

Lifelong Bonds of Boys Choir

Liza Weaver Brickey



June marked the 75th anniversary of the Grace Cathedral Boys Choir Camp at The Ranch. The first group of boys came in 1948, one year after The Ranch was purchased by Bishop Block.

During the first decade of camp the boys bunked in the White family's dog kennel, which had been converted to a dormitory. Camp activities included professional voice training, stage presence, prayer time, and traditional summer camp fun: fire circles, softball, swimming, and lots of pranks. Many of these boys formed the bonds of lifelong friendships after graduating from the Boy's Choir and penned themselves "The Old Boys."

For nearly 30 years, these "Old Boys" have returned to The Ranch for an annual pilgrimage and reunion. The men and their wives or partners come from all over the United States and Canada to reminisce and strengthen their ties of friendship.

The current eldest member of the "Old Boys," Bob Loshuertos, says that each reunion starts with looking at old photos and remembering those who aren't at the reunion or have passed on. During their reflections you can hear in each man's voice, the tender feelings they have for each other and about their years at Camp.

There is a reason the "Old Boys" gather at The Ranch each year. The Ranch shaped them as young boys and forged a deep, everlasting bond between them and this special place.

Clarity and Community

Aaron Wright, Executive Director



One of the best parts of my job is hearing people share their stories and experiences of The Ranch. I'm always delighted to hear the range of experiences – from stories of deep

healing, meaningful transformation, spiritual connection, newly formed community, encounters with nature, family memories, and more than a few hilarious "I can't believe that happened" tales. If you hang around The Ranch community, you'll hear a good story! And, you'll pick up on some consistent themes: "This is my thin place.", "Unbelievably beautiful!", "The food!", "The Ranch is my spiritual home."

Over the last few years, whenever The Ranch community has gathered in person or online, we've asked you to share words you associate with The Ranch along with your stories. We've been listening deeply and compiling all those words and again consistent themes emerged: **Place, Beauty, Spirit, Hospitality, Community, Nourishing.**

So, earlier this year when our Board of Directors began updating our mission statement, we had a wealth of input from The Ranch community to start the process. A task force was formed and Kendace O'Donnell stepped forward to consult with us and guide us through the work of clarifying our mission.

We quickly determined that the fundamental mission of The Ranch hadn't changed, but that our statement needed to be updated and shortened - the old mission statement was 55 words, and though we read

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On The Trail “Oh, My!”

A Regular Column by Greta Mesics



Before hikers tromp out on the trails at The Bishop’s Ranch, we are asked to log in on a simple sheet that hangs on the office wall, with space to sign in and sign out and a little, tiny space for simple, succinct comments. I like to take a little breath and read those comments before heading out. Mainly these are exclamations of joy found in the beauty of The Bishop’s Ranch trails, remarks of delight and discovery. Sometimes there is a note of a challenge: heat, rain, excessive mud on a trail. Once in a while, there is a warning! Oh, my!

I do not usually head out looking for the *Oh, my!* moments. I hope to see something beautiful, fleeting, or new. I look for fungi in the winter. I seek out the wildflowers in the spring and summer. I always hope to see the otters in Lower Lake, the bold tanager, or that huge Blue Heron that makes a breeze but no sound when off he flies. I look for dropped feathers to collect in a jar and admire on days that permit no time on the trails. I pick up smooth stones. I pocket bleached bones and once in a rare while, a weathered skull. I am a walker who looks down as she wanders, so I see tracks, burrows, holes, and all manner of scat. As I look and roam, I do not leash my mind, and what I see brings me much wonder. I do not expect to be frightened or want to be! But, sometimes, a little scare is a good lesson. On three different hikes this summer, I have said, “*Oh, my!*” aloud on the trails — Rattlesnakes!

At each encounter, the snakes and I looked at each other with mutual distrust and hesitation. One of us will indeed have to turn around and head off in a different direction or return from whence we came. I am not accustomed to turning back. Typically, the grasses and branches bend to let me pass. The birds fly off. The deer, coyotes, and boar flee or quickly hide as I approach. But the snakes! They simply flick their tongues and stare. They move not at all.

At no time was there any danger of a bite or a

What to do if you encounter a Rattlesnake at The Ranch

The most common type of rattlesnake at The Ranch — the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake — is most active from April to October, but can be out and about earlier or later depending on the temperatures. If you come upon a rattlesnake, follow these tips:

Back Away. Rattlesnakes are not aggressive unless they feel threatened or frightened. Because they can lunge their bodies about two-thirds of their length, it is best to give them plenty of space — at least 10 steps away.

