

CORRAL

Spring 2020 50 Years of Service

By Gary L. White

How many young married couples, with bachelor's degrees in each of their pockets, a 5-month-old child, and opportunities galore would purposely choose to come to a rather desolate stretch of land, in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and move into a house where they would immediately be responsible for 12 children, under age 12 (and their own, 5-month-old)? Not many that don't either have some sort of self-loathing personality issues or have a strong faith that leads them to this calling and a desire to improve the lives of "the least of these." Fortunately for The Ranches, it was the latter when Mike and Nikki Kull took up residence and employment at what was then, New Mexico Boys Ranch. Fifty years later as they retire from service to what is now, New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches, Inc., or more commonly, The Ranches, I had an opportunity to interview them about their work lives, well spent.

In December of 1970, Mike and Nikki, both graduates of Eastern New Mexico University, arrived at Boys Ranch to what they describe as a very stark and desolate outcropping of a few buildings and 56 child residents. Mike said there were few trees, time and weather worn buildings, only a couple of sidewalks and an almost dismal appearance and feeling. When they entered their new home, Nikki said she asked Mike, "Are we at the end of the world?" He didn't answer. In their new home, they found 12 new faces to care for, a broken couch, broken hide-a-bed, and black floor tile, broken and fractured beneath them, and a 10-year-old riding his bike in the living room. To say it was a

discouraging moment, would have been a gross understatement. But, as they later recalled, it was what they pledged to do, and the adventure was on. They got about the business of learning how to care for children, fixing up the place and staying very, very busy. Soon, Mike was tasked to travel the state meeting donors and helping keep The Ranch financially afloat. When Mike would travel, which was a lot of the time, Nikki remained behind to care for a house full of children. This was in a home with a common bathroom and common shower and very cramped spaces – two bedrooms with six bunk beds in each for the residents. Mike and Nikki had their own quarters, but they were ill-arranged and lacking in good heating and cooling systems. There were only a few buildings on campus and the dining hall was a converted WWII Quonset hut which served up to 90 meals three times a day. Mike described the buildings as having "a temporariness" to them. Mike decided early on that they needed to improve the facilities and grounds, so he set about planting trees, landscaping, raising funds for continued growth and replacement of facilities, and ensuring the future of the Ranch. Mike (privately, and without telling Nikki)



The Ranches Alumni

What is the best lesson you learned at The Ranches?

"That I don't have to do it all on my own, it's ok to ask and accept help, it doesn't mean you're weak."

- Jessica B.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Heath Kull
President

My letter in the last episode garnered more response than anything that I have previously written. For that engagement, I am truly grateful as it endorses my belief that we have a donor base that is unparalleled. While much was positive, I did receive some feedback that was less than appreciative and, at times, very direct in disapproval. I am truly thankful to those that offered negative feedback as well. As I read the feedback and talked with people regarding their beliefs and opinions, I couldn't help but be struck by how deeply both sides care about our country and about how we will navigate the next election and next few years. In exactly the same manner as the kids in our program, politics and beliefs are most threatened by apathy rather than differences of opinion. I'll take passionate beliefs from both sides over a lack of desire to get involved or fear to voice deeply held opinion any day of the week...and twice on Sundays! The divisions that exist in our country are very similar to my experiences with the differences in beliefs in families. Everyone cares about the outcome while few can seem to agree on the best solutions. While this can lead a family to seek the help of The Ranches, I am hopeful that the rifts in our country will lead us to reach out to each other and to listen before judging while valuing relationships over politics. At the end of the day, 545 people will decide most of the solutions while the rest of us would be best served to keep our relationships strong and our prayer list long. We can share our strongly held thoughts and beliefs while respecting the person that holds a different, but equally strongly held, belief that forms a very different thought. We will face many trials and tribulations that will test us to our core. Our relationships will ultimately serve to support us, to heal us and to keep us moving forward until the good Lord brings us home. Apathy, disgust and contempt will only serve the opposite side of the coin. I am, as always, praying for all of y'all.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President
heathk@theranches.org

#RaiseThemUp



Raising children in today's world can be challenging. You may be facing new and unexpected situations on a daily basis. If you are looking for guidance or ideas on how to deal with conflicts that may be coming up, tune into our podcast. We talk about being a parent and different strategies to help you address those bumps in the road you may run into.

