

Spring Lake Ranch Newsletter

2021

"I have come to realize just how much I learned and grew at Spring Lake Ranch."

It might not have always been obvious to me while collecting sap, building a canvas, raking leaves or socializing with other residents, but I was soaking up vital information, working through very difficult and confusing personal issues and developing a cohesive narrative that I take with me to this day."

-Spring Lake Ranch Alumni



IN THIS ISSUE

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Outcomes

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

For years, Spring Lake Ranch has lifted up personal stories of transformation and hope to illustrate the power of our unique program. These hold an important place in our organizational narrative and we value them tremendously. The problem is that stories, while uplifting, are limited in capturing the full picture of the breadth of our impact. They are also limited in who hears them and in the answers they provide. Understandably, referring professionals and families seeking our services want to know: how can we demonstrate our effectiveness in supporting mental health and addiction recovery?

Beginning in 2019, Spring Lake Ranch started to invest in capturing this information. At present, we routinely conduct the following:

- resident satisfaction surveys at the conclusion of the resident's stay
- family satisfaction surveys
- resident surveys on different aspects of the program during their stay
- The DLA-20, which measures functionality in 20 areas of daily activity from admission to discharge

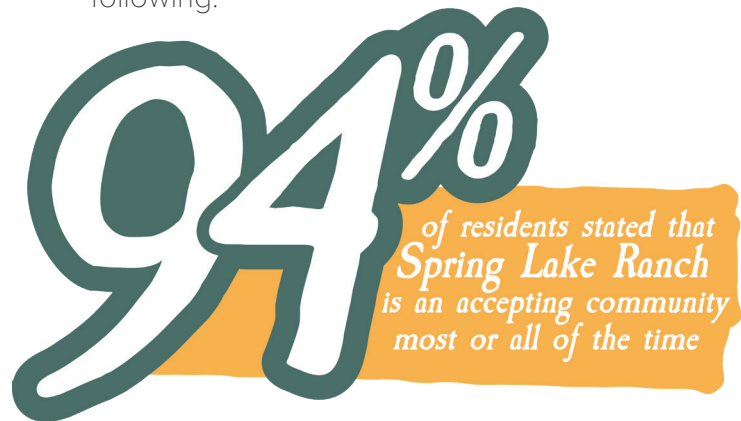
In the future, we plan to conduct post-discharge surveys to better understand the staying power of the Ranch experience related to quality of life and management of conditions.



From the family survey data we know that currently, the highest-ranking reasons families choose Spring Lake Ranch are the natural setting and the focus on work, followed closely by the importance of community. Survey results indicate families are looking for and finding at Spring Lake Ranch the supports they believe will help their family member to recover. 95% of our families

responding to the survey would recommend Spring Lake Ranch to other families.

A recent resident survey focused on the quality and experience of community revealed the following:



- 94% of the residents responding stated that SLR is an accepting community most or all of the time
- 70% stated they felt emotionally safe to express themselves, make mistakes, and work through challenges most or all of the time, while 30% stated that they felt moderately or somewhat safe. No one responded that they felt unsafe.
- 59% find SLR to be a diverse community in terms of differences of lived experiences, backgrounds, and walks of life.

From our discharge satisfaction surveys we've learned that, (on a scale of 1-5 with 5 as the highest ranking), residents rate their overall satisfaction with the Spring Lake Ranch Program at 4.2 and family overall satisfaction is 4.4.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Residents



4.2
out of 5

Families



4.4
out of 5

To measure actual changes in functioning, we also began utilizing the evidenced-based assessment tool called the DLA-20. This assessment takes a snapshot of how a resident is doing in 20 areas of daily functioning at admission, discharge, and at 90-day intervals during their stay. Although we are early in compiling this data, and our sample size is still relatively small, it is exciting to see that the data supports our observations: residents are clearly improving (in aggregate) over the course of their stay.

We're gradually building the infrastructure and methodologies to understand how our program is experienced and its impact. By the end of 2021 we hope to compile this data into our first Spring Lake Ranch Outcomes Report and look forward to sharing it with you.



“residents are clearly improving over the course of their stay”

IMPACT REPORT



Thank you for your generosity.

Thanks to our year-end donors, we have not had to turn away a single resident who needed financial aid this fiscal year.

Thanks to the global community of Spring Lake Ranch supporters, we were able to subsidize each applicant's stay by an average of 38%.

Additionally, we're thrilled to share that, thanks to you, we were even able to offer a 70% financial aid package to help a resident in need of our services

Thank you to all of our donors for your commitment to Spring Lake Ranch's mission of helping each person develop the confidence and skills to recover.

