



New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches

# CORRAL

## The Ranches Alumni

**Advice from an Alumni to  
a current resident:**

**You're worth it, believe  
me, they (The Ranches)  
see worth in almost  
anyone, so try to believe  
them. Take advantage of  
the opportunity to  
prosper in a safe  
environment.**

**- Matthew O.**

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Rekindling HOPE for At Risk Youth - Since 1944

## FALL 2020

### A Whole Lot of Faith... With a Little Bit of Hope

By Heath Kull

"I think it is safe to assume, and to say, that everyone is dealing with a significant disruption to their normal routines, their lives and the lives of their loved ones." 2020 has been anything but normal or typical. In a seemingly very short amount of time, almost all of the rules and routines of daily life have been altered; and some of them may be altered forever. Not the most hopeful or uplifting thought, to be honest.

We, however, have been incredibly fortunate at The Ranches, for the most part. Our campus sits just a little north and east of the middle of nowhere. We don't advertise our location much and we don't have a ton of visitors. As a result, we didn't feel the jarring impact that many have felt during this time in our history. Additionally, we have, for the past several years, offered a good chunk of our schooling to the kids in an online format. This is not out of necessity for learning but due to our commitment to giving kids who are motivated the opportunity to catch up or even work ahead in school. As such, not much has changed for us. The exceptions to this are that we have had a noticeable increase in applications for both kids and staff and we have not been able to attend church with the kids. As a result, we have been having Bible Study on campus. We would probably have full blown church had God not decided that I am far more appealing as a person when I am not singing at an audible volume. We all have our gifts and not singing out loud is definitely one of mine.

And so, I began the process of preparing for 24 weeks of Bible Study for kids who don't always have the best history with church or with God. These kids also, through no fault of their own, don't have a true understanding of Christ, His love or His plan. While my task was a bit overwhelming for sure, the need was there, so my spirit needed to be willing.

As I began the process of preparing and researching, I had to go about the painful process of really considering how I felt about God and faith and eternity and grace and forgiveness.

I was, to be fair, raised in the church. I was Baptized at 7, attended a Christian school for 7 years, went on 5 mission trips in high school, went to Christian summer camp each year, participated in communion regularly and even ran the sound board for a rather small church in Belen and a very large church in Albuquerque. My gift of not singing at an audible volume led a music minister to decide that the sound booth was the best place for my singing voice, and most everyone agreed. I have been thoroughly church and I've participated in religion as a series of rituals and rights of passage. I did not want that to be my goal with the kids at The Ranches. I wanted to talk with them about faith and about the love of Christ and about having a heart aligned with God and with the heart of Christ. I wanted to give them what I felt I hadn't received in church when I was younger; the unvarnished truth.

*Continue reading on page 3*



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



## Heath Kull

President

This edition of the Corral has been a pretty honest one. It's not as though the previous editions were dishonest, but this one has a tinge of vulnerability on my part. Most of the "experts" that advise charities on fund raising caution against too much honesty and against the perceived weakness that comes when you display any level of vulnerability. Well, respectfully, I have a well-established history of not listening to so called experts when my principles are endangered by their expertise. So, I will continue to be honest often and vulnerable occasionally.

This past year has been a tough one for me. As someone who has a natural oversensitivity to the control mechanisms of others, I have not always enjoyed societal and governmental decisions related to our current pandemic. I miss going to speak at churches; I miss the atmosphere of county fairs; I miss meeting for lunch; and I miss handshakes, hugs and the facial expressions of others. Lord, do I miss them.

If I am 100% honest, I have never really found a way to be comfortable asking others for money. I use all of the cool words to deflect from what it is; support, help, hope for kids, etc., but it is all just asking people to donate money to help a child that they most likely will never meet. While it may be the most challenging part of the job for me, it is still a big part of the job.

