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NEWSLETTER

Ben Richey Boys Ranch and Family Program | Fall 2021



Ben Richey Boys Ranch and Family Program Updates

Ben Richey Boys Ranch & Family Program is pleased to bring you another edition of our seasonal newsletter. Providing information about recent happenings, Alumni and Staff updates, and plans for the future is a great way to keep donors, volunteers and our community updated about our incredible programs. Through your generous support, we are able to provide a loving and stable home for Boys and Single Mothers. Without you, none of this would be possible. Thank You!

 **BEN RICHEY
BOYS RANCH &
FAMILY PROGRAM**

Albany Ragin' Red Band

Last year, Albany ISD hired William Vaughn as their new band director. Coming from 5A Kaufman ISD, leading a small 2A school band was going to be an adjustment, to say the least. During William's first year, he took a very small band of 26 students and led them to their first Sweepstakes concert title, earning ratings of 1 in concert and 1 in sightreading at the UIL Region 2, East Zone Concert and Sightreading contest held at Abilene Wylie High School in March. "Winning Sweepstakes is a huge accomplishment for this band", said Vaughn. "I've gone back and looked as far as I can, and this is the first time in at least 18 years an Albany band has earned this title. When you realize we only had two members who had been to concert and sightreading before, you can appreciate the effort these kids have put in."

This school year the band has grown to a 40-member band which includes 7 students from the Albany Campus of the Ben Richey Boys Ranch. The Band Booster president is Pam Bean, our Albany Campus Administrative Assistant, and mother to Jade Bean who plays the drums. Pam stepped into the position this year and has done a great job putting together fundraisers to assist the band in raising money for a spring break band trip coming up next March. The band will take a tour bus to Westcliffe, Colorado to spend 4 days. During their trip, they plan on riding the Royal Gorge Railway, as well as having some activities at the resort including band practice in the beautiful Rocky Mountains! Each student is responsible for raising some of the money for their trip by participating in fundraisers.

The band has made huge strides in performance and appearance! New uniforms were purchased earlier in the year and members of the Ragin' Red Band will wear the uniforms for the first time at the Sept. 24th home football game against Anson. Here is a picture of their new uniforms. Looking good, don't you think?



Construction Update

Our Family Program has been expanding to ten new single family homes through our current building program but not without some delays. As you might recall, we broke ground on the project in September 2018, which followed with the wettest Fall and Spring we have had on record in Abilene. Despite the rain delays along with COVID delays, contractor delays and at times short-handed delays, house number ten is now erected!

Our boys helped again this summer with building the houses, gaining a good hands-on education about construction in the process. We always need extra hands when it comes to putting up the large roof panels and thanks to the ACU track team, Dyess Airmen and some of our good neighbors from the Albany community, we were able to complete the outside construction of the final house a few weeks ago. We could not have done all this work without a dedicated staff and help from our community and neighbors. Thank you to all the people who have helped us along the way. The Family Program will reap the benefits of this project for many decades to come.

As of today, October 2021, we have 5 homes occupied, one finishing inspection soon to be occupied and 4 houses in various stages of completion. We are excited about having a safe neighborhood for our single moms and their kids!



Pitching In

Here at the Ranch, we are blessed to have many different volunteers who help us in many areas of our everyday tasks. In addition to the daily running of the Ranch, we have many more volunteers who help with fundraising events like the Clay Break Classic, Chili Superbowl and Abilene Music Awards. As the events get rolling, we are always in need of additional support to help things run smoothly. This year at our annual Chili SuperBowl event on Labor Day Weekend, we needed some extra help cooking chili and we were lucky enough to snag some wonderful women from the Abilene Junior League who filled our workshifts. They worked alongside additional volunteers from Dyess AFB, Taylor County Sheriff Officers Association and Taylor County EMS.