Don’t try to move the snake away from you using your foot, walking stick, or branch.

Shouting at them also won’t help because rattlesnakes do not have external ears. They can “hear” through vibrations in their jaws and bones. They can sense the impact of feet on ground, which helps them escape before you get there. If they don’t move off on their own, you can try stomping — once you are at a safe distance away — to give them the signal.

If you encounter a rattlesnake while on the trails of The Ranch, move safely away and continue your hike. However, if you encounter one on the main Ranch Campus, please notify your host about its location. Ranch Staff and residents of The Ranch are trained to remove rattlesnakes in a safe and effective manner. Rattlesnakes are relocated to a distant corner of The Ranch property where they can continue their important duties of controlling small animal populations!

strike. There was, in fact, not even rattling. But not one of those three rattlesnakes would move aside to let me continue my hike. I, the entitled, tromping, trespassing human, was made to turn back and take another route. Gladly!

Sometimes we big-brained, selfish, two-legged creatures need reminding that the trails and this earth are not ours alone. We, too, need to give way, share, and sometimes to even be a little frightened into acknowledging that we should not always dominate and decide.

Thank you for the lesson, wise Rattlesnakes!

How to Host a Successful Parish Retreat

by Hale Foote, Board President



Dan Sykes leads a session on *Creating a Public Park*

The staff at The Bishop's Ranch are experts in making sure your group's accommodations are ready for your arrival, but every group requires its own leader to make their retreat successful. Here are guidelines to make you a great parish retreat leader — even if it's your first time!

“But I have never done this before!” Not to worry! Organizing a retreat, whether for 20 people or 120, is an excellent way for lay members to serve in a leadership role. With some planning, it can even be fun!

Gather a planning team. There are many details and roles that, for a large group, exceed what any one volunteer should handle. Recruit several people to be in charge of areas like children's activities, hikes, art projects, lifeguard duty, entertainment, the keynote presentation, etc. Your clergy will lead Sunday worship, but the informal surroundings make it easy for them to include musicians, readers, and others who don't have those roles back home. Plan several meetings before the retreat to discuss and set your retreat schedule. These can spark great ideas.

Wait, we need a keynote presentation? Some large groups bring in an expert to give a presentation. I learned a “lead yourself” model from All Saints' San Francisco where a member used his expertise as a musicologist to talk about sacred song. At Christ Church Alameda we've asked members to present mini-seminars on a topic of interest (work or otherwise). We hold four concurrent tracks, take a break, then repeat so people have choices. Think about why your group is going on a retreat. Is it a chance to get to know a new clergy leader in your parish? Are there decisions that would benefit from time offsite? Or is it purely for fun?

Communicate more than you think you

should. Months before your retreat, once dates are secured, put that date on your parish's calendar. You don't need to communicate all the details of costs and schedules yet, but this is a time to start promoting! Several months before the event, you will have information on costs, activities, and times to share with your group — which needs to be repeated almost weekly in your parish's newsletters and with an in-person announcement during the regular service.

For those who have never been to The Ranch, it's important to describe what it's like. Reassure them that there is good cell and WIFI service. Forming carpools will increase attendance. Two weeks before, send a detailed list of what to bring (hiking shoes, sunscreen) and what not to bring. Share tips for navigating the drive. And remember, this is a *retreat from daily routines*. Remind people they are welcome but *not required* at group activities; “all may, some should, none must!” People can also visit nearby wineries, shop in town, nap, or spend the day at the pool. You will have better attendance if people know they have flexibility.

Explain the costs of the retreat. You will receive a detailed quote from Ranch staff for lodging and meals. This can be divided in different ways, and you need to clearly communicate costs to potential attendees. Some parishes have a fund to subsidize retreat costs, and The Ranch has the Partnership Fund to assist those individuals who request aid. You might also point out what it would cost to stay in a hotel in Healdsburg for a weekend, and their meals cannot compete with The Ranch Kitchen! If your group includes families, decide how to accommodate childcare. Some parishes bring their regular nursery staff; others make up a sharing schedule so that parents can have time away. Teens have no trouble entertaining themselves at The Ranch!

You have arrived at The Ranch! The leaders should arrive early to set up a welcome table with a room assignment chart and copies of the schedule. Meet the Ranch Host assigned to your group, and update them on any last-minute changes. Welcome everyone at the first night's social time. Scout out the public spaces for evening sing-a-longs or s'mores or stargazing, and tell your team leaders. Your Ranch Host will explain logistics to everyone during the first meal, but you as the group leader are the source for information about your own plans. Before you know it, your group will be fully engaged and your work will be done. Now, look around to see who you can recruit to be the leader next year!