We know that the last few months have been painful for many small businesses and others who've been financially impacted by shutting down the majority of the economy. As a result, we are doing everything we can to be good stewards while times are uncertain. Hopefully, when things return to some semblance of normal again, I can resume my discomfort with asking for things from y'all. We are here, we are continuing to accept kids into our program, and we continue to do our very best to meet the needs of the kids while preparing them for a life of independence. If you are in a position to support us, it will be genuinely appreciated. If you're not, we will continue to lift those impacted up in prayer. Thank you for all you do and have done for us.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President  
heathk@theranches.org

## Appeals



How do you know when you're bugging people a little too much? This is tricky for me. Being raised at The Ranches makes me ultra-sensitive to the exclamation of, "You're bugging me!" As a kid, I just heard it too many times from too many people. Honestly, it contributes to the most stressful part of my job – asking for money. I personally like to have a good reason. Vans, arenas, cottage upgrades and a commercial lawn mower. I can always tell if we're bugging individuals by the overall response to us asking for something. Thankfully, the response to our need for a really good mower for our 14 acres of grass was overwhelmingly positive. As if on que, 2 mowers broke in early August. If not for y'all, it would have been a dire situation. But, since your response was positive, a new mower was purchased and we are again taking care of 14 acres of grass.







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You see, I am familiar with The Truth of God, His Son and the Holy Spirit. I am thankful for knowing that truth and for knowing that my eternity has been booked and the price paid for my salvation. When I talk about the absence of the truth, I am simply speaking of the difference between what I was taught - sometimes passively or through the actions and inaction of others - and what The Bible actually says.

Like so many others, I was raised to believe that Jesus was nice and polite and calm and avoided confronting others. The scripture simply doesn't support that view. The scriptures describe Christ as unflinchingly dedicated to the truth and He was especially brutal in his honesty towards leaders in the church. With this in mind, I set out to teach the kids about Christ and His love for them. Due to the importance in the mission of The Ranches, I also wanted to keep in mind how valuable widows and orphans are in scripture. In my researching and my preparation, I came across the following passage on social media and it stopped me in my tracks.

*Many Christians believe that the highest calling God has placed on us is to be nice.*

*Respectfully, I believe that these Christians are wrong.*

*God has not called us to be nice. Rather, he has called us to be good.*

*Here's the difference: nice people never confront evil. Good people do.*

*Nice people are weak.*

*Good people are strong.*

*Jesus wasn't nice.*

*He was kind, He was compassionate, He was caring,  
but He was unbending and unflinching when it  
came to standing for the truth.*

*And it cost him His life*

And so, I began the task of teaching the kids about Christ without the crutch of religion and with an unbending and unflinching dedication to the truth. My pride was the first thing that had to go and humility began to overcome me as it never had before. I was humbled by the idea of being a teacher for such an eternally profound subject. I was also more than a bit concerned that Jesus' unflinching honesty towards leaders in the church would now apply to me.

So, with humble heart and more than a little bit of trepidation, I began the first week's lesson: When we need God, we only need reach out for Him. Many translations lean towards the concept that we are able to cry out for him. When I considered this concept, my first instinct was to consider my role as a father and think about my own children when they were scared or insecure.

When I would hear them cry out, I would often rush into their room and comfort them in their time of fear and need. While that worked for my children, many of the kids at The Ranches have simply never experienced the loving embrace of a parent who was intent on calming their internal storm. As a father, I can't even imagine not doing everything in my power to calm the storms of my children. I tend to believe that God feels the same way about us, and I find incredible comfort in that belief.

But what if you can't imagine the comfort of a parent...or of God?

As I am prone to do, I fell back on many themes from my own experiences. I started to try and help the kids understand that God has a plan for all of us. Well, for at-risk young people, the question becomes: "If God has a plan for me, why didn't He love me enough to give me parents that love me, that comfort me and that wouldn't send me to The Ranches?"

