

FALL 2025

# MO-MESSENGER

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF PRESBYTERIAN MO-RANCH ASSEMBLY



*Faith to Move Forward*

MO-RANCH

# CONTENTS

3 LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

4 THE FLOOD

6 THE BIG CLEAN-UP

8 RE-OPENING

10 CAMP IN THE VALLEY

11 GIVING BACK

On the Cover:  
A glorious sunset from  
Chapel on the Hill.

Follow us:



“  
The 4th of July  
will also be  
remembered as a  
day the river rose.”



## FAITH TO MOVE FORWARD

FROM THE PRESIDENT

IN ANY GIVEN YEAR, THE 4TH OF JULY IS A DAY THAT WE HAVE SET ASIDE AS A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND CELEBRATION OF OUR NATION AND OUR INDEPENDENCE. While that day will continue to be a reason for celebration for centuries to come, in our little neck of the woods, it will also be remembered as a day the river rose.

Words to describe what our beloved Hill Country went through and continues to go through elude me to this day. The level of loss and destruction felt by so many of our neighbors and friends downriver will continue to shape our area for decades to come as we try to rebuild what was taken.

As a photographer, I have spent so many days chasing the light to capture the perfect photo. Today, I am chasing the light in different ways as I seek out stories of light that point us towards moments of God’s presence in a time that has been dark for so many.

It is this light that has given us the Faith to Move Forward.

There have been so many stories of light that have helped us to remember exactly why the mission of Mo-Ranch is just as important today as it ever has been before. A place set aside to serve as a space of faith formation, spiritual retreat, respite, and communities to gather.

Mo-Ranch is special because of each of you. Your thoughts and prayers, your financial support, and your attendance at a camp or conference have all helped shape this place and allow us to live out our ministry for the world to see.

Over the past few months, we have served a new group of people who had never heard of Mo-Ranch before. Volunteers, first responders and people from around the nation came to the area to help. Each of them now has their own story of how this place is a place of respite and sacred ground.

In the pages of this Messenger, you will see the impact and some of the stories of this summer’s flood and how we responded and reacted to the situation, as well as how we continue to live out our mission for the world to see.

It is in this spirit that we are so excited to continue living into our mission with a full lineup of programs, camps, conferences, retreats, and gatherings that will bring people back together and continue to breathe life into this place. I hope that you will consider coming back to Mo soon and recharge your soul as we continue to set the table for you.

Tim Huchton

Tim Huchton  
| President and C.E.O.



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The July 4th floods  
along the north fork  
of the Guadalupe  
River started at  
Mo-Ranch.

## NIGHT OF THE FLOOD

AROUND 1 AM, JULY 4TH, 2025, IT BEGAN TO FLOOD AT MO-RANCH.

**THE STORM AWOKE AROLD BARRERA**, Director of Facilities and Environmental Stewardship, who lives on the property with his wife, Blanca, a sales manager. He'd been monitoring the rain all week, so he knew the ground was already saturated with water, putting us in the danger zone. He went outside to check things out and couldn't see more than 20 feet ahead of him through the deluge. The dried-up creek bed behind his house was running like a river. In the 30 years he had worked at Mo-Ranch, Aroldo had never seen rain like this. And it was only going to get worse.

He went inside and woke up Blanca and their son, Andrew, a 23-year-old grounds employee. Andrew and Aroldo got in their truck to survey the ranch and could see that things were already in a bad way. Water was rushing down the retaining wall in front of the indoor chapel and surging through Wilson Draw, the natural creekbed that separates Youth Plaza from Guest Lodge Road. At that point, there was already two feet of water on the road. Aroldo checked the weather radar and described a big red surge of activity that was following a subtle clockwise pattern, almost like a hurricane. Mo-Ranch was at the edge of the activity, a couple of miles upriver from us, the Guadalupe was stable and calm. The July 4th floods along the north fork of the Guadalupe River started at Mo-Ranch. Aroldo believes that if it had been built up even just a few miles further north, things would have been significantly worse.