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Coming Home

A newsletter about life at
The Bishop's Ranch

The Bishop's Ranch
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Contact us to update
your contact info and
communication preferences:

advancement@bishopsranch.org

Summer Camp Recap



Another year of Bishop's Ranch Summer Camp is in the books! This year we hosted three weeks of BREAD Camp, a sold out week of READ Camp with over 50 local school children, and the second year of the newly-imagined Intergenerational Camp. All our camps included the well-loved traditions of camp: chapel, delicious food from The Ranch Kitchen, small group breakouts, plenty of laughter and song, Capture The Flag competitions and the making of lifelong memories and new friends! New this year was the added joy of a second daily pool session, a hydration station that offered Gatorade concoctions-of-the-day like "Bug Juice," "Grimace," and "Nuclear Waste," a robust version of Camp Olympics that included Land Kayaking races and even the addition of a second verse to the beloved camp song, Sanctuary. The theme of Camp this year was World of Wonders, and campers of all ages explored the wonders of nature, love, faith, and the wonder of themselves!

As always, our camp staff — both paid and volunteer — were the stars of the summer, going above and beyond to guarantee safe and delightful weeks of Camp.

"My favorite part of camp was seeing my grandson (Ren) meet kids he had met last year and take off like the 12 months hadn't existed!"

— Joni Stickney, Intergenerational Camper



“This place is awesome. I can’t wait to come back! And, the cookies are really good.”

– First Time BREAD Camper



“Camp was the usual magic of setting folks in community for a week, providing fantastic meals, beautiful surroundings, and intentional programming.”

– Janelle Fazackerley, Intergenerational Camper

Share Your Ranch Photos

Sharing photos from your Ranch experiences is easy! Just send them to **photos@bishopsranch.org**.

Who knows, they could end up in our newsletter, on social media, or even on our website.

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Fall & Winter Programs

Register for Ranch Programs at:
bishopsranch.org/programs

Fall Hike: Autumn at The Ranch October 14, 9:30 am - 3:00 pm

Spend a Saturday walking the little-known trails of The Bishop's Ranch and exploring its many habitats. Lunch is provided.

Yoga with Marie Hirsch: A Day Retreat November 11, 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Use breath and meditation to deepen your understanding and appreciation of yoga.

Song and Silence with Devi Mathieu November 14-16, 2023

Join a circle of voices in experiencing St. Hildegard's music through a gentle, contemplative process of listening, then singing what we hear. Enjoy plenty of quiet time for rest and rejuvenation.

Quiet Days in Advent December 7-11, 2023

Join us for our annual contemplative Advent retreat amidst the beauty and peace of The Bishop's Ranch. Whether you are long experienced with the practice of quiet, contemplative retreating or exploring a new practice, we invite you to nourish your soul in the quietude of Advent at The Ranch.

Wisdom of the Heart with Kayleen Asbo December 15-17, 2023

Experience the ancient treasures of contemplative practices that can nourish your spirit in a weekend that weaves together story, image, song, and silence. This year, our theme is the longing for sacred union.

New Programs in 2024

John Phillip Newell will have two back-to-back retreats at The Ranch.

Rediscovering Celtic Wisdom Feb. 9-11, 2024

The Great Search Feb. 12-14, 2024

Facilities and Land News

by *Matthew Kissmann*

The Facilities and Land Department strives to mitigate the toll time takes on everything here at The Ranch, but age catches up to us all eventually.

Sadly, this time, wear and tear have caught up to the heater in the Swing Pavilion and a couple of trees on our main campus. The Pavilion's heater is heavily used during the colder months, so it's understandable that it would need replacement after more than ten years. Fortunately for us, it was a direct replacement, so nothing has changed—except for the prospect of warmer air this winter!

Tree work is a near constant around The Ranch, but it's especially disheartening when a tree becomes so unhealthy that removal is the safest option. It's never an easy choice, but safety always comes first. We're sad to say goodbye to a large oak in our cedar grove and an aging maple at the top of the hill, but we are grateful for the shade they've given over the years and the wood they'll supply to keep us warm for winters to come.

On a brighter note, our Westside Community neighborhood was awarded a \$350,000 CAL FIRE grant that will directly impact The Ranch. The submitted grant states, *"The project goals are to protect lives, reduce structure losses, minimize environmental damage, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce human-caused wildfire ignitions."*

A portion of the CAL FIRE grant will fund fire-safety projects at The Ranch making The Ranch more fire resilient. We will serve as a forest management demonstration site to teach fire reduction techniques like tree cutting, chipping, and controlled burning. We will also use funds to remove roadside vegetation along Vacherie Way — a road that borders part of The Ranch property — to create a shaded fuel break.

