Michael and Phyllis Wells

On this 85th anniversary of the founding of the Ranch, perhaps we should pause a moment to acknowledge a miracle: that it survived its humble beginnings in an old, sagging farmhouse without a phone, central heating, electricity, dependable running water and a perfectly terrible road, to what we see today: a beautiful campus, many comfortable buildings, healthy gardens and livestock, a spectacular road, and an impressive record of helping thousands of Ranchers regain satisfying and independent lives.

My parents persisted through the hardest parts and, with enormous help from staff, residents, trustees and members, must have been greatly gratified by this amazing transformation. They retired in 1960.

Since then, Michael and Phyllis Wells have been the Ranch’s most consistent, steadying influence. Michael arrived from England, Phyllis from New York. Their decision to marry, have a family and live out their lives here was a key to the survival of the Ranch through challenging and sometimes turbulent times. Michael was Ranch Director longer than my father, and served as trustee for many years. Phyllis ably filled staff and trustee roles for many decades, and she and Michael raised three delightful children.

They offered counsel to subsequent directors, staff, and former and current residents who needed a guiding hand. Their deep understanding of and commitment to Ranch values have helped generations of members of our community. Their gifts of wisdom, generosity and humor are appreciated by all.

THANK YOU, MICHAEL AND PHYLLIS!
Dear Friends:

As many of you live at a distance and have busy lives, we hope this annual report will help keep you connected to the Ranch. The pictures and information are but small indicators of the daily activities and people who bring the Ranch to life every year.

Right now we are saying goodbye to summer as the bounty of the garden is harvested, hay for the animals is stored, and the new Lake-house nears completion. All of these projects are important individually, but we never lose sight of why they are meaningful, namely, as effective agents in the emotional and physical comfort and growth of those whom we serve.

Much as the seasons of the year change so do the seasons of the Ranch. The founding values from decades ago still remain, however, these values may be expressed and applied in some different and less obvious ways. The primary reason for these changes is that today’s Ranchers come to us having had minimal to no hospitalization and increasingly complex conditions. This is quite different from an earlier time and has prompted us to examine our vision of the future.

Whatever directional changes we make, one area of continuing and great importance to the Ranch is your generous support of the Sarcka Scholarship Fund. Your contribution enables us to extend the opportunity for our unique approach to care to an increased number of applicants.

With great appreciation for your support.

Lynn J. Pilcher
Executive Director

Linda Berryhill
Board Chair

Jim Alic
Board Vice Chair

Photos throughout by Lynn Pilcher, Julia Kesselman and Lana Vanucchi
I came to Spring Lake Ranch as a resident in March 2003, following a period of severe depression and drug and alcohol abuse, culminating in a suicide attempt by overdose. I was 21 at the time, and my attempts to break free from mental illness through rebellion from the white suburban culture I had seen as its cause had left me physically and spiritually broken – strapped to a gurney, getting my stomach pumped.

When I arrived at the Ranch, nestled in the Green Mountains, I remember the snow was hip deep, but we wore t-shirts collecting sap in the warm sun, lugging 5 gallon buckets. Coming from two weeks in a psych ward, it was almost a shock to be immersed in that much sensation: to feel my body as substantial in a rich, lived environment, as an interdependent element of so much space and beauty – snow, sun, trees, fur, mountains. The fire at the sugarhouse was an inferno to match my emotions, and stoking felt like tapping into a simple but powerful metaphor of internal alchemy – using heat to transform, to refine 40 gallons of pure weight into something sweet.

In the year I worked the program at Spring Lake Ranch, I learned to act as part of a team: to cede the reins of control to the group, and to the wondrous vicissitudes of work program, while still bringing the best of myself; to focus on the task at hand and still retain some perspective and humor; to tolerate the internal moods, anxieties and fears that had been too loud to allow me to listen to the people around me; to de-mystify the abstract space in my head by working with my hands; to balance my endeavors in art and music with the “mundane” demands of work and chores. The Ranch offered a space where I could create new “grooves” in my thinking, and a lived experience of bodily solidity I could refer myself to later on: connected with senses and environment, able to sleep at night, eating at regular intervals. Those foundational elements I always seem to devalue, the Ranch gave me an experiential reference point to come back to.

I took these things with me when I went back to school and earned a degree in Theater Performance, worked freelance in theater as everything from actor to electrician to stage manager, earned an MFA in playwriting from Brown University in 2012. Whether performing or writing plays or hanging lights, I discovered that I thrived in situations that demanded collaboration and reveled in process. The practice of working with a group to navigate an uncertain set of tasks was an architecture I had come to rely on: a deeply valued tool that I could take with me when collaborating with the committee in my head to navigate this deeply uncertain world.
In January 2017, at 35 and more than a decade since I was a resident, I rejoined the Ranch community as a House Advisor. In the past several months I’ve been struck time and again by the sometimes hidden, often messy and contentious, defiantly hopeful work toward individual healing being done in this place. I feel as though I’m seeing the collaboration happening “backstage” and it mirrors the collaboration that I have in my own head, which mirrors the collaboration happening on each resident advisory team. Each body functions in similar ways as it tries to negotiate with itself: hopes for great things, complains it shouldn’t be this difficult, gets defensive, loses its temper, processes trauma, reminds everyone we’re all on the same team, apologizes, desires to be better, learns from its mistakes, steps up its game.

