

New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches CORRAL

Spring 2019

Horses, Honesty, Hard Work and HOPE!

By Heath Kull

The Ranches is a little old fashioned and a little behind the times...at least socially. We don't have super high speed internet and we don't have many businesses close by. We are simply out in the country.

For kids that come to The Ranches, the transition from "city life" - with all the conveniences and immediate gratification - to the more laid back lifestyle of the country can be a little shocking and unsettling. That's OK by us as there are some lessons we can teach on The Ranch that can be harder to teach with all the distractions of city life close by.

Horses - for many of the kids, the horses are the first shocking reminder that they aren't in the city anymore. 6:00 a.m. comes pretty early and there are horses to feed and stalls to muck. But the horses aren't just here for show. The horses at The Ranch don't care about a kid's file or their story or the pain and anger that kids often carry. Horses are simpler than that and offer the kids the opportunity to just be kids and to be responsible for the care of another; even if that other weighs 1000 pounds and just offers an opportunity to be present and non judgmental for a hurting child. In time, and with a little help from Lani, the kids soon learn that the horses are also able to offer a reflection of a child's intentions and best feelings and actions. Caring for horses is one of our first steps in healing kids and the horses are effortless in their acceptance and comfort with the kids that we serve.

Honesty - once kids have had the opportunity to adjust to being in the country and, for lack of a more tactful way to say it, no longer within the comfort of their home, we can begin the process of teaching honesty. This starts with our staff; all of whom are committed to our way of life and to the care of kids. Unfortunately, many of the kids have become dependent on the less than honest feedback of peers and social media. In our environment, we can begin to offer honest but caring feedback to the kids regarding their behaviors and their treatment of others. While it can be difficult, at times, to remain honest while in the midst of dealing with difficult behaviors, honesty is the only path towards true healing.



The Ranches Alumni

"Hope, faith, and compassion is what the ranch gave me. It's up to you to what you make of it. I've spent years a bit of time messing up, but I'll never forget the morals I learned. I can say today I'm better then I was yesterday."
~Angelo M

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Rekindling Hope in Today's Youth - Since 1944

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Politics & Charity



Heath Kull
President

#RaiseThemUp

Several months ago we started a podcast at The Ranches. For those of you who are unfamiliar, podcasts are recorded audio that you can download and play at your convenience on your smartphone, tablet or computer.

Our podcast is called "Raise Them Up" and is meant to offer support and tips to parents who are raising kids in today's world. We try to keep them 10-20 minutes in length (a typical car ride) in hopes that parents, grandparents and others who regularly interact with young people can listen and understand how we go about raising up kids at The Ranches. It is our hope that you will try it out and listen when you can. You can find us on iTunes, Google Play and other platforms. So, if you're a parent or grandparent or anyone who interacts with young people and are looking for positive and uplifting content to listen to, we hope you'll give us a listen. If you're already a listener, thank you. If there's content you'd like us to discuss on our podcast, please send me an email at heathk@theranches.org with your suggestions.

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According to the IRS, the rules for a 501(c)(3) organization, like The Ranches, are pretty clear.

According to IRS.GOV - "Under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c)(3) organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office."

While I fully recognize that not all 501(c)(3) organizations (and the leaders of those organizations) comply with this rather clear directive, I do take it very seriously. I am often asked about politics and have become rather skillful at avoiding supporting or diminishing political candidates and elected officials. In today's contentious and divisive times, this can be rather difficult. I, like everyone else, have my beliefs and opinions about politics. I just choose not to share them as I am in the business of resurrecting and rekindling hope in young people. In today's environment, political discussions rarely focus on hope and instead tend to focus on negativity and division. So I exercise self control and stay out of those conversations whenever possible. Unfortunately, political affiliations, along with denominational and religious affiliations, often come with significant strings attached. The strings are significant and are a big part of the reason that we choose not to accept any government funding. I tend to feel, like most people, that the strings often outweigh the benefit. This makes for a somewhat difficult line to walk. So I focus on helping young people to navigate the difficult years of adolescence. I also focus on people who prioritize young people over politics. To my knowledge, no political party or denomination has a monopoly on helping young people. In my experience, people of all political and religious backgrounds and persuasions support The Ranches and the kids that we serve. I welcome them all as the kids at The Ranches are typically just great kids in need of an opportunity...with no strings attached.

