

Hope and Healing

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch



BY TAMMY NOTEBOOM, VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
AT DAKOTA BOYS AND GIRLS RANCH WITH CHERI FISH, MISSION EDITOR

“Growing up, I coped with my feelings the same way my Mom did — drugs. I thought it was normal. When I was 11, my Mom gave me up to the state, and I was in and out of foster homes until I was 13. I didn’t believe anyone really wanted me,” says one former resident.

“When I came to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, I was pretty much the same way I was everywhere else — I would scream, swear, hit, kick, and bite anyone in my path. But then I kinda realized that the staff are not here to get me mad or to ruin my life.

They are here to help. I finally feel like I belong somewhere. My life is still hard, and my future is still very uncertain, but now I have hope.”

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a Christ-centered, residential, treatment, and educational center for children ages 10 to 18. Children who are served at the three North Dakota campuses have experienced severe trauma, psychiatric issues, and/or developmental challenges; come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and religions; and have had numerous foster care and residential treatment placements. While at the Ranch, kids overcome challenges such as conduct disorder, autism spectrum disorder, personality disorder, depression, anxiety, chemical dependency, and issues related to trauma, abuse, and neglect.

With the help of highly trained and qualified staff who are readily available 24/7, children at the Ranch have a structured and safe environment in which to live, learn, and heal. They have access to resources they can’t get anywhere else. The Ranch’s on-site clinical staff includes therapists, nurses, psychologists, addiction counselors, occupational therapists, and a psychiatrist.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch President/CEO, Joy Ryan, said, “For some of our kids, this is the first time they have slept

in a bed, not gone to bed hungry, or had anyone listen to their deepest pains and fears. For many, it is the first time they have been told of Christ’s love for them. The kids come here with psychiatric and behavioral problems of the highest degree, but, if we look at where they have come from, we can understand them and help them to heal. Because of the gifts we receive from generous donors, these children can see the world differently, and feel the love of God through those who care for them.”

A spiritual foundation has always been at the heart of the services to children. The Christian values children learn at the Ranch aid in their healing and provide a foundation of hope that often stays with them their entire lives. Understanding who they are in Christ helps the boys and girls succeed in treatment and positively shapes and influences their future. At the Ranch, these precious children, who have endured so much, have an opportunity to learn about Jesus and grow in their relationship with God through worship, Bible study, fellowship, music, and faith conversations.

As her time at the Ranch was coming to a close, Sierra, a former resident, said, “I’ve grown so much in my faith,

and I believe God is all-healing. He took my anxiety away and I haven't had it for weeks. I had a huge breakthrough in my faith while I was at the Ranch. I know there is nothing I can't do without God."

We are thankful to God for the support of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League over the years. At the Lexington convention this past June, we were awarded a mission grant for our specialized Deaconess ministry. This ministry will bridge the gap for children — from their hard to handle trust-related issues to the transformational, powerful care of Christ. **Q**



2021–2023 MISSION GRANTS

MISSION GOAL: \$2,150,000

2021-2023 Mission Grant Summaries

1. Deaconess Ministry Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch - \$81,680

The healing ministry of the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch creates an eternal life-giving impact in the lives of children from ages 10–18 who face unimaginable abuse, neglect, and trauma. This is especially true for female children who are often victimized by male figures, resulting in trust-related issues that are difficult for a child to bridge. With this mission grant, the specialized ministry of a deaconess will bridge this gap with the transformational care of Christ.

3. Thirst to Learn: Bible Books for Africa's Children - \$100,000

Lutheran missionaries in Africa have witnessed a thirst to learn about the Savior and have expressed a deep need for easy-to-understand Lutheran books to be printed in the language of the people. These books will introduce parents and children to Jesus. Through this mission grant, Lutheran Heritage Foundation can fulfill this mission to publish high-quality Lutheran books for children such as *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, *Luther's Small Catechism*, and *Bible Stories in Pictures* for a cost of less than \$3.00 each.

