People who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community suffer from mental illnesses such as major depression and generalized anxiety disorder at a rate three times higher than that of the general population. These individuals are also four times more likely to attempt suicide, and roughly five times more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs. Unfortunately, for many of us here at the Ranch these statistics hit extremely close to home. In order for the program to better fulfill its goals of “supporting” and “empowering” those affected with mental health and substance abuse related issues, it was time for change. This change came in the form of an LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + Questioning, Allies, +) support and education group dubbed “The Hub.”

Spearheaded by residents and house advisors alike, The Hub was founded in July of this past year with the self-proclaimed goals of offering support to any who need it, providing a safe space, educating, and improving upon not only the Ranch environment but society as a whole. The group meets weekly for which a typical session will include time for individuals to discuss their struggles and/or triumphs often relating to LGBTQ+ issues. This component is at the heart of our group as there is nothing more therapeutic than knowing that you have support behind you. Often a special topic will also be presented by rotating “facilitators” (staff and/or residents) of the group. These topics have been on a wide variety of subjects including LGBTQ+ substance abuse, the history of the community, the fight for equal rights, family life, LGBTQ+ athletes, and trainings about what it means to be an ally. The ability for each of us to gain more knowledge on these topics as well as encounter different perspectives on these issues has truly been an invaluable asset to the Ranch.

The positive effects of The Hub have been widespread throughout the Ranch. Incidents of homophobic behavior/language have, as noted by many, dropped significantly. A Ranch-wide staff training on being an LGBTQ+ ally has taken place. Aware-
In front of the staff residence, Cottage, there’s a huge boulder, and on it a plaque with the inscription: Wayne A. Sarcka, 1890-1968; Elizabeth Man Sarcka, 1893-1992, and their quote: “THE RANCH IS OUR PRIDE AND JOY.” As I stood in front of that boulder recently, seeing the dedication for what felt like the first time (although that hardly seems possible), I felt a connection to Wayne and Elizabeth in some new ways, and considered again the role we play as inheritors of the contemporary community which they began, and the significance of how we carry on their dream today.

A very few of you reading this will have known Wayne and Elizabeth; for most of us, the closest we come to knowing them is through their daughter, Anne; through written accounts from Wayne’s book, Giving a Lift in Time; or through people like Michael Wells, who wrote Wayne from England asking for a job, and came to work here toward the end of their tenure.

The next generation of leadership, following Wayne and Elizabeth, was the ‘troika’ of Anne, Michael, and Ray Sirjane, Wayne’s nephew. Together they carried forward the humble beginnings of the therapeutic community, facing the challenges of their day, and further refining and developing the program, including helping to craft the language for the state’s initial licensing of Therapeutic Community Residences, regulations which were in place for the better part of 40 years.

As we approach our 85th anniversary next year I am mindful of our history and thoughtful about how we carry forward into today’s world the values which made the Ranch unique years ago. Our challenges are different from those of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s; some would argue that today’s pressures are greater, more complex, and increasingly prohibitive. I can’t answer that with any authenticity or accuracy, but I do know that what we provide and the opportunities found here are as relevant today as it was in 1932.

While the specific elements of the program may look more polished than the roughhewn approaches of the early days, it is my sense that what continues to make the Ranch effective are the same core values which were present during Wayne and Elizabeth’s day, namely, that we provide for people whose conditions might otherwise leave them isolated and stigmatized in the general society a

“Having the courage, as Wayne and Elizabeth had, to be open to the potential in each person... is something I believe we continue to hold fast to.”
From the Ranch Kitchen
Coconut-Blueberry Cheesecake Bars

YUM!

DIRECTIONS
Preheat oven to 350 degrees; lightly grease a 13x9 inch baking pan and set aside.

For crust, in a small saucepan heat butter over medium heat until the color of light brown sugar; remove from heat and set aside.

In medium bowl stir together graham crackers, flour, coconut, pecans, and 1/4 cup sugar; stir in butter until combined; evenly press on bottom of prepared pan; bake 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned.

Meanwhile, in large mixing bowl beat cream cheese and 2/3 cup sugar on medium until combined; add eggs, milk and vanilla; beat until combined; pour over hot crust and sprinkle with blueberries.

Bake 18-20 minutes or until center appears set; cool in pan on rack; cover and refrigerate then cut into bars.

