

Hill Country Youth Ranch
P. O. Box 67
Ingram, TX 78025-0067

Address Service Requested

A child care facility family

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Kerrville, TX
HERRING
PRINTING



For more information:
Phone: 830-367-2131
Email: info@youth-ranch.org
Website: www.youth-ranch.org

The Corral has been
published bi-monthly
since 1977

Volume 46 Number 1

A publicly supported tax-exempt charitable and educational organization

February 2023

Fifth Annual Marathon set for April 1 in spectacular location

by *Tim Campbell*
Director of Development

Registration is now open for our Headwaters of the Frio Trail Marathon, Half, 12K, 5K at Big Springs Ranch for Children on Saturday, April 1st. This annual event raises awareness and support for our mission to restore the lives of children who have suffered severe trauma from abuse or neglect.

If you're the kind of person who enjoys the physical challenges of running or walking on trails and are willing to raise a modest amount of money for a worthy cause, you won't want to miss this event on one of the most beautiful courses you'll ever experience! Our 7,000-acre ranch on the Frio River in the Texas Hill Country has a bit of everything: valleys with river crossings, springs, waterfalls, hill climbs, sweeping vistas, forests, grassy slopes, and even some level terrain! You'll be amazed at the scale, variety, and beauty of this spectacular ranch.

Each participant commits to raising, or donating, \$250 to participate in the event, regardless of distance chosen. Adults and children 12+ can register for the 5K, 12K, or Half Marathon, while Mara-

thon participants must be 18+. Minor children can join their parents on the 5K and 12K courses at no additional charge. Aid stations with drinks and snacks are located every two to three miles along the courses to keep participants hydrated and fueled up.

There is a \$50 registration fee to indicate commitment, which is applied to the \$250 fundraising commitment, leaving \$200 to raise or contribute by the event date. You can sign up as an individual, or start or join a team.

Participants and volunteers receive a high-quality T-shirt, and a delicious Texas BBQ lunch will be served from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., so no matter when you finish, lunch is waiting for you.

Proceeds raised through the event go directly into our Children's Fund, which is our all-purpose fund ensuring the provision of essentials for our children – food, clothing, housing, and transportation – plus the basic amenities of holiday celebrations, weekly allowances, birthdays, recreational activities, educational adventures, and a wide variety of life enrichment experiences.

Sponsors are welcome and

needed! Sponsorships help us cover all event costs so 100% of donations go directly to the Children's Fund. New for 2023, every \$500 in sponsorship covers one participant with no additional fundraising requirement. Thus a \$500 Bronze Sponsorship covers one participant, a \$1,000 Silver Sponsorship covers two, a \$2,500 Gold Sponsorship covers five, and a \$5,000 Platinum Sponsorship covers ten participants. Sponsors names/logos will be featured on the start/finish arch, participant and volunteer T-shirts, on course signage, and will receive social media promotion leading up to the event. If you're interested in sponsorship, please reach out to Tim Campbell at tcampbell@youth-ranch.org or 830-367-6107.

To sign up as a participant or volunteer, donate to an individual, or help us reach our overall event goal, please go to the event website: <https://p2p.onecause.com/headwaters23> or scan the QR code on this page with your phone. The website provides all event details and answers to your questions.

The event is limited to 300 participants, so secure your place today!



Everyone from casual health walkers to competitive marathoners are invited to join us for our annual run. You can go at your own pace for your own comfortable distance, ranging from 5k to a full marathon! Check out the article for full details, and then meet us out at the lovely Big Springs Ranch for Children on April 1st!



Array of programs based on 45-year experience

by Gary Priour, HCYR Founder

Over the 45 years that HCYR has been caring for wounded children, some wonderful advances have been made in the understanding of early childhood trauma, especially that caused by abuse or neglect.

The late Dr. Karyn Purvis of TCU was instrumental in bringing the science of brain imaging into the world of caregiving for severely traumatized children. Her Trust Based Relationship Intervention (TBRI) training has become standard throughout the nation as a cornerstone for working with these children. Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk, founder of The Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts, and author of *The Body Keeps the Score*, provided us roadmaps to understand the issues of attachment disorder, isolation, and 'giving up' as responses to trauma seen in various populations including abused children.

Interestingly, these 21st century studies served to confirm our 45-year old strategy at the Youth Ranch of individualizing the care of each child, looking for those things that interest the child and open windows of communication and growth, based on careful observation in various settings.

These visionary scientists also con-

firmed that trauma can be overcome, lives can be restored, brains can light up again.

One key to success with children hidden behind trauma is the need for patient observation, noting in each child what makes the wall thicker or triggers defensive behaviors, versus what opens a window of connection, however brief or small. Caregivers must be ready to respond with affirming action when openings are discovered.

We know from experience that gift-enhancing activities provide great context for advancing this healing process. A child who discovers a special gift also discovers new courage to relate through helping a team or performing in a dance recital.

Having an array of enrichment programs allows children to pass through them while we look for special gifts, as well as deficits. A child who doesn't do well in school might show up as a leader on a summer work crew building trails. A child who can't shoot a basket might have a beautiful voice.

Thus, we offer a variety of settings allowing different gifts to show up and unaccustomed adventures to occur. Without such programs in place and trained teachers/observers on board, such discoveries might be missed, and healing delayed.



Skill and trust development go together. Above, photography class and animal care illustrate the opportunity for learning and healing through relationship to be combined. Left, a child and a horse often form the most therapeutic relationships, showing the child how to develop trust with another creature before risking new friendships with humans.

