

The Bandera PROPHE'T

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Spirits of Texas donates to Echo Hill Ranch

A camp dedicated to kids who lost parents while serving

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi

The Bandera Prophet

Being a kid can be hard - especially for those who must navigate their first young years in the aftermath of a parent's death. To help them with that struggle, the Echo Hill Ranch gives children of fallen service members and first responders a safe place to take respite, and just be kids.

Owned by Kinky Friedman and his sister Marcie Friedman, the 266-acre ranch has been in the Friedman family since 1952. About 18 miles southwest of Kerrville just outside of Medina, the Echo Hill Ranch provides a safe, fun and relaxing summer camp experience - and doesn't cost the families a dime.

"Since its founding in 1953, Echo Hill has been a safe and happy place for boys and girls to spend their summers. Internationally recognized for its noncompetitive child-centered program, Echo Hill has focused on each youngster's successful away-from-home experience. Using a range of activities from horseback riding and swimming to the creative arts and athletics, Echo Hill builds self-confidence and improves social skills in children," according to its mission statement.

The camp has bunkhouses, a fully-equipped dining hall, infirmary and activities run by professional staff. Activities include swimming in Big Foot Wallace Creek, a spring-fed tributary of the Guadalupe River; horseback riding; camping; hiking; and fishing. All meals are kid-friendly, eaten family-style with their bunkhouse groups.

To help with some of those expenses, Nancy Harvey, of Bandera Spirits of Texas, donated \$3,000 to the ranch, to help keep it tuition free for campers.

“It takes a community of volunteers, donations and planning,” she said. Marcie Friedman, a certified camp director, oversees the operations and activities. She, with her brother Kinky Friedman, spent much of her childhood on the ranch, and looks forward each year to sharing her memories with others, while they form memories of their own. For more information, go to echohill.org, or call 830-589-2520.

The Echo Hill Ranch Gold Star Summer Camp dates are as follows:

June 10-13: Orientation and Volunteer Training

June 14-23: Gold Star Camp Session I

June 24-26: Intersession I

June 27 to July 6: Gold Star Camp Session II

July 7-10: Intersession II