

Disney World Family Vacation: Your Essential Guide

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Fantastic Food

Best-Ever Crab Cakes

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Fix & Freeze Lasagna

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MAY 2006

Comfortable Sunporch

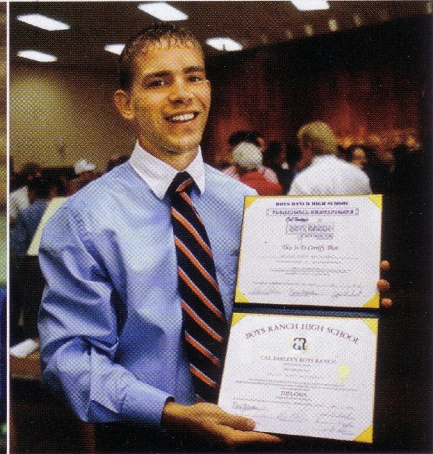
Second Chance At Cal Farley's

Shoved around by life, youngsters get a chance to start life anew. Even the horses help.



Vanessa Saunders is a senior at Cal Farley's. A poster of the community's founder hangs behind her.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK SANDLIN



top: A student connects with one of the horses used in Cal Farley's equine therapy program. **above:** Scott Whitehurst grew up here, graduated last year, and earned an academic scholarship for college.

youngsters here, she has spent most of her life in this place that an Amarillo businessman founded in 1939 to give wayward children "a shirttail to hang onto."

Second Chance on the Canadian River

You can feel change in the air in May at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch north of Amarillo. A current of excitement, as visible as the breezes in the cottonwoods, ripples around Boys Ranch, Texas, and its schools as graduation approaches. Soon, many will receive college scholarships with their high school diplomas and leave for higher halls of learning. Younger students will look forward to vacations, recreation programs, summer jobs, and another year in this place where lives change for the better.

"Change is constant," says Vanessa Saunders. It's a lesson that these kids experienced early in their lives. A graduating senior from Dallas, Vanessa arrived at Cal Farley's as a 7-year-old. Like many of the 260 other

If you're new to our state, you'll soon learn that Cal Farley's Boys Ranch (where girls go too) is a Texas synonym for a second chance. Cal Farley's accepts children, free of charge, when their biological parents or supervising adult can no longer provide for them.

This community is neither detention center nor boot camp, nor is

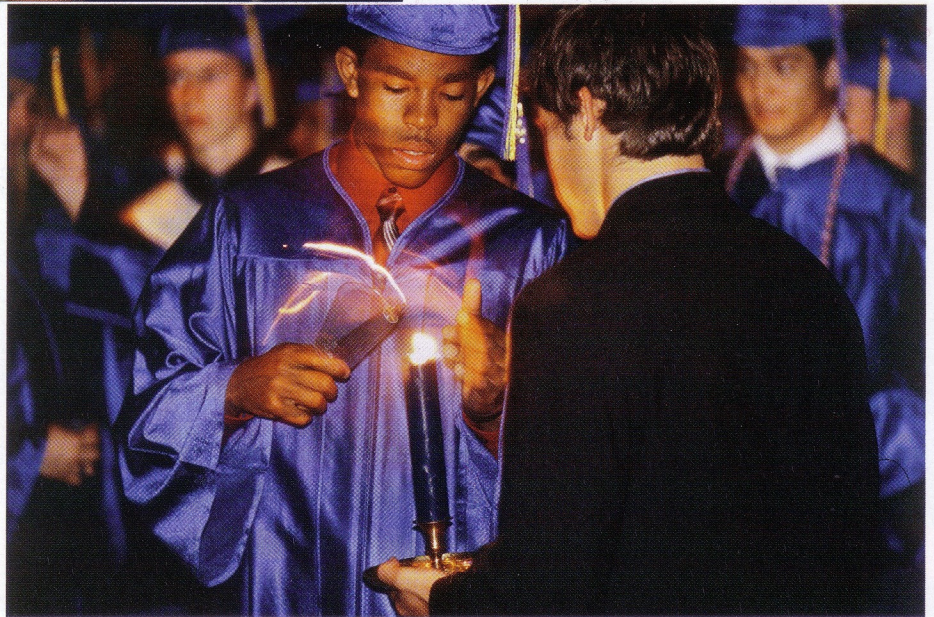


above: These lab partners conduct chemistry experiments. Cal Farley's maintains its own separate school district. **right:** Graduation at the ranch is the highlight of the May calendar.

it just a ranch up on the Canadian River, about 40 miles northwest of Amarillo. It is, instead, a hometown comprised of quiet streets, brick residences, schools, a football stadium, a fire station, a fine arts center, and a nondenominational chapel (the literal and figurative heart of the community).

