requirements for the NADSP DSP-I credential during paid work hours -- and Ashley is helping to make this happen! The first round of DSP's are set to complete the program in November 2023.







## Join us for Camp, Teens are Welcome!

Ranch Camp is focused on supporting adults with IDD who are looking for a unique, safe, and fun summer experience.

We have ratios of 1 counselor to 4 campers, but usually have lower ratios with support of volunteers and other experienced staff.

Ranch Camp is for Campers who enjoy group activities and the hustle and bustle of camp life. For the 2023 season, we are offering 30 spots in each of our 8 week-long sessions.

Session #1: June 4th – June 9th

Session #2: June 11th – June 16th

Session #3: June 18th – June 23rd

Session #4: June 25th – June 30th\*

*\*Teen session is only for ages 13-17*

Session #5: July 2nd – July 7th

Session #6: July 9th – July 14th

Session #7: July 16th – July 21st

Session #8: July 23rd – July 28th

Visit our website to start your application today or email [camp@downhomeranch.org](mailto:camp@downhomeranch.org) with any questions.



## Camp Staff & Volunteers

Howdy! Ranch Camp has several ways to get involved and be a part of the camp magic this summer. We have paid positions, Internship positions and volunteer opportunities.

Ranch Camp is hiring male/female counselors, program staff and coordinators to serve our remarkable campers. Dates are May 22-July 28, 2023, staff can choose to commit to 4 weeks of camp or all 8 weeks of camp. We pay very competitively! Room/board, unlimited s'mores, new best friends, epic adventures, and memories included.

Volunteer opportunities for individuals include assisting with activity preparations, sorting, and filing paperwork, teaching an activity skill or other supportive camp roles. We'd love to visit with you about your talents and how we can put them to work serving at camp. Group opportunities are also available.

For more info e-mail [camp@downhomeranch.org](mailto:camp@downhomeranch.org) or visit [downhomeranch.org/ranch-camp-opportunities](http://downhomeranch.org/ranch-camp-opportunities)





# Down home Ranch

Igniting Independence. Building Community.

## Mission

Empowering the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through social, educational, residential and vocational opportunities

## DHR Accomplishes the mission by

Providing residency for people with IDD in 6-bed, 4-bed, 3-bed, 2-bed and 1-bed micro-homes

Providing vocational skills training and paid employment, with diverse job opportunities and options both on and off the Ranch

Providing a community for people with and without IDD to enjoy companionship, friendships, fun, travel, recreation and an active lifestyle

Integrating itself into the surrounding local communities and the larger Austin metropolitan community, while becoming increasingly active on the national stage

Seeking to be on the cutting edge in creating an entrepreneurial organization that attracts people interested in disability, horticulture, agriculture, environment, good stewardship and more

## Core Values

Individual Connection with the Rancher

Do With, Not For – Lead by Example

Use Your Skill Set to Move the Mission Forward

Be of Service



## vision

We will provide a high quality of life for our residents, offering lifelong opportunities and supporting individual choice. Our programs will make it possible for everyone to benefit from our unique environment.

## goals for the future

Expanding enterprise and vocational opportunities for Ranchers

Facilitate a healthier lifestyle for Ranchers

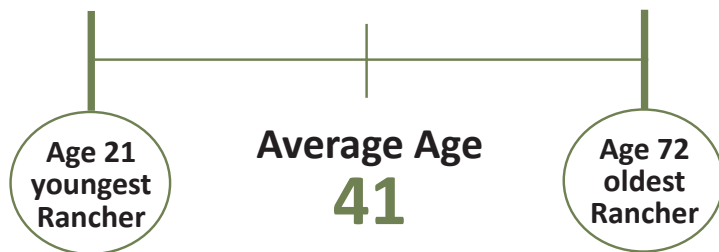
Maintaining expenses, increasing income, cutting energy use and cost, using resources wisely, building an Maintenance Fund

Achieving a balanced operating budget, with income growing faster than expenses

# THOSE WE SERVE

Residential and Day Program Profile

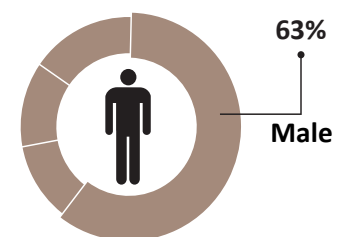
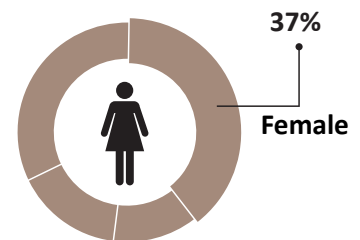
**TOTAL  
RESIDENTIAL AND  
DAY PROGRAM 62**