Key programs at a glance

During 45 years of providing an educational and life-enhancing environment for traumatized children and youth, seven core programs have proven their worth in lifting children and youth to see more in themselves than brokenness, allowing them to discover gifts, take new adventures in learning, develop strengths, and find motivation as they continue to heal and prepare for adult life. They include chapel and Christian education, horsemanship and animal care, visual and performing arts, recreation, family life activities, summer programs, plus transitional living and 'fresh start' programs for young adults at our third campus, Enhanced Horizons.

The total annual budget for these seven core programs is \$1,230,000. Because the government offers no support for such programs, we must raise these funds each year to sustain them. We believe they are essential to the success of our children and youth. Having them makes Hill Country Youth Ranch unique, and adds to our continuum of therapeutic services. If you are interested in knowing more about the programs, and how you can help us sustain them, call Gary Priour or Tim Campbell at 830-367-2131 for more information.

- **Chapel & Christian Education** – Our mission to provide a life-enhancing Christian environment starts with Sunday chapel. Our children often arrive angry at authority, including God. Each requires a different 'next step', so we sing and talk about the love of Christ, and strive to be mutually respectful while waiting for an opening to occur.
- **Visual & Performing Arts** – Art, music, poetry, and theater are powerful healing tools for traumatized children. An otherwise non-responsive child may be able to paint, write, sing, or dramatize what they cannot otherwise share. Plus, artistic gifts are often enhanced in such children, and their works can be stunningly beautiful.
- **Horsemanship & Animal Care** – Certified staff help children learn to be around horses safely, while also learning to groom, saddle, ride, and show them. Riding for fun is what the children enjoy most. They also learn valuable life lessons like respect, discipline, trust, and work ethic through such interactions, experiencing healing in the process.
- **Recreation** – Recreation is a key element in healing and growth. Trauma is stored in the body and mind in ways that influence behavior. Recreation provides life-changing experience through exercise, adventure, challenge, and play. It also offers gift-discovery and development.
- **Summer Programs** – The whole gamut of enrichment programs is offered each summer on an elective basis. Residents take classes in life skills, cooking, sewing, arts and crafts, dance, music, drama, painting, vocational education, sports, fishing, horseback riding, and more. They can participate in many programs in rotation.
- **Family Life** – Each individual house, 18 of them spread across the two children's campuses in Ingram and Leakey, functions as a family. It is our goal to model traditional family experiences. Cabin activities for each household include holiday celebrations, birthday parties, off-Ranch outings for meals and entertainment, and trips to special destinations.
- **Enhanced Horizons – Transitional Living & Fresh Start Programs for Young Adults, ages 18 - 24** – Residential and educational support for HCYR alumni, aged-out foster youth, at-risk young adults, homeless young mothers with infants/toddlers, and sexually abused young women, ages 18-24. Offerings include: high school completion (EH Charter School), college enrollment and financial assistance, job skills training, life skills coaching, career guidance, transportation assistance, transitional housing, and help during crises.

Livestock Show always succeeds at teaching

Brune students show rabbits, goats, swine and prepare for horse show

by Tony Gallucci, HCYR Publications

Animal care is the oldest of all the programs that enrich the lives of children of HCYR and BSRC. When the first residents arrived at HCYR in 1978, they were greeted by loving houseparents, along with a pony, a milk cow, and chickens. We know from these years of working with children that animals have a way of teaching lessons that humans have difficulty expressing. Whether it be getting trained in horsemanship or raising rabbits, goats, horses, and pigs for the livestock show, in some way the care of animals has an impact on children that results in indelible life lessons.

We know it takes special people to work with animals, requiring significant time outside the work day to feed and care for them. Teaching a child to take care of an animal's needs gives them an understanding of caring for something that is unable to take care of its own needs.

It also results in the epiphany that this level of care is akin to what their houseparents must give

to them. When a child's well-being is enhanced by working with critters they can touch and trust and feel comfortable with, then no responsibility is too large. And now they have an even greater appreciation for those who have taken their own care upon their shoulders.

None of that would be possible without our array of sponsors, donors, and mentors. Good-hearted people and non-profits have over and over come forward to support our horse program and the school's 4-H program.

Horses have been an integral part of Big Springs Ranch for Children since its beginning, with Michael Priour helming the facility where we use horses as part of our therapeutic work with children. Lamar Perez has spent this year working with an array of 4-H students in preparation for spring horse shows.

We educate the kids on basic horse care, such as grooming, feeding, saddling, and taking care of tack. Working with horses teaches about dedication, hard work, discipline, respect, and the level of responsibility and time it takes to care for a horse.

Teaching kids to work with animals also has its benefits for the instructors, as it combines passions for social work and working with children, leading to 'light-bulb' moments when kids display loving behaviors we haven't seen from them before.

Horses, of course, are only part of the equation. This job is about a certain level of empathy and ability to connect with children,



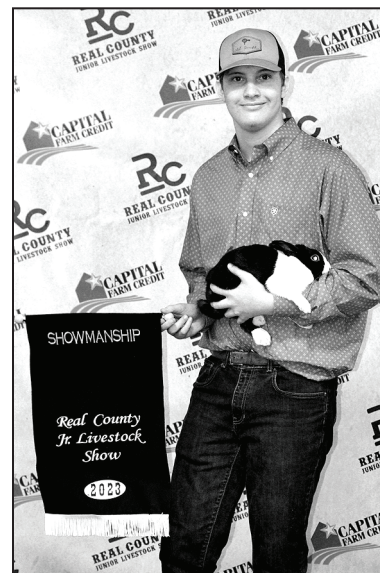
Brune School 4-H Sponsor and Science Teacher Tripp Davenport (above) checks in with students prior to the beginning of the January show in Leakey. Students showed rabbits, goats, and swine (right). Meanwhile, Lamar Perez (in vest below) is working with 4-H students to condition horses and learn the routine for upcoming horse shows sponsored through the 4-H program.