I don't have a neat and clean answer to that question or the follow up question and exclamation: "Why are you upset at my behavior if it's part of God's plan? He knew that I would act this way before I was even born, and still He made me this way!"

The only response that I could come up with was a question: Why do you think God planned for you to be here in this situation and in this conversation with me?

I remember being at their age and thinking the same thoughts and challenging those who were attempting to teach me about God in much the same way. What a foolish young man I was, at times. God really does have a sense of humor and I think that he gets a particularly big kick of watching me. Maybe I overestimate my spot in God's entertainment, but I do think he has a good laugh at me from time to time.

By the Grace of God, I made it through the first week.

Being unbending and unflinching about being honest can be a bit challenging. I've never really shied away from the truth, but I have softened it for some; typically, those closest to me. I couldn't escape the feeling that softening was just a nice way to say that I bent, and I flinched. While I want to be, I can't even be unbendingly or unflinchingly honest with even my family. I had the sudden realization that I am not certain that I possess the strength of character or conviction to die for the truth or for my fellow man. I am no Jesus...even though I strive to be like Him whenever I can.

On to week two...

Why does God give us free will? Especially when he sees all, knows all and the whole world is His. Wouldn't it be easier if He just "programmed" us to do what He wants us to do and to not make mistakes or sin?

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# #RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

## Room to Grow

Last spring, we set about working on teaching the kids some life skills with a focus on seeing the fruits of our labor...literally. One of our houseparents, Judey Truitt began working on resurrecting our garden and revitalizing a greenhouse here on the ranch. Each day as the kids set out for VoTech - our work program that pays the kids for jobs on campus – Judey took two or three to work on the garden. The correlation between the work in the garden and the internal work that the kids must do while at The Ranches was undeniable.

1. Clear the dirt – Getting rocks, debris and unhealthy plant life removed from the garden is a lot like clearing out all of the negative thought and patterns in the kids lives. *“Still other seeds fell on fertile soil...”*
2. “Fertilize – While the area may be cleared, the plants need nutrients to grow strong and produce. In much the same way, we have to start teaching the kids that they have value and are important; fertilize their mind and soul.”  
*“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit...”*
3. Tend to the garden – After the ground was cleared and fertilized and the seeds were planted, the kids tended the garden throughout the summer. In the same fashion, we have to stay vigilant in reminding the kids of their worth and that we care or they too will wilt. *“...and you shall be like a watered garden”*
4. Harvest – At the end of the summer, kids who’d been a part of the process were able to see the fruits of their labor in literal fruit and vegetables. Zucchini, squash, pumpkins, cantaloupe, cucumbers, tomatoes and much more were all grown right here at the ranch. For us, the fruits of the emotional labor of the kids is a harvest of healing and seeing themselves differently; of being productive members of society. *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”*  
By Heath Kull



# #RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

## Unfinished Business

Everyone who comes to The Ranches, whether kid or staff, comes with a certain amount of unfinished emotional business. Wounds from the past that haven’t quite healed or healed but left a “scar” or a “limp,” so to speak, that allow the events of yesterday to impact the relationships of today. Thankfully, we are now equipped to navigate and help finish much of this unfinished business in kids and staff.

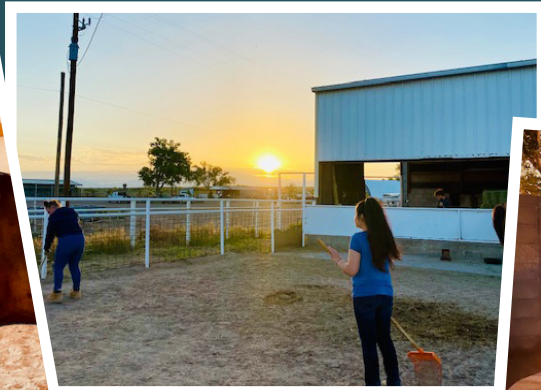
Our Equine Gestalt Coaching program in conjunction with the Agape Indoor Riding Arena that so many of you supported, gives us the space and the tools to help all those who enter, to start the path of healing. Lani Kull has spent countless hours in the arena with Jessica Hauschildt from Colorado helping kids to heal and to settle some business that needs finishing. Like so many things at The Ranches, once the results start to manifest, the momentum builds.







