

New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches CORRAL

Fall 2019

Expectation, Isolation and Shame

By Heath Kull

Note: I have spent precisely ZERO days of my life as a girl. I was raised at a "boys ranch" in rural New Mexico and was surrounded by a seemingly endless stream of fresh male faces. None were the same but none too different either. My experience with girls comes primarily from being married and having 3 female children...and working with at risk youth of both genders.

Growing up in rural New Mexico in the 70s and 80s wasn't without its charm, but my childhood also didn't come with much in the way of intricacy or nuance when it came to children. "Boys will be boys" and "sugar and spice and everything nice" were the prevailing thoughts about the genders and little more thought was attached. All of the kids that I grew up with were either "at-risk" boys living on a ranch at their families request due to behavioral issues or abandonment or neglect; or they were the children of the people who worked with the "at-risk" boys - "staff kids" as we were called; both boys and girls. Due to the sheer numbers of us, boys were prioritized and tended to get the majority of the attention.

Despite the disparity in numbers, the girls and the women were a part of life on our campus and there was little to differentiate them from the rest of us males. Looking back, I can only imagine the feelings that the girls and women had about our little male-dominated oasis in the New Mexico desert. Oddly enough, I don't really remember the issue being discussed openly, if at all.

As a result, my views on girls and women were formed through my rather myopic lens and through a limited number of relationships with the opposite sex; that is, until we moved to a big city and I was enrolled in a large public high school. Going from a community of 70 to a school of 2000+ was a rather shocking experience. The things that remained the same for me were that "boys will be boys" and that I was still expected to take risks and somehow gloriously stand out while sheepishly fitting in. I did my best but rarely, if ever, felt that it rose to the threshold of being "good enough." I just wasn't good enough, but for who? I still do not know who I was striving to be "good enough" for, but I do know that I wasn't enough and, in many cases, still tend to feel as though I don't quite measure up to some unspoken standard. If I felt and still feel this way, I fear that I have more in common with girls and women than I have allowed myself to realize. I have also failed to be able to summon the courage to regularly try and put myself in the shoes of those girls and women that I am surrounded by in an effort to understand their pressures and fears. I failed to summon the courage until the choice was removed from me and I was forced to face what I had chosen to ignore. I had a capable, competent and beautiful wife and three capable, competent and beautiful daughters. I had to ask myself, "What are they facing? What are their struggles? Their fears?"

The Ranches Alumni

"During my time at The Boy's Ranch, we rode horses there. One of the most memorable things ever done in my life. Thank you GOD!!!"
- Joe B.

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Rekindling Hope in Today's Youth - Since 1944

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Heath Kull
President

Thank you for celebrating 75 Years

Since 1944 - That's a long time. 75 years to be exact. The Ranches has been helping kids in New Mexico since 1944. On August 3rd, 2019, we invited everyone out for our 75th birthday party. We had visitors from the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s, and the past decade. BBQ was served, music was played, memories were shared and hayrides were given. In the end, getting the opportunity to catch up with "kids" from yesteryear and see their spouses, friends and relatives was what it was all about. It is impossible to calculate the impact that The Ranches has had over the years, but it is easy to measure the smiles and laughter when everyone gets back together again to tell stories and catch up on each other's lives after The Ranches. We had a great day and saw a bunch of faces from the past. For those of you who were unable to make it out, please know that you were missed.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President
HeathKull@theranches.org

#RaiseThemUp

Life is filled with struggles and accomplishments. Before The Ranches my only thought process was to always survive. Being at The Ranches has shown me another way. It shows you that you can turn your hurt, your sadness, your anger, your past into a weapon. Okay, when I say weapon don't freak out. When people say weapon they think, "Danger, run." To me, weapon means power; not the power to control or to do harmful things. To me weapon (power) is a way to give myself confidence and security. My weapon is my past. I use my past (weapon) to show myself that I am not responsible for what happened to me as a child, and how I choose to move forward in life is up to me. When I choose to tell others about my past it's to get them to understand that what I do have control over, I use to benefit myself, that my past doesn't define who I am. Our accomplishments show kids (including myself) that even when things get hard that we are able to keep going and to keep our heads up. Our struggles show two things about a person. One that they may need a hand because it may be too difficult to handle on their own, or two, they may need a little longer to work on their current struggle. To get an accomplishment you need to have a struggle. Our accomplishments show others that things may get difficult but it won't hold us back and we are free to move on to the next thing life throws our way. When life throws things at you that you weren't expecting, you either fight or run "Fight or Flight." For most of my childhood it was a constant fight or run. As a child in CYFD custody, you learn relatively quick that people want you to choose run or fight. This is because people don't want to deal with kids who have a mouth. The usual excuses are, "They're too difficult to deal with" or "They're too aggressive." When I say fight it doesn't always mean fist fight, it can also mean a verbal fight. If we get honest with ourselves we know that most people can't handle people who yell and talk back. So therefore most adults choose to have kids who are quiet and who will submit to what they say and want. I have to admit I am not one of the kids who ran or obeyed, I am the kid that said something back, and for that I went from home to home, shelter to shelter, till I got here, The Ranches. I have always told myself that I had the right to be treated like my life meant something. Being a resident at The Ranches has shown me that I wasn't alone, and there are others out in the world who had similar struggles. Working on myself has shown me there is