It also maintains its own bank where Vanessa, who interns at an Amarillo television station, maintains her savings and checking accounts. Allowances are deposited for the youngest children, while older ones with afternoon jobs bank their earnings. Many save wisely. One student even graduated with \$26,000 in her account after winning a stock show. Others learn the meaning of the word "overdraft."

All live in brick residences where house parents such as Mike and Yolanda Myers supervise daily schedules of meals, homework, and chores. They also stand ready to counsel, console, and coax the newly arrived children into learning how to love and trust others.



Learning To Love

Students often arrive here surly, suspicious, wary, and weary of their turbulent lives. "Many of them don't trust adults at all," says Tom Novak, who grew up here himself in the 1960s and now

serves as administrator of Cal Farley's. "Adults have cheated on them and neglected them and abandoned them and beaten them. They want someone to care for them. They want someone who will hold them accountable and set parameters. Kids want

Who Was Cal Farley?

A championship wrestler from Iowa, Cal Farley (1895-1967) moved to Amarillo and built a small tire shop into a large business. He began working with boys from "the lower 10% of our nation's youth" through athletics and other endeavors. He founded the ranch in 1939 and eventually sold his business. He and his wife, Mimi, dedicated the rest of their lives to the ranch.

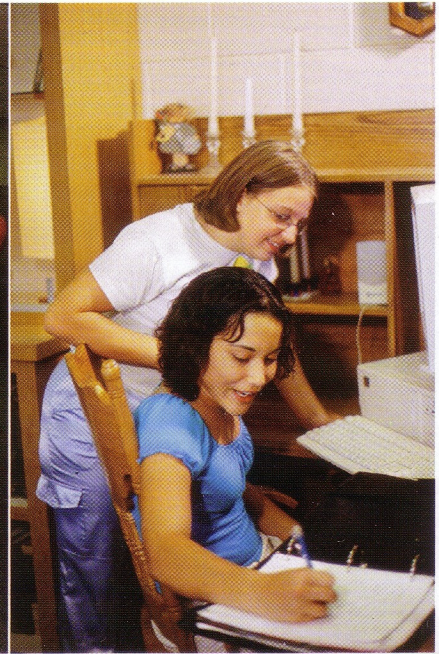
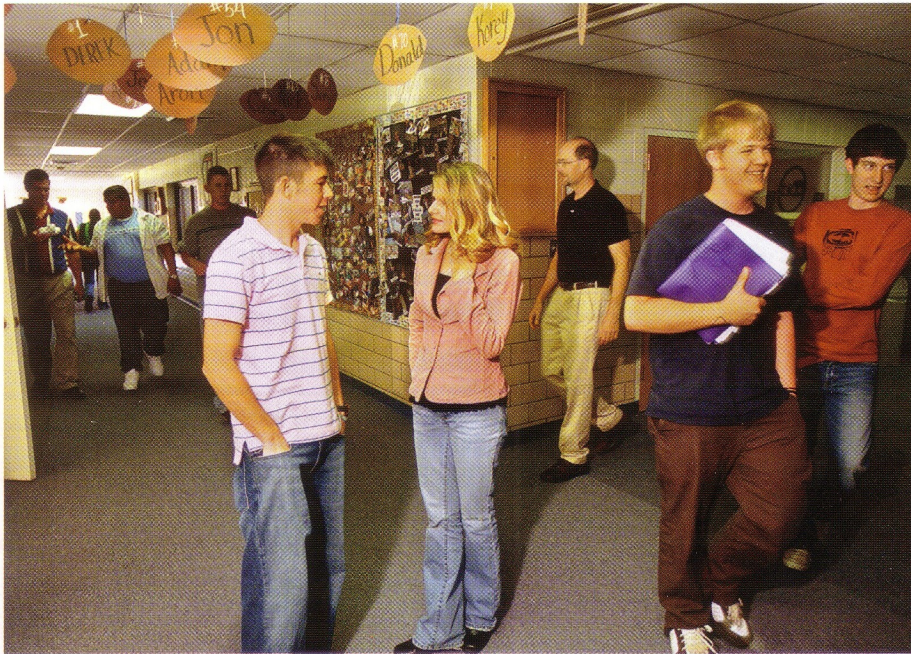
that. That's scientifically proven."