It reminds me that my favorite part about collaboration, what gets me in the deep soul gut feet-in-the-dirt level, is that it takes something that can seem fragmented, even seemingly dysfunctional, and turns it into a thing of grace. Or it can, at its best, and I honestly think that’s what the Ranch is striving for, individually and collectively, every day. It’s an honor to be a part of that striving, that daily reminder that I am more than the sum of my parts, and so is everything else, and that can be terrifying, and also utterly beautiful.
Farm Crew
It’s been a great year for the Farm. As always, the focus on care of animals offers something very special. This year, we were able to card all of our wool and even to spin a little of it at Carl’s weekly Tuesday Afternoon Art and Crafts gathering. Our Hay Harvest was roughly double what it was the year before, up around the 4500 bale mark! This can be attributed to excellent management by Carl, including seeding and spreading of manure, as well as the gift of weather and some daring choices to squeeze in a hay cut between the frequent rainstorms early this summer. As always, bringing in the hay was an all-Ranch activity that brought us all together. Our amazing summer Farm Assistant, Phil, was a huge help both in preparing the hay crop for collection and in maintaining and upgrading our Farm Equipment. Improvements in fencing resulted in a new and unbreakable record of zero escapes this summer. Bo Vinci’s excellent bloodline is being preserved by holding back several of his daughters as brooders, with the intention of producing 12 calves next year to better meet the needs of the Ranch kitchen. We’ve also seen a moderate increase in pork production and a significant increase in egg production.

Our hard-working steed.

Great egg-spectations.
Woods Crew
For those who love physical accomplishment and camaraderie with a dash of humor and a strong artistic flare, nothing beats Woods Crew. The new Woods Crew warming hut, built and set in place by Shop Crew, was named “HOHN” by the crew, said to mean “Heart of Humans in Nature” or “Hill of Hard kNocks.” The Woods Crew works in conjunction with our forester and with professional logging jobs to proactively manage our 500 plus acres of forest land. This allows us to harvest firewood while performing timber stand improvement work, which would not be financially viable for another large forestland owner. This year, Doug and his crews finished cutting, splitting and stacking the trees that were designated for cutting in Area 5 and also to work up a small triangle of wood as requested by the forester in Area 14. In addition to producing firewood, they also cut, skidded, and helped mill some hardwood and hemlock logs of a size and quality to be made into lumber for future furniture and building projects. They also cut and split an unprecedented amount of Sugar Wood, thanks to the generosity of our neighbor Francis Wyatt, a former House Advisor who is building a house on a former Sarcka Parcel up on Button Hill Rd.

Spring is Sugaring time, with Woods Crew pulling the whole community together to produce 560 gallons of our favorite liquid gold. In summer, the crew maintained the flower gardens that adorn our campus, repaired some Woods Roads, recleared and remarked our ski trails, mowed the grass that just wouldn’t stop growing, planted and transplanted wildflowers in some of our wilder areas on the margins of the landscaped areas.

Gardens Crew
Our Gardens Crew does so much more than Gardening! In addition to producing and sometimes preserving healthy and delicious veggies and fruit for our table, Gardens
Crew, headed up by Lisa, offers a strong dose of sociability and connectedness. In winter, the focus is on creativity, mostly weaving and sewing projects. Ranchers experience the pride of making something that is beautiful and useful. Something very special happens as they pass on their newly acquired skills to others.

Gardens Crew also focuses on kitchen work, making snacks from existing recipes and creating new ones, producing granola and pesto for our table and for market, and helping prep items for the main kitchen. Our Maple Granola is legitimately the best in the world. Their contribution to organizing and embellishing our holidays offers Ranchers an opportunity to feel ownership for an occasion that can be wonderful or challenging. Gardens Crew also organizes our stand at the Rutland Farmers’ Market, which brought in significantly more money than projected this year for the SLR Financial Aid Program. This experience offers challenges and opportunities.

