

## **Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch: Physical and Mental Wellness for At-Risk Children**

Lutheran Women's Missionary League – South Dakota District

**Project goal:** Support the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch through robust wellness programming, and improve treatment outcomes.

### **I. About Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch**

Founded in 1952, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, a Registered Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, gives children who have experienced significant trauma a safe place to live, learn, and heal. Our mission is to help at-risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ. Our holistic approach to caring for children includes meeting their physical, emotional, and mental health needs through wraparound services including individual psychiatric therapy and therapy groups; wellness activities; spiritual life programming; equine-assisted therapy; on-campus education; and more. We weave trauma-informed care into every aspect of treatment to ensure the Ranch is a safe, reliable, and trustworthy place for kids who enter our care.

The Ranch serves young trauma survivors, ages 10-17, from North Dakota who have the highest psychiatric needs. Their lives have been traumatized by unimaginable abuse, neglect, mental health challenges, violence, addiction, and other adverse childhood experiences. Many children also come from generational and historical trauma, with many family members struggling with mental illness, addiction, and poverty. The abuse, neglect, and trauma that children who come to the Ranch have endured, often result in maladaptive coping mechanisms and psychiatric illness.

All work done at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is done in the name of Christ. Our foundation is and always has been on our Christian faith. Children at the Ranch hear the Gospel and learn of Christ's love for them through chapel services, spiritual life groups, individual mentoring with our Chaplain and Deaconesses, and daily interactions with Ranch employees. We bring Christ's presence to our work by showing up, being fully present, listening, and surrounding our children with an atmosphere of faith.

### **II. The Need: Holistic Wellness for At-Risk Children**

#### Situation:

Wellness programming is critical for children in residential treatment, providing a holistic approach to healing, development, and long-term success. While much of the Ranch's wellness programming focuses on physical health, activities also support the social, mental, and spiritual health of our kids. Wellness programming includes physical recreation activities such as biking, kickball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, ultimate frisbee, trips to local gyms, and more. Wellness also teaches children at the Ranch how to enjoy leisure activities like board and card games, arts and crafts, and trips to the zoo, park, science center, or movie theater. Wellness programming introduces children at the Ranch to healthy living habits that will benefit them while in our care and when they return to their home communities.

Wellness programming improves outcomes for children at the Ranch as they experience increased self-esteem and self-worth, better relationships with peers and caregivers, improved emotion regulation and coping skills, and greater engagement in therapy, school, and other treatment programming.

#### Specific Activities:

A mission grant from the South Dakota District LWML will support Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch's Wellness Program. Funds will be used to construct a bike path on our Minot campus. As we do not currently have a dedicated bike path on campus, the only option is for kids and staff to ride around the parking lots and other areas of campus where cars typically drive. The new bike path will give the kids a safe place to ride and enjoy the benefits of physical activity.

In addition to the path construction, mission grant funds will also purchase a bike storage shed, which will be constructed close to the path for convenient, covered storage. Our current bike storage building is located across the county road, so for ease and accessibility, the bikes are kept outside and subject to the elements during the summer.

**Projected Impact:**

This project is an opportunity for the women of the South Dakota District LWML to support the physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. By awarding this proposal, the South Dakota District LWML will provide a safe space for children to heal and become their best selves.

**III. Proposed Budget, Fiscal Sources, and Ongoing Funding**

**Physical and Mental Wellness for At-Risk Children**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Income</b>
Bike path construction	\$30,000	
Bike storage shed	\$12,000	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$42,000</b>	
<i>South Dakota District LWML (pending)</i>		\$4,000
<b>Total income</b>		<b>\$4,000</b>

*\*Actual project costs are subject to change as the project moves forward.*

Additional funding for the project will be solicited from other LWML groups across the country and the Ranch's generous donor base, as necessary.

Denny Grocott, Facilities Director, will oversee the implementation of this proposal. He will be assisted by the Facilities Maintenance staff for the project's physical needs. Fiscal services for the grant's administration and record keeping will be managed by Sheila Miller, Vice President of Finance, Facilities, and Technology.

*Erinn Dosch*

*8.26.2025*

*Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Representative*

*Date*

**Grant Coordinator Contact Information:**

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## **Physical and Mental Wellness for At-Risk Children**

WHEREAS, the Word of God teaches we are fearfully and wonderfully made in body, mind, and spirit (Psalm 139:14, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:23); and

WHEREAS, we are instructed to faithfully care for our whole selves as temples for the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20); and

WHEREAS, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch seeks to address the needs of the “whole child,” wrapping each child in services that fully address their mental, educational, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs; and

WHEREAS, research shows that healing is more likely to happen in the life of a traumatized child when all five of these healing components come together in a positive way, as they do at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch; and

WHEREAS, the Minot campus does not currently have a safe and reliable outlet for residents to learn to ride bicycles and engage in the health and wellness benefits that come from active riding without the danger and inconvenience of merely circling in active parking lots; therefore, be it

RESOLVED: that the South Dakota District Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, assembled in convention, grant the sum of \$4,000 to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch to assist in constructing a bike path on its Minot campus, creating a safe, wellness-focused environment where children can learn, grow, and build healthy habits necessary to fulfilling our mission of helping at risk children and their families succeed in the name of Christ.