Riley wins top showmanship award for 2023 at Real County

Brune 4-H student Riley Chipman was the top winner from among Ranch competitors at the 2023 Real County Livestock Show in Leakey.

According to 4-H Sponsor Tripp Davenport, Riley had been working as hard as any student he ever had at learning every detail about his rabbit, and in



perfecting his spiel to present to the judge.

It was a tense buildup as the expected arbiter was a no show, and it took some time to find an alternate judge and begin the process. Riley maintained his focus.

It paid off. Riley impressed the judge from the get go, not only with his ability to show off his Dutch rabbit, but with his intense knowledge of rabbits in general, and the objectives of conformation showing. He was awarded Champion Senior Showmanship for his performance.

many of them troubled. The children we work with are eager to learn and become doubly insightful. It is clearly all worth it, as residents learn to confide in an all-listening, four-footed beast the worries and stresses they aren't yet ready to confide in humans.

Tripp Davenport, with our Brune Charter School, incorporates it via the 4-H program. At the annual Real County Livestock Show, we have become one of the standard-bearer programs. The Big Springs 4-H group now regularly raises competitive-level animals and brings lots of livestock to the show, which have over the years included rabbits, chickens, sheep, goats, pigs, and horses.

This year was no different. Riley Chipman (see box above) was crowned Showmanship Champion in rabbits for 2023. He brought home our highest award this

year, and is our fourth Showmanship Champion of the last decade!

For 2023 the kids were most focused on two groups: rabbits and pigs. Some of the students showed in multiple categories and divisions. With six different types of animals readied for show in the past, students find that each species requires a completely different regimen of feeding and care techniques. In taking responsibility for each of those needs every child enhances their knowledge, wisdom and empathy.

The Real County Show ends with a premium auction. The animals are 'auctioned off', but the kids keep their projects to move on to other shows or to retire to breeding. They can then use their proceeds to invest in new project animals, or use it toward college expenses if they are showing for the last time before graduation.

HCYR Memorials & Honors

Each month HCYR receives memorial gifts honoring loved ones who have passed away and other gifts remembering special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Because they are so important to the daily operation of the Ranch, and in keeping with their two-fold purpose, we gratefully acknowledge all such gifts both in the newsletter and in cards sent to family members. The following list includes loved ones honored by gifts from December 6, 2022 through January 30, 2023.

In Memory Of:

KATHLEEN AKIN
Mike & Betty Schofield
JAMES O. "JODY" BACHUS
Jody & Kim Bachus
MARGE BAIRD
Mark & Margaret Noblin
BETTY BALES
Vivian Ringo
KRISTINA BERRY
Vicki Berry
PHIL BERRY
Vicki Berry
FRANCES "FRAN"
BERNARD BERTAGNOLLI
Frank Bertagnolli
EMILY BIRSCHWALE
Steven & Charlene Buck
Leola Dunbar
Hill Country Youth Ranch
Auxiliary
Rob & Cynthia Moran
Gary & Carol Priour
Michael Priour
Cheryl Bowles Sieker
WILLIAM BIXLER, JR.
Dr. Sara Bixler
BILL BORN
Ralph Shelley
WILLIAM "BILL" "HOPALONG
CASSIDY" BOYD
Claire Nelms
GEORGE PHILIP BRENNAN
Susan Jane Brennan
MYRLE BRUMMETT
James & Ellen Hobbs
ED BRUNE
Sandra Hubert
EDWIN BUCH, JR.
Kenneth & Jeanna Schuessler
TOMMY BUTLER
Karen Copen
BILL & DEDE CANN
Jim & Pam Cann
TONY CAVALLARO
Ralph Shelley
OTHA CLEERE
Karen Copen
DON CLOWERS
Janet Walker
DICK COLVIN
Karen & Bart Jones
BOBBY COOPER
Betty Cooper
JEANETTE DOBSON
Ruth Hatch
ELLEN
Pete & Bera Casiano

MARY & ARTHUR ESSER
Mary Jane Morrison
LINDA LEWIS EWING
Thomas Ewing
TYLER FINE
Evelyn & Ginny Tomlinson
BYRON FOURNET
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
HORST & MAIGA FREIER
Catherin Freier-Randall
NORMA GABIER
Maxine Nielsen
IRENE GILMORE
Dink & Dawn Gulley
LEE & IRENE GILMORE
Claire Gilmore Nelms
MYRON GLEBERMAN
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
MARY GRAHAM
Janis Winn
VANNIE A. GRAVES
Paulette Graves
MARY GREER
Ben & Alice Hammond
ROGER & PHYLLIS HAGAN
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
PATRICIA HAINLINE
Ronald Louis Rumsey
EVELYN HENRY
Lady Jane Percival
PAT HENRY
Jane Ann Henry
PETE HENRY
Jane Ann Henry
WM. RHETT HOWERTON
Gayle Wolfe
CHET JANASZ
Ed & Pat Donaldson
CONNIE LYNN GOODALL
JETTON
Eva Jo Auld & Brandon
Bransford
BETTY JEAN KENNEDY
Marc & Sue Kaase
PHYLLIS KILCHERMAN
Maxine Nielsen
ROGER KINARD
Karen Copen
KAYLA KIRKPATRICK
Brenda Logue
LAURA J. LAING
Herbert Laing
TONI SPECK LANCASTER
Evelyn, Ginny, Tinker &
Trey Tomlinson
ROBERT LANGEHENNIG
Frances Langehennig
WANDA LEIBEE
Allen Leibee