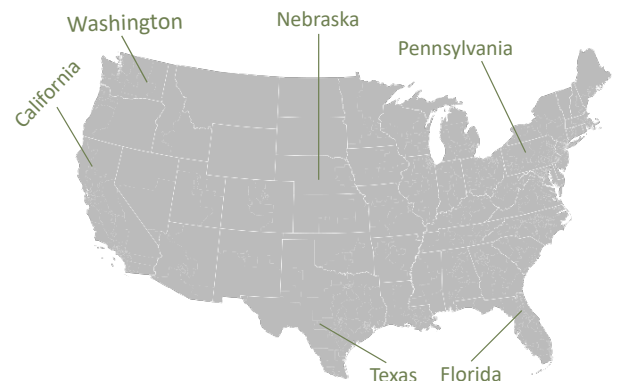
Rancher Alan learning how to use the weed-eater in his role as a staff member in the Maintenance Department

## DIAGNOSIS STATISTICS

100% of Ranchers have an IDD diagnosis



## Ranchers come from six states...



\*Statistics are representative of individuals served from Jan 1, 2022-Dec 31, 2022



# Upcoming Events

**April**  
1<sup>st</sup>

April Showers Plant Sale

**Sept.**  
16<sup>th</sup>

DHR's 20th Annual Gala

**May**  
12<sup>th</sup>

DHR's 34th Birthday

**Oct.**  
27<sup>th</sup>

Monster Bash Community Dance

**May**  
13<sup>th</sup>

Spring Plant Clearance Sale

**Nov.**  
11<sup>th</sup>

Fall Fest & Market Days

**June**  
3<sup>rd</sup>

Dash n' Splash Fundraiser

**Dec.**  
9<sup>th</sup>

Stocking Stuffer Sale & Holiday Hoedown Community Dance



## Join us for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dash n' Splash!

Register to run/walk in a 1-mile Fun Run or 3-mile Trail Run

Pool party after the Superstar Run is free for all to attend

BBQ lunch available for purchase

Meet-n-greet & book signing with Kayleigh Williamson

Raffle and other fundraising fun

**Adults \$35**

**Kids \$20**  
(10 & under)

*Registration includes a  
t-shirt and medal*

9am - Check-In

10am- Superstar Run

11am-2pm - Pool Party  
and Lunch Served

12pm- Book Signing



[downhomeranch.org/dashnsplash](https://downhomeranch.org/dashnsplash)

# THOSE WE SERVE

## Ranch Camp and Respite Profile

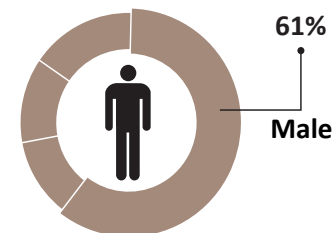
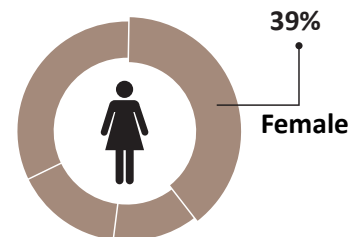
**TOTAL  
RANCH CAMP  
AND RESPITE** **189**



A camper age 13+ having fun learning how to fish

## DIAGNOSIS STATISTICS

100% of attendees have an IDD diagnosis



## Attendees came from ten states...



...and one came from Jalisco, Mexico!

\*Statistics are representative of individuals served from Jan 1, 2022-Dec 31, 2022



## Projects & plans for the future



Here are a few of the ways donation dollars were hard at work in 2022:

- Expanded the Ranch Camp program to serve more individuals over an 8-week period and opened up the experience to ages 13+
- Achieved the American Camp Association (ACA) accreditation which allows caregivers to utilize government-issued respite funds to pay for camp. In order to receive the ACA accreditation, DHR had to complete many upgrades and repairs to the camp lodging facilities, such as bathroom renovations, new flooring and more.
- Awarded \$23,000+ in scholarships for Ranch Camp attendees
- Upgraded 19 residential bathrooms by installing grab bars and adjustable shower heads
- Installed a brand new lighting system in the DHR Village with commercial-grade LED streetlights
- Expanded the Horticulture program and grew over 80,000 plants with each one sold equating to funds raised for the mission

....and much, much more!



*Dear Friend,*

*As a long-standing and successful residential ranch serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, DHR will continue to provide highly valued and necessary programming in a safe and accessible environment for all. Here at DHR, we are given the opportunity to make a real positive difference in the lives of those we serve. Everything we do is driven by individual choice, with a goal of empowering those served to be the best version of themselves. Down Home Ranch has developed effective programming that encourages the Ranchers to live fulfilled, self-directed lives. As a community, we will ensure the mission of the organization continues to thrive for many years to come.*

*All my best,*

*Craig Russell, Executive Director*







  
*Moments*

We have all experienced those moments where the world seems to stand still – the worries of tomorrow have ceased to exist, the hardships of yesterday no longer linger and in that moment your heart is filled with joy. These moments look different for everyone – catching your first fish, finishing a project, making breakfast with your loved ones or watching fireworks on New Year's Eve – these moments remind us just how beautiful life can be. The Moments campaign is aimed at sharing stories of the heartwarming moments experienced by those we serve – stories we can all relate to. As humans, we are constantly searching for these moments by buying new products or going new places, but at Down Home Ranch, these moments are experienced every single day.

We are excited to share their stories with you!


## Down home Ranch, inc


Visit. Learn. Get Involved.

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