Aroldo and Blanca began fielding calls from guests on the property who had seen water entering their rooms from the storm. They gave them careful instructions on how to stay safe. Blanca took up post at the front desk in case any guests came with concerns or fears, and Andrew was stationed at the front gate to direct anyone trying to leave

to turn right instead of left. If you turn right out of Mo-Ranch, you follow a highwater route to Highway 41 and eventually to I-10. The other option a typically scenic drive through Hunt along 1340, marked by numerous low-water crossings. If things were bad at Mo-Ranch, they would be much worse in Hunt.

Aroldo woke Tim Huchton, President and CEO of Mo-Ranch and briefed him on the situation. At 2:54am, Aroldo sent an email to all Mo-Ranch staff informing them of an emergency flood situation and urging them to stay put and not travel until further notice.

Together, Tim and Aroldo decided to evacuate River Dorm and Guest Lodge, the only lodging Mo-Ranch has along the river. These buildings were offering a home to youth groups visiting Mo-Ranch for the annual Intercultural Youth Conference. They woke up the kids and their sponsors and let them know that they were going to be okay, but they needed to be moved to higher ground. They loaded them up in a Mo-Ranch bus and drove them way up to Nicklos Hill that led to a service road which connected them back to the main part of the ranch. The ranch had lost power by this point, but Blanca and programs manager Echo Clark had set up lanterns in the Dishman auditorium, where these guests waited in place until the sun came up.

There were 580 people on the property on July 4th, including guests and staff. By the grace of God, all were able to leave the ranch and safely return to their homes. The campers in Loma Linda slept through the night and reunited with their parents at closing as planned. The ranch remained without power or connectivity for multiple days. Once power was restored and all guests were safely home, it was time for the staff to consider the next steps.



## THE NEXT DAY

MO-RANCH WAS CLOSED FOR A WEEK TO ALLOW FOR THE CLEANUP OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE FLOOD AND TO FACILITATE RECOVERY.

ONCE THE POWER WAS BACK ON AND THE RAIN WAS IN THE REARVIEW, it was time to bring back the beauty of the riverfront. The water had receded, leaving the area an absolute mess. Debris was everywhere, and not an inch of the ground could be seen through the diluvial muck.

With summer camp canceled for the week, the counselors, OEM staff, and every other spare set of hands began to work on clearing the mess. First Presbyterian Church of Houston was scheduled to come out that week for their annual retreat but sent multiple church members instead to help with the clean-up efforts.

Much of the damage done to the property was infrastructural. The sheer force of the water ripped up the asphalt along Wilson Draw and the low water crossing, making both impassable. Some of the buildings sustained water damage from leaks and flooding. The grounds and maintenance teams worked together to repair as much as possible to enable a safe reopening.

With no guests on the property, Mo-Ranch was able to offer housing to first responders and rescue teams working in the greater Hunt area. Many expressed their gratitude at having a peaceful place to rest after long, hard days in the field. Flood relief in Kerr County was a communal effort, and all were involved in some way.

Meanwhile, the guest services and sales teams fielded calls from the guests whose summer trips to Mo-Ranch were canceled due to the flood, issuing refunds to all who requested them. July is typically one of Mo's busiest months, but even though the ranch reopened after a week, the riverfront had to remain closed until it was clear of bacteria and debris. Every group that was scheduled in July understandably canceled their visits, from church retreats to family reunions and weekend getaways. This, alongside the cancellations of a week of summer camp and Junior High Jubilee, resulted in a significant loss of revenue.

The Mo-Ranch family was quick to respond with donations and well-wishes. They helped cover the lost revenue as well as cleanup efforts. A special Employee Assistance Fund was created to help Mo staff members who'd lost their homes or belongings in the flood. A significant amount was raised, entirely from donations.

The week after July 4th showed the strength of the Mo family and the communal love we all hold for this thin space. With the support of the camp community, the quick and proficient work of the staff, and the generosity of the donors, Mo-Ranch was able to reopen its gates to continue offering a unique living, learning, Christian environment.



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*It was time to bring back the beauty of the riverfront.*



## THE NEXT WEEK

MO-RANCH REOPENED ON JULY 11TH, THOUGH NOT WITHOUT CHALLENGES.

