Theories on why the terrorist group ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria have been tossed around by those in our political system as well as those on the periphery. Alissa Johannsen Rubin is a celebrated journalist who has an acclaimed career in reporting on geopolitical issues and, most recently, on the emergence of the pseudo-state ISIS. Alissa is currently the Paris Bureau Chief for the New York Times. She spoke at the Shrewsbury Meeting House in Shrewsbury VT, on August 6 to a packed house of concerned citizens. Alissa skillfully fielded questions posed by the audience, which at times became quite heated.

The audience came to realize that ISIS and possibly fundamentalist Islam as a whole can firstly be attributed to the colonization of the Middle East. According to Rubin, in the early 20th century, the French and the British divided up their colonial possessions and created borders for new nations with complete disregard for historical animosities between indigenous groups and profound religious differences. Resentment of colonialism and its effects still linger among the peoples of the Middle East. Furthermore, a general distaste for foreigners has been fostered both by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and US incursions in both the First and Second Gulf Wars. Religious hatred was spurred when Sadham Hussein was overthrown and the Shia majority was given power in Iraq, much to the dismay of the Sunni minority. Ex Baathists alongside Sunni fundamentalist created a new coalition of insurgents in Iraq, many of whom crossed the border into Syria. With the outbreak of the Arab Spring, an anti-regime movement that occurred across the Arab world, this new alliance was poised at annihilating Syria’s slowly crumbling Assad regime. In the midst of chaos, ISIS’s emergence became the paramount issue on the world stage.

With such fiery subject matter, Alissa Johannsen Rubin did a brilliant job at eloquently presenting this information in a logical and ingenious manner. As a trustee of Spring Lake Ranch, it is with great pride that we applaud Alissa for coming back to Vermont and delivering this dynamic and vital talk.
Yoga, as it is practiced today, has become a very physical practice, conjuring up images of individuals placing their legs behind their head or contorting the spine in circus-like positions. Yoga, in its entirety is so much more than just a physical exercise. It is a practical and spiritual science of unifying the body, mind and spirit through the use of not only physical postures, but also incorporating nutrition and cleansing techniques, breathing exercises, meditation techniques, service work, prayer (to a chosen deity), study of religious and spiritual texts, self-examination (journaling, art, music, etc…), and for myself, includes anything that can be used to deepen your connection to and acceptance of yourself, Life, and the Divine. This can all begin to sound like a lot of hocus-pocus mumbo-jumbo (and I’d be the first person to tell you in the beginning I thought so too), but used in a consistent, safe, and intelligent way Yoga practice can offer the practitioner a safe inner space of retreat, a place to test ourselves, and can create an attitude of receptivity towards all that we are and experience. In the words of Sharon Gannon, co-founder of Jivamukti Yoga, “You cannot do Yoga. Yoga is your natural state. What you can do are yoga exercises, which may reveal to you where you are resisting your natural state.”

Yoga has many different flavors. For some it is heated and powerful, for others it is traditional and lineage based, for others still, it is eclectic and mix matched, and for those of us dealing with emotional/mental/or physical struggles it can be very therapeutic and healing. There is something for everyone. I believe within the environment at Spring Lake Ranch exists the perfect conditions (solitude, natural setting, etc..) for Yoga to be explored therapeutically and applied to the individual’s struggle through metaphor, yoga techniques, and getting back in touch with the body. One important thing it creates is a safe environment where exploration, making mistakes, and asking questions are encouraged. It’s never about getting something ‘right’ but more importantly the presence...
and spirit we bring to what we’re doing. Once that space has been created residents are then able to explore body movements that can be comfortable, relaxing, strengthening, strenuous, boring, artful, playful, endurance building, complex, etc…. In this way I like to relate each pose to a situation in life. In life, we will encounter all of these various feelings in our interactions with relationships, jobs, school etc… And in each physical posture I ask what quality of mind they are bringing to the table? How are they breathing? Is there a connection between the two? Do they desperately want to get out of it? Or do they desperately want to stay there? Metaphorically, each of these little moments within the pose can be a mirror for our experiences in life and through this practice we can begin to learn ways to release tension in a difficult space or interaction, find our inner resolve or deep relaxation, or simply let it be and breathe. On top of this, there are many physical and mental benefits to practicing Yoga postures: it boosts immune function, increases circulation, strengthens and tones muscle, increases focus, lowers stress levels, induces the Relaxation Response, eases anxiety, supports healthy digestion, can ease chronic pain, raises confidence and self-esteem, aids in a healthy body image, and much more. (This is sometimes dependent on the type and style of Yoga you’re practicing). It also shows the practitioner how intricately connected the body, mind, and spirit already is and begins to dissolve the barriers that have been built up to create the illusion of separation.

