

Kenneth and Cheryl Mantooth

House parents
Cal Farley's Boys Ranch

Kenneth and Cheryl Mantooth have been house parents at Boys Ranch six years. Kenneth and Cheryl were born and raised in Oklahoma. Prior to joining the Boys Ranch staff, the couple served as house parents at a smaller group home for children in Oklahoma for 15 years.

According to Cheryl:
“Successful house parent couples make friends with their neighbors and they become involved in the community and with the kids.”

LEADERS IN THE HOME

House parent couples fulfill an important leadership role in providing direct daily care to Boys Ranch and Girlstown residents. Just like the parents in a “traditional” household, house parents establish the family “culture” for each household and motivate, direct, aid and cajole the boys and girls in their care. House parents provide structure for their kids when they’re not in class or participating in a scheduled event or program.

In short, house parents work as a team to ensure the health, safety and well-being of each child in their care.

Cheryl and Kenneth Mantooth believe the key to being successful house parents is leading by example. “Our approach to house parenting is very much like a mom, a dad, and a family,” Kenneth said, “We’re a team.”

Living in the Boys Ranch community, the Mantooths say, is an important factor in being successful house parents. Making the campus their home enables them to befriend neighbors and become involved with the community and with the “neighborhood” kids.

At Girlstown, Russ and Sharion Stephens appreciate house parents who can manage a crisis with the girls and still maintain their senses of humor. Creativity and consistency also are important, they believe. “Consistency in following the rules and policies, and consistency in fairness and discipline are vital,” Sharion said.

Oftentimes, children in residential care settings have not developed the coping skills that children develop within secure families. “Things that would not upset somebody from a secure background who has learned to cope with anger and crisis can cause our kids to react in a totally different way,” Sharion said.



**According to
Sharion:**

“My advice for new house parents is to get a good pair of tennis shoes, because you walk a lot. It is a necessary part of being a house parent.”

“I try to put myself in their shoes,” Cheryl said. “They have new adults telling them when to get up, when to go to bed, where to go, and what time to go. We want to build a relationship so that they do not want to let us down and we do not want to let them down.”

Fortunately, house parents are not alone in their efforts. There are numerous support staff involved in each child's life from home life staff to teachers, caseworkers, coaches, vocational mentors and more. “We depend on the people around us,” Kenneth said. “We depend on the whole team.”

Although small rewards surface daily, behavior change among the boys and girls takes time. “The thing about motherhood is that you do not know how you did raising your kids for a long time,” Sharion said. “That is the way it is here. There are some girls you can tell you are making a difference right away. Other girls you think, ‘Am I ever going to get through to her?’ You may not know until years down the road that you helped them make a better decision because you were here for them.”

“It's so rewarding when the light comes on and they make the right choice,” Russ said. “But the long-term payoff will be 10 or 15 years from now when they have their own families. That's when our work today will pay off.”

Russ and Sharion Stephens, *House parents, Cal Farley's Girlstown, U.S.A.*

Russ and Sharion Stephens have been house parents at Girlstown for two years. Russ grew up in LaMesa, Texas, and Sharion was raised in Plains, Texas. Russ was in sales for many years. They have three adult sons. Sharion was a stay-at-home mom for many years. She home schooled their sons for 10 years. She also worked in doctor's offices and a Christian book store. They still maintain a home in Lubbock. They enjoy keeping in contact with friends, family and church.



Keith

Boys Ranch High School
2006 Senior Class

Keith has lived at Boys Ranch for over four years. He is involved in football, basketball, baseball, journalism, the chapel program and the Youth Leadership Organization.

According to Keith:

“When I first came to Boys Ranch, I did not like it. It was hard for me to be separated from my family. But, Boys Ranch has helped turn my life around.”



QUIET LEADERSHIP

Keith, a senior at Boys Ranch High School, is a participant in the Transitional Living Program, which allows him the opportunity to enjoy added responsibilities and less oversight by adults.

Keith is viewed as a leader by adults and peers alike. He still lives in a home supervised by a house parent couple, but with fewer restrictions than other homes. As Keith describes it, “You are pretty much on your own to cook, do laundry, wake yourself up, stick to a budget, check your bank statements, and do things without being told. You must show a lot of maturity.”

When Keith arrived at Boys Ranch, he continually allowed his anger to control his emotions. He did not want to be at Boys Ranch and missed his family. But Keith attributes his overall turnaround to the Boys Ranch structure and the one-on-one attention he received. “I am still working on my anger,” Keith admits. “I have gotten over most of it, but it is probably something I will never get over completely.”

Keith describes himself as a quiet leader. “I am not a leader through what I say, I am a leader by example.” According to Keith, it is normal for some guys not to complete their chores on time. “I get mine done early,” Keith said. “I take care of my responsibilities on time. Most of the time my house parents do not have to say anything,” Keith admits his house parents do have to remind him to shave once in a while.