another path to take in life, that I was not stuck on one road. There are always tasks to do and more to achieve in life. But what are we working towards? My work is leading me to have a more positive outlook on life and on others. I'm a sophomore in high school and I still have things to learn and things to accomplish. So why does my opinion matter or count? I don't know the answer to that question, for all you know I could just be another teen with a mouth and issues. But who's to say my words have no meaning. In the end you really have to take a second and ask yourself, "Why do my words mean more than a child's" maybe it is because you're older. You know there is a saying that the older you are the more wise you get. To be honest I don't think that what you say matters, at least not as much as why you say it or what's the meaning behind them. Words have meaning, and if you can teach someone, lets say a scared kid, and you show them how to use their words so that they have purpose and direction then you just gave a child a way to express themselves in a sea of black. Did you know that most of the human population would choose the person standing out in front of a crowd in a conflict. It's because they think if they side with the person yelling they will get the attention and get their own needs met. My time at The Ranches has proven to be a one of the greatest decisions in my life. The Ranches has shown me that I can turn my past into just that, a past. People say our pasts define who we are. Why should it? Your past is the past and why should you let others say that our past is us. I hate, absolutely hate when people think that I am too fragile or young to deal with the truth or that I am too broken to handle anything. How about come and ask me. I like to fight. Fighting shows others that I am not going to sit around waiting for others to do something for me. I like to show others that my past does not define me and there is not one person out in the world who can tell me otherwise. I think our past was a lesson to be learned, I don't think it was a punishment or a life sentence. Sometimes my past comes back to say, "Hey I am still here, don't forget about me." Our accomplishments and even our struggles. Being at The Ranches has changed my thought process from survive to, "Adapt, keep learning and keep moving forward." So I'm going to ask again, why do my opinions or my words matter? I don't really know the answer to that. I guess it's all up to you, to decide whether or not my words have any real meaning to them. -Resident CV



THE RANCHES

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Raising girls of my own – even with their mom being ever present in their lives – has been humbling, rewarding and terrifying in varying doses and mixtures. While I had expectations for them as a parent, I was not prepared for the myriad expectations that people feel that they have the right to place on girls with whom they have no relation or connection. “She seems or is...”

- “Too quiet”
- “Too loud”
- “Too big”
- “Too small”
- “Too tall”
- “Too short”
- “Too masculine”
- “Too feminine”
- “Too angry”
- “Too meek”
- “Too blunt”
- “Too timid”
- “Too agreeable”
- “Too disagreeable”
- “Too much”
- “Too decisive”
- “Too indecisive”
- “Too cautious”
- “Too cavalier”
- “Not enough”

And the list continues, ad nauseum.

So, what’s a girl to do? This is where things get complicated as there doesn’t seem to be a definitive answer. The women and girls that I know have both conquered and at times still struggle with expectations. Whereas men and boys seem to have channeled the accusations of toxicity into anger, women and girls seem to have gone a different route altogether. Many who have failed to successfully navigate and overcome the never-ending list of expectations in their own unique and acceptable manner seem to have settled more for isolation and, in many cases, the shame of social inadequacy. If it all gets to you and at times overwhelms you, who and what are you, if not all alone?

If Dr. Sigmund Freud is to be believed, “Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.”

What we are seeing today is the uglier ways that unexpressed emotions in girls and women come forth. We have sent the message to girls that they aren’t good enough and are, each in some unique way, unacceptable. Many learn to accept and tolerate that they are to be ashamed. Furthermore, when a woman or girl dares to stand up and express frustration and fear, she is almost immediately told that, in order to get her needs met, she will need to calm down, sit down and offer some uncharismatic and dishonest impression of an apology to someone who has attempted to shame her; not for her feelings

towards them but, because she dared to stand up and be less than compliant with unfair expectations. In my experience, this leads to one of two roads; fear or isolation. Both options tend to be rather toxic, but both are altogether avoidable if a group of capable, non-fragile people who are neither bothered by nor judgmental of a woman’s true self will support the expression of her unexpressed emotions that were, indeed, buried alive.