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(facebook.com/TheNewMexico-BoysandGirlsRanch)

Twitter & Instagram:

@TheRanchesNM

or my **personal Twitter:** @HeathKull

#HeathKull

Beaded Angels

A year or so ago, a generous donor gave The Ranches a large collection of beads and jewelry-making equipment. Some of it was used for crafts with residents, but the quantity was way beyond our needs. Then come the members of the Bead Society of New Mexico to the rescue. Over the last several months, Pam Troutman, Laurie Tanner, Pat Verrelle, Deb Cole, Jill Bartel, Elizabeth Reisinger, Barbara Rosen, Liz Sands and others devoted over 170 hours of labor to organize, identify, price and sell the remainder of this treasure. Their sale netted The Ranches several thousand dollars for the benefit of our residents. Our gratitude to these "Beaded Angels" and the original donor.





THE RANCHES



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made a personal commitment to stay for 10 years to ensure that they would leave the ranch in a better situation than what they found it in. Meanwhile, Nikki (privately, and without telling Mike) made the commitment to stay 2 years. Obviously, as we recognize their 50 years of continuous service, those pledges were fairly short-sighted, and aren't we fortunate.

After about two and a half years, the then Ranch Superintendent, Barry Morgan, left and Mike was named Superintendent. Mike remembers folks questioning his appointment at age 25, and his refrain would always be, "If you can find someone else, good luck!" Mike's challenge to fund raise intensified as he traveled the state encouraging donors to support building projects and the renovation of existing facilities. Meanwhile, Nikki continued her care of children seemingly night and day. This was in a day where women were expected to be silent and were known as the "wife of" the male employee... Nikki was not a real conformist so she recalls a lot of her early years at the Ranch being fairly contentious as she wouldn't always "fall in line." In 1973, they added to their own household with the arrival of their son Heath. Now they had the challenge to raise two of their own children while caring for many, many others. Over their 50 years, they moved up and moved off The Ranch to run the organization from the office, first in Belen and later in Albuquerque. Due to Mike's firm belief that children should not suffer in times of economic downturns, he established the New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation to provide endowment funds that often provided the needed resources when tough financial times hit. Donors throughout the state soon petitioned The Ranches to place facilities in their areas. Eventually, with lots of donor support, The Ranches opened Girls Ranch in Lamy, Families for Children in Albuquerque (to provide private foster care), Hart Youth Ranch in Melrose, The New Mexico Family Connection (to provide counseling services to the children and their families), Pippin Youth Ranch in Clovis, and Mountain Vista Ranch in Albuquerque and these programs expanded their services throughout the state. For many years, each of these programs served well the youth and families of New Mexico. Mike was very proud of responding to this challenge and was equally saddened when state and national economic downturns and rising fuel prices forced the eventual closure of most of these expanded services.



I then queried them about the hardest time for each of them at The Ranch? Mike responded that closing down these programs left him feeling like he had let down the people that had supported their creation. When asked, Nikki's reply to the same

question was the change in attitude by people not understanding what a vital and quality role The Ranches plays for some children and families and the amount of over-regulation which occurred from the 80's through the first part of this century. She has been disappointed by the negative view some in power have had on community group homes. The Ranches serves children and families that are seeking help and don't want to surrender their children to the state while simultaneously also serving many children in state custody who have grown weary of the foster care system. For Nikki, dealing with this has been very discouraging; but, in spite of these challenges, and the constant need to raise funds to sustain programs (which have never accepted any state or federal funds), they would make no different choice in how they spent a large portion of their lives.

I then asked Mike to share the most hopeful time he experienced, at The Ranch? Mike shared that once, in their early years, funds were critically low, and they could not cover payroll. Mike said he went to the Lord in prayer, and as much as people don't like to hear about Christians bargaining with God, he made a deal. If God would meet this need, he would remain fully committed to the success of The Ranches. So, Mike took a leap of faith and handed out paychecks knowing there were inadequate funds to cover them...and then he prayed. The very next morning, a generous donor unexpectedly met that need with funds that covered all of those paychecks. Since that time Mike has been happy to keep his deal.

I then asked Nikki about any regrets in her affiliation with The Ranches? No misgivings about what we chose, but I do regret not standing up more to critics, allowing other's opinions to guide her decisions and most especially the pain our own children endured while watching their parents care for other peoples' children and not feeling their parents had time for them.

I then asked Nikki what was the most rewarding time in her Ranch career? She smiled and said, seeing Heath and Lani move up through the organization to become its' leadership and especially what good parents they are to their three girls. She went on to say that growing up at the Ranch was difficult for her kids, far more than she realized, and Heath received a lot of retaliation from residents and staff. She said to see him now, makes her most proud and that he is amazing to watch when he interacts with the children at The Ranch. But, "he [Heath] and we've taken a lot of flak over nepotism, through the years." But she went on to explain that having people you could trust and rely on was critical and all too often we've had staff just drive off and leave the remaining staff in the lurch to care for children. She went on to say that she loved watching Heath's influence on kids, seeing them succeed when everyone else had given up on them. She said that he would say, "If you have a kid you don't know what to do with, call me." Mike quickly agreed and added, that, "we came out of a totally different culture; growing up [Mike] at the Baptist Children's Home in Portales, reputation was very important." He said, "I always worried about people's