Makes: 32 servings
Prep: 30 mins
Chill: 3 hrs
Bake: 350 18-20 mins

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup butter
3/4 cup finely crushed graham crackers
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup flaked coconut
1/2 ground pecans
1/4 + 2/3 cup sugar
12 oz. cream cheese
4 eggs
1 tablespoon milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups blueberries

place to belong, be accepted, and grow as one discovers an identity beyond the confines of a condition. Having the courage, as Wayne and Elizabeth had, to be open to the potential in each person, and to take risks associated with walking that journey together is something I believe we continue to hold fast to.

I never knew the Sarckas, but I trust that their spirit is alive and well at Spring Lake Ranch today. As daughter Anne has written, “my parents would be immensely proud of (the Ranch) today. My father would be surprised by the comfortable buildings; my mother, delighted with the remarkable staff. They would be gratified that the simple yet profound ideas with which they started in 1932 remain core values today, and warmed by the transcendent spirit and beauty of the place.”

Lynn J. Pilcher, Executive Director
There are many appealing new (and not so new) ideas coming up about treatment of mental illnesses. Many have moved closer to being a part of psychiatric practice, even during my ten years at the Ranch.

Genetic profiling - so far gene testing can predict likely responses to certain medicines and suggest individualized dose ranges depending on speed on metabolism. Most of the actual human studies so far have been done on antidepressants - those still on patent, of course, and likely to make money for the developers.

Someday it may be possible to test for genes for susceptibility to mental illnesses, autism, increased likelihood of psychotic and other extreme responses to recreational drugs and alcohol. Numerous genes have indeed been identified as occurring more frequently in affected people, but NONE of them are unique to affected people only.

Brain inflammation - we are finding more noninvasive ways to track what happens in the working brain which has lead to exciting information about neuroplasticity, the glial (lining and insulating) cells and the ill effects of inflammation. The causes of this inflammation in the brain are still unclear. In any part of the body, inflammation can be caused by infection, autoimmune processes, circulatory compromise leading to tissue breakdown, injury, exposure to toxins. Each of these causes leads to different plans for treatment.

The gut biome - finally, we are accepting that each of us is a small ecosystem, with symbiotic relationships with about 30 pounds of gut bacteria of different types. The "human" part of this system provides a safe home and a food supply to "them" in return for a steady and balanced supply of micronutrients, antioxidants, and breakdown products which affect both the physical and mental well being of the human component ("us") of the ecosystem.

Another huge conceptual shift that has occurred during my professional career is actually a return to an older, more "organic" way of looking at mental distress.

Medicine, including psychiatry, was seduced by the idea of discovering THE cause of any given illness, which of course would then lead to a cure. In every field, from infectious disease to psychiatry, the data have forced physicians to accept that there are hardly any maladies out there, from tuberculosis to schizophrenia, that are not multifactorial in origin, and that don't require "restoration of harmony", not just a pill, to treat. This is not to say that the search for "the silver bullet" doesn't go on, among physicians, researchers, the public, and a variety of entrepreneurs.

Here's how that relates to my practice at Spring Lake Ranch: my license, as well as my training, constrains...
me to stay within reasonable bounds in terms of what is known and "evidence-based" versus what is excited (and fascinating) speculation. My personal bent is towards the "restoration of harmony" model. I also have thirty years worth of experience seeing medicines save people's lives and letting them live a life. I agree with the indisputable idea that these medicines are overused (a history common to many non-psychiatric medicine). My hope and plan is to move every resident towards the LEAST EFFECTIVE dose to allow stability and a return to everyday life. This could be anywhere from none, to a much lower dose than on arrival, to adding medications. Time will tell.

Meanwhile the Ranch is improving brain neuroplasticity (studies have shown!) by providing work therapy - and this IS therapy, despite initial protestations about the importance of "suiting up and showing up" - multiple relational opportunities, social skills coaching, "normalizing" of being quirky, and a milieu that helps many young people accept where they are - a prerequisite for moving forward. And lots of vegetables, for which the gut biome says thank you.

Dr. Jennifer FauntLeRoy will retiring in March from her role as the psychiatrist for the Cuttingsville Program. She will continue to oversee the care of clients in our Rutland Program.

We will soon welcome Dr. David Hedden who said "I am honored to have the opportunity to work at the Ranch. I appreciate the good work that Dr. FauntLeRoy has done on the Hill, and look forward to collaborating with her as she continues to consult to the Rutland programs."

