

MAJESTIC RANCH:

A Living Nightmare for Kids

Executive Summary

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[Zehnder Report #1](#), by investigative reporter Isabelle Zehnder, blows the whistle on abusive practices at Majestic Ranch, a privately operated residential facility for children in Randolph Utah.

It also blows the whistle on law enforcement officials for not protecting the children confined there, and the Utah Legislature for not passing legislation requiring facilities such as Majestic Ranch to be licensed and subject to routine and unannounced inspections by state agencies.

The report was submitted to the Governor, Attorney General, Department of Human Services, and all members of the Utah Legislature on February 28, 2005. It was also distributed to the media on that date.

This Executive Summary has been prepared for people who may not have the time to immediately read the full report. It contains highlights and excerpts from the report so that a quick glance through the Executive Summary will give the reader basic knowledge about the plight of the children living at Majestic Ranch.

Readers will wonder why state and local officials in Utah have not taken action against this specific facility and why it and all similar facilities are generally unmonitored and unregulated.

In my 30 years as an attorney and human rights advocate I have seen a wide range of policies and practices which have harmed many classes of people.

I thought I had seen just about everything, but I was alarmed when I learned about the living conditions of the children at Majestic Ranch. I was even more upset to learn that there are many other private facilities in the United States which abuse and neglect the children entrusted to their care.

With the dedication of people such as Isabelle Zehnder, and the emergence of advocacy organizations such as the Emancipation Project, a new era has arrived. Unsuspecting parents and vulnerable children no longer have to cope on their own with problematic experiences they have with “abduction” agencies and “reprogramming” businesses.

Similarly, law enforcement agencies and legislators will no longer have to rely on one-sided presentations and self-serving information given to them by business owners who are profiting from child abuse and neglect.

I hope that this summary and the report will prompt you to learn more. Visit the websites listed below and join us in blowing the whistle on child abuse.

Excerpts from the Report

About Sheriff Dale Stacey

A [Salt Lake Tribune story](#) (Feb. 16, 2005) reported that an investigation was initiated by state and local officials after current and former ranch employees filed complaints with Child Protective Services alleging unsanitary conditions, abuse, and neglect of the 60 plus children who stay there.

The story reported that Rich County Sheriff Dale Stacey and CPS workers visited the ranch the prior week. The story quoted Sheriff Stacey as saying:

“I don’t foresee any charges being filed, but that’s not entirely up to me.”

About Child Proective Services

Child Protective Services obviously did not see things the same way as Sheriff Stacey did. [E-mails from CPS](#) worker Wands Lundahl painted a much different picture.

Somehow (by the grace of God) Michelle R. (last name omitted) showed up at our office today. That is the Michelle that Kar (Karleen Farnsworth) was referring to. She brought a truckload of valuable information. Too much to write about.”

“Michelle will also be very instrumental in getting together the rest of the staff whom have left the ranch and want to expose the despicable way these children are being treated.”

“I am sickened by the way these kids are being systematically destroyed. Let us pray that this will be the time that we can shut them down.”

“We are assembling a very effective team for the sole purpose of doing all we possibly can (taking legal constraints into account) to help these unfortunate children.”

“There are 80+ kids over there living in hell who have no one to advocate for them. No one at all.”

Affidavits from Former Staff

Jared Quick

Jared Quick signed an Affidavit on Feb. 24, 2005 about his observations and knowledge of the conditions at

Majestic Ranch. ([See Affidavit of Jared Quick.](#)) Jared worked at the ranch from July 2004 to January 2005.

Intimidating disposition

Wayne Winder, ranch manager, is a very large man, about 6’7” to 6’8” so a lot of people are intimidated by him, especially the children. Jared told Wayne he did not intimidate Jared which made him madder.

Jared has seen Wayne grab children by the backs of their necks and drag them on the ground. Jared has seen Wayne chase children, drag them, throw them to the ground, and perform unnecessary and harsh restraints while they were lying on their stomachs.