**THE RIVER WAS STILL INACCESSIBLE FOR SAFETY CONCERNS** and State Highway 39 from Hunt was closed down to all but essential traffic. But these obstacles did not stop the participants of ART @ Mo from attending their favorite conference. For more than 20 years, ART @ Mo has been a beloved program for artists of all skill levels to hone their craft and learn new ones. At the end of the five-day conference, each participant goes home with something they themselves created. This year, in response to the flooding in Kerr County, multiple participants found ways to use their art to give back to their home away from home.

The quilting class, led by Connie Watkins, is a longtime staple of the conference. Participants bring their quilting projects to a communal workshop, where they can swap tips and techniques with fellow quilters and celebrate their craft together. This year, they all worked on one quilt together to raffle off in support of Flood Relief at Mo-Ranch. Each quilter tackled a square, working off Watkins' example star pattern. The end result is a beautiful Christmas quilt handcrafted by some of the most talented quilters Texas has to offer. Tickets are available for purchase online at [MORANCH.ORG/STORE](https://moranch.org/store) with 100% of sales going to the continued flood relief efforts at Mo-Ranch. The raffle will be drawn around Thanksgiving, just in time to make a perfect Christmas gift. Connie Watkins was honored to use part of her class to give back to Mo-Ranch. "It's the best feeling in the world, being able to help," she said. "Mo-Ranch has been an important part of my life for a long time, so it's an honor to be able to help out in their time of need."

Beyond the quilting class, ART @ Mo participants donated stained glass works and welded crosses to the prayer tank, to stand as comforts and reminders for the lives lost downriver on the 4th. At Grand Camp the next week, grandparents and their grandkids worked together on a mission project to put together hygiene kits for Kerr County residents rendered homeless by the flood. Each of these cases is an example of the mission of Mo-Ranch in action. The passion and servant hearts of our programs participants after July 4th offered strength and encouragement to the Mo-Ranch staff and helped them build the faith to move forward.

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*It's an honor to be able to help out in their time of need.*



## SPOTLIGHT:

# Blanca and Aroldo Barrera

### IN MANY WAYS, MO-RANCH IS A FAMILY BUSINESS.

There are currently five married couples on the staff, multiple sets of siblings, and parents and children working alongside each other. But with more than 50 years of experience between them, no family has put in more work at Mo-Ranch than Blanca and Aroldo Barrera. At this year's staff party, Aroldo was recognized for 30 years of service at Mo-Ranch. As the Director of Environmental Stewardship and Facilities, he knows these 500 acres better than anyone. His spiritual mission is to look after this beautiful property bestowed upon Mo-Ranch so the world may share in it. His wife, Blanca, believes her mission is to bring in people to share it with. A beloved sales manager, she has worked at Mo since 2001, building lasting relationships with churches across the state and family reunions that come back year after year. Together, they are a perfect example of setting the table for our guests to experience this living, learning, Christian environment. Married for 37 years, the two of them met at high school in Rocksprings, just down the road from Hunt. They raised four children here, all of whom worked their first jobs at Mo-Ranch. Their daughter Dahlia was married here. Their son, Andrew, was born here and now works alongside his father as a member of the grounds team. Needless to say, for the Barreras, the July 4th flood hit very close to home.

They worked tirelessly all night on the 4th to keep everyone on the ranch safe and accounted for, and spent the coming weeks working day in and out alongside the rest of the Mo-Ranch staff to help recuperate as much as possible.



In Aroldo's case, that meant repairing facilities and clearing debris; in Blanca's, communicating directly with her sales groups that were choosing not to come this year.

And yet, even once Mo-Ranch reopened, they felt their job wasn't done. Their mission now extended beyond the Mo-Ranch gates to a community that was hurting after the flood. For two weeks after the 4th, Blanca and Aroldo worked a day's shift at Mo-Ranch and then volunteered in Hunt and West Kerr, wherever needed. They helped translate FEMA contracts to Spanish speakers at relief camps. They delivered ice to fire stations without power and brought water to work crews late in the day. As longtime residents of Kerr County, they knew which areas would be the hardest to reach and brought refreshments to them first. "This is our community," said Blanca. "Every one of our kids grew up at the Hunt School. What if those missing kids were our kids? We had to help."

The Barreras lead by example, letting their actions speak for the power of family and the mission of Mo-Ranch. Blanca and Aroldo's story is special, but it is not unique. They are just two of the many members of Mo's staff that gave their personal time to help with flood relief in Kerr County. And multiple couples have followed in their stead to work together at Mo-Ranch while raising a family. The staff at Mo-Ranch doesn't just set the table for their guests, but for their fellow employees, and the greater community. Working as one, they give one another the strength and the faith to move forward.