Dr. Hedden first visited the Ranch in 1980, having just begun his Residency and become aware of the program through one of his UVM faculty mentors, Dr. Hans Heussey. He became re-acquainted with the Ranch through his wife, Becky Moore, MSW, who has been a Member for many years; and he, too, has been a Member for several years.
This cartoon is the first in a series by Kurt Shaffert. Kurt served as a House Advisor/Work Crew Leader in the mid-90s in Pfeiffer (’95) and then Penthouse (’96-’97) both of which, in terms of being residences, are now the stuff of legend.

Kurt is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and serves as a Clinical Chaplain & Clinical Pastoral Educator with VA-Connecticut Healthcare Services as well as a Teaching Fellow in Pastoral Care at Yale Divinity School.

Kurt also is a cartoonist who presents workshops and seminars in healthcare settings and national conferences on "Graphic Narrative & Process Cartooning in Clinical Care & Education".

Having been a Member since 2003 and now a Trustee, Spring Lake Ranch continues to be a source of inspiration for hard-scrabble community-building and constructive quirkiness. Twenty years after being a House Advisor/Work Crew Leader at SLR, several of Kurt's best friends and mentors continue to be Ranchers. He sees the Ranch as a way of life, which includes both the joys and the challenges of the old SLR Mission Statement, "To Accept Vulnerability & To Live in Hope."

Thanks to those of you who suggested we begin publishing a list of items that we are hoping for and that you might be willing to donate.

With your tax-deductible donation of any item on this list, you actively become a part of our mission to support and empower people with mental health and addiction issues by providing opportunities to grow and thrive. Contact Heather at heatherb@springlakeranch.org to help!

- Outdoor Seating for our Improved Front Porch ($1,250 new)
- DR Walk-behind Field and Brush Mower ($2,000-4,000 new)
- Filter Press for Sugaring ($1,900 new)
- Steam Stack for Sugarhouse ($15,000-17,000 new)
- Canoes, Kayaks, Paddles and PFDs in Good Lake-Worthy Condition
I remember I felt completely deflated when I arrived in Cuttingsville, Vermont, as I was at the lowest point I had ever been in, in my entire life. What I also remember from those days are the first breaths of clean air I took, the stillness of the environment around me, and people bustling around and suiting up for work crew. I remember feeling completely broken but also gaining a sense of hope upon my arrival. I knew that this would be unlike any experience I had ever had, if I allowed for it to be.

The work program and the environment that the work takes place in were the largest part of my treatment process and my newfound desire and drive for life that I gained in my first few months at the Ranch. I found through what seemed at times to be extremely long days working on the farm or in the woods that I was able to reconnect with the world around me and most importantly, to myself and my inner strength. Doing physical work outdoors and within nature was magical, simple and rewarding in those initial months, and so following six months at SLR, I made the decision to move to the Rutland Program and take on an Internship working as a Crew Leader on Woods Crew. As my internship comes to a close, I look back with such gratitude for the experience as it has allowed me to learn precious lessons about myself and the beauty of life.

The internship experience has allowed me to reconnect with my authentic self. I was able to take a huge risk in deciding to do a work crew internship, as the work was completely out of my comfort zone and not something that I was necessarily expert at. Prior to SLR and the internship, I was only used to long hours spent mostly behind desks or on telephones and in meetings. I had never used tools or my hands for something other than writing or typing. I had never used my physical body to get jobs done, nor had I ever worked with and within nature. I came to SLR from a decade of trying to be the “best,” working in jobs that I remained in only because I was good at them, defining myself by the status of my position and the amount of money I made and making career choices that ultimately brought me chaos and discomfort emotionally and mentally. I made the choice to do the internship because I liked the work I was doing at SLR and how it made me feel. It was a risk for me because it was stepping into the unknown and away from the life I had previously thought I had wanted before coming to Ver-
What brought you to Spring Lake Ranch?

Throughout college I lived in several intentional communities with a focus on environmental sustainability and service work. At the time, I had a real passion for sustainable agriculture, and had been working on a farm in New Hampshire for several summers. I attended the Audubon Expedition Institute through Lesley University where I had amazing opportunities to study in different regions of the country, living in community with people from all walks of life. I later went on to do a study abroad in India in an international community called Auroville. Throughout all my travels I found a new love for getting to know people and learning to meet them where they are at. After college, I was looking for something more than just a job. I wanted to find meaningful work with people, within a community. When I was invited for an interview as a House Advisor back in 2007, I remember driving up the Ranch road and thinking, “This is it, I’m home.”

I’m now in my eighth year at the Ranch.

What has kept you here?

