“Spring Lake Ranch was the first place where positive thoughts began to come back into my life ...”

Spring Lake Ranch

A small therapeutic work community in the Green Mountains of Vermont
Spring Lake Ranch was founded in 1932 and has been offering a healing community for individuals with psychiatric and substance abuse problems ever since. Our core belief has always been that the process of healing and recovery can best take place in a setting that is supportive, respectful, and yet does not treat people as patients or cases.

Everyone who comes to Spring Lake has some essential strength that he or she can contribute to a working community. In taking an active role in the work and life of the community, a sense of self and of accomplishment, sometimes forgotten during what has typically been a long course of illness, can be regained. Combined with this community-centered approach is the use of advances in pharmacology and individual therapy when it is indicated.

Residents at Spring Lake, men and women over the age of 17, have typically been recently hospitalized, but many are also coming from home or school situations. They are struggling, but not in need of hospitalization. No one at Spring Lake is constantly supervised, so each resident has to be able to safely live with that amount of independence. Spring Lake is not appropriate for people who are acutely psychotic, suicidal, or violent.

While residents and their families frequently make their own referrals to Spring Lake, referrals are also made by psychiatrists, therapists, and educational consultants. Residents come from all over the United States and from abroad. There is not a defined length of stay. A common range is six to eight months, and many residents go on to the Spring Lake Aftercare Program.
after all.” — A Resident
The residential program at Spring Lake is set on a beautiful farm of over 500 acres. In a working community such as this, our gardens, animals, barns, repair shops, sugar house, and green house are always in view. Housing for residents, staff, and their families is clustered near the original farmhouse, creating a village atmosphere. The farmhouse, now known as our Main House, contains the common dining room, kitchens, offices, and meeting space. Recreational facilities include a new gymnasium with space for basketball and volleyball as well as exercise equipment. There is also a pottery studio and a tennis court.

Spring Lake is one of the most beautiful and unspoiled lakes in Vermont. We use it for swimming, fishing, boating, and, in the winter, ice cutting. Ice cutting was once a typical winter activity in Vermont; we now do it to preserve the skills and the connection with the history of our place. Open fields, woodland trails, and old logging roads are ideal for hikers, cross-country skiers, and joggers.
Personal growth and healing can begin with the effort to share oneself in spite of illness or distress. When sharing a simple rural life, a sense of belonging develops from which trust, self-esteem, and growth are natural consequences. The interaction that occurs each day during work, play, and leisure provides repeated opportunities for learning how to deal with illness in a positive and creative way. It gives residents the chance to recognize limits, establish priorities, and assess values—all in relationship to others who are doing the same.

The courage and motivation needed to risk change and face the future emerge as one’s commitment to the community increases. Gradually, a sense of meaning and purpose in life begins to return. The effort to come to grips with serious mental illness and addiction is difficult and challenging work. In addition to a supportive community, we provide a team of experienced advisors who work closely with the resident at each stage of this process.

Our advising staff includes social workers, a nurse, and counselors—positions that anyone who has been involved in treatment will recognize. An unusual aspect of our advising staff is that it also includes our farmer, work program leaders, our development coordinator, and other staff. At any given time, we will employ staff who had been residents at Spring Lake in the past, and can bring a unique perspective and strength to the healing process at Spring Lake.

“After her stay at Spring Lake Ranch, my daughter came back to New Mexico a new woman, with a renewed confidence and self-esteem that I had not seen in years. The light had returned to her eyes, and she was able to find joy and value in her life.” —A Parent
Work and Leisure

The core of the day-to-day life is the work program. Many who come to Spring Lake have lost both the spirit and the stamina needed for work. It is clear from research, and from most of our individual lives, that work is a critical piece of recovery and, in fact, of any successful life. Working together provides the opportunity to regain strength and enthusiasm and for coping with the kinds of problems found in every work situation.

The work program occupies five hours a day, five days each week. The work we do reflects the ongoing needs of the community. Depending on the season, haying, forestry, maple sugaring, gardening, or ice cutting is in progress. Always in season is the production of meals or the creation of a new quilt that depicts life on our farm. The farm animals require attention, no matter the season.

