



November 3, 2022

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Proposal to the City of San Marcos Community Initiatives CDBG-CV for Project HEAL

Candlelight Ranch provides educational and nature-based experiences for families and children of all abilities and needs to learn, explore, and heal. The founders of Candlelight Ranch envisioned a special, natural, and accessible Hill Country environment where children could experience the wonders and beauties of nature. Today, the beautiful 41-acre ranch located on the north shore of Lake Travis includes multiple accessible facilities for fun, educational and healing outdoor experiences.

Candlelight Ranch promotes physical and mental health by providing overnight, weekend and day programs filled with outdoor and natural science education, therapy, and challenge courses. Amenities include low ropes challenge courses, accessible zip lines and climbing tower, Carolyn's Canyon Crawl (225' bridge spanning the 80' deep canyon), Chillville water play and education area, an equine therapy facility, gardening and an expanding food forest, art projects using found natural materials, rainwater system, wheelchair-accessible tree house, fishing, canoeing and kayaking on Lake Travis (when available), and hikes and trail exploration with a Master Naturalist.

As a result of the growing need for safe and accessible outdoor spaces in Central Texas, Candlelight Ranch developed Project *HEAL*. Project *HEAL* allows families to register for a day immersed in our natural and healing environment where they can participate in our customizable activities while decreasing levels of stress and anxiety. During the pandemic the demand for our services increased by over 150%.

Through Project HEAL, Candlelight Ranch provides programming and services to underserved Central Texas children and families aimed to support and enhance healing of detrimental emotional responses to COVID-19. Clients include low to moderate income (HUD) families and children and families with special needs. Project HEAL offers individualized, customized programming designed to help reduce stress, anxiety, and PTSD, and increase family communication and bonding through the healing stability of nature.

Families use the low ropes courses to stimulate teamwork and confidence-building. Speeding down the zip lines and crossing the bridge 80 feet above the canyon results in a sense of accomplishment and overcoming of fears. Working with the ranch horses in our equine and EAGALA programming

encourages empathy, team work, and connection. Children and their caretakers are educated in surrounding wildlife as they learn about nature first-hand from the wildlife viewing platform and a nature hike with Candlelight Ranch's Master Naturalist. A day would not be complete without a refreshing cool-down from kayaking on Lake Travis and refreshing education from our interactive water feature.

Candlelight Ranch projects achieving the following Goals for Project HEAL for eligible San Marcos Families:

- a) To offer high quality, unique education, recreational, and therapeutic programs to at least 220 individuals and families who are underserved, at-risk, experienced trauma, and/or have special needs;
- b) To increase family time together, immersed in nature through a one- or two-day nature experiences with Candlelight Ranch's customizable nature activities.
- c) To assist families in stress and anxiety reduction by providing a safe and accessible space for respite, healing, and family reconnection.

Candlelight Ranch carefully measures experiences at the Ranch and will survey the families and individuals who participate. We project that 85% of participating families will report a decrease in stresses after their visit to Candlelight Ranch.

To evaluate the impact of Project HEAL, Candlelight Ranch administers and assesses changes in stress, anxiety, PTSD, and appreciation of nature using pre- and post-test evaluations of those ages 8 up. All adults are given the validated Generalized Anxiety Disorder – 7 item scale (GAD-7) to assess changes in pre and post visit levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

Candlelight Ranch will provide all activities, meals, snacks, equipment, and roundtrip transportation for family day events. We keep each family day to 40 participants to ensure high quality programming and activities.

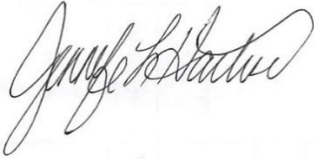
For 2023 and 2024 the following dates have been reserved for eligible San Marcos families:

- May 13, 2023, San Marcos Family Day (40 individual spots)
- June 10, 2023, Candlelight Ranch Family Day (20 individual spots)
- June 11, 2023, San Marcos Summer Family Day (40 individual spots)
- October 28, 2023, Fall Family Fest (20 individual spots)
- December 3, 2023, San Marcos Holiday Family Celebration (40 individual spots)
- March 15-17, 2024, San Marcos Family Spring Campout (40 individual spots)

Through relationships with the City of San Marcos, eligible families will have the opportunity to register for Project HEAL family day event. Candlelight Ranch will coordinate the event logistics and transportation times with each family. The City of San Marcos will assist with the promotion of the services by using social media, website, and reaching out to activity center, senior center, and parks and rec to promote with their low-mod families.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve City of San Marcos families and help them heal from the Covid-19 pandemic. If you have questions or need additional information, please reach out to me.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Hartner", written in a cursive style.

Jenn Hartner  
Executive Director

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