JERRY & LOU LEINWEBER
Mike & Candy Stewart
LYNN LOGGIE
Linda Brown Stephens
PEGGY LoPRESTI
Amy Walsh
THEONE LOVELADY
Sylvia Rees Sieker
PIERCE MANGURIAN
Gary & Carol Priour
LINDA MAYFIELD
George Mayfield
DOROTHY McLAUGHLIN
Scott McLaughlin
OTIS MOORE
Cheryl Bowles Sieker
Harvey & Marilyn Vordenbaum
COLLENE MORGAN
Tom Morgan
JOE MORRISON
Mary Jane Morrison
THAIS NOBLE
Eddie & Gerry Hatch
Ruth Hatch
TOM O'NEIL
Gene & Claire Elmore
J. B. & ROSEMARY OSWALT
Gary & Carol Priour
MATTYE PHELPS
Keystone Section Three
Property Owners
Harold & Judy Wilson
JUDAH PRIOUR
Tom & Raydell Givens
JEAN PUMPHREY
Bob & Sheri Riley
DELORES ANN QUARLES
Hydee & Billy Corbin
EVELYN RALSTON
Randy & Dorthea Cheek
Stan Forde
Maurice & Jeanell Hart
Hill Country Youth Ranch
Auxiliary
Bob & Cynthia Moran
Gary & Carol Priour
Sam & Jane Romero
Barbara Ruben
Bill & Blythe Thomas
Gary & Jeanette Vaughan
RUSS RITTIMANN
Terence & Bettie Green
DEE ROBINSON
Edward Robinson
LUPE ROCHA
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
JACK ROGERS
Kay McCorquodale

J. B. ROWAN
Betsy Drapela Rowan
CHARLES D. SCHMIDT
Elroy & Doris Behrends
Sherry Behrends & Michael
Stork
Stanley & Doris Ernst
Delbert & June Oehler
EMMIT SCHMIDT, SR. & JR.
Georgie Schmidt & Deborah
Keiter
JAMES "JIMMY"
SCHUCHARDT
Edward & Sylvia Albrecht
Carolyn Jo Goodall
DOC & VERNITTA SCHWARZ
Jim & Pam Cann
BETTY SKEELS
The Morrison Family
BILLY VAN SMITH
Janet & Mike Bentley
SCOTT & JULIA STEHLING
Mike & Candy Stewart
DEWEY STOCKBRIDGE
Charles & Linda Reichenau
LANA C. SUMMERS
Coy C. Summers
UBALDO & ERNESTINA
TORRES
Rey & Ninfa Benavidez
CAROL VAN TUYL
Harvey & Marilyn Vordenbaum
JOHN VINSON
Liz & Brian Oehler
JOHN WALKER
Janet Walker
NORMA WEDGEWORTH
Harvey & Marilyn Vordenbaum
JUDY WHITE
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
JANE WIEMERS
M.A. Faubion
WAYNE WILLIAMS
Albert & Jeanette Pittman
HENRY WILSON
Dorothy Wilson
THOMAS E. WRIGHT
Ann Bracher Vaughan
In Honor Of:
ALL RANCH HOUSEPARENTS
Anonymous
FRANCES ANDREWS
Judy Jones
BEV AVERY
Casey & Jena Cartusciello
MIKE & SUSIE BARNETT
Jesse & Joyce Filgo

THE BELL FAMILY
Sandra Dunphy
MR. & MRS. ART CAMERON
Billie Walker
KIM & AUSTIN CLARKSON
Carolyn & Joe Herring
TREY & JENNIFER DENDY
Bill & Fran Dendy
JOE & BARBARA DOVE
Kathy Pearce
GLORIA SUBLETT EARNEST
Herman & Merle Baldwin
JUDY & GEORGE EYCHNER
Carolyn & Joe Herring
KAREN FAIR
Kyle & Judy Priour
THE FRANKLINS
Mark & Kristelle Castiglione
THE FAMILY OF STEVEN
& DOREE FRIEDRICH
Wayne & Norma Franklin
THE GLYNNS
The Andrews
AL HAUGHEY
90th Birthday
Shirley & Bob Zimmerman
MIKE & M'LISSA HAYES
Carolyn & Joe Herring
MARIAN & JOHN HENDRICK
John & Jenny Hendrick
E. A. & ASHLEY HOPPE
Carolyn & Joe Herring
DAHL & GAIL HOWARD
Karen Fair
BRENDA & BUZZIE HUGHES
Carolyn & Joe Herring
BURT & ELLEN ISENHOUR
Anonymous
CHAD & KRISTY JACKSON
& FAMILY
Chuck & Barbara Jackson
JESUS CHRIST
Kelley Kirby
WERNER & TERRYL
JOHNSON
Bill & Fran Dendy
KERRVILLE
Brian Bowers
JEREMY KERTH
Birthday
Patti Kerth
JAMES KESSLER
Claire Gilmore Nelms
RAE & LLOYD MARQUIS
Libby & Rich Carpenter
ELMORE & VIRGINIA
MARTIN
Teresa Martin