I was recently asked if I would accept a donation from a pronounced atheist. The answer is a resounding YES; as long as the donation did not come with the expectation that we would abandon our faith and our beliefs as a string attached to the donation. While that may offend some, I am not in the habit of living in accordance with people's current inclination to live their life in pursuit of being offended. In all my years, no child has asked what the religious or political affiliation of a donor happens to be. Kids are simpler than that; either people want to help and support the kids at The Ranches, or they don't. Being offended by a supporters beliefs is a luxury that most of the kids at The Ranches simply can't afford.

So, if you're a Republican or a Democrat; a Christian or an atheist; progressive or conservative, we welcome your support of kids who are struggling. Kids who've been hurt, neglected and abandoned. In the end, regardless of your political or religious affiliations, there is a crisis with young people in this country. Many have lost hope and many see their lives as insignificant and, at times, meaningless. At The Ranches, we work tirelessly to help kids understand that God has a plan for them, they matter, and they are inherently valuable. In time, their faith and their politics will work themselves out. Our mission is to remind them there is hope; no matter what their politics happen to be. We hope that, regardless of your political affiliations, you'll support us in "Rekindling Hope" for kids that can't yet see hope for themselves or their families. Hope isn't a political belief, it is simply the idea that moving forward is the best course of action...especially when you are struggling and hurting. Tomorrow doesn't have to be defined by what happened today and hope is precious for all of us regardless of our politics.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President
HeathKull@theranches.org



THE RANCHES

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Once we've established that we are honest with the kids about our difficulty with their behaviors, we can also begin to be honest in giving them feedback about the strengths and talents that we can so clearly see in them. While they have to give up the "likes" and constant praise of their peers, what they receive in honesty from us tends to serve them far better as they mature. Self esteem can be difficult when a child sees themselves as a constant problem. Our job at The Ranch is to honestly help kids see themselves as less of a constant problem and more of a consistent blessing. To do that, we must work to help them honestly see their gifts and their potential and honestly come to terms with their behaviors and past mistakes. This honest assessment is step two in the healing process at The Ranches.

Hard Work - as anyone who's worked on a ranch can tell you, there is always work to do. We constantly strive to teach both the value of hard work around the ranch, and also the value of and necessity for hard work in developing talents and maximizing potential. This is the monumental work of those called to work with and care for other people's children. Modeling hard work and the hard work of personal growth is the foundation of healing the wounds of childhood. I am thankful and blessed to be in a position to model and assist in teaching kids the lifelong importance of hard work. While we cannot dictate what kids will do in their lives, work ethic will always serve them well and never really goes out of style...despite the stereotypes of today's generation of kids. We work hard with them and for them in hopes that they will one day work hard with and for their own kids. With a little hard work, the cycle of pain and difficulty can be broken and a new normal can emerge for the kids and, one day, for their own kids. Hard work is the third step in our healing process.

"Hope matters and hope creates better tomorrows. When the final step of introducing hope is complete, healing becomes a lifelong endeavor worth pursuing."

Hope - when we have the opportunity to introduce kids to horses, honesty and hard work, a simple and singular concept emerges within them - Hope. It may start as a glimmer, but can quickly snowball into a belief that our tomorrows begin with our todays. Hope, in its simplest form, takes shape when we see in kids that they no longer believe that their past dictates their future. When they realize that, with some honesty and hard work, their future is theirs. Hope matters and hope creates better tomorrows. When the final step of introducing hope is complete, healing becomes a lifelong endeavor worth pursuing.

As a supporter of The Ranches, you are critical to our work. Your support of our program, our horses, our honesty, our hard work and our mission of rekindling hope creates a lasting legacy for children, their families and the generations yet to come. We are proud of the work we do and we are touched and humbled by the willingness of our larger and generous Ranches family to support the kids today as they work to become the parents, employees and citizens of tomorrow. Your support is transformed from a gift into hope and healing for kids who would otherwise never have the opportunity to become adults with hope and brighter tomorrows.

