

## The Ranches Alumni

"The Ranches is a great place. I personally think this because you don't just find friends there you also find your family. Within this program you begin to find yourself and discover new things about yourself you never knew before. They don't just help you grow they also help your family life to. I do suggest this place for struggling kids and kids who need help. I love the ranches and thank them for their help with my life." - Leah

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Rekindling Hope in Today's Youth - Since 1944

# SUMMER 2018

## Times...They Are a Changin'

By Heath Kull

Growing up in the seventies and then starting my professional life in the nineties means that I grew up with a certain amount of, and a certain level of comfort with, social change. While most change seemed to be glacial, some was startlingly rapid and somewhat chaotic. At The Ranches, the world's constant and never ending social change means that we must always be steeling ourselves to resist unnecessary change while remaining flexible and fluid enough to embrace change that is both good and vital to our continued relevance and success. While some find comfort in shoring up their principles and stances on social issues one time and one time only, I am not quite arrogant enough to believe that I could have, in my twenties - or should have, in my forties - settled on a stance for every possible social issue and decided that I was done thinking about it and done deciding. I could have, had I been foolish, decided that I could not handle anything new after a certain date and then, as so many in the faith community do, chosen to never revisit nor think critically of those issues again. "If it was wrong then, it is wrong forever!" has never been my way of thinking. Sadly, as we march towards our unavoidable tomorrows, we are faced with issues that we must decide are worthy of taking a stand on and of teaching to young people and issues that are worthy of thought, prayer, debate and possibly, changing our minds on.

Before I cause too much alarm, I would like to reiterate that we still stand for the values that we've always stood for, but I find myself in a position to have to help kids to understand how their social values are formed and how those social values should be informed. While I wish that our country hadn't taken the reckless and rebellious path that it has taken on some issues, I have to remind myself, and the kids and staff, that I have to be in the world, but not of the world. A taller task than it has ever been.



So, what exactly are we facing?

You only need turn on the evening news to realize that there is a plethora of social and political issues that are knocking at the door of all those, like you and I, who support The Ranches. From school choice to #metoo to abortion to 2nd Amendment issues to restrictions on what one can and can't say or do in public. Some of my colleagues have chosen to bury their head in the nearest mound of sand, but I simply cannot. While I have no desire to try and tell others how or what to think, I am in a position where I am constantly attempting to teach kids how to think for themselves. It is very difficult to do that without teaching them how I tend to think.

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Heath Kull**  
President

## #RaiseThemUp

The Ranches is based on two principles.

1. Caring for and Rekindling Hope in Today's Youth who are in need of help.

And...

2. Addressing and altering the negative, self destructive and self sabotaging behaviors of those children that we are caring for and Rekindling Hope in.

While the first goal requires nurturing and protection, the second requires a bit of stubbornness and a willingness to consistently provide a negative consequence and response to negative behaviors from the kids we serve.

We are pretty good at the first, but we sometimes struggle with the second. And the reason is simple.

Discipline, derived from disciple, is about relationship. As human beings with frazzled emotions and hurt feelings, we tend to favor punishment. And for many parents, the favorite punishment is to shun and ignore. While this is effective with people who love us and crave our approval and acceptance, it is a gift to kids that have gotten to the point where they are "kinda over it".

Discipline, and the requisite discipleship, requires that we embrace the relationship and deny our own selfish desire to protect ourselves by ignoring and shunning those that behave in a way contrary to our expectations.

I try to, as often as possible, "lean into" the relationship with kids who are performing badly. This usually causes them to try and shun me. This gives me the opportunity to teach them that meeting expectations means positive time with me and negative behaviors mean negative interactions with no loss of relationship but a loss of approval and no increase in the "space" that they desire in order to continue the negative behavior outside of my view and influence.

Just something to think about.

## MERCY NOT SACRIFICE

Matthew 9:13 - But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'

This verse has always haunted me as thinking of my own actions as "sacrifice" to the kids or to God or to whomever, is far easier than having mercy. Especially when mercy must be directed towards someone that I, with all of the moral superiority that I can muster, have deemed undeserving. Even though it is easy to think in terms of sacrifice, it isn't desired by God or called for in the New Testament.