There was one resident in particular who recently transitioned from the Ranch that was coming regularly to the classes. He would come twice a week and at first he was a little apprehensive.

After the first class though, there was a noticeable difference in his mood and energy levels and he seemed so relaxed but focused. He had the same look I see on many people’s faces after a class when I know they ‘got it’. That blank yet focused stare off into the distance. He continued coming after that until he transitioned. After class I will sometimes stay and talk about some of the ideas mentioned in class and relate them to life, showing how to apply what we learned in practical ways. He was very receptive to the ideas we talked about and I could see him incorporating them into his daily routine. In a very short time, two months or so, he began to find a little sanctuary on his little piece of rubber yoga mat, and
The Rutland Program is happy to announce that we now have 40 clients in our program. Washington Street has all seven apartments rented and a sweet community has emerged – clients hang out together, cook BBQ’s, attend meetings, dog and cat sit, etc. We have a new addition to our Townhouse, a lovely rescue dog, Stan. Stan was adopted by one of the clients.

Royce Street is supporting eight clients, seven men and one woman. Although this is exciting, it comes with challenges: how do we fit everyone around the kitchen table for meals when the table’s already been extended and turned caddy-corner? Do we take shifts? Would a bigger table even fit? Should we split up and use the mini-kitchen? Do we add another folding table in the living room like when my family was overflowing with relatives for the holiday? How do we make enough room in the TV room for clients to watch a show or movie? We take many of these things for granted in our daily lives, yet at Royce, these issues are rather complex. Staff is doing a great job working within the constraints of our tighter spacing, but are open to the creative ideas of others!

We are always brainstorming new ways of creating space and programming for our clients. As of September, we plan to create a meditation area in our glass house. In the meantime, please drop by to see the glass house. Mark just refinished the floors and removed old art, so it looks really nice. An art space in the pink room of the basement is also slated for September. We are beginning to ask clients to create a mural on one of the pink walls that will add to the ambiance. In September, we also plan to begin a Writers for Recovery group. Last month, clients and staff were trained in the specific techniques of writing for recovery, so we look forward to giving clients a new healing venue for working on and through recovery issues.

More clients have donated their artwork and pictures for the walls of our conference room and offices. Please come by in September and take a look at their talents. Please also come by any time and drive under our new Washington Street Porte-cochere (car port) – it looks great. As you drive through, notice the gold trim and fancy lighting the hill and our maintenance staff did. The RP maintenance crew has also been busy painting the building so we’re looking pretty spiffy. Also take in the vegetable garden the clients have been growing.

The Rutland Program is grateful for your ongoing support and looks forward to sharing our new developments currently in the planning stages, in the next newsletter.

Lana Vanucchi, Rutland Program Director

Thank you to the over 100 donors who supported the renovation of the Ranch Tennis Court & Recreation Facility, a project that has been put on the backburner for decades!
A road home:
My experience with SLR and beyond
by Sarah

The old adage reads “Seek and ye shall find.” At the point where my life path merged with SLR, I was seeking darkness, however unintentionally and that was what I was bringing into my life. I was a Resident at Spring Lake Ranch’s program in Cuttingsville the summer of 2011. I had a terrible history of addiction, as well as more than one significant mental illness. My time at the Ranch was restorative and grounding, and helped me be ready to start facing the challenges of life, in some ways really for the first time.

At the end of my stay at the Ranch proper, I moved to the Ranch’s Rutland Program, first to the Royce Street supported living house, then to my own apartment. I learned functionality and how to wade through much of my anxiety in a city environment. I found my own next step on finishing the Rutland program in downtown Rutland. There is real community, and the apartment, in what was an old publishing house, was gorgeous and affordable. In short, I moved from being completely cared for to significant independence, successfully.