I love coming to work! Even when it is difficult there are great parts you can easily find to get you through. Supervision sessions with House Advisors are incredibly rewarding. I value what each individual brings to the organization and we have beautiful conversations about community, mental health, empathy, self-care, and so much more.

The amazing community has kept me here. Spring Lake Ranch provides a work environment, unlike so many, where you are actually encouraged to grow and learn. I know I’ve grown here. I am grateful for every opportunity that has presented itself over the years.

It’s a very special place. I love bringing my daughter here for meals, coming up on weekends to build snowmen on the front lawn, and swimming in the lake in the summers. It is a beautiful thing to know that my daughter will have memories of growing up at the Ranch.

What is your role at the Ranch?

I started at the Ranch as a House Advisor in 2007. I lived up here for about a year and a half, and then applied to work as a Case Manager in the Rutland Program. From 2008 to 2013, I did a little bit of everything in Rutland. I managed Royce Street House for a couple of years, and then shifted to working with clients in their apartments as a Case Manager. Over time, I became the official Transition Coordinator working with individuals in their process from the Hill into Rutland. It was a real honor to work with our clients through the challenges of a transition, while seeing them take steps to better their lives.

“This throughout all my travels, I found a new love for getting to know people, and learning to meet them where they are at.”
and gain independence.

In 2013, while I was out on maternity leave, the position of House Advisor Coordinator came open, and I couldn’t pass up the opportunity. It’s my dream job! Working with these twelve amazing House Advisors is a privilege. They bring so much to the community. It’s an honor to supervise and support the staff who live and work so closely with our residents. We receive close to 300 House Advisor applications per year for the twelve positions, so we get truly wonderful people for the position who want to be here, and bring their positive energy and interests to the community.

How do you spend your time when you are not at the Ranch?
I’m a mom to Dottie, an amazing 2 ½ year old. Being a mom is who I am! I do try and find time to take our dogs for walks, go for a run, or simply watch the sunset. It’s incredibly important to have good self-care practices.

What might someone be surprised to learn about you?
Some already know this, but the only thing I can think to share is that I can play the cello!

Anything else that you would like to share?
I really appreciate the direction that the Ranch is heading. I have watched it change and evolve and I am proud to be a part of it. I love the population that we work with; I see potential in everyone.

Dory and daughter Dottie

Dory spoke so highly of the “amazing house advisors” throughout her interview; we thought it might be fun to see what they had to say about her!

Does a supervision get any better than this?
Offers the best insight to every situation.
Ready to help.
You’ll always feel better after you talk to her!
-Melissa

Dory has been such a big part of my experience here at SLR. She has shown nothing but support, care and love from the very first email correspondence with her, my partial interview with her paddling a canoe, from my arrival at the ranch, all the way up to my last check in with her 5 minutes ago at lunch. She seeks out the light in everyone and brings such a bright light herself that does nothing but shine on everyone in the community. I am so grateful for the example she sets everyday, not only at work but in the world as well. -Andrea

I appreciate how Dory is always up to hear a new perspective and collaborate with House Advisors. Her presence and attention makes any thought shared feel meaningful, and her smile and sharing of snacks bring so much color and beauty to the community. -Loren

Dory’s the kind of supervisor that is fun to have around. I really cherish that when I get pulled into her office I never feel that shiver down my spine of “what did I do wrong?!”. She makes my job 1000% more fun and always looks trendy. -Franky

When I first visited SLR as a perspective house advisor, I was greeted by the warm comforting smile of Dory. She brings that smile to work every day. As both a supervisor and a person, Dory is calm, present, and supportive in every situation. It is truly a blessing to have someone who is so committed to helping others like Dory is. -Jon
STAFF Notes

WELCOME!

Aaron Haupt, Cook
Mike Spoth, Maintenance Assistant
Jess Novak, Admissions and Outreach Coordinator
Margi Hilstad, Rutland Program Driver
Terri Harrington, Royce Street Living Skills Coordinator
Cynthia Hanson, Substitute
Jamie Perry, Substitute
Peat Purol, Substitute
Matt Vezina, Substitute