Dangerous restraints

Majestic Ranch claims they practice the Mandt System for restraints. Jared did not receive any formal Mandt System training. The only training he received was first-level training that was given to him by Wayne Winder. It was very informal and he allowed staff to use books to take the tests. Wayne *never* brought in a professional trainer to train staff on any level of the Mandt System because he said it was too expensive.

Children at Majestic Ranch are restrained often. Many times they are restrained for the wrong reasons and not as a last resort as they are intended. Some staff and management abuse the use of restraints.

Isolation room

During intervention/Isolation, children are taken to a basement with one staff member. The door is locked and the staff wears a key around his neck. The children eat, shower, use the bathroom, do school work, and sleep in that room the entire time they are in isolation.

Mattresses were placed on the floor. They have no contact with other children or staff. The windows are screwed shut so they could not get out if there was a fire in the middle of the night. It was basically a lock-down area. The most I saw in there at one time was 3 children.

Punishment

Another form of discipline was called ADAPT (All Day Alternative Physical Training) which was used for children who misbehaved.

While they were there, they were forced to sit on crates in the snow. They were sent out in the clothing they were wearing at the time, which in some cases would mean a pair of shorts and hooded shirt. Some children sat out there for 3 hours or more. Children were sick often with colds and fevers.

While in ADAPT children were made to shovel manure, shovel snow, or perform other physical manual labor.

Psychological issues

Jared felt that many of the boys he worked with did not need to be in a program. It appeared that some of the children who were there had parents who did not want them. Some had anger problems and issues but none deserved the treatment they received at Majestic Ranch.

Many boys who were fine when they arrived finally snapped from the pressure, sadness, and pain.

Some children tried to commit suicide by drinking cleaners or by cutting themselves. Some had ADD, some were bi-polar. Many took strong medications.

Unlicensed dispensing of medication

Staff were given no training in disbursing strong prescription drugs. Shift leaders were the ones who were supposed to distribute the medications but they were not always available to do so. Jared had disbursed medications during those times. There was no nurse on site.

Lack of medical care

The children were sick often, more than normal children. When children were injured or sick they were not taken to a doctor right away. There were many occasions when children never got medical attention for illnesses and injuries when they should have.

Unsafe and unsanitary conditions

The windows were nailed shut in the dorms which was a fire hazard. There was a mouse problem in the kitchen. The sewage backed up at least once a day. Though it was frozen when I left you could still smell it. Sewage overflowed onto the ground daily.

Brittany Painter

Brittany Painter signed an Affidavit on Feb. 24, 2005 about her observations and knowledge of the conditions at Majestic Ranch. (See [Affidavit of Brittany Painter.](#)) Brittany worked at the ranch from September 2002 through December 2004.

Abusive practices

Some staff members made children sit in manure as punishment. If they refused to sit in the manure the staff physically tried to get them to sit down. If they would not cooperate staff was instructed to restrain them at that point. During restraints children were thrown to the ground, in the manure, at times with their faces in the manure. The children talked about the restraints and showed staff the manure all over their bodies. There was usually not enough staff to take the children to shower so they would have to wait to shower until the evening, often with manure on their bodies and clothing for hours.

Stark deprivation

Children appeared miserable at Majestic Ranch. Children as young as 7 had no dolls, no stuffed animals (only very few upper-level children had stuffed animals, and they were limited to two), no toys, no outdoor play equipment, no bicycles, nothing. There were several games but children were rarely allowed to play with them. They had virtually no fun activities for the children.

Lack of psychological treatment/training

Not only was Brittany not told about problems children had when they came into the program, but she was not trained to deal with them.

Some of the conditions that Brittany was aware that children suffered from include: (1) bi-polar; (2) suicidal; (3) extreme depression; (4) killing animals; (5) ADD-ADHD; (6) run-aways; (7) drug addicts as young as 11 years old; (8) sexual abuse, molestation, and rape; (9) children with bed-wetting issues, usually as a result of sexual abuse; (10) self- mutilation; (11) alcohol syndrome; and (12) mentally challenged.