4. Making the Next Generation of Disciples for Life - \$92,000

The sanctity of life has been under attack by pro-choice organizations. They are expanding their movement to reach children of younger ages, to attack chastity, and promote promiscuity which cause devaluation of life, marriage, and the family. The continued development of "Life" curricula is one of the most frequent requests by LCMS schools. With this mission grant, LCMS Life Ministry will build a set of developmentally appropriate resources and curriculum for early childhood, young children, and elementary-aged children and their families.

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1 | Deaconess Ministry Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch
(Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch) | \$ 81,680 |
| 2 | Healing the Invisible Wounds of War through Horses
(Spirit Warrior, Central Maine) | \$ 95,000 |
| 3 | Thirst to Learn: Bible Books for Africa's Children
(Lutheran Heritage Foundation) | \$100,000 |
| 4 | Making the Next Generation of Disciples for Life
(LCMS Life Ministry) | \$ 92,000 |
| 5 | Helping Hands for Lutheran Deaf Outreach
(Lutheran Deaf Outreach) | \$ 50,000 |
| 6 | Hope of Christ for Cancer Patients
(Phil's Friends) | \$ 70,000 |
| 7 | Training Pastors to Serve the Church in Russia
(Lutheran Theological Seminary, Novosibirsk, Siberia) | \$100,000 |
| 8 | Light of Christ in Eastern Europe
(Mission Central) | \$ 56,000 |
| 9 | Propelling the Gospel
(LAMP Ministry, Inc.) | \$ 65,000 |
| 10 | Educating Pastors in Africa
(Mission Central) | \$100,000 |
| 11 | Redeeming Life Maternity Home, Illinois Expansion
(Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries) | \$100,000 |
| 12 | Mercy Medical Care for Tanzania
(Mwadui Lutheran School and Community) | \$ 68,182 |
| 13 | Gospel Outreach to Women and Children in Mongolia
(Lutheran Hour Ministries) | \$100,000 |
| 14 | Caring for and Sharing Christ with Hurting People
(Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) | \$100,000 |
| 15 | The Littlest and Least of These (St. Paul Lutheran Church and Christian Academy, Dallas, Texas) | \$ 42,000 |
| 16 | Bring the Inner-City Children to Camp
(Lutheran Valley Retreat, Colorado) | \$ 25,000 |
| 17 | Spiritual and Physical Food for Children of Peru
(La Mision Luterana del Peru) | \$ 56,750 |
| 18 | "Ends of Earth" Scholarships
(Mission Opportunities Short Term — MOST Ministries) | \$ 50,000 |
| 19 | Sharing Jesus' Love in India
(Lutheran Braille Workers) | \$100,000 |
| 20 | Mission & Outreach to the Least of These
(Victory Lutheran Church, K. I. Sawyer Community) | \$ 51,356 |
| 21 | Mercy House Belize Lutheran Campus
(Belize Mission Society) | \$100,000 |
| 22 | Ministry Vehicle Fund, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone
(Lutheran Bible Translators) | \$ 70,000 |
| 23 | Showing God's Love in the International District, Albuquerque, New Mexico
(God Cares About You Mission) | \$ 98,000 |
| 24 | Reaching the Homebound with God's Word
(Lutheran Ministries Media, Inc. <i>DBA Worship Anew</i>) | \$100,000 |
| 25 | Missionaries to America Project
(Mission Nation Publishing) | \$ 88,000 |
| 26 | Strengthening the Lutheran Mission to Kuna, Idaho
(Friendship Celebration Lutheran Church) | \$100,000 |
| 27 | Expanding God's Love in Uganda
(LCMS Office of International Mission, Africa Region) | \$ 92,000 |
| 28 | Christ-Centered Materials for Hmong Language School and Outreach
(St. Paul Hmong Outreach Ministries) | \$ 70,208 |

■ -grant partially paid; ■ -grant paid in full