Shop Crew
The new Lakehouse has been the focus for Shop this year. The old building, built in approximately 1960 from used materials, had deteriorated to the point where it was no longer suited to the mood and beauty of
Spring Lake. In honor of founder Elizabeth Sarcka, the heart and soul and connecting tissue of the Ranch for so many years, a fundraising effort provided all the materials needed for the project. Crews, under the skillful, thoughtful and empathic guidance of Ray, gained carpentry, leadership, and problem-solving skills as they built a model of the building as designed by John Berryhill, and then the actual structure. Trees cut around the periphery of the new structure were milled up for lumber. Some of that lumber will be used in the building; the rest has been stacked up to dry for future projects. The structure is not yet completed as of this writing, but we hope to complete it before the snows fly. Well, the serious snows, anyway. In addition to this project, Shop has produced some amazing furniture, including a prototype for new dining room chairs, designed and executed by a Rancher. They also created a “tiny house” for woods crew, countless smaller projects, and a sense of camaraderie and accomplishment.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Lakehouse fundraising effort. We exceeded our original goal of $25,000, raising $38,383. The additional funds will allow us to do much needed dock repair, purchase boating equipment, and provide maintenance for many years to come.
Some highlights of the year included expanding coverage and offering more client support in the evenings and on weekends through our Program Support Coordinators. These positions, in addition to our Case Managers, helped us to be able to offer more individualized and group activity in recreation, assistance in attending recovery meetings, and doing fun projects like soap making, especially in the evenings and on weekends.

A highpoint this year were the many projects completed at the Townhouse, including sanding and refurbishing of several apartments. The client maintenance crew, although small, has done an excellent job at keeping the building clean and presentable. Turnover in the Townhouse is more frequent than in years past, which involves a lot of cleaning and preparing for new tenants.

The boat building crew completed a first stand up paddleboard, which was successfully launched on Spring Lake this summer. Art therapy is provided to individuals as requested through our arrangement with local art therapist, Marietta Yeager. After nearly 10 years, Lynn Reardon retired from facilitating our Dual Diagnosis group. We miss her and we were happy to welcome Sam Hollander to ably step in following her departure.

Our first Rancher-built stand up paddleboard.

Adrift on a swan.
Art heals the artist and the viewer.

Our clients benefitted from group offerings including boat building, hearing voices, dual diagnosis, focus group, and a new one, forest bathing. With the certification of Diane Northrop as our Employment Specialist, we look forward to increasing the opportunities for work, both paid and volunteer.

And finally, Rutland Program hosted many summer BBQ luncheons on the porch of the Townhouse. We were pleased to have current and former clients, families, Trustees and Members join us, which enriched our gatherings.
170 rogue white and 10 red lettuces from 2016 came up
(yes, they tasted as good the 2nd year)

1 first time ever paddle for first ever stand up paddle board made

42 free plants dug up from Marietta’s (Art Therapist)

1 lovely stray cat adopted and made a home at the townhouse, while 2 others made many visits

1 lovely stray brought for vet care and adoption

4 sheets of plywood, 2 gallons of epoxy resin and hardener, 36 ft of fiberglass cloth, sand paper, 5 hours of planing and sanding, 12 pre-cut internal supports, 2 non-skid pads, 20 ft of copper wire, 20 wood screws, 14 ft of 1x4 pine, 10 hours to trace, cut and plane plywood top, bottom and sides, and lots of labor to build our 1st paddle board.

4 gallons of paint for the townhouse porch

4 Rutland Program lunch time barbecues for clients and staff

40 weekly cooking groups

7 clients got jobs

16 transitions to Royce in the last year

1 chair broke under a staff person. 3 chairs were repaired; 1 chair was replaced.

78 walnuts have pelted the roof of the glass house so far. Make that 579 – no, 580….
Where Resident Came From
- Hospital: 53%
- Home: 27%
- Rehab: 8%
- Educational Consultant: 8%
- Other Program: 2%

Resident Age
- 50+: 24%
- 40-49: 11%
- 30-39: 7%
- 21-29: 11%
- 18-20: 5%

Where Residents Discharged To
- Other: 7%
- Discharged AMA: 8%
- Higher Level of Care: 11%
- Home/School: 21%
- Rutland Program: 51%

Length of Stay
- 12+ Months: 42%
- 10-12 Months: 14%
- 7-9 Months: 7%
- 4-6 Months: 5%
- 1-3 Months: 8%
- < 1 month: 5%

Our outreach team.
BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT

Revenues*
- Fees: $3,079,419
- Financial Aid: $738,199
- Investment Grant: $78,100
- Development Grant: $100,000
- Washington St. Rent: $48,802
- Other: $121,568
**TOTAL: $4,166,088**

Contributed Income*
- Annual Individual Giving
- Program Income
- Capital Gifts
- Spear Fund Grant
- Other
**TOTAL: $412,536**

Expenses*
- Compensation: $2,853,779
- Administration: $385,331
- Physical Plant: $278,222
- Program: $405,420
- Dining & Other: $154,815
**TOTAL: $4,077,567**

* Unaudited
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Spring Lake Ranch is grateful for these gifts received between September 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017.

If your name does not appear, is misspelled, or listed incorrectly, please accept our apologies and bring the error to our attention by calling Rachel Stark at (802) 492-3322.
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Relaxing on the porch.

It’s creemee time!

Fresh air works wonders.
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Best buddies. Sharing music.
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Down-home music.

A bountiful harvest.
Spring Lake Ranch Therapeutic Community supports and empowers people with mental health and substance abuse issues by providing opportunities to grow and thrive. Through shared experience, meaningful work and active participation in an accepting, diverse community, we help each person develop the confidence and skills to recover.