# THEIR JOURNEY







*Continued from page 3*

I've often wondered about this and I didn't fully understand the concept until I became a father. I wouldn't appreciate it very much if my kids were required to tell me that they love me and were proud of me at the threat of punishment or abandonment. Those "I love you's" and "I'm proud of you's" wouldn't mean anything. But, the voluntary ones; The ones I'm not expecting that are genuine and of their own free will, those mean the world to me. I am pretty sure our voluntary acts of service and loyalty to God – done of our own free will – mean the world to Him as well. Free will is the only thing that makes kindness, integrity, grace forgiveness, and unyielding and unflinching honesty mean anything. Free will is of absolute importance to me and, much more importantly, to God.

Attempting to teach the kids that they could, of their own free will, reach out to God for help, for comfort or for assistance made for yet another challenging round of conversations with the kids. How does one, at the tender ages of 13 to 16 learn to reach out for comfort and help when every other attempt that they've made to reach out has been met with anger or silence or a sermon or abandonment.

*As one young man put it, "Do I just yell or cry or talk or what? I want God to be in my life, but don't know how to 'reach out'. Can I just think it?"*

Convincing the kids that God wasn't like their parents or like any other adult that they have met, is very hard to do. I love a good challenge though, so into the conversation I went. It is a challenging thing to be in the position to be angry about things that I did not do on behalf of others who aren't present in order to help a child understand that God is not like the adults that they should have been able to trust. The need is there though, so my spirit needed to be willing to be an adult who was willing to be honest; unflinchingly so.

That brings us to week three...

As if God decided to allow me the opportunity to hoist myself on my own petard, week three's lesson was focused on the rituals of church and religion vs. the heart of God. Suddenly, all of my unexpressed thoughts and emotions were no longer willing to stay neatly contained. What was the unbendable and unflinching truth about religion vs. the Heart of God?

According to the scriptures, in Mathew 23:15

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a son of hell as you are."*

To be honest, some of the unbending and unflinching truth of the scriptures was lost on the younger me. To think that Jesus

was so unyielding in his honesty towards the leaders of the church as to describe them as "sons of hell" holds particular significance when you realize your own insecurity while you're teaching kids about Christ. The significance of this truth is not lost on a much older me who is hoping to teach young people while not becoming one of those, aforementioned, "sons of hell." It doesn't help that I have my own history with the leaders of the church in relation to The Ranches. From pastors who openly preached, with us in the audience, about contributions to charities like The Ranches, not being a valid form of tithing to all the references I've heard, from employees and church leaders, about how the kids at The Ranches and I are, in some way, "not Christian enough" for one reason or another. Hurtful yes, but certainly worthy of forgiveness and a little grace on my part. It would be easy for me to dive into the "sons of hell" as a label for those who have hurt and frustrated me, but forgiveness is always the better choice. If not for them, certainly for me and my well-being.

As I've had to navigate this time in history while also attempting to navigate teaching Bible Study to the kids of The Ranches, I have started to become thankful both for my early experiences with the church and for the opportunity afforded me by the current circumstances.