Scott Whitehurst of Whitehouse, who now attends The University of Texas at Tyler on an academic scholarship, also grew up at Cal Farley's. He says it was always easy to spot the new kids

whose treatment in life made them angry and defensive. "One guy from Chicago had a survivor attitude. He hadn't learned to let that go," Scott remembers. "People who've been at Cal Farley's for a while learn to lean on others."

"Change is constant."

Vanessa Saunders, resident at Cal Farley's



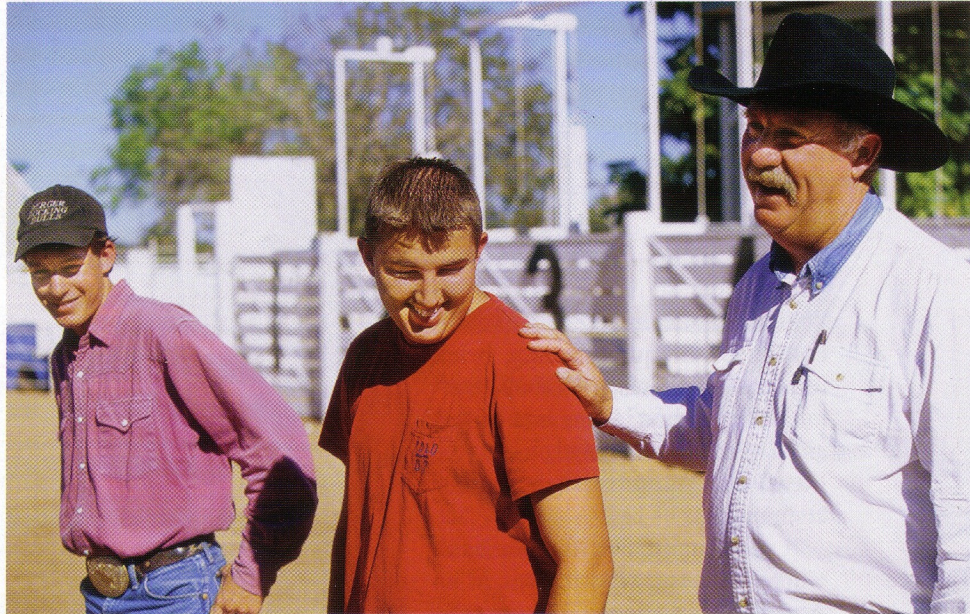
above, left: Some 300 students, including children of employees, attend three schools. **above, right:** House parents, teachers, coaches, and other Cal Farley employees impact the lives of these youngsters. **right:** Tim Jobe (right) works with both students and house parents in the equine therapy program.

Horses Teach Too

They learn love from house parents and other mentors such as coaches, teachers, employers, and even horses. Tim Jobe, who calls himself “just a cowboy,” supervises his equine therapy program that he created for children and employees alike. Working with horses, he explains, always reveals adverse personality quirks.

“When I tell a youngster to take a halter and put it on a horse, anything that causes him problems anywhere else—frustration, manipulation, anger—will cause him problems with that horse. And a horse will respond honestly to what you do,” Tim says with a smile. “I don’t teach a whole lot. I let the horses do that. They’re a lot better teachers than I am.”

Such mentors, whether they stand on four legs or two, become friends with students for life. Many alumni and teachers stay in touch for years. Mike and Yolanda recently drove to California to watch one of their former



How To Help

Cal Farley’s Boys Ranch depends on private donations. For information: Cal Farley’s, P.O. Box 1890, Amarillo, TX 79174; www.calfarley.org. Students give free guided tours. Call in advance (1-800-687-3722). A good time to go is for the annual Cal Farley’s Boys Ranch Rodeo on Labor Day weekend, September 2-3.

students graduate from boot camp in the United States Marine Corps. “No one in his family was there,” Mike recalls. “Mr. Farley used to say, ‘What’s the purpose of hitting a home run when no one is there to watch?’”

Although alumni may drift far from the Canadian River, this place of a second chance stays with them. Vanessa, who plans to attend Amarillo College this fall, says it best: “Cal Farley’s? It’s my life.” **GARY D. FORD**