Next door to the Chili cooking area, the Kids' Area was hoping this year and we needed volunteers to help oversee the games that were set up and make sure the kids were not driving golf balls off of the putting green into the rest of the crowd. ACU students from the Occupational Therapy Department and Sub T-16, one of the Fraternities on campus, stepped up to help us thanks to Dina Warren. Dina is an Assistant Professor at ACU and contacted us to ask about ways to get her students involved in service opportunities. We told her we had several events to offer to her students and she responded by sending sixteen students out to work shifts. We also had several guys from the fraternity who came out to give us a helping hand.

In addition to the Chili Superbowl, we have volunteers who help with our horse program. Sheila Spurgeon runs the program which pairs kids with horses. Each week, our kids learn about riding, caring and bonding with the horses. The benefits of this program are too numerous to mention but it takes many volunteers to make it happen. In the photo below, you can see the horse program in action. We have volunteers from Dyess AFB (Kaitlyn and Hector), a former airman (Anthony) and Vall, a co-worker/friend of Sheila's. Hats off to these volunteers who make a positive impact on our kids in this program.



Hamming It Up

A few of the guys at the Albany ranch have been tinkering with radios and learning about the hobby of amateur radios (ham radios).

Over the past few weeks, they have helped make power cable upgrades on a few different radios and power supplies. They removed the original connectors on the power cables and installed a new connector that allows for quick installation and easy disconnects. The new connectors made it easier to use the radios because the radio can be easily moved from the ranch house, to the truck or a park bench.

After the new connectors were installed, the guys were able to take their radios out into the backyard and connect it to a solar battery system. Using a 120-watt, portable solar panel connected to a solar power generator, there was plenty of power for hours of radio operations.

The antenna they used was built by their houseparent and was a simple, 66-foot-long wire antenna. The wire antenna was strung up between two trees and the center was supported by a tripod made from old tree branches! It was a simple and effective system made from materials found on the ranch.

Listening in on the 20 meter band of the HF spectrum, the kids learned to use various features of the radio. They learned about the different frequency bands and modes of operation. One of the radios had a "waterfall" display that showed a visual representation of the radio waves strength. Using the "waterfall" display and changing the modes of operation, the boys were able to pick up stations that were hundreds of miles away...and a few that were thousands of miles away! It is important that kids have a variety of positive experiences as they grow, develop, and mature. These experiences help develop healthy relationships and provide positive outlets as they pursue hobbies and recognize potential careers. Showing them about ham radios is just a small part of the positive experiences that they have while at the boys ranch.

Staff
Ben Richey Boys Ranch
Albany, Texas



One of our donors said, "Share your needs with others..." Taking that advice, we'd like to share this list of items needed at the Abilene campus:

- Towels – hand, bath, wash clothes
- Pots & Pans
- Twin sheets
- Pillows and pillowcases
- Crock pots and mixing bowls
- Boxer briefs (boys XL, men's small)
- Black no-show socks (sizes men's 6-12)
- Pig feed (Linder's 611 & Purina Oat Groats)

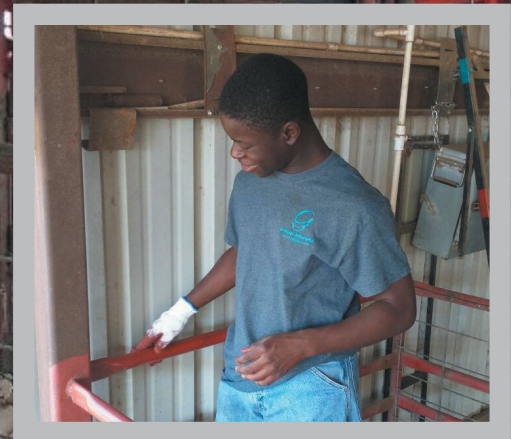


Tools For Life

When school lets out in May, our boys put down their books and pick up their tools to learn the value and gratification of hard work through our Summer Work Program. During this time, the boys work on campus for pay doing a variety of projects which includes learning new manual skills and applying common sense. The Summer Work Program begins shortly after school lets out for the summer and ends right before school resumes in August. The boys work for approximately 4 hours a day, mostly in the mornings before it gets too hot outside.