The Kids

By Heath Kull

When asked what kind of kids we serve at The Ranches, I am often confounded as to how to answer. The kids at The Ranches are all struggling with the lives that they've lived, up to this point, and all have at least one significant issue with at least one parent. While that is a very generalized description, it is also honest. Many of the kids have been convinced, sometimes through no fault of their own or even their families, that they are worthless and an inconvenience to those around them. Many people believe that we should just love them and tell them that they matter, but that doesn't tend to actually change how they feel or how they behave. In order to illicit real change, we have to dig a little deeper and touch on the pain that creates their behavior and their overwhelmingly negative view of themselves. We can't shy away from their pain or their inaccurate view of themselves. We have to be willing to deal with their inaccurate perceptions and build a new perception based on honesty and constructive feedback. It usually isn't pretty and it is never easy, but rarely is there anything worthwhile that is easy and anything less than completely honest.

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#RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

STRIKE



It's not always about work here at The Ranch. We like to reward good behavior and personal achievements. When we can, we seize opportunities to get out and have some fun.

We are strong believers at The Ranches that it is about creating positive memories. We saw some competitiveness come out during our bowling game but we were also able to observe smiles, laughter and happiness.



#RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

SCIENCE ENTHUSIAST

We are very thankful for our volunteers who come out to The Ranch on a weekly basis to educate our kids. We enjoyed a day full of science and experiments. The kids were able to think outside the box and put their minds to work. They were able to experiment with gelatin and fog bubbles; the gelatin made the bubbles stronger, and the fog bubbles were filled with dry ice fog. Another experiment was with electric currents using different batteries and wires, making simple motors. It means a great deal to us that we have wonderful individuals that are helping educate our youth.





THEIR JOURNEY





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The goal is to help kids to achieve self awareness and, with a lot of hard work, authenticity. We are tasked with helping them to face all of the scary events that led them to see themselves as worthless and inconvenient. In most cases the kids that you support have had adults and caretakers give up on dealing with them. Well meaning adults in their lives have often reached their emotional limit and, often times, uttered words that can't be taken back but that serve to define a child in the mind of that child.

"I'm stupid"

"I'm lazy"

"I'm a mistake"

"I'm the reason that my family fell apart"

"If my mom didn't have me, she'd be happy"

"If my dad didn't have to take care of me, he could have pursued his dreams"

"I make everyone angry"

"People are better off without me around"

"I hate myself"

"I should have been aborted"

"My family taught me to hate myself"

All of these statements have been uttered to me over my years at The Ranches. While rarely, if ever, accurate, the kids at The Ranches tend to live with these beliefs as the basis for how they see themselves. Our mission is to change those beliefs and, as you probably already know, changing a child's beliefs about themselves is painfully difficult. When you support The Ranches, you are supporting us in changing the internal dialogue of kids. We look to replace those negative beliefs with more honest, self aware and authentic statements.

"I am intelligent and will work hard to achieve my goals"

"I may have been an 'accident' but I am not a mistake"

"My family had issues and, while I may have contributed to those issues, they weren't my fault"

"My mom and I need to work to communicate better and support each other"

"My dad has a choice to follow his dreams and I hope that he does"

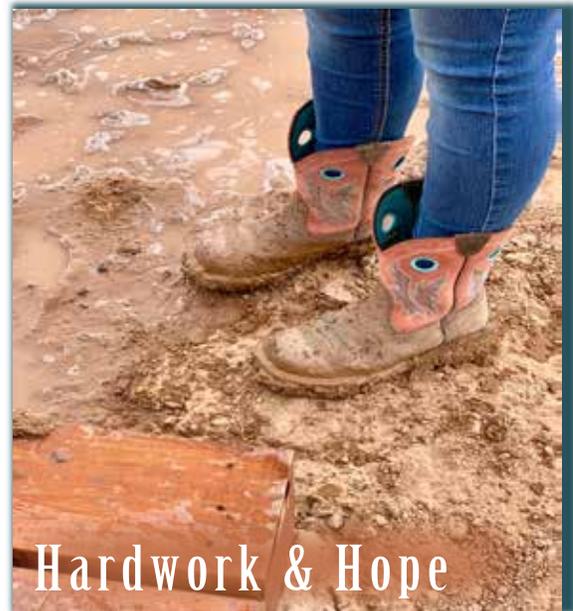
"I can't make people angry, but I can react differently to situations that are difficult"

"I can teach my loved ones to appreciate who I am and that I am a blessing"

"I love myself even if I don't always like my behavior"

"God made me for a reason and I am going to look for that reason"

"My family didn't always know how to deal with me and I can learn to forgive them...and myself"