As if the expectations and shaming weren’t enough, the reactive isolation of the girl or woman allows those who stand in judgement of her to believe that they were righteous and noble in setting expectations for her and also in shaming her results.

Observationally, isolation begins with a question. “What if I can’t be perfect and nice and polite and agreeable?”

All too often, girls are choosing isolation; romantic isolation, social isolation and even physical isolation.

Sadly, isolation is in itself, torturous; even when self-inflicted.

So, what are women in our culture and in society? When I look for answers, I tend to look upward. What does the Bible tell us about women?



10 Bible Promises for Women

- You are loved. (Gal. 2:20, John 3:16)
- You are not condemned. (Rom. 8:1)
- You are included. (Eph. 2:19)
- You are accepted. (Rom. 15:7)
- You aren’t alone. (John 16:32)
- You are wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14)
- You are free. (John 8:36)
- You are God’s. (John 1:12)
- You are chosen. (Eph. 1:4, Col. 3:12)
- You are no longer a slave to sin. (Rom. 6:6)



#RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

County Fair Time

The Ranches would like to thank all of those who worked tirelessly this past 4-H/FFA season to help, encourage and support young people participating in county fairs across New Mexico. All the late nights and early mornings that you selflessly gave to young people really mattered. When our kids succeed, we succeed. Thankfully, many of the generous folks that attended, bid upon and won animals in the junior livestock auctions around the state chose to multiply their generosity by giving the animal to The Ranches to be used as a part of our food supply for the coming year. Having the animals at The Ranches also allows us the opportunity to get the kids at The Ranches out and taking care of the animals while they are with us. Please accept the appreciation of The New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches for all the long hours, hard work and sacrifice. We'd also like to thank those that generously donated animals to us this year.

See ya at the fair next year!



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Thank You Richardson & Richardson

All work and no play...

Every year we have an opportunity to introduce kids to the game of golf courtesy of Richardson and Richardson. This year was another great year of golf and good times.

We are pleased that we were again able to participate in the annual Pete Leyva Memorial Golf Tournament to benefit The Ranches, sponsored by Richardson and Richardson.





THEIR JOURNEY





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Can we honestly say, as a society, that we feel the same way about girls and women that God affirms?

As someone who works with girls and women, I can honestly say that I don't always treat women as loved, not to be condemned, included, accepted, not alone or pushed aside, wonderfully made, free – especially of expectations, fear and isolation, God's own, chosen or no longer a slave to their past mistakes and sins. I am, indeed, part of the problem. While it's easy for me to say; it can be very challenging to change the world, even if my motivation is to change it for my own daughters. But I can find the motivation necessary to change me. I can then look at how I must change my views, my thought and my actions.

Expectations, fears and the predictable isolation that comes from those expectations and fears is a part of everyone's life at times. I was, thankfully, taught to take risks, to pursue my ambitions and my dreams and to not submit to other people's expectations of me. While this was my experience in being raised as a boy, I can do the same for the girls and women in my life. I do, however, have to understand that I cannot truly understand. My experiences are my own and I am a fool for attempting to narrate someone else's experience through the lens that was created by my own trials, tribulations and struggles.

Girls literally have no choice as to their gender before they are born. God, or for those less faithful, some predetermined spin of the genetic wheel, determines their fate until they are old enough to have that fate determined by boys, men, girls, women and a society that demands that expectations be met without so much as a respectful nod to the individual child who struggled against all of the pressures associated with being female. Want to play sports with the boys? You do it on their terms. Want a job in a male dominated field? Work twice as hard and accept that the boys will indeed just be boys despite how you feel when they act awfully. Speak out against the expectations that you feel are unfair? Please just sit down and be polite...and labeled. Want to play the same way boys are playing? You're a girl, now act like it. Don't want to settle for a boy who is weak or emasculated? How dare you judge. Don't want to have kids and a family? What's wrong with YOU?

This is not a case of girls being too much or too aggressive or too outspoken. It is simply the game that girls and women are expected to play while being polite and gracious. Many women and girls have simply had enough, and, in many cases, they simply want the freedom to no longer play; or no longer play by the rules that they were never even asked to agree to.

So, girls are choosing isolation and the shame that is often associated with choosing to shun the expectations of others.

In my experience, this often leads to feelings of anxiety, depression and internalized shame for not being what others expect you to be. Oh, how unfair we can be when we fail to empathize with someone who happens to be different than we

expect them to be.

I propose that we start teaching kids, both boys and girls, to learn to accept themselves and strive to be the very best versions of themselves. Additionally, I propose that we take the expectations away from those that have never walked a mile in another's shoes and who've never even taken the time to get to know the individual before lumping them into some predetermined victim group or victimizer group. Girls and women, boys and men, can learn to be complimentary to one another and to leave the expectations and judgements out of the equation. Boys and men can also learn to accept the competency and even superiority of women in situations where those women excel...even against the men that don't always appreciate their excellence. Women can also learn to take pride in their excellence and to take risks in pursuing their ambitions and dreams; despite the backlash that may come along with their pursuit.