Living at the Bottom of the Rollercoaster

A FAMILY NARRATIVE

The early years of our son's struggles, pre-diagnosis, blur in my memory. My husband and I knew that he was flailing, but we were thinking along the lines of older international adoptee issues and substance use. A mental health diagnosis was not on our radar. Then, when he came home one day speaking incoherently, we brought him to the local emergency department – they said it was THC toxicity and to get him into a 30-day residential rehab program. Within 24 hours of entering said program, he was transferred to an acute psychiatric facility, in a full-blown catatonic state.

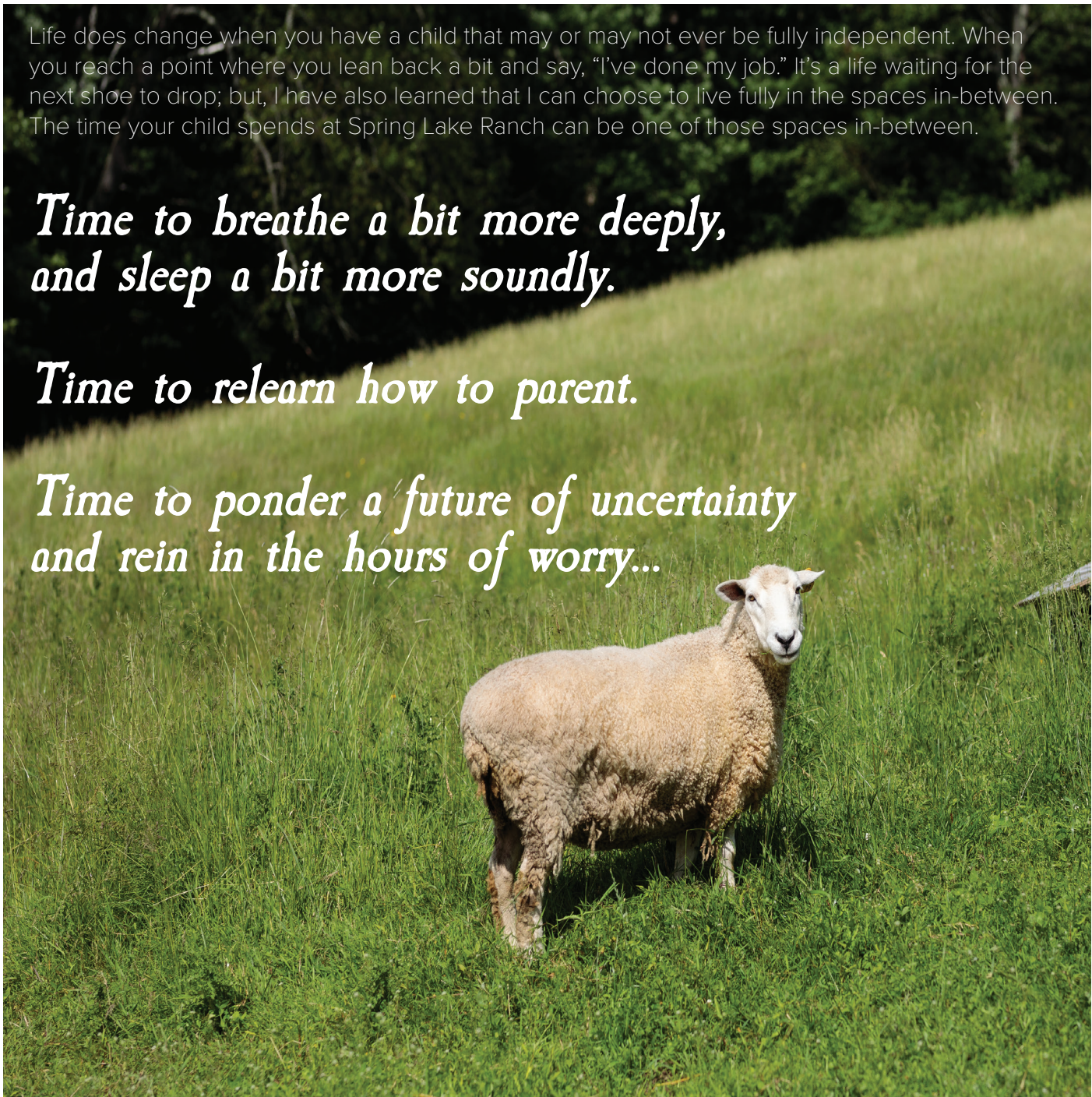
When the crisis came and he was hospitalized, there was one defining moment that stands out for me. I was totally unprepared for the shock of hearing the attending psychiatrist tell a judge that our son's prognosis was "grave" and warranted a possible six-month involuntary commitment. That's when it became real. When we first heard the words "bipolar disorder," I turned to my husband and said, "My step-dad was bipolar; our lives are forever changed." I was right, and I was wrong.


