



November 17, 2015

Mike Peterson
3635 Homestead St.
Rapid City, SD 57703-1234

Dear Mike,

Many of us have wonderful memories of Christmas as children. We were surrounded by a loving family – giving and receiving gifts, anticipating Christmas dinner and celebrating the birth of Jesus. We had loving and stable parents who created a safe environment for us to talk, laugh and develop into who we are.

Sadly, there are children who don't have that experience at Christmas. Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch serves many children for whom the Christmas season causes painful memories rather than hope and happiness. While they may have hoped to receive gifts, and most likely saw other children receiving presents, many ended up with nothing. Worse, they may have suffered abuse and neglect.

Take "Martha." Christmas reminded her of what she and her family didn't have. Her mom suffered from drug addiction and she didn't have a dad in the picture. She is the second oldest of five children and she had to be the parent for much of her young life. They were so poor that sometimes they hardly had any money to pay for propane or electric bills (never mind Christmas presents) so they would go to her grandmother's house to stay warm by the fireplace.

When Martha came to the Ranch, she hid under her hair which she let fall over her entire face. She didn't

smile or laugh. She was quiet, shy, and isolated. She avoided interacting with anyone. She was fighting depression and anxiety, contemplating suicide regularly.

Martha hoarded her medication to save up enough to kill herself. Staff had to search her room to stop her. Eventually her care providers had to crush her medicine and mix it with her food each day.

Staff encouraged Martha to get involved in activities offered on campus. When she joined the volleyball team, something started to change within her. She had to put her hair up in a ponytail, and you got to see her face. She smiled and laughed. Staff told her that was who they wanted to see and who they knew was underneath all of that hair.

Encouraged, Martha cut her hair and started taking care of her appearance. She began interacting with her peers, even offering them advice.

Christmas at the Ranch was like nothing Martha had ever experienced. The Ranch ensures that each child has a least one Christmas present. True to her generous spirit, Martha wanted to give some of her few presents to her siblings!

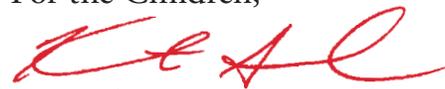
Those who worked with Martha said they were proud of her growth during her year-long stay. One shared, "She was a little girl who came in here without a voice, and when she left, she had one. It was night and day; a whole different kid."

Now back at home, Martha said she still wears the present she received for Christmas. And most importantly, she said she won't forget the love she felt at the Ranch. "It was great because they always keep an eye on you," she said. "They keep you safe."

Of course, the love and care received by children like Martha only occur because of gifts from people like you who care and want to make sure that all children have the opportunity to experience joy at Christmas and to develop the gifts and talents they have been given.

With your help, Yellowstone Foundation is able to contribute about \$258 per month to support each child served by the Ranch. Please consider making a gift to provide for the needs of troubled children at the Ranch and similar organizations and ensure they have a blessed and loving Christmas.

For the Children,



Kurt Alme
President

P.S. Thanks for all you do to help serve the "least of these."