This past summer, work included painting pig pens and fence mending. The boys go out with their house dads who work alongside them. By working with the boys, these dads model positive character traits like a good work ethic and a positive mindset as well as demonstrating how to perform the job. The boys definitely learn life skills in addition to the manual skills. When these boys leave the Ranch, they will have tools they can use throughout their lifetimes including paying it forward for their own children or those they come in contact with through daily living.

"You don't learn to walk by following rules. You learn by doing, and by falling over." Richard Branson



Making the Old New Again

With a recent camping trip pending, we wanted to make sure all our gear was in good shape. Lacking a small axe, we ordered one online, but it arrived without a protective sheath. Knowing that we couldn't take it without a sheath, we determined to make one of our own!

After scrounging around for something strong, lightweight, and durable, the idea of using a piece of fire hose was considered. We contacted Chief Travis Gardenhire of the Albany VFD and we were able to get just what we needed! There was a discarded section of hose at the firehouse that wasn't going to be used anymore and we were allowed to get what we needed for our project.

Repurposing that old firehose into an axe sheath was a lot of fun. With just a quick snip of the scissors, a few zig-zags on a sewing machine, and the hammering of a few gromets we made just what was needed. It was finished off by taking some old bootlaces and using them as lashings. In just a matter of minutes, with some attention from willing hands, that old hose was made useful again! In the eyes of a fireman, that hose didn't have much value anymore, but in the hands of a craftsman, that's another story.

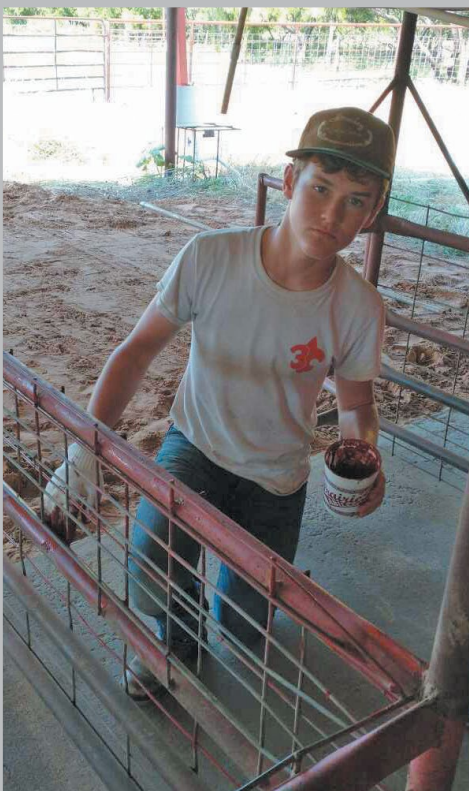
You see, that hose actually has a story, but then again, don't we all? Last year this hose went through a fire, one where things got out of control and out of hand. As a result, the hose got burned up and it wasn't usable anymore. Burned once and deemed unfit for service.

By now, you know where I am going with this, this isn't just about an old fire hose...

It's about all of us, being renewed and repurposed. Burned in the eyes of the world, we seemingly lose value. But, put into the hands of a craftsman, it's another story!

That's what we do here at the ranch, we focus on renewal and growth. It's all about second chances...both getting one and giving one.

Houseparent
Albany, Texas





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Because of You!

Ronald Reagan once said, "Some people wonder all their lives if they've made a difference. The Marines don't have that problem."

Marines don't have that to wonder about and neither do the supporters of the Ben Richey Boys Ranch! Because of your generous support, lives are impacted, and the future is being shaped. Your support has allowed so much to happen over the past few months.

- Because of you, a boy graduated high school as part of the National Honor Society.
- Because of you, a boy had a birthday party with his friends for the first time.
- Because of you, a single mom was able to buy a used car that was reliable for work.
- Because of you, a boy was able to play baseball on a travel team for the first time.
- Because of you, a kid went to church camp and rededicated his life to Christ.

Because of you, these boys and single moms' lives are better. We thank you for your continued support in changing lives.



GET IN TOUCH OR FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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