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#RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

Lions Help Residents Help Vets



This year, Albuquerque Breakfast Lions Club members Carol Marshall, Glenna Ladegaard, and friend Jim Wolken gathered the residents to create Valentine's Day cards. The kids had a great time creating colorful, heartfelt cards which the Lion's then took to hospitalized Veterans at the Albuquerque VA Hospital. It was an afternoon of fun and fellowship and warmed the hearts of many Veterans. Lion Sandy Stewart, who couldn't join them, made Valentine gift bags for each of the kids. Overall it was a great time and helped the kids focus of the needs of others. Thank you Lions!

Alpha Delta Kappa

We were blessed again this year to have several representatives from the Alpha Delta Kappa International Honorary Organization for Women Educators group come out to The Ranch for Valentine's Day. They brought cards and gifts for the kids and spent time with the kids. While we often associate Valentine's Day with romantic love, the Alpha Delta Kappa teachers showed the kids that some quality time can mean just as much for kids at The Ranches. The kids discovered, yet again, that teachers can be "pretty cool" outside the classroom.



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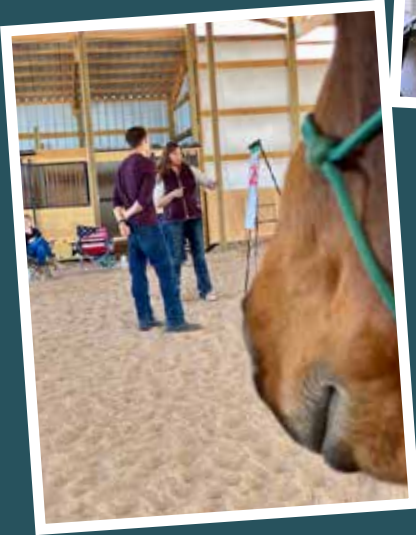
Game Night and Ice Cream Social

During this time of Isolation one of our Board Members, Allen and his wife Carla were thinking about our residents. They generously supplied ice cream that our staff safely transported to The Ranch and enabled us to partake in a fun night with an ice cream social and Bunko. This allowed the kids a much needed break in their routine while still following social distancing guidelines that we all are becoming accustom to. Thank you for showing that even during uncertain times that generosity is still possible.





THEIR JOURNEY





THE RANCHES

The Ranches Response to Coronavirus

Our current situation has allowed for a significant reduction in the pace of things at The Ranches. While we're still caring for the kids 24/7 and facilitating their education, we are working diligently to keep their world as normal as we can. Consistency and predictability for children (and their adult caregivers) remains a critical piece in keeping positive momentum and emotional stability.

For those of you now homeschooling, you may finally get to experience prayer in school, once again. Aside from the reintroduction of prayer, time-ins, additional chores and more creative time outs in your home; how does all of this effect the kids at The Ranches and the kids now homebound?

We've used the following **Haim G. Ginott** quote for quite some time in our training and it seems more relevant than ever, right now:



"I have come to a frightening conclusion.
I am the decisive element in the classroom.
It is my personal approach that creates the climate.
It is my daily mood that makes the weather.
As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous.
I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.
I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.

In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated,
and a child humanized or de-humanized."

In times like these, this is more important than ever since kids are hypersensitive to the adults that serve as caregivers, whether guardians or parents, who are being afforded the opportunity to empathize with teachers and others who work with, near or around children on a daily basis.

So, I'm sure that, at some point in the near future, we will sit down and assess the impact that all of this has had on donations and donor engagement and employee satisfaction and commitment; right now, it is simply ALL about the kids. We are working to create the best emotional climate for them possible here at The Ranches. We have no plans to send kids home or lay anyone off. What we are doing is restricting visitors and relying more on telephone and video visits with friends and families. We are playing a few more board games, getting a little outdoor exercise, telling a few more stories, caring for the horses and other animals and creating a climate of calm and peace while believing that everything will indeed be alright.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:6-7](#) (ESV)

As you go about our hopefully temporary new normal, please remember that you too have the power to create the emotional climate in your part of the world. Whether its teaching math that you have forgotten long before your kids were born or just the time you spend in the toilet paper aisle at your local grocery store; you can help to create better weather for those you do come into contact with. We'll keep you posted on things when we have the opportunity, but in the meantime, please know that the kids are doing well and we are taking every precaution to protect and support the kids, our employees and the families connected to The Ranches. The ownness for paying salaries for both those working and any that may become ill, will rest on entirely on our organization and our generous donors. We ask that you include us in your prayers – even if the prayers are now in the school that is now in your living room. We understand that many of our readers may themselves be enduring financial uncertainty and we ask that you include these folks in your prayers, as we will. If you are in a position to continue to support our efforts, we ask that you do so, through our website (TheRanches.org) or the mail. Perhaps we can all take a step back and see that we, Americans, have way more in common than the issues that may divide us. Whatever you can do to make someone's personal weather a bit brighter today, please do so.