The power of this work centers on its clear value. The wood that is harvested heats the Main House all winter. The gardens produce much of our food. The syrup is not only served on our pancakes, but also sold to raise scholarship funds. There is reason to take pride in this work and to realize its rewards.

It is much easier to make friends and to focus on what one can do rather than what one can’t when working together on a common task. What we do yields tangible results as well as a sense of purpose and ownership.

While we challenge residents to try new things and to take new risks, we also work closely to find work at which they can succeed. That is why our work includes a variety of indoor and outdoor options for a range of physical abilities and interests.

Equally important is the opportunity for growth afforded by recreation, play, and leisure time. Along with our recreation coordinator, organized activities are frequently planned by resident groups. Trips to movies, shops, concerts, plays, and athletic events are routine. Residents regularly enjoy pottery, yoga, folk and contradancing, hiking, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, swimming, boating, and camping.

Learning to use and enjoy unstructured time is a priceless asset for those who have been isolated by mental illness.

“The Ranch creates an environment where residents can feel accomplishment on a day-to-day basis.” —A Resident
## Schedule

### Typical Weekday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Community meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>Meet with advising team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>Review meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Recreation, chores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AA, NA meetings for some;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recreation and unstructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Main House closes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The schedule will vary for individuals when the psychiatrist is here or for other medical appointments, volunteer opportunities, and so on. There will also be chances for activities that can include the entire community, like a festival or a canoe trip.
More than sixty people live at Spring Lake. Half are clients, or residents as they are known here, and the other half, staff and their families. The long-term staff at Spring Lake are experienced people who represent the differences found in life—in age, education, marital status, accomplishment, thinking, and belief. Among this group there are likely to be people with whom a resident can identify as a role model or kindred spirit.

Families, some with children, and single people of all ages make Spring Lake their home for a period of their lives. Returning Peace Corps volunteers, Americorps volunteers, and college students or recent graduates are key members of the staff. Often volunteers come from abroad for short stays because of their interest in Spring Lake as a unique form of treatment. Backgrounds of staff can include education, farming, carpentry, business, social work, nursing, and the arts.

The core members of the staff have been here many years. Through experience, education, and training, they have acquired a thorough knowledge and understanding of the illnesses and problems of the residents who come to Spring Lake.

The community aspect of life at Spring Lake is often most visible at meals. Staff children and guests in the dining room add a welcoming feel that is not often found in settings that most residents have experienced.
Our consulting psychiatrist is at Spring Lake Ranch one full day each week, and there is twenty-four hour on-call psychiatric coverage. Along with the psychiatrist, our psychiatric nurse, resident coordinators, and advisors work closely with residents to help them manage and treat their illness. The resident is always an active participant. When it is appropriate and desired, individual therapy will be arranged.

The advising teams work so closely and regularly with each resident, that our psychiatrist gets the benefit of much more information than could ever be generated in a brief office visit.

A full range of medical services is available in nearby Rutland. Residents are frequently transported to Rutland appointments. Should a psychiatric hospitalization be required, the local hospital does have a unit for short stays.

“Being part of a vital and independent community is the most important therapeutic element of Spring Lake Ranch. In the Work Program and small house living arrangements lie the social meaning that give all people a sense of belonging and satisfaction of participation”

—Former Spring Lake Ranch Psychiatrist
The concept of working together as a team extends through each resident’s entire stay at Spring Lake. Through this approach, residents learn to recognize and understand the symptoms related to their illness and how those symptoms can be managed. Over time, they are able to reduce the impact of the illness on their lives.

Residents participate in the development of their action plans and in their own record keeping. They are involved in the decisions about the most effective course of treatment. In regular meetings, they establish personal goals and modify their daily program to assist in reaching those goals. The more effective the treatment, the more likely residents will be able to use the Spring Lake experience to realize their dreams for a richer life.

We maintain close contact with families. Families are viewed as an indispensable part of the team approach to developing realistic and achievable goals.

Residents are always encouraged to be active participants in their own course of treatment as well as in the general community. One approach is to address many aspects of community life through a New England town meeting format. Practical and philosophical issues about Spring Lake can be acted on through this democratic process. This is another way of enabling residents to change their focus from psychiatric illness to the primary goal of living productively.
“Having had a couple of years away from the Ranch working as a provider in various settings, I am more than ever convinced that Spring Lake Ranch occupies an important niche in the world of mental health care institutions.” —Former Staff
Spring Lake Aftercare offers a range of living and support options for people who have progressed through the residential program. The core philosophy is the same. The difference is that the residents have moved on to a much higher level of independence.