Spending most of his time at school, work or in sports activities, Keith plays football, basketball and baseball. As a leader on the basketball team, Keith tried to serve as a role model to the other players. “I stepped it up a lot, encouraging players to play more as a team. If players were messing around, I tried to get them to quit.”

Keith works at the Dippel Activity Center Grille, a campus snack bar. He would like to manage a big restaurant one day and the experience he has gained in food service should help him achieve that goal.

Keith is looking forward to graduation and studying business management in college with the assistance of a Cal Farley’s scholarship. “Graduation is going to be hard for me,” he said. “There are a lot of people I am going to miss.”

“Boys Ranch is a good place to be,” he said. “It has so many opportunities.”

180 DEGREE TURNAROUND AT GIRLSTOWN

Jessica, 15, is a quiet leader at Girlstown. Her house parents, Walter and Marla Davis appreciate her willingness to help out in the cottage whenever she can. "Sometimes on weekends, when my house parents are going crazy and they are trying to cook a meal and handle 12 girls at the same time, I'll start dinner or do whatever they need."

Jessica's definition of a leader is "someone who can help other people and have other people look up to you and to be an example and a positive role model." According to the Davises and her caseworker, Stacy Lambright, Jessica fits her definition very well. "She volunteers for everything that is offered," Mr. Davis said. "She is one of the first kids up and ready to get going. If you need an extra hand, and you ask her, she will never turn you down."

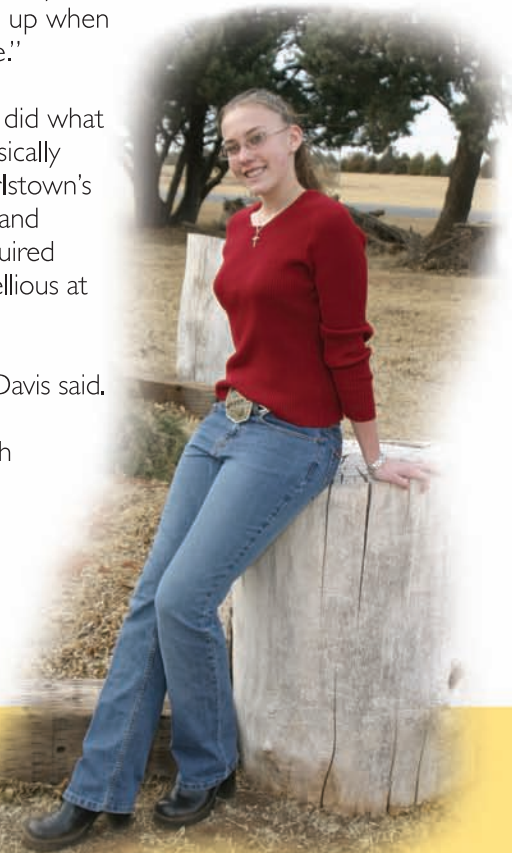
Jessica describes Girlstown as an encouraging place with a lot of unique opportunities "if you go after them. It is a good, clean, Christ-centered campus," she said. "Girlstown has helped me in many different ways, such as learning responsibility. It taught me to be honest, to keep my head up when I know I can do it, even if it takes losing everything, because that is what happened to me."

When Jessica arrived at Girlstown, she was accustomed to getting her own way. "I never did what my mom told me," Jessica admits. "I was always arguing, running away, disobeying and basically doing what I wanted to do. When I didn't get my way, I threw a big temper tantrum." Girlstown's staff worked with Jessica for many months, but her attitude and actions remained negative and disruptive. The team revised all of Jessica's objectives. Jessica lost her privileges. She was required to spend more one-on-one time with staff, and working on various projects. "She was rebellious at first. Then she realized there was nothing she could do but follow the program," Stacy said.

"She started forming relationships for the first time rather than running from them," Mrs. Davis said.

Jessica credits God, Ms. Lambright and "basically everyone on the Girlstown campus" with helping her through the tough times. "And my mom, of course," she said. "We have gone through some tough times. She is there to encourage me."

According to Jessica:
"It wouldn't be a pretty sight if I was still at home. My mom tried to help me. She gave me her best and I did not accept it. I just never wanted to take it. Without Girlstown, I probably would have ended up pregnant and out on the streets."



Jessica, Sophomore, Cal Farley's Girlstown, U.S.A.

Jessica is a 15 year-old high school sophomore. She has lived at Girlstown for approximately two years. She describes herself as energetic, determined and resilient. Girlstown staff members describe her as a quiet leader in her cottage and on the campus. She participates in the Youth Engaged in Service (YES) program, which is a program that provides girls opportunities to volunteer for community service projects. Competing in the Boys Ranch Rodeo was a very special moment for Jessica, especially when she won third place. Her immediate goals are to remain at Girlstown until she graduates, and then pursue a college degree in Special Education and Child Development.