I see Residents and Staff in town, and the bonds remain inclusive. I was given permission to Volunteer for Aftercare, leading a group that explored a reviving of creativity after a process of getting into treatment, which is sometimes so difficult it thwarts creativity. Also, in my process, creativity was held under a microscope as a marker for mental illness. It took time, support, and work to earn it again, but creativity came back, bringing much greater happiness. Thus, leading the group and facilitating this process for others was a wonderful experience.

I lived so many places when I was sick, thinking places were the problem, but I am moving into my own home in VT this Fall, and, thanks largely to SLR, I have found a niche for myself here. Not everyone stays in the area, instead reconnecting with life in a previous or new environment, but my wonderful process of unfolding has led me to find a home here. I volunteer three places, attend Recovery groups, have sober get togethers, and spend time in much loved nature.

What I came to seek from the core of my being was a healthy life, and with that intention, and a lot of help from the Ranch, that is what has manifested. I still can struggle, and at times things aren’t easy. But, I have made it into the mainstream of functioning, and I finished my experience with the Ranch feeling understood as an adult and a contributing member of my community. I have found wellness, and I have found a home.
What a pleasure it was to interview Vanessa Lane, Clinical Director at Spring Lake Ranch Therapeutic Community. I felt honored to be given 30 minutes with such a valued member of our team. In the following interview you will learn about Vanessa on a holistic level, from the love she has for her herd to the challenges and possibilities of what she does as a clinical director.

PART I: Life Stories and Experiences

Where are you from?
Country of Origin, England; I moved over here about 25 years ago.

What’s your personal philosophy?
I believe a lot in the power of positive thinking and intentionality. I think that our thoughts really shape our emotions. There is a saying, “whether you think you can or can’t, either way you’re right.” If you go into something believing you can do it, you’re much more likely to succeed. I’m a very glass half full kind of person, I really like to and try and see the best of things.

What are you passionate about?
I’m very passionate at varying degrees of understanding the good about connecting with animals and being in a space with animals, allowing them to be true to their species and true to their breed versus looking at them as inanimate objects or humanizing them. I strive to try and give them a voice and be understood and not put my emotions and my beliefs as a human onto them. I think that’s very important and I honestly believe that we need more of that in the world. I think the human species can learn a lot from animals.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?
I met Bill Clinton. He came to my graduation ceremony from Dartmouth. He was tall, huge, and very charming and charismatic. I never would have said that unless I’ve been in his presence.

What did you do before the Ranch?
I worked in Community Mental Health for about 12 years just an hour away from here. I had various different positions in the 12 years that I was there, sort of grew up and came up through the ranks there. I have a lot of experience in a variety of populations: folks that do want services, that don’t want services, quite psychotically ill, substance-use issues, etc.

Tell us how you found out about the Ranch? Why did you choose to advance your career here?
Somebody approached me, who also knows the Ranch and knows Lynn, and knew I was not necessarily happy where I was; I was ready for the next thing to find me. He suggested I go for an open position. The weird thing is, it’s almost like those things where the universe and the stars lined up and from the second I sent in my resume, not from a big headed “I’m all it” sort of way but I knew from my core, my gut, that I was supposed to be here. It just feels
like from the second I came here, this is where I’m supposed to be and this is the next step for me.

PART II: The Practice Story

What is it like to be a Clinical Director at the Ranch?

It’s great, I love it! I love it, love it, love it. In my role, I get to do direct supervision with folks. My role gives me the capacity to have the human-to-human contact that I think keeps us humble and keeps us real. I get to talk with residents and help them hold some of their hurt and help them find a space where they can heal. However, at the same time, be part of the bigger picture and look at where we are, where we want to be, and how we get there.

What aspects of your role do you enjoy the most?

All of it! It probably is cheesy to say but there is no one part that really jumps out more than any other. I like the bigger picture, plotting, planning, and programing development. I love the contact with the residents. I love developing staff and helping them grow and learn, and feeling more and more comfortable about whom they are and what they bring to their role. I love all of it!

What’s the most challenging thing about your job?

It’s the best thing and the most challenging thing; that is having so many different pieces to hold up at any one point in time. I want to get to something and physically not able to because of the other things that I need to attend to in the moment. I’m sure other folks would agree there are only so many things you can physically, humanly handle in one day.

How do you deal with that challenge?