While the work has not changed for me, I am looking at it a bit differently. I've always valued honesty and prided myself on being blunt and brutally honest even when it was hard; heck, especially when it's hard. If I am being completely honest though, feeling the weight of Jesus' example of unbending and unflinching truth and His willingness to die for each of us while He maintained His dedication to truth, is truly sinking in for the first time in my life. I am dedicated to the truth, but I am not 100% sure that I am so dedicated as to die for it. I hear those of you who echo the thoughts and sentiments of my childhood youth camp experiences that extolled the virtue and possible necessity of having to die for my beliefs, but I've not been in that position yet and can't say, with unflinching honesty, that I'd have the courage to lay down my life for my beliefs. I hope that I would, but I haven't been tested and I am honest enough to admit that, despite the cowardice of the statement. I do, however, know for certain that I am living out God's plan for me and that I am a part of His plan for The Ranches. It took me a little while to get there. In the vein of absolute honesty, I have struggled with the idea that I have been called by God to lead The Ranches. Had I been on a dusty road to a Godforsaken town and seen a bright light and booming voice, maybe I'd be more convinced. But I was simply born here. It is hard to move past the feeling that I just never escaped the orbit of The Ranches like so many others did. Was I called, or just too deaf to hear the call to somewhere else? The best I can offer is that I have faith that I was actually molded, shaped and guided here by the Man upstairs.

I look back now and see all of the painful spots of my youth and realize that there is always a child now that is a reflection of a



child from back then and that I received, back then, an absolutely tailor-made education on kids in group care. Learning to accept that the pain inflicted on me from kids and other staff kids at The Ranches was God’s way of making me tough, strong and able to handle anything that the kids of today can throw at me was one my least favorite lessons. But I wouldn’t trade it for anything. He knew what I needed before I even started to realize it. I also know it took me a little while to realize that 2 years on a cattle ranch taught me about the long hours of “Ranch Life” and about being absolutely dirt tired. Those lessons sure come in handy now. While it was absolutely the hardest one for me to find peace with, I have mostly come to terms with God’s gift of Rheumatoid Arthritis for me and one of my daughters. I spent more time than I should have being angry about that one, but I’ve come to know that God knew that I would never understand the powerlessness that kids and parents feel unless I had to feel that same level of powerlessness in my own life. Another lesson that is not near the top of my “favorite lessons list,” but probably the most necessary for someone as stubborn as me. Speaking of stubborn, I am most thankful that God made me stubborn and sent me a wife of equal – possibly greater – stubbornness to love me and the kids even when we can’t. I like to believe that God knew what I would need now, even all of those years ago. I can’t say that I understand it all, but I do my best to understand what I am able to comprehend. So, am I sure about being here at The Ranches and working to lead the organization into the future? Honestly, mostly. Until I get a chance to ask Him one day, my belief in His plan is the best I can offer while maintaining unbending and unflinching honesty. The rest is simply a whole lot of faith with a little bit of hope.



Bible Study Photos by Lani Kull

## THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary gifts in excess of \$100 during the period of July 1, 2020 - September 15, 2020. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

Alamo Ranch Company	Deming	NM	Hillsboro Union Church	Hillsboro	NM
Colquitt Company	Anthony	NM	Ken Brudos Insurance	Albuquerque	NM
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# FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

## Reward Offered

We are offering the reward of having helped change the lives of children, or even one child. We want to develop foster care respite homes (in the greater Albuquerque metro area) for children (living at The Ranch) who would then have a local family they could develop a relationship with. Our vision would be that the child would spend one weekend a month and perhaps share their vacation times each year, with the foster family. Many of our residents have families and a home to return to while others either do not or those homes are too distant or are not safe or functional. Our foster care agency (FFC), wants to offer a positive alternative. Like all of us, an occasional change of scenery benefits us; for children living at The Ranch this is also true. Helping a child expand their support systems has amazing benefits and is rewarding for the families who choose to host them. This is a win-win and works toward our goal of helping children build an extended support system as one more step toward launching them successfully into adulthood. Both statistically and through first-hand experience, children with broader support systems do better at navigating the pitfalls every young adult is faced with and it mitigates many of past risks they've encountered in their lives. If you, or someone you know, would consider such an opportunity, please contact FFC 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 youth, either in person or via the web.

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!

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: You may contact me by email. My email address is:  
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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/](http://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 Funds Transfer.

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