Turning the internal dialogue of a child into a positive internal conversation can be difficult and overwhelming, but that is the work that God has called us to do. When you support our organization, you are supporting us in walking alongside a child on their journey to see themselves, and those around them, differently. While we do love them and we do constantly tell them that they matter, the work of rekindling hope and turning their perception of themselves around takes skill, dedication and time. We recognize that you have a plethora of choices for your charitable donations and we appreciate that you have chosen to support ours. Hopefully, reading this will give you some insight into the actual work that must be done in order to minimize the risks inherent in "at-risk" youth. When your support and our hard work are combined, we can teach kids that they are indeed loved, worth knowing and loving, and that they matter. Hopefully, we can help them to see themselves differently and, in the end, your support will create future generations that never have to struggle with a negative internal dialogue and are never "at-risk" because their parents were at The Ranches and learned to break the cycle for their own children.



“There’s something about them that I hate about myself!”

By Heath Kull

I recently heard this “There’s something about them that I hate about myself!” quote by Dr. Phil on a podcast and it sums up the source of many issues that families face and the main issue that we face in addressing the issues that arise between staff and kids at The Ranches.

While there is a tendency to focus on the emotional challenges that kids and parents face in today’s complex and ever changing world, most of the issues that surface are behavioral issues that are a direct result of emotion felt when dealing with kids. Rarely, if ever, do families come to us and discuss grief and loss and abandonment and feelings of not belonging. They do, however, discuss the behaviors that emerge from the emotions related to those issues. Talking back, ditching school, rebellious behavior, drugs, alcohol and conflict are all sourced from deeply rooted emotions within families. The biggest conflicts in families and at The Ranches typically comes when kids display behaviors that remind adults of an emotional root that exists in that adult.

So many times, the people that irritate and annoy us the most are the ones that are behaving in a way that we work hard not to behave. We see something that we’ve worked to eliminate in someone who isn’t working to eliminate it. And we have a negative emotional response when we see that characteristic or behavior. If we get honest, our empathy has, in many cases, turned to apathy, anger or resentment.

For me, insecurity and being overwhelmed are the two states of consciousness that I struggle within others. This isn’t because I’ve never felt insecure or overwhelmed; quite the opposite, actually. My negative emotional response is because I hate in myself feelings of insecurity and when I feel like becoming overwhelmed is a real possibility. So, I react - often badly.

I recognize that insecurity and feeling overwhelmed are both temporary states, but I also recognize that we sometimes make permanent decisions based on our temporary state of mind. We end relationships, change jobs, lash out at coworkers, bosses and loved ones and create permanent flood damage from a storm that, if given time, will pass. In knowing this, I often react to others’ insecurity and their state of being overwhelmed by becoming frustrated at the possible outcomes instead of dealing with the temporary issue. I hate what’s going on in someone else out of fear that they will react in the exact same way that I have in the past. I think many parents and kids tend to follow this same mistaken path.

We can, if we choose to, stop ourselves from reacting and simply respond to the emotional state of the other person. We can ask honest questions and listen to their responses. We can even share our own struggles in pursuit of helping them to overcome their temporary emotional state without making permanent and emotionally driven decisions. “You shouldn’t feel that way!” and “You have nothing to feel insecure about!” and “How dare you get overwhelmed with me!” rarely, if ever, lessen the feelings of insecurity or being overwhelmed in those we care about. “I too have felt insecure and overwhelmed at times and want to support you,” is a much healthier and more productive response.

While this is one example, it applies to most things that we see in others that we hate about ourselves. If we are purposeful and intentional in supporting and embracing those that display to us what we hate in ourselves, we can go from a negative emotional response to becoming a coach and an agent for change in someone that, like us, deserves the opportunity to see themselves and their emotional state a bit differently. Maybe, just maybe, those that we support and coach can then begin to reflect back to us the things we loved and have worked hard to change in ourselves. Be the change you want to see in the world.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary or in-kind gifts during the period February 02, 2018 - April 30, 2019. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

AF & AM Temple Lodge 6	Albuquerque	NM	Nicole Decor & Design	Albuquerque	NM
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SAVE THE DATE

We are excited to be celebrating 75 years of helping families and "Rekindling Hope in Today's Youth." Roughly 3-4 million meals served to approximately 10,000 staff, kids and visitors since 1944.

We plan on celebrating this momentous occasion on **August 3rd, 2019.**

We'll host a lunch, all are welcome.

If you are an alumni and on Facebook, there is a group you can join for updates and stories.

Heath



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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