I write lots of lists so that a) I don’t forget it and b) it helps me see very clearly the things I need to tackle next. Lists help to prioritize, organize, and accomplish. If there’s something that’s crisis oriented, that always takes priority and I deal with that in the moment. Then slowly, I chip away at my list. There is nothing quite as fulfilling as crossing something off a list.

What would people never guess you do in your role?

Given the nature of the ranch, how fluid it is or how flexible it is, my guess is folks wouldn’t probably be surprised by anything I do.

What is involved in your day-to-day activities in your position?

My day can involve anything from:

- Approving someone to go to a training
- Having someone knock at my door to run something by me
- Having a resident come and say “I need help, I’m not feeling very good, what do I do”
- Writing a staff evaluation
- Thinking about changing the advising model and implementing that, which is involving in and of itself (where do we want to be and what are we now, what do other folks need out of this).
- Taking phone calls. Talking with folks outside of the agency around trainings.
- Talking to somebody on the crisis line about a screening when I’m not sure or when I need to seek some consultation as well.
- To updating Lynn about something big that’s going on so that should she get a call, she has an awareness of what’s going on.

To read more about Vanessa, visit springlakeranch.org
What happens when you leave your comfort zone (this being Africa for me) and relocate half-way across the world to live on a ranch for 6 months? Well, you panic of course.

First day at the main house: “No dad, I’m not going to want to extend my stay later on!” I calmly say. He was convinced I would change my mind.

First skype session with friends overseas: "I know what the words 'therapeutic', 'community', and 'ranch' mean individually in and of themselves, but I don’t know what they mean all together”. I had to explain to them not only the extent of the efforts that the staff at the ranch make every day to ensure that people with mental illness and/or substance abuse receive the care that they need, but also the personal effort that each individual makes in order to contribute to the greater community. It is therapeutic because people have changed for the better.

From the offices in the main house to the gardens to Anne’s woods to mucking chicken coops to the very bed that I sleep on, extending further to Rutland’s Royce Street and the Townhouse, it is people who make up this place that I will call home. It is a community because it is people.

Genuine is the word I constantly use to describe the Ranch. In every sense of the word. The people have completely opened themselves to the fresh air, the green grass, and new experiences every day. And so it went on like this: each day was a challenge but was also a gift; things as simple as someone’s smile or the fact that they pronounced my last name correctly, began to remove layers until I too completely opened myself to the place, and the people!

“So what do you do here exactly?” asked a resident one afternoon. "Well, I’m an intern in the administrative department; I work closely with the Human Resources Director, the Development Director, and the Director of Admissions. My tasks vary from filing and mailing, to grant writing, to research work. I also vol-
I called my mom when I went in for lunch to say Happy Anniversary and she said she forgot all about it. She said I made her day by remembering. It felt so good to hear her say that.

My point in telling you this is it is amazing how great my relationship is with my family now. For so many years my life was full of just one thing after another and spiraling out of control. I have a lot to be grateful these days by living responsibly.”

-Keith, Rutland Program Client

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<td><strong>Spicy Marinated Tomatoes</strong></td>
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**INGREDIENTS**
- 4 cups cubed red tomatoes
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced green onions (about 4)
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced
- 1/3 cup white balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine first 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Combine vinegar and remaining ingredients in a small bowl; stir until blended. Pour vinegar mixture over tomato mixture, tossing to coat. Serve at room temperature.

My name is Nahita Zafimahova, I'm from Madagascar. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the United States International University in Kenya. I have diverse hobbies including hiking, biking, volleyball, video games, pottery, and various arts.

I value the work that the Ranch dedicates itself to doing, constantly striving to better the lives of people from all over the United States. I’ve met people with fascinating backgrounds and people who will forever leave their footprints in my heart (both residents and staff). This is why half-way through my internship, I decide to extend it for another month. My dad was right (but I won’t give him credit for it).

After the Ranch there will be plenty of stories to tell at the dinner table in Kenya. I arrived here when I knew what I wanted to do in life, I was so sure. However, throughout my stay, I realized I didn’t know what I wanted, and I discovered new parts of myself. Funny thing is that I am happy not knowing, funny because my biggest fear had always been uncertainty. But that’s what the ranch does to you, it’s such a safe environment that it allows you to explore yourself and to accept every moment as it is. My hope is that when I leave towards the end of September, I will leave here knowing even more deeply that my life is in my hands and I can achieve my potential.