Honors, continued

LORRAINE MASSEY

Birthday

Mary Jane Morrison

CLAIRE NELMS

Gerry & Dawn Gulley

KATHERINE PEARCH

Joe & Barbara Dove

LADY JANE PERCIVAL

Myer Ballesteros

GARY PRIOUR

Nicholas & Anne Ogan

Franz Schneider

URIAH RAMSAY

Birthday

Mary Estrada

MICHELLE SEBESTA

Dr. Daniel & Marsha

Sebesta

BOBBY SIEKER

Birthday

Harvey & Marilyn

Vordenbaum

CHERYL & BOBBY SIEKER

Gary & Carol Priour

Gary & Jeanette Vaughan

SUE SMITH

Janet & Mike Bentley

Christine Infante

Creighton & Cristina Smith

BETTY STEVENSON

Janie Neunhoffer

SANDRA THEIS

Birthday

Mary Jane Morrison

JOHNNY THORNTON

Jo Hancock Thornton

MARILYN & HARVEY

VORDENBAUM

Gary & Jeanette Vaughan

BILLIE RUTH WALKER

Art & Mary Ruth Cameron

DARLENE WATKINS

Sabrehna Everett

TAYLOR & ALI WILLIAMS

Keith & Debbie Williams

MARY KAY & TOM WOOD

Kay McCorquodale

RICHARD & DORLENE

WRIGHT

Pamela Jucknies

Auxiliary Medallion Ceremony



At the January 30th meeting of the Youth Ranch Auxiliary, Executive Director Krystle Ramsay gave her annual State of the Ranch message, and then medallions were presented to members (above) whose volunteer service has spanned at least five years.

500 Club Grows

The **500 Club** is our way to honor donors who have given \$500 or more to HCYR. We are pleased to announce new members whose donations total over \$500 by virtue of gifts made from December 6, 2022 through January 30, 2023.

Generous cash donations came from **John & Jenny Hendrick, La Jolla, CA; Catherin Freier Randall, San Bernardino, CA; Elizabeth Essary, Brandon, MS; Randall & Robin Fairman, Charlotte, NC; Mick Law, P.C., Omaha, NE; Pramila Sood, Fountain Inn, SC; Pamela Laing, Mount Juliet, TN; Harvest Health Center, Bellaire, TX; Beulah's Peculiar Attic Thrift Store, Camp Wood, TX; Kerry McKee, Canyon Lake, TX; Bobby Hindes & Ann Matthews, Charlotte, TX; Stan Forde, College Station, TX; John & Brenda Tollett, Corpus Christi, TX; Mark & Margaret Noblin, Dallas, TX; Tony & Jean Sauer, Fredericksburg, TX; Mark & Marlene Cogwin, Houston, TX; Lillian Cox Rowland Charitable Foundation,**

Houston, TX; Gary & Diane Dickinson, Ingram, TX; Tom & Raydell Givens, Ingram, TX; Carolyn Lawrence, Ingram, TX; Dayton & LaVerne Baublitt, Kerrville, TX; Thomas & Donnalyn Brock, Kerrville, TX; Donna DiFiore & Brian Smith, Kerrville, TX; Five Cross Services, LLC, Kerrville, TX; Jeffery & Sharon Kirby, Kerrville, TX; Donna Nottingham, Kerrville, TX; Dave & Mari Samuel, Kerrville, TX; Arnold & Suzel Vela, Kerrville, TX; Bettye Warnock, Kerrville, TX; Robert & Evelyn Wilke, Kerrville, TX; Glen & Susan Hood, Livingston, TX; Estate of J.B. Oswalt, Lubbock, TX; Marietta K. Randall Foundation Trust, San Antonio, TX; Brenda Tobey, San Antonio, TX; Carol Watson, San Antonio, TX; Jean Ereaux, Stephenville, TX; Arthur & Mary Cameron, Tyler, TX; and Reynaldo & Ninfa Benavidez, Uvalde, TX.

We were also blessed with generous in-kind gifts: **Kara Newton, Allen, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Kelley Kirby, Boerne,**

TX, gave Christmas gifts; John & Jimma Robertson, Boerne, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Paul & Jenny Panunto, Camp Wood, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Bobby Hindes & Ann Matthews, Charlotte, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Frio Chevrolet, LLC, Dilley, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Dutchman's Market, Inc., Fredericksburg, TX, gave a gift card; Edna Freeman, Friona, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Charles & Linda Parks, Hunt, TX, gave furniture; Michael & Lisa Heiligenstein, Ingram, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Dayton & LaVerne Baublitt, Kerrville, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Charlie & Shelley Deax, Kerrville, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Donna DiFiore & Brian Smith, Kerrville, TX, gave furniture; Steven & Janet Furbush, Kerrville, TX, gave furniture; Fred & Patti Gilmore, Kerrville, TX, gave exercise equipment; Heart of The Hills Lions Club, Kerrville, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Ray McDonald, Kerrville, TX, gave furniture; Dorothy Schmidt, Kerrville, TX, gave Christmas Gifts;

Auxiliary Twine

Dear HCYR friends,

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to all HCYR Auxiliary members for bundling up and attending the first HCYR Auxiliary meeting of 2023! Today was a very special day as we were able to recognize our members and volunteers for five year's service. Krystle Ramsay gave a wonderful "State of the Ranch" presentation.

This is going to be known as "The Year of Possibilities". It's amazing what a group of dedicated women and men can accomplish when the end result is to help provide a safe and loving home with strong leadership, education and enrichment.

Being a member of the Auxiliary and the Hill Country Youth Ranch Thrift Shop not only helps heal children, but it also provides healing, friends, and a sense of purpose for all who volunteer.

Join us for our next HCYRA meeting – February 27th, 11:00 at The Kroc.

Grace and peace,

*Cheryl Sieker, President
Hill Country Youth Ranch Auxiliary*

Tyree & Christine Thompson, Kerrville, TX, gave furniture; Rupert, Donna Jo & Melanie Sparks, Leakey, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Steve & Deb Trimpe, Leakey, TX, gave Christmas gifts; Jacquelynn & Benjamin Bingham, San Antonio, TX, gave Christmas gifts; David Valdez, San Antonio, TX, gave Christmas gifts; and Clayton Hudson & Leah Sealover, The Woodlands, TX, gave Christmas gifts.

Thanks to these new members, and to all our **500 Club** members, for your generous and enduring support.

