LEGACY RANCH

HEALING THE INVISIBLE WOUNDS OF WAR

A development proposal championed by Dr. David Boje and Dr. Ken Hacker

Building a Legacy for our Military Community | Dr. C. Meghan Downes
Legacy Ranch

Healing our Military Service Members, their Families, and our Veterans
Research Team

The Legacy Ranch concept is being championed by Dr. David Boje and Dr. Ken Hacker at NMSU. The full list of participants and individuals dedicated to bringing this vision of helping our military community are listed below. This team is bringing their deep subject matter expertise and passion together to help develop new and innovative tools to help our military community. This team is comprised of research faculty from three universities (Aalborg University, Denmark, and in the U.S., New Mexico State University, and Texas Tech University), and one Military Ph.D. Psychologist.

Dr. David Boje (NMSU), Management Department, Full Professor, Distinguished Achievement Professor, Vietnam Veteran, certified by Equine-Assisted Growth And Learning Association (EAGALA) as Veteran and Family Deployment Support as Military Services Provider, and author co-founder with Dr. Rosile (below) of ‘Embodied Restorying Process’ (ERP) methodology and practice.

Dr. Jeanne Flora (Co-PI, Arts & Sciences College of NMSU, Communication Studies Department, family studies), Associate Professor

Dr. Kenneth Hacker (Researcher, Communication Studies Department), Full Professor & Department Head of Communications Studies, former state military officer, and Distinguished Achievement Professor.

Dr. Grace Ann Rosile (Co-PI, College of Business of NMSU, Management Department), Full Professor, co-founder of ERP methodology and practice, certified EAGALA Veteran and Family Deployment Support as Military Services Provider.

Dr. Meghan Downes (Co-PI, College of Business of NMSU, Economics Department, Associate Professor, working on Agent-Based Model in Study of Veteran wait times at the Veterans Administration

Dr. Liz England Kennedy (Co-PI, Health & Human Services College of NMSU, Department of Public Health Sciences)

Dr. Wanda Whittlesey-Jerome (Researcher, School of Social Work)

Erika Gergerich, MSW (Researcher, School of Social Work)

Dr. Kourtney Vaillancourt (Co-PI, College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Science of NMSU), College Associate Professor in Family and Child Science, Director of Marriage and Family Therapy Training Program, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Dr. Merranda Romero Marin (Researcher, Department of Family and Consumer Science), Assistant Professor, licensed psychologist specializing in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), particularly within the context of the family system.

Dr. Hans Hansen (Co-PI, Rawls College of Business, Texas Tech University), Associate Professor

Dr. Anete Strand (Co-PI, Material Storytelling Lab founder and director, Aalborg University), Assistant Professor.

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The Need for Legacy Ranch

Since October 2001 approximately 1.64 million U.S. Troops have been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. Evidence suggests the psychological toll of these deployments may be disproportionately high compared to the physical injuries of battle. Two combat related injuries that are of concern with the veteran’s and
service members from Iraq and Afghanistan are post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury (TANIELIAN AND JAYCOX 2008, pp. xix). It is estimated that more than 300,000 veterans suffer from PTSD or major depression, and that 320,000 veterans experienced a probable TBI during deployment. Approximately one-third of those previously deployed have at least one of these conditions. An estimated 525,000 veterans suffer from a TBI, PTSD, or major depression. Of these, only about 50% have sought treatment within the previous year of the study; additionally, it is estimated that those reporting a probable TBI, only 57% had been evaluated by a physician (TANIELIAN AND JAYCOX 2008, pp. xxi). Even when veterans seek care, it is estimated that only about half received minimally adequate treatment, and those receiving care that has been demonstrated to be effective (quality care) is estimated to be even smaller. Surveys indicate that 45% of those surveyed indicated drug therapy was ineffective and seeking treatment would prevent further job advancement. The prevalence of PTSD and major depression will likely remain high given the large numbers of affected service members (in excess of 500,000), the low level of service members and veterans seeking treatment, and lack of quality treatment options (TANIELIAN AND JAYCOX 2008, pp. xxii).

