



Life at Still Creek

Photos by Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

Three boys at the Still Creek Boys Ranch walk down to the barn to do their daily chores after their school is let out.

Local ranch gives boys second chance at life

By Traci Travis
The Battalion

With a little help from the Still Creek Boys Ranch, 18 troubled boys from broken homes are putting the pieces back together. Dan and Margaret O'Quinn, owners of Still Creek, are year-round surrogate parents to boys who come from various dysfunctional home atmospheres. Several were abandoned and have neither a father nor a mother.

The ranch, located 20 minutes outside of Bryan-College Station, has room for a total of 18 boys and remains full 95 percent of the time, Margaret said.

Still Creek boys are taught the manners of old-fashioned America through church, school and various activities, Margaret said.

"They are taught to stand up when a lady comes into the room, to take off their hats in public, to tuck in their shirts, to say 'yes ma'am' and 'no ma'am,' to bless the food and to pledge the flag," she said.

Ten years before starting Still Creek, the O'Quinns worked at another children's home in Houston that was state funded. There, the couple made a decision to start a home for children who would not be typically accepted to a state-funded home.

"We try to avoid taking kids with emotional problems," Margaret said. "These kids are good kids who have problems with their environments."

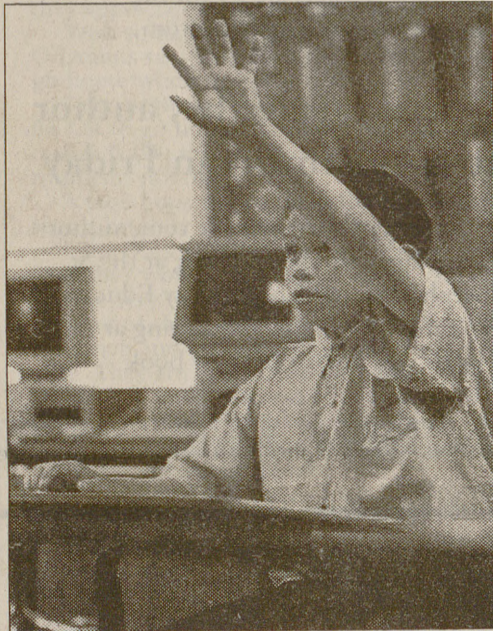
While the O'Quinns were in Houston, the current Still Creek was being operated as a residential treatment facility. This type of facility is geared towards children with emotional problems who need daily counseling.

Because the facility was not prospering as it should, the state had plans to close it down.

The O'Quinns heard about these plans from their daughter, a College Station resident, and offered to take over the ranch with hopes of turning it into their "dream home" for children.

And with each year that passes, they take one step closer to their goal.

Since 1988, the Still Creek Boys Ranch has changed the lives of many unfortunate chil-



Patrick Garcia hopes to be called on during an exercise in his math class at the ranch.

"We have a boy now who, when he first arrived, only wanted to be a gang member," Margaret said. "Now, he just wants to be a goat farmer. Praise God."

The boys range from ages eight to 15, but 18-year-olds, by law, can stay at the home only if they are in separate cottages from the others, she said.

There is a small schoolhouse, two cottages for the boys (younger and older), a home for the O'Quinns and several pastures filled with farm animals the boys raise themselves.

A typical day for the boys is packed with various lessons and responsibilities.

They wake up at 6:30 a.m. and begin working on individually-assigned household chores.

At 8 a.m., they leave their cottages and feed their animals. School begins promptly at 9 a.m. at the schoolhouse in between the two cottages.

The ranch has its own staff of accredited teachers and Aggie volunteers who offer their time as tutors for the boys.

There is a set study hall every evening from 7 to 8 p.m. and following this, the boys are allowed some free time. Bedtime is usually at 9:30 p.m.

The boys are involved in 4-H and have taken home several awards for their pigs, goats and chickens. Along with the rewards, Margaret said, the boys learn important lessons.

Despite their busy schedule at the ranch and in the community, the boys still manage to spend time with various Aggie groups who come to visit such as the Aggie Men's Club, Aggie Sisters for Christ and Pi Beta Phi sorority.

This Sunday, the Aggie Men's Club will sponsor a concert at the Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater at 6 p.m. to benefit the ranch. The concert will bring popular Christian artists Susan Ashton, Wes King and Michael James.

"So many groups are looking for projects," Margaret said. "And we're a project looking for a group."

Because the ranch is not state funded, the O'Quinns and the boys rely entirely on donations for everything — including their most basic needs.

"It is definitely a faith ministry," Margaret said. "No donation is too small."

On average, each boy needs about \$44 dollars a day. This pays for teachers, house parents (caretakers besides the O'Quinns), electric bills and clothing.

"We educate, feed and clothe the children just like they were our own," Margaret said.

The boys raise their own beef and have a garden on the ranch for growing their own vegetables, she said. And local merchants such as Kroger and Appletree, provide the boys with bread, chips, and dairy products. However, they still need help with their medical and dental needs.

See Still Creek/Page 5

WHOOOPSTOCK Unity Fest '94



Festival organizers hope event becomes tradition

By Jennifer Gressett
The Battalion

Did somebody say Woodstock? No, but the idea is the same: music, people, bonding. That's right, it's time for the second annual Unity Fest, also known as Whoopstock.

Sheri Schmidt, a student development specialist in the multiculturalism department, is leading the event, which originated on a whim last year.

"When we heard that the KKK would be coming to campus last year, we decided to find an alternative event to attract students," Schmidt said.

"And it ended up being so much fun that we decided to do it again this year."

Although Schmidt only had two weeks to plan the fest a year ago, she said about 650 students attended. More are expected to attend this year, she said.

Barrett Fromme, RHA's representative for the event, said it was one of those classic April weekends.

"Youth Fun Day and Ring Dance were scheduled for the same weekend, which may have contributed to our low turnout," Fromme said. "Our goal this year is to get more students to attend."

But better turnout isn't the only goal, said Off-Campus Aggie representative Shannon Bayer.

"We really want to create a new Aggie tradition, but we want to change the norm," Bayer said. "By including a variety of talents, we are hoping to create an event that will attract students from a variety of backgrounds."

And variety is what they've got. Entertainment this year will include Karan Chavis, a local artist known for her jazz and R&B talents. Schmidt said Chavis should be a big draw for Whoopstock; this year she will perform with the Big Apple Trio.

Other bands include Direct Connection and The International Music Club, a group made up of international students who will play music from a variety of countries.

Along with the bands, other student groups who will perform include the Aggie Yell Leaders, Fade to Black dance ensemble and the Aggie Wranglers. The Freudian Slip Aggie Improvisational Troop will also entertain between bands.

But something no one should miss, Schmidt said, is the step show. Popular among black fraternities and sororities, this dance is sure to shake the stage, she said.

Unity Fest will be held this Sunday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Simpson Drill Field. An alternative rain site is set for G. Rollie White Coliseum and admission is free.

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