Life does change when you have a child that may or may not ever be fully independent. When you reach a point where you lean back a bit and say, "I've done my job." It's a life waiting for the next shoe to drop; but, I have also learned that I can choose to live fully in the spaces in-between. The time your child spends at Spring Lake Ranch can be one of those spaces in-between.

*Time to breathe a bit more deeply,
and sleep a bit more soundly.*

Time to relearn how to parent.

*Time to ponder a future of uncertainty
and rein in the hours of worry...*





At one of the workshops at SLR during a Family Weekend (don't miss them!), the presenter described the choice we all have to either sit in the "car" with our children on the rollercoaster that is their lives, or to hang out on the platform below, watching the highs and lows. If they crash, it is not helpful to crash with them. This imagery has kept me from repeating old mistakes on more than one occasion.

Since our son's time at SLR, my husband and I still worry, and we still wait for the next shoe to drop, but we live and work in the spaces in-between. We celebrate our son's victories. He is working. He is living in a room he rents. He adopted a kitten. We turned his bedroom into a COVID-isolation workout space, knowing he might have to move home at any time and we will have to change the space once again (and figure out how to introduce a cat into a dog household). We revisited our estate planning to afford him some protection when we're gone. We resist the urge to hover – he lives two hours away and, apart with some assistance with his rent, he is managing. He has recently informed us that he has stopped his meds and he asks us not to worry. How little he understands. We are waiting for the rollercoaster to crash; in the meantime, we hang out on the platform, doing our best to live our lives. And we try to convey our unconditional love – without appearing to hover.

*And we try to convey our
unconditional love—
without appearing to hover.*

You can read other family stories by visiting www.springlakeranch.org/blog.
While you're at it, sign up for our newsletter to get the latest posts.

Work Program

SIX MONTHS ON CREW

As the days lengthen, the sun shines, and the weather warms, we reflect on all that has happened on Spring Lake Ranch's Work Program through the winter and early spring. This winter was especially unique, as the COVID pandemic kept us on the Hill and insulated from the outer world. Although this resulted in more cabin fever than usual, we also experienced a great deal of gratitude for the safe and special Ranch community.

The big project for Woods Crew this winter was to add 400 trees to the sugar bush

The crew tapped over 3,500 trees this year, and with the new Sugarhouse section on a gravity-fed tubing system, that means the sap flowed in!

Woods also spent time on trail clear and signage for the trails around the Ranch, in addition to keeping us warm with all the wood they processed for heat.

We always appreciate the consistency of animal care on Farm Crew, and this winter has been no exception. Residents enjoy taking on paid farm chores on the weekends, as well. The Ranch is now raising 100% of the animal protein we eat, including beef, pork, poultry, and eggs.

Gardens Crew has been hard at work in the sewing room, making more mittens and weaving projects than in previous years.

Activity in the People's Kitchen also got extra creative, with the crew making soups for lunch and experimenting with sourdough and yeast breads.

Activity in the People's Kitchen also got extra creative, with the crew making soups for lunch, experimenting with sourdough and yeast breads, and preserving garden produce through canning. Baking Club taught additional cooking skills to those who were interested after work crew hours. The link between the garden and the kitchen is getting stronger, as the two collaborate to meet each other's needs. We've even had delicious salads this spring with the over-wintered kale and spinach from the greenhouse! Seeds were started in early spring and we can't wait for all those delicious garden veggies.

The Ranch recently started attending the Winter Farmers Market in Rutland again and we're



back to bringing our projects to the public, including the mittens and weaving, syrup, granola, and more.

We're excited to announce that Shop Crew completed all the new chairs for the dining room! Shop work over the winter also included making bookcases, and wooden name plates and room numbers for everyone in the residences and offices. The crew has also been helping with maintenance projects around the Ranch, including renovating a bathroom and building a new office downstairs in the Green House.

Finally, Work Program is looking forward to getting more residents involved in the ACE

Program – the Advanced Crew Experience. This is an opportunity for any resident who is looking for more leadership and responsibility to develop a plan and launch a project of their choice, with support and guidance from their crew.

We're dedicated to helping residents and clients work towards independence across the full spectrum of our programs, and Work Program serves as a big part of that.

The Ranch is now raising 100% of the animal protein we eat, including beef, pork, poultry, and eggs.



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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 SpringLakeRanchVT

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 Spring Lake Ranch

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Spring Lake Ranch

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“Our son had been through so many ineffective (for him) programs before he arrived at Spring Lake Ranch. It was the first program where he didn’t feel institutionalized; instead, he felt like he was part of a healing community.

It wasn’t all bread and roses, and it didn’t free him of his challenges forever and always, but it gave him time to experience being himself, and to regain a sense of self confidence and competence.”

-Spring Lake Ranch Alumni