Aftercare staff start working with residents as they begin the transition to Aftercare and while they are still living at Spring Lake. They might be preparing to move to our own group home, our supported apartments, or to a completely independent living situation. The Aftercare housing options are located in Rutland and are convenient to transportation as well as to shopping and services.

The Aftercare staff work as case managers and assist clients with daily issues, like grocery shopping and cleaning, to more complex things, like selecting a college course and finding employment or a volunteer position. The Aftercare program provides a social net so that clients don’t move from the bustling atmosphere at Spring Lake to an isolated apartment.

Aftercare clients continue to address the issues that originally brought them to Spring Lake. This might involve an ongoing connection with a therapist or participation in AA and NA. Many participate in vocational training or return to academic classes. Others work or volunteer. Aftercare operates a hot lunch program in the local elementary school to provide work opportunities, and we employ some Aftercare clients in food-prep positions at Spring Lake. These jobs are intended to provide a more realistic employment situation than the Spring Lake work program.

For some Aftercare clients the work program at Spring Lake continues to provide daily structure. They are transported to Spring Lake for a full day, and then return to their own homes in the afternoon. Others call on Spring Lake for much more limited services. This could be simply continuing to use our psychiatrist and checking in with a case manager.

“I want to thank you and all your staff at Spring Lake for your efforts with my son. You have the best program I’ve seen, and I’ve seen a lot.” —A Parent
An important aspect of the Aftercare work is to provide crisis intervention and help in using local agencies and area resources. Timely intervention can prevent a rehospitalization and the setbacks that can come with that.

Aftercare has its own complement of staff. They work to keep the Aftercare services and the residential program integrated, but their time is dedicated to Aftercare. The Spring Lake psychiatrist also covers the Aftercare Program, so there is no need to change doctors, a sometimes difficult and stressful event.

Spring Lake remains an important focal point for many Aftercare clients. They frequently join in holidays and special events at the Ranch. There have been Aftercare and Ranch teams that have competed against each other in local recreation leagues. The Spring Lake community does not end at the physical boundaries of the farm. It continues to welcome and include those in Aftercare.

“For the past four years I’ve been working full-time at a job I enjoy. Often, when I’m presented with a project at work or at home that seems too big or complicated to be manageable, I think: How would they approach this at the Ranch? My experience at Spring Lake Ranch remains with me, and I am very glad that it was a part of my life’s path.” —A Resident
Application
If you are interested in finding out more about Spring Lake, a telephone call from you, your family, or a referring source will initiate your referral. Call 802-492-3322 and ask for Admissions.

A formal application will involve the forwarding of records and a twenty-four hour visit to Spring Lake. Detailed information about this will be provided by the Admissions Office.

Costs
The fee stated in the accompanying letter is payable in advance and includes private room and board, program expense, and psychiatric coverage. The fee does not include medication, any necessary medical or dental expenses, or personal expenses. All residents are required to have medical insurance prior to admission.

Some insurance will cover Spring Lake, but this changes all the time. In some cases, a school district or other agency will pay for Spring Lake. We will try to assist you with inquiries. If a stay is to be covered by insurance or another agency, Spring Lake will need to receive approval from the insurance company or agency prior to admission.

License and Affiliations
Spring Lake is licensed by the State of Vermont as a Therapeutic Community Residence. Spring Lake is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation.

Affiliations include the American Residential Treatment Association and the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs.

Travel
Spring Lake is located in Cuttingsville, Vermont, a small village on State Route 103, eleven miles southeast of Rutland. Driving time from New York City is about 5½ hours, and from Boston, 3½ hours.

Vermont Transit, Greyhound Bus Lines, and Amtrak provide service to Rutland. A commuter airline flies directly to Rutland Airport, 10 minutes from Spring Lake. Larger airports are Albany, NY (2 hours away) and Burlington, Vermont (2 hours away).
“I look back on my stay at the Ranch as a time when hope was beginning to come back into my life. Working hard focused my mind on something other than my problems. The care and concern I received from the staff was very healing.” — Resident