A Tax Tip about IRAs for Seniors

Tax Tip: If you are age 70½ and are required to make minimum distributions (RMD) from your IRA, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution from this RMD. This has the benefit of lowering your Adjusted Gross Income and your income tax. You still get the benefit of the Standard Deduction if you do not itemize.

A journey of mission work . . . from houseparent

By Carol Priour
HCYR Fine Arts Director

On a summer afternoon in 2006, I responded to a knock at my office door, and there stood a handsome young man dressed in his Marine dress uniform. Although it had been about ten years since I had last seen Clint, I recognized him right away. Of course, he was taller than the 11-year-old boy I remembered, but time had not changed the kind look in his soft brown eyes.

After telling me of his experience in Iraq as a combat engineer, he filled me in on the years since he had left his home here at the Ranch. After Clint had been moved from Hill Country Youth Ranch to another region by his caseworker, he had unfortunately been placed in a number of abusive homes.

"I had it pretty rough," he said, the memories apparently still much too clear. His high school years had been hard, but it was theater that "kept me going," he said. I silently wished we had had the fine arts

program developed while he was still here as a boy, but the first "Broken Wings Can Fly" show was to be performed a few years after he had left.

Clint spoke fondly of his time living at the Ranch. He remembers "running up and down the hills, and a friend I had who was always pretending to be a horse. He was different, but everybody just accepted him."

Then he said something we who work at the Ranch live to hear . . . "The Ranch was the only place that ever felt like home to me."

Home. I felt it, too . . . when I entered the front gate of Hill Country Youth Ranch for the very first time. This was home . . . a place where I belonged. A place where the gifts God had given me could be used to benefit others. In the decades I would spend here, I would come to see what makes the Youth Ranch such a special place, and my heart would fill with gratitude countless times for the privilege of being here.

Thirty-seven years ago, I



Alumnae who visit the Ranch are always keen to see "Mama Carol" who invested so much in their care (above in 2009, girls of the '80s, when Carol worked as a houseparent, share memories). Clint Roberts '95 (right) came home dressed in his Marine blues in 2006 to see her.



had been living in Austin and working at the School for the Blind, but the city traffic and long lines were wearing on me. I was, after all, a country girl. I saw an ad in an Austin newspaper for a childcare worker in the Hill Country at a place called "Hill Country Youth Ranch", and I remembered a co-worker from my camp counseling days who had gone there to work. She had described to me what the Ranch does in a phone call.

I wondered how it would feel to be in a parental role for children I had never known before. I wondered if they would even be able to accept my love and guidance, after those who came before had already let them down. I wondered if I should give the Ranch a call and ask for more information.

My answer came quickly. I just couldn't get the Ranch out of my mind, so I set up an interview by phone, got in my Toyota, and headed to the Hill Country. I was hired the very day of my interview, and although it has not been without trials and challenging times, I have never regretted living my professional life in service to the State's most wounded children. I have never regretted raising my own children here, as they have become caring childcare workers and teachers themselves.

Right away I could see that

this was a place where new children were met by loving adults who would listen and learn what would be necessary to start the child down a path of healing. This was a place where children could grow and learn in an atmosphere of acceptance and love.

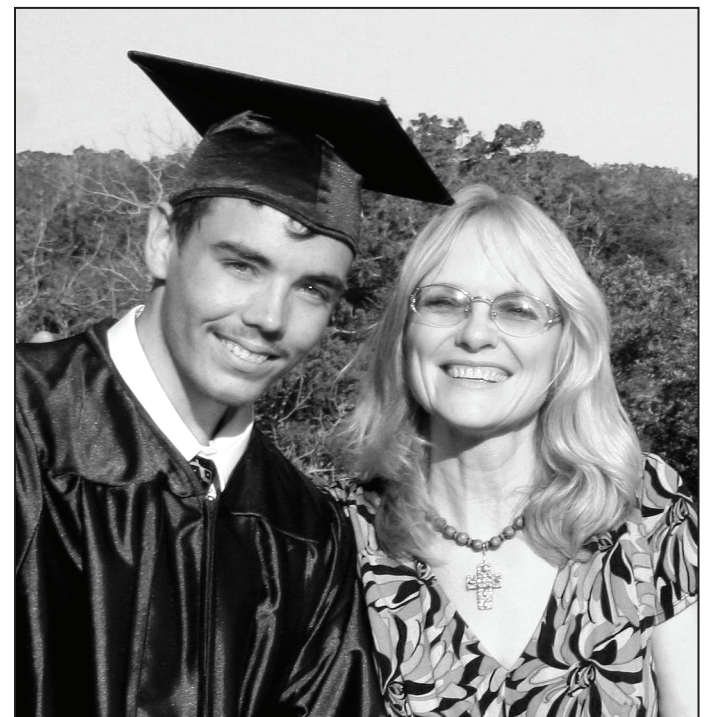
As a child, and all through my life, art had been my avenue for expression and healing, and plans were being drawn for a fine arts complex for those who spoke the many dialects of producing art as a first lan-

guage. Being a nature lover and one who knew firsthand of the healing properties of fresh air and the land, I quickly noticed the beautiful ponds, deer, birds, rolling hills, and trees. This was a place like no other.

Yes, it is true that the stories of the children's brutal childhoods have broken my heart over and over again in my 37 years of employment here at the Ranch, but every heartwound has healed through knowing that these children are learning to love and trust



Carol Priour (above, on left) became a houseparent for teenage girls when she arrived at the Ranch in 1985. Over the years she has become everyone's "Mama Carol" and teacher of the arts.



