

# ROB'S RANCH: WHERE HOPE BEGINS

By Daily Downer

After Hightberger's life changed the day his roommate showed a shotgun in his face and gave him an ultimatum: "Get out of the house or die!" Now, on the street with just the clothes on his back, he realized he'd become everything he hated: a liar, a cheat, and a thief.

"I was sick and tired of who I was and what I was doing," Hightberger said. "I knew I needed help because I couldn't help myself anymore."

Three weeks later, the Tulsa, Okla., resident entered the alcohol and drug addiction treatment program at Rob's Ranch in Purcell, Okla. Hightberger's story is only one of many who enter the program.

According to the National Institute of Health, an estimated 20 percent of people in the United States have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons. Lance Lang of Pryor, Okla., became part of these statistics after a series of operations led to a decade of prescription drug abuse.

"No matter how many pills I had," Lang said, "it was never enough."

He lost everything: his wife, his children and his job.

Chris Baugh had a trust fund and all the money he needed. The Edmond, Okla., resident graduated cum laude, had two college degrees and was excited about entering law school, his lifelong dream. His world appeared to be perfect; but one day, 17 years of drug addiction caught up with him. The police stopped him for driving without a headlight and found meth residue in his car. He now

faces a decade in prison; and, as a felon, he will never be allowed to practice law. Jason Woodring of Parker, Colo., was a major league baseball player, but addiction to alcohol and cocaine took everything he had.

"The last time I saw my children was in October 2011," Woodring said.

Rather than talk about his problems, he bottled them up. In desperation, he even tried to commit suicide.

For many of the residents at Rob's Ranch, an all-male recovery center on Oklahoma Electric Cooperative land, this is not their first treatment.

"In other facilities," said Floyd Carter, a Rob's Ranch staff member originally from Kingsport, Tenn., who's been through more than one program, "you go through a 20 to 30-day treatment. They give you some pamphlets. They tell you where the local meetings are, and then it's, 'Good luck to you.' Most of us spent years developing these bad habits so it's probably going to take a few years to create good ones."

The Ranch operates on the principle that community is the key to long-term, successful recovery and provides this community through its Alumni Association. After a 90-day residency, the clients are encouraged to return on a regular basis to participate in volunteer opportunities, sports, a winter ski trip, and counseling. "This helps them to keep connected and accountable," Carter said.

Baugh is on campus today as a participant of the alumni program. He'll attend lectures, go to some group meetings and visit with his counselor.

"High school is nice," Baugh said, "but Rob's Ranch is more like college. It's

one huge fraternity; and, without my brothers, I don't see success at all."

Another purpose for Baugh's visit is Transition. One of the residents is "graduating" and everyone is celebrating. As they wait for the ceremony to start, some of the men gather together on a leather sofa, talking and laughing; others sit at the card table shuffling dominos. The aroma of freshly made ham and cheese sandwiches wafts from the kitchen and "Joy to the World" by Three Dog Night blares through the sound system.

Family members begin to arrive and look for loved ones. Because addiction affects the whole family, the staff created a Family Program to help with recovery. Family members are encouraged to visit the Ranch on weekends and for special events. Counseling is offered to family members who need it.

Many of the staff members, themselves, are either recovering addicts or have loved ones who suffer from the disease. The founder, Richard "Dink" Liddell lost his son, Bobby, at age 37 as a result of addiction. Lang, Carter and Hightberger all completed the 90-day program at Rob's Ranch.

Lang, who has a bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership, is now the

executive director. Carter holds a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and is the health and fitness coordinator as well as part-time cook. According to the residents, he makes the best tuna salad in the whole world. Hightberger is now on staff doing outdoor maintenance.

Although Rob's Ranch is faith-based, the program is recommended by secular agencies, individuals, churches, counselors and other treatment centers.

"We are a Christ-centered facility," Lang said, "but we don't discriminate. We treat our clients with love and respect."

Jeff Largent's experience is a testimony to that love and respect. Faced with the choice of five years in prison or getting treatment, the Edmond, Okla., resident agreed to come to Rob's Ranch, but he was extremely angry.

"I hated this place," Largent said. "I didn't trust anybody, and I got in trouble the first week."

However, after a few weeks experiencing the staff's care, he changed his mind. "Now, there's not one person here I wouldn't do anything for," Largent said. "It's just amazing."

A scripture prominently displayed on the Rob's Ranch website says, "For I

**"IT'S ONE HUGE FRATERNITY; AND, WITHOUT MY BROTHERS, I DON'T SEE SUCCESS AT ALL."**

CHRIS BAUGH, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

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