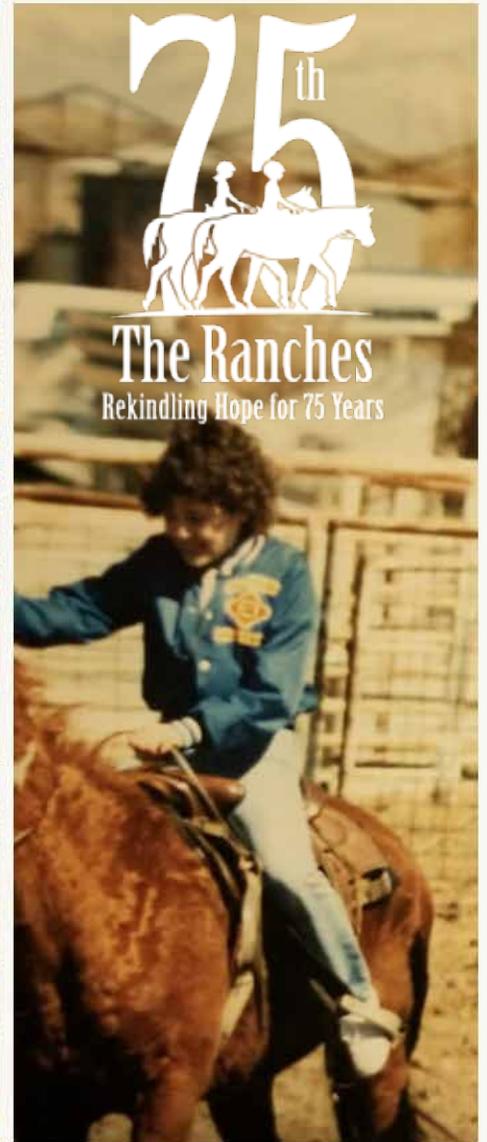
One of the very basic ways that we can start to change the world for girls and women is to value, promote and facilitate the mentorship of girls by women who have, for their entire lives, walked in the shoes of those girls. As a man, I want nothing more for my children than a community of women that support them; their ambitions, their dreams and their difference.

As a dad, I fear that my daughters will choose isolation as the most basic of survival mechanisms due to the fear that they have no other choice and will never achieve the mythical status of "good enough." For they have always been good enough for me, but I fear that I have failed to communicate that message to them often enough and with enough clarity that it will never become one of their core beliefs about themselves. I still have so much to change in myself and instill in them. While daunting, I know that the most basic and important thing that I can do in pursuit of their brighter tomorrow is to model my belief and value of their mother while they are young. I have to accept that I am, no matter how intimidating it may seem, teaching them how they should expect to be treated by men. If I fail to show them the value that I see in their mother and in them, I have perpetuated the problem for another generation. I can do better so that they can expect better for themselves.

Maybe, within a few generations, we can start to reverse the effects of unfair expectations, fear and the requisite isolation that comes as a result. If we truly value others, we can create a world – even a small part of the world - where shame can be reserved for those that hurt, marginalize and unfairly judge others. Maybe, just maybe, our daughters can find a firm footing of their own and see their value, not in comparison to others and not in producing other humans, but in who they are and who God designed them to be. Maybe we can create fairer and more equitable expectations, reduce fear and put an end to self-imposed isolation as a means of survival. Those girls who I have the honor of raising cannot do this alone but can thrive if supported and valued instead of being judged by unfair and unwanted expectations, shamed, isolated and shunned.



THE RANCHES



THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary or in-kind gifts during the period July 01, 2019 - September 01, 2019. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

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Become a Partner

First of all, I don't think there are many people that have everything, but I could be wrong. What I can tell you is that giving is contagious and generational. Teaching young ones (of all ages) to support great causes can start by giving a monthly gift to a great cause in the name of someone that you love. Not only can you help a worthy cause, you can teach your loved ones about the causes that are important to you and, hopefully, help them to catch the "giving bug" this fall season. While I am partial to The Ranches, there are a plethora of great causes out there. Can you spare to share \$75 a month for kids at The Ranches in honor of our 75th year?

- Level 1 - \$50/month get a hat and sticker
- Level 2 - \$75/month get a hat, sticker and shirt
- Level 3 - \$100/month get hat, sticker, shirt and water bottle.

We appreciate your contiued support.  Heath Kull - President
HeathKull@theranches.org

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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