Billy Sanders' graduation in 2011 is one of our proudest moments. He came to us at eight years old after suffering abuse so horrific he was left for dead. Ten years later he left the Ranch with a high school diploma, a wonderful sense of self, and a bright future.

to working with children in the arts for 37 years

through the gifts of healing that God instilled in those of us who chose this work. And as they move through this program, I get to see more learning and growth than I would have in any other occupation I can think of. Although we are all individuals, the folks who work here have something in common: we all want a better world. And we are willing to unite and invest in the children to achieve that.

As I do my part to help train new Youth Ranch employees, I tell them of a long-ago vacation in Italy, when I stood speechless and in absolute awe before the magnificent 17-foot marble statue of David by Michelangelo. The tour guide told of a time when the sculptor was asked “How did you do it – make such a magnificent piece from a block of marble?” That huge piece of marble before him must have been daunting, but Michelangelo was quoted as replying, “I just removed everything that wasn’t David.”

I think maybe the words of the great Michelangelo come close to describing what we do here at the Ranch. The children come to us deeply hurt by the world and abandoned by all those they have loved . . . we have been home to a boy who was found in a cage, another boy with scars from his little chest down to his feet because his father put him in boiling water as a toddler, girls who have been repeatedly raped by their own fathers, children left alone without food to eat for long periods of time, children with so many scars, both visible and invisible.

These children come to us full of anger, self loathing, fear, and distorted views of the world. It is our job to “remove everything that is not David,” . . . to chip away what was put in their hearts by the cruelty of others . . . things that keep a child from becoming who God meant them to be. We must work carefully . . . with mallet

and chisel of patience and love.

Although immensely rewarding, this work can be tiring. Ask any houseparent who has been here for more than a week. Or ask one of our volunteers who is helping teach a fidgety twelve-year-old to read after years of educational neglect. The children have so many needs. Sometimes the damage is so deep, the task of helping them heal sometimes seems so huge . . . like Michelangelo’s block of marble. Just telling them that they are loved now isn’t enough. They will need to be shown. Over and over. And again. But, as in most families, there’s lots of ‘family fun’ between the lessons.

It is true that there have been days when I wondered where the energy would come from to do the work I needed to do. Then my energy is replenished when a fine young alumnus like Clint knocks at my door. Or when Jenn, who was here as a teenager over 20 years ago, sends me a text with pictures of her children, whom she adores. The children of our children are so loved . . . largely because we were able to teach their parents a better way to live.

There is also much gratification when we are able to help our grown children continue their pursuit of self-improvement through our college scholarship program. We have assisted graduates with over 500 grants to further their education.

And my energy has been replenished countless times when I have witnessed kindness coming to the surface in a child who has only displayed fear, hopelessness, and anger.

And, certainly not lastly, because the greatest sculptor of all, the sculptor of souls, has, once again, used human hands to do His work . . . *our hands*. And it is this surrender to His service that has made Hill Country Youth Ranch a very special place for a very long time, and molded me into a better human being..



Teaching and affirming are key traits in our work. We are in need of such caregivers. If you are mission-oriented, check out the ad below and call if you are interested!

We Need Help! Are you looking for a mission in life?

*There’s a destiny that makes us brothers . . .
none goes his way alone.*

*All that we send into the lives of others
comes back into our own.*

~ Edwin Markham

Know someone who would like to make a huge difference in the lives of some sometimes tough but very amazing kiddos?

The Youth Ranch is looking for loving houseparents and childcare workers. This is basically missionary work on homeland soil. This is work that changes the world, one abandoned and traumatized child at a time.

You do get a few days off each week, but you live with the children – like a family – when you are on duty (onsite off-duty housing provided). They go to our Charter School here on campus, and each home has a van for transporting. They have breakfast and lunch at school on school days. You get extensive professional training before being left alone with kids, and we pay while you train. We offer health insurance, a retirement fund, housing, and other benefits.

Call Dawn at 830-367-2131 for details.

Carol Priour, Director of Fine Arts: “As I approach retirement, I have so much peace with what I did in my 37 years working here. In the end, when I look back over my life I will never have to ask the question “did what I have done in this world change it for the better?” . . . I am confident that it did, because loving these children helped them to learn to love themselves and others better.”

Catherine Brockett Carson: “Coming from one of those kiddos from the 80’s . . . ‘the difference my houseparent made in my life *changed* my life. The trajectory I was on was one of failure, jail, even death, but the Ranch redirected my path. Everyone showed me *unconditional* love. The Ranch saved my life. Love you Mama Carol!”

Teresa Holm, houseparent and case manager during the 1990s: “If you’re looking for a purpose in life, Hill Country Youth Ranch is a great place to make a change in your own life, and a difference in others. Helping traumatized children to feel safe and loved is difficult but rewarding work. The Ranch needs mission-minded people, now more than ever, to get involved in this important work helping and healing our children and our society. I worked there for ten years in my thirties, during the 1990s, when the Ranch was growing and expanding to two campuses. I’m in my sixties now and consider it the best learning and growing experience of my life. Also, the relationships and love that develop are forever.”

Letters Home ~ notes from alumni

Every day we receive notes, emails, and online posts from our alumni, now over 2100 strong, and ranging in age from 18 to 58. We're so glad when our alumni write to us, or visit us, sometimes to show their spouses and children the place they call home.

To all our grown children – keep the visits, photos, postings, and emails coming!

January 27, 2023

Dear Mama Carol and Papa Gary,

I was placed at the Ranch at age 11, in 2013. I graduated from the Ranch's Charter School in 2020. Before I came to the Ranch, my life was filled with uncertainty. I grew up hungry and scared. It didn't get much better when Child Protective Services got involved. I never knew when they were going to show up, give me ten minutes to pack my things, and move me again. Like many children in foster care, I became accustomed to the frequent moves to new places with new people, and the practice of calling these new places and new strangers "home".