As I look back on my time in this business and in this organization, I can see all the people who came here with the mindset that they were sacrificing for the Lord. They often referenced "giving up" their home, closeness with family, home churches, jobs and friends. They seemed to be able to convince themselves that somehow, because of their great sacrifice, they were more noble than others and certainly closer to God because of this sacrifice and its inherent nobility. Sadly, this typically manifested itself in an attitude that required the kids to be grateful to them for their sacrifice. When this expected gratitude was absent in a child, that child became not only an enemy in the cottage, but also a sign that God did not find favor in the child that could not be grateful for this noble person who sacrificed so much to bring the Love of Christ to The Ranch. This then led to the idea that the kids, and their attitudes and behavior, were a barrier between the staff and God. Getting the ungrateful child out of the program became the top priority. If this drive to get the child discharged was unsuccessful, leaving The Ranch became the only plausible solution.

Conversely, there have also been many people, some who are my inspiration for writing this, that came to bestow mercy, kindness, forgiveness and love on children who may feel that they don't deserve it and certainly have had a shortage of mercy, kindness, forgiveness and love in their young lives. This mindset usually leads to two district conclusions:

1. There but by the Grace of God go I. Most people who stick around and are successful in this business come to recognize that they aren't different than the kids. They may be more mature and they may make better decisions, but they still can see themselves in the kids. This leads to the conclusion that, had it not been for key people in our childhood, we would have needed The Ranch to help us too.

2. Whatsoever you do for the least of these, you do for Me. Once we recognize that, by God's Grace, we have overcome our pain and tribulations, we start to look to repay that Grace back to God by having mercy on and caring for those most in need of a little grace. Sooner or later, this leads us back to the fact that God views what we do for these kids as being done for Him. (It's humbling just to write that)

To these people, working with kids is an honor and a gift. The fact that God entrusted these kids to us and allows us to be his ambassador in their lives, is the most profound sense of purpose we can imagine. It allows us to accept the behaviors that hurt, irritate and annoy us and respond, not to the child, but to God. As our experience grows, we just learn to see God somewhere in all of them and know that every day is an opportunity to serve a Higher Purpose...for the least of these.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President  
heathk@theranches.org





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## **Politics**

I have never seen a more contentious and uncivilized political climate than the one we are in now. While I remember watching politics from Reagan's election through the first Bush, Bill Clinton, the second Bush, Barack Obama and now Donald Trump, I tend to remember an allowance and appreciation for, disagreeing on the issues. While some prefer less spending, and some prefer more military, and some prefer more social safety, there was always a dinner table discussion to be had and an agreement to value relationship over disagreement and friendship over issues. I am failing to see those priorities today and fear that we are headed towards social scenarios where we simply make a list of topics that are not to be discussed in our presence. While this leads to fragile people, it also leads to intellectually lazy people who only socialize with those who agree with them. No matter how many times we have seen where this thought process leads, here we are about to try it one last time...until the next time.

When The Ranches was founded, The United States and her allies had just defeated a seemingly insurmountable force who had the exact same goal; to only allow those who agree with the ruling party to prosper. Yet here we stand, about to have to do it all over again.

In 1944, The Ranches was simply The New Mexico Boys Ranch and we just helped boys. At that time, girls just weren't seen as in need of help and guidance in the same way that boys were. Over time, and in my lifetime, we had to backtrack a bit and admit to ourselves and our community that girls did indeed need our help. This holds true today as well, but there is almost a complete reversal of roles. The boys are meek and tend to avoid conflict while the girls are more stubborn, rebellious, defiant and conflict oriented than I can ever remember. Times simply changed, and we had to change with them.

## **Gender Dynamics**

This change in roles is particularly fascinating when placed in the context of ministry. I grew up listening to men explain and vehemently defend their belief that they were, as God had instructed, the head of their home. I also watched as these men routinely deferred meaningful decisions to their wife when caring for kids at The Ranches. This was confusing to me and confusing to the kids. It is just hard to reconcile, "I'm the man of the house!" and "If mama ain't happy, nobody is happy!" being said by the same person on the same day. I've seen it happen though. While we've oft claimed that we live in a patriarchy, many kids inherently understand that they actually live in an informal matriarchy. Those two systems have vastly different rules sets and vastly different cultures within them. In my opinion, kids just need the truth of what they are living in and can adjust to the rule set once they know it. We still, however, care for a large number of kids who are simply the byproduct of someone else's decisions and are at The Ranches due to their behavior being an unintended consequence of this unintentional shift towards a societal matriarchy.

As if all of that weren't enough change, we also have had to learn to contend with and gracefully deal with shifting attitudes and preferences regarding sexual orientation and identity. While in no way the same thing, these two issues do stand at the forefront of our seemingly natural cultural battles. At The Ranches, we have dealt with these issues on a much smaller scale and have yet to fully publicly articulate how we believe we should deal with it. For me, it is a difficult time to have to lead a group of admittedly human employees in dealing with some admittedly potentially toxic and divisive issues.

