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LEGACY  
RANCH

## HEALING THE INVISIBLE WOUNDS OF WAR



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

# Legacy Ranch

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*Healing our Military Service Members, their Families, and our Veterans*



## **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.

38 cabins

2 people per cabin

14 horses

2-4 cows

2-4 Sheep

Nature Trails

Gym

Hot Tub

Fishing

Gardens

Therapy Cabin

Homecoming Cabin

**Legacy Ranch**

Based on the above structure we estimate that at full capacity the facility will cost \$5,939,658 to run annually and a very conservative estimate of \$2.475 million to construct. It is also estimated that if we charge the current VA rate for psychosocial residential therapy that we could generate \$6,304,833 in fees for service. The preliminary estimate indicates that Legacy Ranch can provide a unique and high-quality approach to treating PTSD, Major Depression, and the results of TBI at a cost-effective rate.

<b>Cost Overview</b>	
<b>Facilities Investment Components</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Amount</b>
200 Acre Ranch	500,000.00
Housing for Participants	750,000.00
Housing for Staff	200,000.00
Meeting Buildings	120,000.00
Intake Building	60,000.00
Performance Spaces	40,000.00
Animal Facilities	28,000.00
Site Development and Infrastructure Costs	607,528.80
Natural Amenities (Lake and Trails)	40,000.00
Furnishing Rooms and Bathrooms	64,600.00
Gym	60,000.00
Spa Facility	5,000.00
<b>Total Facilities and Building Costs (Capital Outlay)</b>	<b>\$2,475,128.80</b>

In the preliminary cost estimate above, we provide a quick view of the major cost categories for the building of the working ranch. This estimate is a coarse view with high-level numbers so that issues of sizing, location, and scale can be discussed.

<b>Operational Components</b>	
<b>Operational Components</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Amount</b>
Animals	54,898.50
Food and Beverage	223,349.04
Toiletries and Kitchennette Sundries	209,657.85
Engagement Supplies	181,000.00
Art, Therapy and Activity Supplies	90,500.00
Utilities (water, electricity)	20,231.98
Telecommunications	2,479.45
Staff Labor Costs	2,402,400.00
Therapy and Medical Specialists	199,100.00
Administrative Labor Costs	150,000.00
Insurance	517,551.68
Legal	258,775.84
Administrative Costs	517,551.68
Overhead and Maintenance	517,551.68
Contingency	517,551.68
<b>Total Annual Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,939,658.29</b>
<b>VA Therapy Service Based Fee Generation</b>	<b>\$6,304,833.33</b>
<b>Potential Net On-Going Operations</b>	<b>\$365,175.04</b>

In the table above we provide the estimated annual operating costs for the 60-person capacity facility. These numbers are based on full utilization for an entire 365 day year. Additionally, we show the potential fees for service that could be generated from the facility. It is anticipated that this working ranch is a therapy service as would be covered under VA benefits. The illustration above is designed to show only the potential that the innovative treatment methods envisioned by the Legacy Ranch can potentially be economically feasible. The actual costs should be expected to vary significantly from this estimate. However, as a proof-of-concept and demonstration of the economic feasibility of the approach defined by the Legacy Ranch these estimates provide an important baseline and starting point for discussion with stakeholders.

## 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).<sup>1</sup> NMSU is within 35 miles of the largest military installation (White Sands Missile

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Maps/VetPop14\\_State.pdf](http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Maps/VetPop14_State.pdf)

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

## References

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

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=132:CONTENT:0::NO::P4\\_INST\\_ID,P4\\_INST\\_T YPE:4375%2CINSTALLATION](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=132:CONTENT:0::NO::P4_INST_ID,P4_INST_T YPE:4375%2CINSTALLATION)