Brittany was in no way trained to deal with these serious issues. Therapy was provided only to those whose parents paid an additional fee for the children to see an outside therapist. Out of all the children at the facility, only six or seven of them went to therapy every week or two.

Lack of medical treatment

On many occasions children were hurt or sick and they did not receive immediate, if any, medical treatment for their conditions.

Unlicensed drug dispensing

There was no on-site nurse to administer drugs or to monitor the children's health. There was no other on-site medical staff or psychiatric staff. Supervisors distributed medications. If the supervisor was busy then any other staff could distribute the medications to the children. There were medications such as Zoloft, birth control pills, Lexapro, sleeping medications, and more.

Unsafe and unsanitary conditions

The kitchen was filthy. Food was mishandled and children were fed cross-contaminated meats. When the dorms were full a child's bed was moved into the kitchen for about two weeks.

The dishwasher did not work well so children had to wash their own dishes in a tub of soapy water shared by a lot of children. The dishes were not cleaned to food handler's standards because an extra rinse with Clorox was not done. The kitchen ran out of hot water before the dishes were done so they were being cleaned in cold water. The

kitchen staff complained that the dishes were not properly cleaned.

Poor food and nutrition

Children were given only one glass of milk per day. If they complained they were warned they would receive powdered milk instead. They were fed a lot of Cisco canned foods. They were fed mostly packaged, unhealthy foods.

Child labor

Children are forced to do their own laundry (there was only one washer and dryer in the girls' unit that was broken most of the time). The dishwasher was not large enough to accommodate all of the children's dirty dishes so children were forced to wash their own dishes. Children are forced to clean their own living quarters. There is no cleaning staff.

As a privilege upper level children are allowed to clean Dan Peart's personal cabin and to paint his cabin. As a reward, they are allowed to eat "normal" food.

Karleen Farnsworth

Karleen Farnsworth signed an Affidavit on Feb. 21, 2005) about her observations and knowledge of the conditions at Majestic Ranch. (See [Affidavit of Karleen Farnsworth.](#)) Karleen worked at the ranch for three weeks in January 2005 and quit when she could not tolerate the conditions there any longer.

During her short stay there, Karleen witnessed child abuse and neglect, animal neglect, and unhealthy living conditions. Her past employment history with the Utah Youth Corrections, and her training with that agency, alerted her to the fact that Majestic Ranch was a bad place for children to be and a bad place for employees to work.

With the facts she knew about abuse and neglect, Karleen called Craig Barlow in the Attorney General's office. He told her to call Debbie Kurzban in the Department of Licensing which she did. She also called Ken Stettler's office and was told by an employee to call Child Protective Services in Logan.

Karleen then reported the child abuse and neglect to CPS in Logan but never heard back from them again.

Staff dissatisfaction

During her last week on the job, Karleen was told by her shift leader and the supervisor that several unhappy staff members have walked off the job and demanded better working conditions, better food and water for the children, better medical treatment for the children, and better housing for the staff. Management threatened to turn in

the staff for child abandonment if they left, and some staff stayed as a result of that threat.

Mental health concerns

Karleen was required to work with a wide range of children at Majestic Ranch, from kids with no prior reported problems at home to children who had previously been in a mental institution. Some of the girls were bi-polar and others suicidal. Others suffered from abandonment issues, post traumatic stress disorder and night terrors.

This information really makes one wonder why Majestic Ranch is not required to be licensed as a mental health facility by the State of Utah.

Unusual punishments

Karleen's affidavit goes into great detail about unusual punishments and practices which endanger the health and safety of the children. For example, children who have too many consequences or even just a "bad attitude" are made to stand outside on a milk crate for extended periods of time in sub-freezing temperatures.

Children who refuse to shovel manure are made to do so with their bare hands.

Inadequate medical attention

Karleen's affidavit also discusses the lack of prompt and necessary medical attention. For example, an outbreak of scabies has not been properly dealt with.

