



## Helping at-risk Children Succeed in the Name of Christ.

### Deaconess Ministry Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch — \$81,680

2021–2023 Biennium  
Mission Goal:

**\$2,150,000**

Mission Grant #1

**\$81,680**

*But when Jesus saw it,  
he was indignant and  
said to them, "Let the  
children come to me;  
do not hinder them,  
for to such belongs the  
kingdom of God  
(Mark 10:14b).*

*Let your work be shown  
to your servants, and  
your glorious power to  
their children  
(Psalm 90:16).*

Since 1952, the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch has touched the lives of more than 34,000 at-risk youth and their families. As a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Ranch brings Christ-centered hope and healing to children from across the nation who have experienced severe psychiatric, emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental challenges due to abuse, neglect, violence, and more. At the Minot, Bismarck, and Fargo, North Dakota, campuses, the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch combines the best-in-class psychiatric care with best-in-class Christ-centered spiritual care unlike any other organization in the nation. Children ages 10–18 and their families find new futures as they seek healing, hope, and new beginnings at the Ranch. With their Christ-centered Lutheran heritage and mercy-focused care, the Ranch becomes a place of stability, hope, and comfort for those they serve. During their time at the Ranch, the children learn to see the world differently, feel the love of God through those who care for them, and begin to look to the future with hope. The discovery of the Savior's mercy is often the most vital component of a child's healing.

Nearly all of the Ranch's female residents have been traumatized in some way, and in almost all cases the perpetrator was male. In addition, most of the young men who have been subjected to violence or abuse have experienced it at the hands of a male figure. This simple reality creates immediate trust issues that can be difficult for a child to bridge, especially when dealing with a male chaplain. In 2018, while recognizing the need to minister directly to the hearts of victimized young girls and boys, the Ranch called an LCMS deaconess, Kelly Bristow, to complement the work of the Spiritual Life Staff. Her work quickly began to bridge many of the gaps that often hinder a child's healing. This incredible relationship of trust became a turning point in children's lives. When the children complete their treatment and move on from the Ranch, they leave knowing God loves them and that His love will never change. Many of the children have written Deaconess Kelly, thanking her for everything she had done in the healing process. Many have found a church home where their faith remains rock solid.

The specialized ministry of the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch impacts more than 1,400 children and families each year, from all corners of the United States. The deaconess ministry is part of the Ranch's overall Spiritual Life Program, and it impacts more than 300 residential children annually. Two-thirds of the children receive services at the Minot campus. With this grant, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch will be able to fund one full year of deaconess ministry in Minot, North Dakota.

Learn more about this mission grant at [lwml.org/mission-grants](https://lwml.org/mission-grants)

