

Tulsa Hills Youth Ranch

Turns Ten Years Old!



A Decade of Growth

It's hard to believe that ten years have passed since we began this incredible journey. What started with just one 17-year-old boy in May of 2014 has now grown into a thriving community where we serve up to 60 youth every week. From humble beginnings to where we are today, it's been a journey of growth, love and dedication - and we want to take a moment to thank YOU for being part of it.

How It All Began



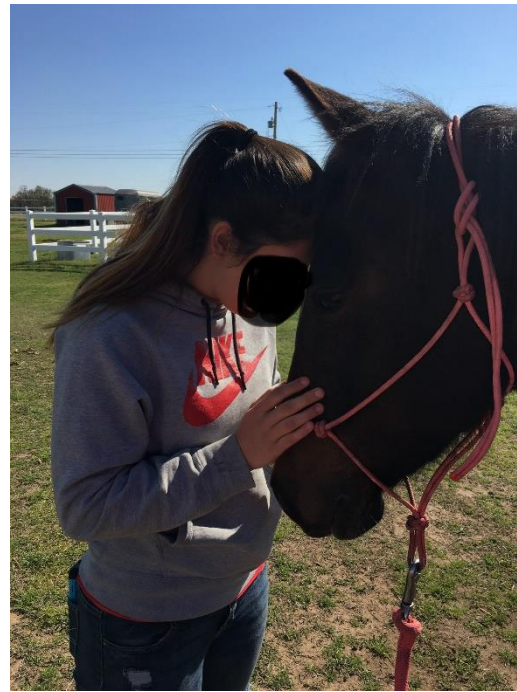
When we started this journey, there were only a few of us. To be honest, we had no idea what we were doing. Once we decided to begin, Kyle, Tricia, Jessie, Mike and I attended a training at a very established youth ranch in Oregon, named Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, where Mike and I embarrassed us all by asking, “what’s a farrier?” (To those like us at the time, that would be the person who tends to the horses' hooves). I believe these pioneers had very little faith that we would even last a year!

At the time, Tulsa Hills Youth Ranch consisted of 20 acres, an empty pond, a dilapidated barn and a handful of passionate, nervous people who believed that something better could be created for the youth in our community who had experienced trauma. Or “children from hard places” as one of my personal heroes, Dr Karyn Purvis, would say. The task felt daunting, and the road ahead uncertain, but we were driven by the possibility of making a real difference.

In those early days, it was all about taking one step at a time. Securing our 501(c)3 status gave us the legitimacy and structure we needed to grow. We were then blessed to assemble an amazing board, Chris Boyett, Kathleen Bedore and Sara Fox, who each brought a unique

perspective and set of skills that continue to provide the ranch vision and guidance to this day. At that time, we also had a growing community of hearts and hands joining ours in service, as well as monetary and physical gifts. The ranch soon transformed into a sanctuary; a safe place of healing, a place to form connections, and a place where a sense of hope was felt. And this was not just true for our youth and guardians, but surprisingly for us as well!

What You've Helped Build



Today we are not just a handful of people, we're a thriving community of volunteers, donors and supporters with up to 80 volunteers a week. That's 80 passionate individuals who show up week after week, to mentor the children, foreman a session, work with the horses, or care for the ranch property. Each of the volunteers who work with the children attends training on the approach we use called Trust Based Relational Intervention. This approach has proven to be very successful across the nation regarding working with children from trauma. All these things together create a beautiful environment that is safe and feels calming for our youth and horses.

This environment has changed significantly since our humble beginning. Our empty pond is now a ¾ acre stocked pond where youth and mentors can enjoy fishing together, along with a fishing shed which holds the necessary supplies. In place of the unsafe, dilapidated barn now stands a sound, temperature controlled, multipurpose barn offering a variety of activities for youth and mentors, as well as a place to host various volunteer groups. In addition, we have 10 gardens beds that the youth help maintain, a greenhouse to facilitate the gardening, and a beautiful firepit for gathering, smore's making, and the occasional guitar led sing-a-long. All of this sits on the original 20 acres which is now beautifully maintained by and is home to our executive director and communications director, Kyle and Tricia Livingston, who oversee the day-to-day operations on the ranch. They have a huge job, and we can't imagine anyone more perfectly fit to be the daily presence on the ranch. For those of you who have been warmly welcomed by them or worked alongside them, I'm sure you agree!

This property is also home to our eight horses and miniature donkey who participate in ranch sessions and add their own special meaning to the experience. The horses are included in sessions thanks to an incredible team of twenty plus volunteers who are led by two women, Sara Fox and Melissa O'Sullivan, who have been with us since the beginning. Their passion for these horses and children is truly inspiring.

To all of you – whether you've been here from day one or have joined along the way – we cannot thank you enough! Because of you, Tulsa Hills Youth Ranch is now a place where hundreds of youth have experienced a sense of belonging, a feeling most of them have never known. Your commitment, time and resources have transformed the ranch into a safe haven where these kids, who have been living in fear, can finally take a deep breath and allow their traumatized brains to begin the healing process.

We've seen so many amazing stories unfold – young people who arrive unsure of themselves and leave with a newfound sense of hope. From our very first day with that one boy in May of 2014 to now serving a community of kids, we've grown beyond what we could have ever imagined.



Looking Ahead

As we look to the next decade, we are filled with excitement and optimism for all that's to come. The foundation we've built together is strong and we are committed to continuing to grow and serve more youth in the years ahead.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey. Whether you've donated, volunteered, or simply spread the word about Tulsa Hills Youth Ranch, you've played a huge role in the positive changes we've seen. We're so grateful for your continued support, and we look forward to the amazing things we will accomplish together in the next ten years!

Here's to another decade of growth, healing and transformation for us all. We couldn't do it without you!

In love and gratitude,

Mike and Donna Freeman, Co-Founders