# THE NEXT MONTH

## CAMP BEYOND OUR GATES

**MO-RANCH HAS LONG BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF THE SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE.** As the amount of technology and screentime kids have access to increases, so do childhood depression rates. Many kids these days lack important social skills and core values. By spending a week or more at summer camp, detached from technology and the pressures of daily life, under the guidance of Christian adult role models, kids gain confidence, learn new skills, and grow closer to God, nature, and one another. After the tragic events of July 4th, the camp experience was suddenly more important than ever.

Every summer, Mo-Ranch brings summer camp to children in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas who would otherwise never get to experience it. Camp in the Valley extends our mission beyond our gates, even when, as was the case this year, those gates are closed. After a long, hard week of cleanup and recovery, the camp counselors and staff packed up and headed to Edinburg, TX. Camp in the Valley is about offering an escape for kids to just be kids, but this year, it provided a kind of escape for the counselors as well. It renewed dampened spirits and let them focus on the core of their job: bringing growth and joy to kids who need it. Billy Abbate, the Assistant Director of OEM, said that “this year, Camp in the Valley wasn’t just for the kids—it was for our staff, too. With all the difficulties in Kerr County, we were all feeling the strain. But watching the campers find joy, build friendships, and discover their own strength, it gave us a purpose.”

Camp in the Valley is funded entirely by the generosity of donors like you. For more information on how you can give, visit [MORANCH.ORG](https://MORANCH.ORG) today.



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*This year, Camp in the Valley wasn’t just for the kids—it was for our staff, too.*



## MO GIVES BACK

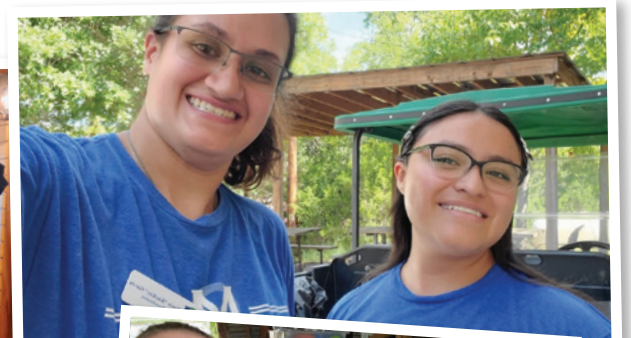
# GIVING BACK in a New Way

**IN 2022, MO CREATED A ONE-DAY SUMMER EVENT** exclusively designed to raise money for local non-profit organizations. First branded Molympics, then re-branded in 2024 to Mo Gives Back, the employees worked together for a day each year dedicated to meeting the needs of other organizations, coupled with a day of fun for families and the community to enjoy Mo-Ranch and the riverfront. Several organizations over the years like Mercy Gate Ministries, the VA Dogs of Texas, Doyle Community Center, the Hill Country Youth Ranch, the Texas Round Up Animal Alliance, Families in Literacy, and Kerrville Pets Alive all benefited from Mo Gives Back.

Mo Gives Back 2025 was scheduled for August 16 but due to the devastation of the July 4th flood and continued clean-up efforts across the area, the on-site event was canceled. Instead, Mo-Ranch decided to reserve that day to

get out and give back to the community wherever needed. President and CEO Tim Huchton encouraged every employee to volunteer in the community that day. Staff donned their matching Mo Gives Back shirts and chose a charity that mattered most to them. Some went as a group, others went individually. They braved heavy rain to hand out food to people driving up in need, helped with clean-up effort along the Guadalupe, cleaned cages at animal shelters belonging to the many furry friends displaced in the flood, helped organize medical equipment donated to a senior center, and helped paint homes under reconstruction.

The initiative was so successful and rewarding that the 3rd Saturday in August will remain a day that Mo-Ranch employees step out into the community in unison to give back while continuing to give back in other ways throughout the year.



MEET, STAY, PLAY & PRAY, YEAR-ROUND AT MO!

PRESBYTERIAN  
**MO-RANCH**  
ASSEMBLY

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