Food and water were making the children sick with vomiting and diarrhea. Staff bring their own food and water to avoid serious stomach problems.

One boy had rotten teeth and one tooth fell out. In the three weeks Karleen was there, he was not taken to a dentist.

A girl suffered from severe knee pain for the entire time Karleen was there. She was never taken to a doctor.

Another girl's glasses were broken for a month and she was never taken to an optician to get new ones.

Unlicensed dispensing of medications

There are many children at the ranch who are taking medications on a daily basis. The medications are administered by staff who do not have any medical license. For example, a 19 year old female staffer routinely dispensed medications.

Some children complained they were being given the wrong doses of their medications. When Karleen was at Youth Corrections, unlicensed staff were not even allowed to dispense aspirin.

Unsafe conditions

The windows in the girls' dorms were screwed shut and there was no smoke detector in one of those dorms.

Staff are told to sleep with their beds blocking the door so the children will not escape at night, thus posing a hazard in case of the need to quickly escape in case of a fire.

There is only one bathroom for 12 or more girls and the door is always propped open so there is no privacy.

Bedding is not cleaned on a regular basis. Some of the bedding had not been cleaned for over a month.

Brainwashing

Karleen witnessed a 15 year old girl who ran visualization exercises for the children. As she was playing music, she would tell the children to visualize their families leaving them because they were bad children. This caused all of the children to break down in tears.

Raw sewage

At the time Karleen was on staff, there was a problem with raw sewage on the premises. It was frozen and not visible, but could be smelled from the water tap.

Sara Concetta

Sara Concetta signed an Affidavit on Feb. 21, 2005 about her observations and knowledge of the conditions at Majestic Ranch. (See [Affidavit of Sara Concetta](#).) Sara worked there from Sept. 21, 2004, to Feb. 11, 2005.

Last minute cover up

Just prior to her leaving, children told her that Wayne Winder got notice that the Fire Marshall was coming for an inspection. Winder was seen putting up smoke detectors and making corrections to bring things up to code in advance of the inspection.

Just before she quit her job, children told her that Winder had made them come into his office and asked them to fill out a form which inquired as to whether they felt threatened at Majestic Ranch or by him personally.

Some of these children told Sara that they said no because they were afraid if they told the truth – that they were afraid of Winder – there would be consequences.

Inadequate clothing and hygiene

The children do not receive adequate clothing even though the parents are paying thousands of dollars per month for the program. Dirty clothing is often worn because of inadequate laundry facilities.

Conclusion

The facts contained in this report are only the tip of the evidentiary iceberg.

[Other staff were interviewed](#) but were reluctant to sign affidavits, probably due to fear. Nonetheless, their verbal statements more than corroborated the facts in the affidavits that were received.

This report, and supporting documents, raise serious questions about the failure of child protection agencies in Utah to protect the children at Majestic Ranch and to conduct a proper investigation.

Why have not more staff members and former staff members been called by these agencies for interviews?

Why were the children not interviewed when law enforcement went to the ranch to inspect it?

Was Majestic Ranch tipped off about the impending inspection, and if so, were any of the agency personnel responsible for giving the tip?

Why have the parents of these children not been notified that CPS was given evidence of abuse and neglect?

What will it take for the Utah Attorney General to prosecute?

The report also raises questions about why Utah law does not require facilities such as Majestic Ranch to be licensed and subject to unannounced inspections.

Finally, any reasonable person reading this report will wonder when the law will be strengthened to protect children entrusted into the care of a private business.

This report is being made available to the Governor, Attorney General, and all members of the Utah Legislature. They are being advised about the existence of this report and are being provided with the link to the online version on my website – www.kidsincaptivity.com – they can read it online and print it out.

The report is also being given to members of Congress with the hope that one or more of them will forward it to the Attorney General of the United States, asking for a full investigation into the allegations and evidence raised in this report.

There is a need for official intervention into this unacceptable situation in Utah. With the help of the media, the public will learn about this scandal and hopefully will join in this demand for reform – for the sake of the children.