NEW HOUSE ADVISORS

Aaron Hammer Andrea DiMedeo Nina Nguyen
Melissa Redd Jon Weisbecker

NEWS BITS

Liz Lawson, Assistant Business Manager, is expecting her first child on April 17th!
Kim King, Royce Street Overnight Support Staff, is expecting a child on July 4th!
Bruce Allen, Shop Crew Department Head, welcomed his first Great Grandchild, Vayen Rupert Allen, into the world on 11/15/2015! This past November 4 of the 5 generations of Allens celebrated Thanksgiving at the Ranch.
“The Roost” – Farm Crew’s HQ- has been updated and is now back to its original name “The Hanger.”
Shop Crew completed a new hay barn at the bottom of the Hill in Joan’s Meadow. The barn was completely built by Ranchers, from start to finish.
Tom Conry, Human Resources Director, had his last day on the Hill February 3rd. Tom is beginning his trek of the Appalachian Trail in March! Good Luck, Tom! We can’t wait to see you in June when you pass through the Ranch!
Justine Farrow left the Cook position in February. Justine was a wonderful community member whose delicious pancakes and warm smile will be missed very much!
Sarah Knutson, Clinical Team Leader, had her last day at the Ranch on February 19th. Your years of passionate commitment to the Ranch are invaluable. We’ll miss you, Sarah!
Anne Wells, long time Rancher, left the Nurse position in December. SLR was a big part of Anne’s family- from her mother’s involvement in the Rutland Program to raising her daughters on the Hill. Thank you for your energy and dedication to the Community!

A SPACE continued from cover page

ASPACE continued from cover page

ness has been raised about the intersecting struggle behind identifying as LGBTQ+ and having mental health issues. Perhaps most significantly, certain individuals within the group have, often for the first time in their life, felt comfortable enough to come out to their peers or the community as a whole. The ability for these individuals to live true to themselves and be comfortable in their own skin has empowered them to thrive.

Although we have made great strides as a result of The Hub and the terrific people who compose and support it, we know that there is still much more work to do around the Ranch and in society as a whole. Currently we are fighting to have “safe-spaces” around the Ranch identified in order to give residents the tools and support they need to combat the struggles that might come up relating to LGBTQ+ issues. We continue with our work to raise awareness and provide support for the transgender community, which is often the most marginalized and victimized sub-community amongst us. Finally, we know we must take this fight for civil rights, social justice, and LGBTQ+ mental health out into the real world for we know that we cannot wait for others to stand up for what is right. We must take the necessary change upon ourselves.

KM, former resident and community member
Remembering Maurie
By Michael Wells

Dr. Maurice (Maurie) Green a longtime friend and supporter of the Ranch died recently. All of us who remember his warmth, generosity of spirit and sense of humor give thanks for what he gave to us and to the Ranch.

Maurie served as Trustee, referring psychiatrist and professional sage throughout his career. He practiced in New York City and was a long time member of the esteemed William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry. Alternately, Maurie was one of the founders of the Jazz Institute of America.

An example of his remarkable generosity to the Ranch is when he invited Anne Sarcka and me to the annual Psychoanalytic Conference held in Chicago one year at which we presented the Ranch from a booth at the conference while taking turns attending talks and receptions.

Such support for our little known, alternative lay approach to the care and treatment of those afflicted with mental illness and substance abuse was precious, especially at a time of leadership transition.

THERAPEUTIC ARTS
Head Heart Hands

This just in from the Rutland Program - We are thrilled to welcome Marietta Yeager, a licensed occupational therapist and artistic therapist, who will be offering professional services to Rutland clients starting in February. She completed her artistic training, in the method of Rudolf Steiner, in Sussex, England, which has a strong focus on emotional, as well as spiritual healing through the arts.

CHANGE continued from page 7

It was also a risk because I wasn’t necessarily knowledgeable or “good” at woods work. What I found is that the internship allowed me to recognize that I am good, regardless of how good I am at a specific job or task. It has also taught me how to ask for help, take risks, and be myself even in the workplace. I know now that I can continue to make decisions based on what is true for me and what will bring me the most peace, just as I made the choice to leave an old way of life behind and give the internship and Vermont a try. In making this choice I have continued to grow in my connection with myself and the world around me. I will continue to hold on to these experiences and the tools I have gained, as I move forward with a new perspective on life.

-Anonymous
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.

Telephone: 802-492-3322  E-mail: info@springlakeranch.org  www.springlakeranch.org

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Newsletter Editors: Heather, Jess, Jill, Liz, Lynn  Photo Credits: Kellie, Janet, Allie, Lynn, Megan

Spring Lake Ranch
Therapeutic Community
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Cuttingsville, VT 05738

Oh no! Are you running low?
Order your Spring Lake Ranch Maple Syrup
online at springlakeranch.org!

Nina and Megan