“I just had to tell someone this."

My name is Nahita Zafimahova, I'm from Madagascar. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the United States International University in Kenya. I have diverse hobbies including hiking, biking, volleyball, video games, pottery, and various arts.
One of the objectives called for in the current strategic plan, and one of my personal goals as Executive Director, is to find ways to make the experience of the Spring Lake Ranch Therapeutic Community a reality for more people. As it stands, even with our generous financial aid program, admissions are limited to people with enough means to be able to pay for a significant portion of our fees. Relatedly, but more broadly, the Therapeutic Community as a model of mental health care is not recognized or utilized nearly as much as it could be. As it stands now, Therapeutic Community opportunities are mostly limited to those who can find and afford them and for a very few receiving care in the public mental health system. Despite advances in legislation, the parity laws have been woefully unhelpful in securing insurance monies to pay for care within Therapeutic Communities such as ours.

One of the ways to accomplish making the Ranch more affordable, and perhaps even getting to a place of being ‘needs blind’, will be to have a large enough endowment to enable us to provide the financial assistance necessary to allow those who could benefit an opportunity to participate, regardless of their ability to pay. Another avenue for accessibility will be developing partnerships with agencies which have State or Federal funding thus also making the Ranch a viable option and much preferable alternative to incarceration, for example, where too many are institutionalized with mental health needs but not receiving adequate mental health services. We’ve had several of these partnerships over the years, but with limited State and Federal funding they’re difficult to maintain. One particular success we had for about five years was a partnership with the Veterans Administration, which unfortunately disintegrated in 2012.

Making the model of Therapeutic Community more broadly known, understood, appreciated, and in the end, funded, will take a lot of work. I’ve recently been part of a conversation with other farm-based Therapeutic Community Executive Directors who are interested in getting the word out about what we do and the success it can be for people with major mental illness and substance use issues. One consideration underway is to conduct research involving many TC programs. At our spring AR-TA meeting, a Case Western Reserve University researcher and professor spoke to us about her interest in conducting this research. I’ve invited Sana Loue, PhD, to visit the Ranch October 1-3 to learn about us and to discuss with staff, members, and trustees her research interests and what they...
more importantly within himself.

If you are thinking of starting up a Yoga practice the first thing to remember is to start where you are at. You’re not flexible? OK. You can’t focus? Even better. You have low energy levels? Great. All these things mean is that you will gain even more, more quickly from practicing. The second thing to remember is that it’s not a contest. Have fun with it, explore and be open to new ways to use your body, mind and heart. The third thing to remember is that it is important to find a teacher that is knowledgeable about safe ways to practice and progress in that practice. The ability to laugh at themselves doesn’t hurt either!

I wish you safe travels on your journey into Yoga, but not too safe …. Namaste!

My name is Peat Purol. I started my Yoga journey in 2006 and have been teaching for 4 years. I have been trained in Therapeutic Yoga through Yama Studio of Baltimore Maryland and Yogaworks.

Yoga has played a very impactful role in my life and I love to share my story and this practice with anyone who has a desire to learn these techniques and apply them in their lives. I also love jamming out with some hand drums or guitar, getting messy with paint, nerding out with some spiritual study, laying in fields in the sun and long walks on slacklines. If you are in the Rutland area and are interested in trying one of my classes I currently teach at Kula Cooperative in Downtown Rutland.

Lynn J. Pilcher, Executive Director
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.

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Newsletter Editors: Heather, Jill, Liz, Lynn, Nahita, Rachel Photo Credits: Heather, Kyle, Lynn, Nahita, Spencer

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A Crew Poem

There once was a crew from the farm
They awoke with a rooster alarm
They hayed for the cows
and brought slop to the sows
Watch out for their ram or be harmed

There once was a crew from the shop
Whose carpenters couldn’t be stopped
The hammered for hours
To build smoking towers
With cupolas sitting on top

There once was a crew from the garden
Whose soil they never let harden
They planted and sowed
The weeded and hoed
And brought all the kale and swiss chard in

There once was a crew from the woods
They made lots of great maple goods
They sawed and the mauled
They split and they hauled
And landscaped the Ranch neighborhoods

-2013 Ranch Crew Members

Allie and a Ranch piglet