## **Gender Expectations**

To compound all of this, it would seem that masculinity, if not entirely dead, is at least circling the drain and on life support. Where there were once expectations of the boys of The Ranches to become men and to achieve characteristics consistent with masculinity, strength and independence, now there are expectations that the boys will defer to the girls and that their natural tendencies toward aggression, competition and acts of displayed strength are now toxic and detrimental to society. Yet they are still boys who are still in possession of biologically endowed masculinity and still in pursuit of healthy ways to achieve what we all seek to achieve; an opportunity to live life as themselves and become who they were intended to become.

In today's world, it would seem that aggression is seen as a sign of significant risk for violence and anyone who has any comfort level with conflict is seen as displaying a harbinger of the completely unacceptable personality trait of not allowing other's feelings to dictate one's actions; in short, allowing others, who see themselves as socially and politically enlightened and superior in intellect, to manipulate the actions of the plebian "regular people" by shaming their actions that challenge the elite influencers. Sadly, I remember when that was our goal and now it is what people are hoping that we will teach boys to never become. Those same elite influencers have become content to use their own ability to create a false victimhood that they can then use to bludgeon anyone who dares to ask them to take responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings and actions and therefore, abolish their own victimhood to a place where it cannot be used to bully those who dare to think boldly and live honestly.

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# #RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

## CLASS OF 2018

In mid 2016, Jaylyn, a very angry, very untrusting young lady came to The Ranches. She'd endured significant personal loss in her 16 years of life and would soon endure more with the loss of more family members. Learning to trust and learning to recognize her value were both big challenges. With the encouragement and guidance of a group of caring adults she developed into a wonderfully strong young woman who persevered and walked the stage at this year's Infinity High School graduation. Watching her receive the recognition she earned, in spite of life's many challenges, and proudly join the world of high school graduates, was a very proud moment for all of us at The Ranches. Because of her maturity and commitment to helping lead others, she stayed to work at the ranch for the summer before she goes on to college this Fall. Our very best wishes go with Jaylyn.



# #RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

## NATIONAL PARKS TRIP

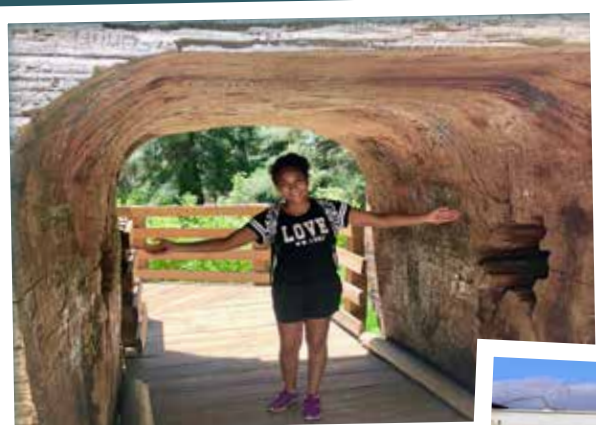
"This is amazing!" "I didn't know there was so much world out there." "I got to walk under a waterfall, hike in real forests, and see the ocean, the real ocean!" These are but a few of the great comments of residents who along with staff traveled to the Sequoia, Yosemite, and Kings Canyon National Parks this summer. Due to a grant from a very generous donor we were able to take all the residents on a trip of hiking, swimming, exploring and fun. For many of our residents who had not previously been outside the State of New Mexico, this was an amazing experience they shared and will never forget. To top off this already great trip, we concluded the journey with a visit to the Pacific Ocean and Disneyland. As one resident wrote, "This is something every family should do with their kids...I will do this with my kids." That pretty much sums up our hope for the next generation; parents that understand the value of making happy memories with their children.







# THEIR JOURNEY







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While girls are now rightfully celebrated when they display masculine characteristics and strive for the same level of success inherently expected from the boys of yesteryear, it is hard to explain why society celebrates girls and castigates boys for the exact same actions and displays of their personality. It's as if there is an effort to ensure that God is not seen as responsible for creating each of us as unique and talented and we are, instead, all deemed as rabbits trapped in a maze where rewards can only come from those deemed worthy of being our secular worldly influencers and elites who build their own pedestals and then ask that we stand in admiration while looking up at them in their self-elevated position atop their social media fueled and narcissistic perches.