Upon my arrival at the Ranch, I remember thinking that I wouldn't be at this placement long, so I shouldn't get comfortable. Moving was the new normal, and so I was preparing to leave, even as I was getting settled. I remember sitting in my new cabin, surrounded with new kids, and playing and eating and talking. Normally, I didn't feel safe in these circumstances, but this placement felt different. Within two hours, everyone had made me feel safe and welcome.

I remember the first time I met Mama Carol. She was painting the ceiling in our chapel at Big Springs Ranch. My housemates and I had walked in to see it. I couldn't help but tear up. It was so beautiful. I stood there for a while looking up at her artwork, and Mama Carol came up to me. I looked at her and said, "I love it. It makes me forget all the bad things that have happened to me." I remember looking at her and feeling safe. She was so welcoming. Her smile was so warm it made me smile.

Over the next year, I had the opportunity to take her art classes, and got to know Mama Carol well. She was patient, and she taught me that I was a natural, and could express myself creatively. I felt noticed. It made me so happy hearing her encouragements.

After about a year, CPS put me up for adoption. I was abused in my adoptive home, and I'm so happy the Ranch took me back. It was hard emotionally, felt like another defeat, but the Ranch still felt like home when I drove through those gates. They continued to help me heal and grow. They helped me find ways to love not only myself but others. All the staff were kind and caring. They were patient with me as I learned all the things I should have learned at a younger age. The Ranch provided me with a great therapist, and we had amazing church services I enjoyed attending each Sunday.

Over time, I got to join so many fun and educational programs. My favorite two were Mama Carol's art class and Miss Camille's dance class. I never got tired of them. And I never knew I would love the arts so much. Miss Camille was always making me laugh. We would dance and dance, both choreographed and free style. It felt so good just to be myself. I felt so free during dance class. And I will forever be thankful to her for letting me be a part of it.

By the time I was 17 and in my senior year, I felt like I had come so far. Everyone would tell me they were proud of me. It made me happy hearing that. In May of 2020, I graduated with good grades from the Najim Charter School at HCYR. Everyone was there and we had the most amazing senior parade down HCYR's Main Street. I got into college.

The day I left the Ranch was tough, but it was time to spread my wings. I was leaving my home and family, but I also knew I had put down roots here and that I would be welcomed back with open arms. The staff made sure I knew that I was always welcome to visit and that I would always be family.

I couldn't have made it to this point in my journey without Hill Country Youth Ranch. I still visit as much as possible, and they still make me feel welcome every time. I will forever be grateful for my Ranch family. Thank you, Mama Carol, Miss Camille, Papa Gary and all the loving staff for helping me be the best version of myself and for letting me have a place to call my forever home.

Skyler Cleveland '20
Kerrville, Texas

January 26, 2023

Dear Papa Gary,

I miss you and your wife and everybody at the Hill Country Youth Ranch and at Big Springs Ranch for Children. I'm so glad I got to live at both Ranches during the five years I was there until I graduated. As time has passed, I've realized even more how great y'all are at what you do, and that you really cared for everybody on the campuses. Thank you all for all y'all have done. I really appreciate it, and I look forward to seeing you one day soon to visit with you again in person, and to thank you for all you have done for me and so many others. I really appreciate it more than you know. I miss you and everyone there.

Zeb Parsons '09
San Antonio, Texas

January 25, 2023

Dear Gary and Carol,

We've just moved in to our new home in Huntsville, and I wanted to write and say thank you guys for everything. You've always been there for all us kids and now our families.

I hope to visit you soon in Ingram and bring the family. I need to consult with you guys anyway on getting help with our foster kiddo who has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. I also want to get your advice about returning to school at age 50. My goal is to get my Masters Degree in Education, but I may have to start with online courses to move in that direction while working.

Over the years, I've compiled a collection of my art work and poetry. My poetry is published, and I am sending copies to you and Carol. It's a great addition to the mask references I have used in my art work. You know about my history. My work is a representation of what all the Ranch kids faced in childhood, and how I saw it could be represented in an artistic way . . . specifically the person hiding behind the mask, the main theme of my artwork while at the Ranch, and since. I've sent photos of my work to Carol. She was a *huge influence* in nurturing the natural talent I already had. She recognized my talent and helped me advance my skills.

Let me know if there is anything we can do for the Ranches. I would love to give back somehow. And please send our love and best wishes to the whole family. We will keep in touch. I love you guys and hope to see ya soon.

David Daley '90
Huntsville, Texas

January 16, 2023

Dear Papa,

Oh my, I'm just reading your email to me that references me as "mi hija". Big Sigh and a very deep Thank You, Papa.

This last year was a tough one, for us all, I think. For me, knowing that God can work wonders in the midst of tragedy and loss has been my comfort and refuge.

Please send my regards to all fellow alumni. We are a family that is both unique and beautiful. We are blessed through our brokenness. God did that through you.

I love you; I'm grateful to and for you, and I sincerely hope you are enjoying a splendid and peaceful New Year. Best Wishes and Much Love. Always.

Angela Moreno Pogue '87
Abilene, Texas

January 10, 2023

Dear Papa Gary and Mama Carol,

I was so fortunate to be placed at HCYR when I was 12. The Ranch was the place where I began to heal. It was the place where I first felt safe. It was the place where I first felt loved. Thank you Papa Gary and Mama Carol for taking me in as a child, and loving me for a lifetime. Though I was broken, hurting, angry, and untrustworthy when we first met; you saw my potential, not just my brokenness. You guys are my heroes and I love you both with all my heart. Love always.

Sarah Kirwin Lawton '94
Melissa, Texas