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perception, and mostly the older people who were our primary donors, but we weren't always sensitive to how our children perceived this." I reached a point that I knew, without question, that God was with us, and trusted in God's promise "I will be a Father to the Fatherless." My deal was not to worry about hours or vacations or raises, but we will do what it is He wants us to do. Many of those there did not have the personal reassurance that he had so Mike and Nikki turned to those whom they could trust, their own family.

How many children do you guess you have encountered? Based on records available there have been almost 1700 children who have been cared for by The Ranches, during Mike and Nikki's tenure. After a few years living on the Ranch they moved to Belen and later Albuquerque. While still working full-time for The Ranches, they fostered 13 children in their own home, (not all at once).

I then asked what their wish would be for the future of The Ranches? Nikki reflected on the prayer of Jabez, (from 1 Chronicles 4:10): "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, and that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain! So God granted him what he requested." Nikki went on to say that her hope is that, "The Ranch will be better and stronger with Heath and Lani in the leadership positions." Mike then joined the discussion with his hopes and confidence in the future of The Ranches in that under Heath's leadership, there has been a refocusing on the primary mission and he believes in a very positive future for The Ranches.

I then reminded them both about the many people in New Mexico that would like to help The Ranches and I asked what they would suggest? They were humbled but said that if people wanted to honor them in any way, that they continue to support the ongoing, day-to-day operations of The Ranches. If anyone wanted to give a gift to The Ranches, they would appreciate it done in honor of their service, but not restricted funds that would limit the use to specific issues. Helping out with the day-to-day operations, is an ongoing need, especially when the economy is so impacted by the ongoing health situation in our country. Together they asked for readers of this piece to remember The Ranches in their prayers and when possible, with their contributions.



Mike and Nikki will continue to be strong supporters of The Ranches, while trying to figure out what retired life will look like.

I've had the pleasure of working with Mike and Nikki for 12 years and send them off with my prayers and best wishes for the next phase of their lives.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary or in-kind gifts during the period January 1, 2010 - March 31, 2020. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

Alamo Ranch Company	Deming	NM	Ned's Structural Steel	Belen	NM
Bennett Construction	Santa Fe	NM	NM Acoustics and Specialties, Inc.	Albuquerque	NM
Colquitt Company	Anthony	NM	Old Mill Western Mercantile	Belen	NM
Ditch Witch of New Mexico, Inc	Albuquerque	NM	Reynolds Enterprises	Aurora	CO
Fulton Motors	Albuquerque	NM	Sh'eh Wheel Law Offices, P.C.	Isleta	NM
Greeman Ranches	Tishomingo	OK	Slayton Foundation	Roswell	NM
Harper Cattle, LLC	Arlington	TX	The Jack Stahl Company, Realtors	Albuquerque	NM
Hillsboro Union Church	Hillsboro	NM	Tucumcari Altrusa International Club	Tucumcari	NM
Hoops Unlimited	Carlsbad	NM	Women's Christian Service Society	Los Alamos	NM
Ken Brudos Insurance	Albuquerque	NM	Yucca Cowbells & Woolgrowers	Artesia	NM



BECOME A PARTNER

Become a Partner

Have you ever wondered what it meant to be a Partner of The Ranches? Our Partners commit to a monthly gift which allows for us to provide hope for the kids in our care. The financial needs of an organization which is dedicated to providing HOPE for "the least of these" can be daunting. By making an affordable automatic gift each month, you can help bring HOPE to the children who, through no fault of their own, have been hurt and lost hope.

Celebrate the 50 years that Mike and Nikki Kull have dedicated to the kids at The Ranches by committing to \$50 a month. Please fill out the information below or call us at 505-881-3363 to set up your monthly donation.

We appreciate your continued support of The Ranches.

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 youth.

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.

YES! I would like to Become a Partner!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: You may contact me by email. My email address is:

My Monthly donation will be: (a minimum gift of \$25 a month is required to become a Partner)

\$25 a month (\$300 yearly)

\$100 a month (\$1200 yearly)

\$50 a month (\$900 yearly)

Other: _____

If you would like to make a Donation by credit card
please visit us at

www.theranches.org/invest-in-our-youth/

or call us direct at (505) 881-3363 or (800) 660-0289.

Please contact me at the number listed above to set up monthly payments by Credit Card or Electronic Fund Transfer.

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