### **#MeToo**

The past year has been startling in the sheer number of women (and men) who have come forward to address their own histories of sexual assault, sexual marginalization and sexual abuse. While the stories are tragic, I fear that we have yet to see all of the stories of people in power taking from people who were in positions of submission. While I hope that The Ranches was able to protect and insure the safety of residents and staff, I simply can't be sure that there are not kids who were hurt while in our care or in the care of other homes like ours. As a social issue, we are constantly attempting to make sure that we never have to address this issue by responding to allegations of abuse and maltreatment. We train and teach and warn and reteach and talk about boundaries and offer counseling to every child. Our hope is that we can prevent a tragedy, but we can't know for sure. We can, however, make sure that we respond quickly and appropriately should an issue be identified.

### **Family Dynamics**

And all of this seems to have been brought on by the deconstruction of families and the demoralizing demonization of roles in a home. According to Pew Research, in 1960, 73% of kids under 18 were growing up in traditional homes; defined in the U.S. as "kids younger than 18 years of age are living in a home with two married heterosexual parents in their first marriage". Today, that number has dropped to below 46% in the U.S. While the change is anything but glacial, it is also hard to attribute to any single factor. What is more easily seen, is the impact on kids growing up in today's less traditional world. There is significant confusion, insecurity, inability to handle conflict and lack of clarity as to how to see one's self. This translates to kids who are unsure of who they are, who they wish to become and how to navigate their own thought, feelings, impulses and frustrations. In a word, many of today's youth feel lost. Why am I here? Do I even matter? Would anyone notice if I weren't here? and finally, how can I achieve significance quickly and without any real commitment. Families used to be the port of safety in the storm of adolescence. Sadly, in many cases, families have become the storm and external sources have become the ports of safety.

### **Service**

Lastly, our attitude, as a country, about service has changed. As stated by Nick Palmisciano, co-owner and co-founder of Ranger Up in an essay widely attributed to, but not written by, General David Patreaus, military service has declined significantly in the past 70 years. In WWII, 11.2% of our nation served in 4 years. By the Vietnam war, 4.3% served in 12 years. Sadly, in the Global War on Terror, only .45% have served in 17 years. .45% Like so many other issues in today's world, society has deemed military service as something that someone else can do. In short, today's youth see military service as, "not my problem." People today tend to feel the same way about kids who are struggling, orphans, widows and elderly people. We've just convinced ourselves that most problems simply aren't our problem. I disagree.

At The Ranches, at-risk youth – hurting young people – are indeed, our problem. We work to serve them, to stabilize them, to educate them and to introduce them to the idea that they were created by God to serve a purpose while they are here. In order to do this, we must teach them to think and to think critically. We must also teach them to think about where they stand on issues and what they care about. In pursuit of this goal, we spend a lot of time talking to the kids about the issues that I have outlined.



As our donors, we are hoping that you will reach out and let us know where you stand on some of these issues and what is important to you that we can teach to the young people of The Ranches. I know that I am asking a lot, but I really would appreciate more information from you as to what you value in society and what you want passed on to these kids that you support.



# THANK YOU BNSF BELEN MECHANICAL

There's rarely a that day goes by that we don't marvel at how blessed we are. Recently a group of employees of Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Belen Mechanical Division contacted us to invite the children and staff of The Ranches to be their guests. The BNSF employees and family members hosted The Ranches at their Family day which included lots of great food, fun, music, comradery and a very generous donation. They treated all of our residents to fishing and at the end of the day, the employee group presented us with a check representing collections totaling nearly \$2300. Wow! What a great group who we look forward to building a greater relationship with. Thank you so much BNSF Mechanical!



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# THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary or in-kind gifts during the period April 01, 2018 - June 30, 2018. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

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## BECOME A PARTNER

# Annual Report

Our latest audited Annual Report is available on our website for Fiscal Year 2016 (July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017). We want to thank all of our donors and supporters who have contributed to our success for the past 74 years. Thank you for helping us continue our mission to "*Rekindle Hope in Today's Youth.*" To download the Annual Report please visit [theranches.org](http://theranches.org) or if you would like a printed one mailed to you, please call The Ranches at (505) 881-3363.

## Help Us Share Our Story

Representatives of New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches are available to meet with clubs, civic organizations and fellowship groups to share our story of bringing hope to hurting youngsters.

If you are interested in arranging a speaking engagement for your organization, simply give us a call at (505) 881-3363 or (800) 660-0289.

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# The Ranches

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