Through the generosity of a donor, The Ranch purchased and installed a generator to power the refectory during power outages and Public Safety Power Shut-offs, which have become increasingly frequent over the last few fire seasons. This generator will power the kitchen and refectory, allowing us to continue providing meals, prevent food spoilage, and provide a safe, well-lit space in case of an emergency.

Clarity and Community (continued)

it aloud at each board meeting, we had to read it each time because it was too long to recite from memory.

After much work (and many flip charts and Post-its!) the task force delivered drafts to the board for input and eventual approval. Our mission statement illustrates our purpose. Our vision is the impact we want to have. Our values are principles and ethics that guide us. I'm so happy to share with you our approved new mission statement — shorter, clearer and memorizable:

To share a place of rare beauty through hospitality that nourishes spirit, body, and mind.

The mission is anchored and contextualized by our vision and values which are shared here in draft form and will be finalized soon.

We honor this place of rare beauty – its natural setting and the campus – through our commitment to promote sustainability in every way – environmentally, financially, and spiritually. It is fundamental to our core values to preserve this exceptional part of creation for future generations.

Support the Annual Fund!



Your support of the Annual Fund sustains The Ranch by directly supporting our operating budget. Your gifts support our staff, maintain facilities and land, and provide hospitality that nourishes spirit, body, and mind for all who visit.

To make an online gift, scan the QR code or visit bishopsranch.org/donate, or use the enclosed envelope to mail a check.

To make a stock or securities gift, visit: bishopsranch.org/stocksandsecurities

Our Mission

To share a place of rare beauty through hospitality that nourishes spirit, body, and mind.

Our Vision

A place where lives are changed.

Our Values

Spirit

We foster spiritual life, nurturing contemplation, discovery, and renewal. We find strength in our identity as a camp and conference center of the Episcopal Diocese of California to provide a place of spiritual growth for people of all faiths - or no faith tradition. We offer our chapel and prayers to all, making room for varied expressions and experiences of the spiritual life.

Community

We practice abundance through our hospitality to enrich community. We believe that hospitality is a powerful tool to create a more inclusive, diverse and equitable society. The fullest way to experience The Ranch – our lodging, meals, and programming – is in community.

Beauty

We appreciate, value and celebrate natural and created beauty. Our setting among the rolling hills overlooking the Russian River Valley and the Mayacamas is one of rare natural beauty. We foster the experience of that beauty by maintaining an atmosphere where obstructions are minimized. We pursue beauty in everything from buildings, to furnishings, to meals, art and experiences at The Ranch. We seek to be co-creators of beauty wherever possible.

Sustainability

We honor this place of rare beauty – its natural setting and the campus – through our commitment to promote sustainability in every way – environmentally, financially, and spiritually. It is fundamental to our core values to preserve this exceptional part of creation for future generations.

Equity

We seek to promote equity in all we do; to treat all who visit, work and volunteer at The Ranch with dignity and respect; to remove barriers that would prevent any person from experiencing this sacred place; and to celebrate each other's uniqueness as we build community.

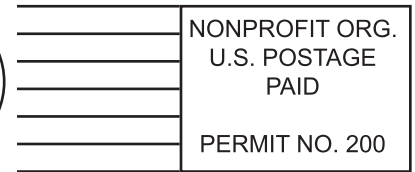


The Bishop's Ranch


of the Episcopal Diocese of California

5297 Westside Road
Healdsburg, CA 95448

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Coming Home Fall 2023

 Printed on recycled paper

Recipes from The Ranch

Quinoa Seeded Granola

*Vegan. Gluten Free. Nut Free.
Makes 16 servings.*

6 Tbsp. Coconut Oil
10 Tbsp. Maple Syrup
2 Tsp. Cinnamon
2 Tsp. Vanilla
1 Tsp. Salt
6 Tbsp. Chia Seeds
7 Oz. Sunflower Seeds
7 Oz. Pumpkin Seeds
3.5 Oz. Flax Seeds
3.5 Oz. Quinoa Flakes

In a large saucepan, combine the first five ingredients and heat on low until smooth. Allow to cool.

In a large bowl mix together the remaining five ingredients.. Pour the cooled coconut oil mixture into the same bowl and mix until well coated. Spread the granola mixture in a single even layer on the sheet pan.

Bake for 30 - 40 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes to ensure even cooking.

Granola is ready when it is golden brown in color. Remove from the oven and let cool completely.

Once cool, store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for one month or in the freezer for up to six months.

Recipe adapted from Elizabeth Chloe