The consequences for our military community and their families are large and wide-ranging. The consequences of PTSD, major depression, and TBI on families, work, social functioning, substance abuse, homelessness and suicide are significant. One estimate places the monetary costs of PTSD at $5,904 for a 2-year per case basis. If suicide occurs as result of the PTSD the per-case 2-year cost rose to $10,208. For major depression, the per-case per 2-year cost was estimated at $15,261 to $25,757. For those members seeking treatment, the one year costs for major depression was $25,572 to $30,730 (in 2005 US dollars). If a diagnosis of PTSD was made the costs are estimated at $252,251 to $408,519 (2007 US Dollars). The total costs are estimated in the range of $4.62 to $7.17 billion over two years for major depression (TANIELIAN AND JAYCOX 2008, pp. xxiii).

From an economic perspective, the costs to society from the “Invisible Wounds of War” are tremendous. Our military families are suffering. Legacy Ranch offers an innovative way to help our military community heal these invisible wounds. The unique capabilities of New Mexico State University offer a way to help heal the members of our military community while training students, recruiting new students to NMSU, and serving our outreach and education missions. Legacy Ranch provides an opportunity for NMSU to serve a community that is in desperate need of high-quality, low-cost solutions. Veterans and their families have sacrificed a great deal and invested their lives in service of the United States, and Legacy Ranch is an opportunity to serve our military community.

**Building the Legacy**

A 200-acre working ranch where animals, nature, and guided research-based therapies come together to provide a restful and safe place for members of our military community to begin the healing process and learn skills and techniques that will them re-acclimate to civilian life and learn to cope with the hidden wounds of war. The ranch will have horses, cows, sheep, chickens, extensive gardens, fishing opportunities, nature trails, and performance spaces. A structured schedule of physical activity, animal care and interaction, therapy, social interaction, and nature-based activities will provide a restful setting in which the difficult tasks of relearning, responding, and reconnecting can occur. We have conducted a
preliminary estimate of the basic costs and fees that will be generated by this facility. This preliminary estimate provides a rough vision for the possibilities and helps provide a context for the next steps in building the Legacy Ranch.

We envision a 200-acre facility with a maximum on-site capacity of 60 participants. Visits are set at 30 day, 5 day, and weekend retreat lengths and provide for 35 high-need participants and 25 low-need participants. Participants can return for multiple treatment stays. Using this accounting we estimate that the facility can serve 3,020 participants per year with a total of 18,100 participant days. We have a preliminary estimate of 15 staff and 2 managers that will run the facility. Interns, students, visiting faculty, and volunteers from NMSU and the community will be anticipated to provide significant activities and expertise to the Ranch.

Summary

Given the large estimated population of veterans with PTSD, TBI, and major depression; the lack of appropriate care; and an understaffed and uncaring VA system the benefits that the Legacy Ranch can bring to our military community are significant. The economic and social costs of our current treatment system are not readily estimated, but even the most conservative estimate of the cost is upward of $10 billion dollars. Additionally, NMSU sits in a region with 2.35 million estimated veterans (Arizona, New
Mexico, and Texas).\textsuperscript{1} NMSU is within 35 miles of the largest military installation (White Sands Missile Range); and 55 miles from the second largest military installation Ft. Bliss, which is home to more than 29,000 active duty personnel, 2,000 reservists, and more than 40,000 family members.\textsuperscript{2} NMSU sits in the center of a high-need area. The opportunity for this institution to serve not only our military community here in New Mexico but to be a magnet for veterans and service members from around the country is immense.

New Mexico State University is in a unique position to create a world-class and leading treatment center for our military community. Legacy Ranch can provide an integrated way of bringing evidence and research based therapies to military members, their families, and veterans in a safe and inviting manner that destigmatizes treatment. The Legacy Ranch provides a healing nature-animal based treatment system while training the next generation of health providers and educators. The Legacy Ranch will build a new paradigm for helping our military community while generating new opportunities for New Mexico State University in terms of recruitment, retention, training, education, research, and outreach. Legacy Ranch is an opportunity to transform veteran’s care for PTSD and major depression by using New Mexico State University’s unique land grant based abilities and resources.

\textbf{References}


Pictures in Figure from Google Images. Key picture links below.

\url{http://provo-canyon-parks.weebly.com/trefoil-ranch.html}
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