

2025



ANNUAL REPORT



2025 was a landmark year for Holbrook Farms. Strategic investment in our operational programs led to measurable gains in productivity, strengthened financial stewardship, increased fundraising success, and reduced retreat expenses – all while preserving the exceptional quality and life-changing impact of the retreats that remain at the heart of our mission. None of this would be possible without the unwavering generosity of our donors and the dedication of our volunteers.

26 Women Served

Operational Highlights

- Hosted 3 transformative retreats in Detroit Lakes, MN
- Leveraged Executive Director and Retreat Coordinator to boost growth and improve program delivery
- Invested in fundraising CRM to strengthen donor stewardship, improve transparency, & increase capacity
- Redesigned website to improve accessibility, elevate storytelling, & deepen donor & community engagement
- Hosted our 1st booth at the Gary Sinise Snowball Express Summer Resource Fair, increasing visibility and outreach to military and veteran families.



- Successfully executed inaugural Hearts for Holbrook fundraiser at Holbrook Farms – an impactful community event featuring a car show, open house, Field of Flags, and fun run.
- Launched new initiatives to strengthen connection between Holbrook Farms alumni
- Increased local community engagement through school and service club visits, parade participation, and nonprofit networking
- Welcomed 3 new board members, further strengthening leadership & organizational expertise

2025 Retreat Highlights



Survivors of Heroes Retreat

Gourmet Cooking Club. We also welcomed two children who attended Camp Cormorant while their moms were at Holbrook; a visit from the Ice Cream Truck on was a fun surprise!

July brought our 5th annual **Sisters of the Fallen Retreat**. They arrived strangers and left sisters. Each participant shared the profound loss of a brother in military service and found connection, healing, and renewed peace through the restorative environment of Holbrook. From crafts to ta'i chi to massages to troll hunting, these beautiful ladies took every opportunity to build bonds, work on their wellness, and enjoy nature around them.



Sisters of the Fallen Retreat

In September, Holbrook Farms hosted their **Alumni Retreat**, a powerful reflection of the lasting impact of our mission. Alumni returned to the Farm at their own expense to invest their time and talents in support of future retreat participants, exemplifying the spirit of service and community that defines Holbrook Farms. The retreat included a first-time community service project with the Lakes Crisis & Resource Center, extending our mission to the Detroit Lakes community. Alumni also played a critical role in the planning and execution of the inaugural Hearts for Holbrook Open House and Car Show, supporting donor engagement, property tours, and event logistics. Their leadership and dedication were key to the event's success and highlighted the sustainable, generational impact of Holbrook Farms' retreat experience.

Holbrook is healing, self-care, much-needed...

"Thank you for providing a pause. A pause for me to enjoy some time and self-care that is normally hard to do. This is a much needed retreat and I am truly and forever thankful for the opportunity to experience your little slice of heaven. Thank you!" –Widow



Alumni Retreat

"I will be forever grateful for the week I just had, so restorative and healing. Thank you so, so much! I've felt seen and cared for in a way that I had not experienced since my brother's passing." –Sister

2025 Fundraising Report

Honoring Our Military Spouse Community Partners

In addition to our Hearts for Holbrook and Annual Appeal fundraisers, Holbrook Farms is deeply grateful for the unwavering support we received this year from military spouse organizations across the country. Their generosity reflects not only a commitment to service, but a shared belief in strengthening families, fostering resilience, and creating meaningful impact within our community.

Through their collective contributions of \$6,750, these spouse organizations helped further our mission and expand our ability to serve those who need it most. Their support validates our mission and expands our financial foundation. We are honored to recognize the following military spouse groups for their financial support in 2025:

- **Cannon Spouses Club – \$2,000**
- **Hurlburt Spouses Club – \$1,000**
- **Kirtland Spouses Club – \$1,500**
- **Langley Spouses Club – \$250**
- **Malmstrom Spouses' Club – \$500**
- **Mountain Home Officers Spouses' Club – \$1,000**
- **Team Seymore Spouses' Club – \$500**

“Holbrook Farms has a feeling of peace from the moment you walk in. The home has a cozy feel and space to relax in. The lake and trees create a safe space to laugh and cry. Thank you!!” --Sister

Scheels SUPPORT

Social Media Giving Day Impact

During Social Media Giving Day, the Scheels store in Fargo, North Dakota invited the community to help choose where to give \$1,000 to three local non-profits. With over 2,000 comments on a single post, Holbrook Farms was selected as one of the top vote-getters—earning a \$1,000 donation. Thank you to Scheels and to everyone who commented and supported our mission!



HOLBROOK FARMS Patron

Funding of our 2026 retreats remains incomplete. We urgently invite you to stand with our survivors by becoming a Holbrook Farms Patron by visiting www.holbrookfarms.org. Your partnership ensures that healing, connection, and hope remain accessible to those who need it most.



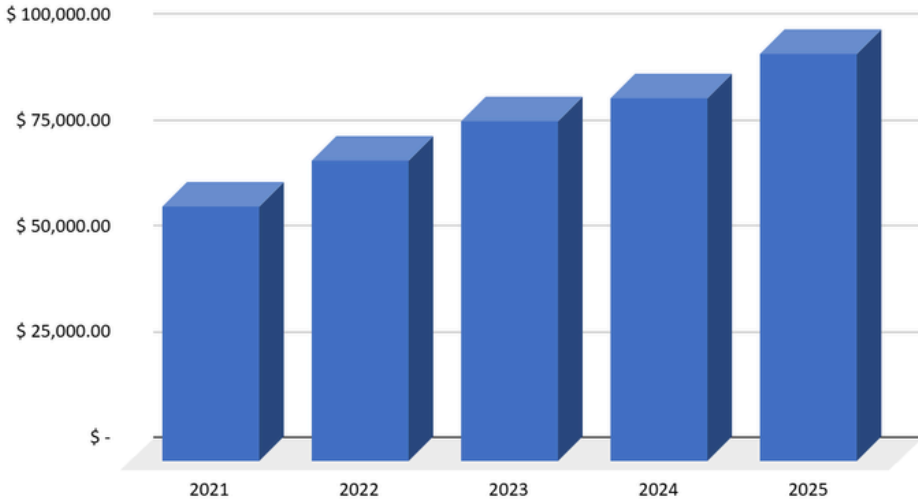
Holbrook Farms is a nationally recognized Combined Federal Campaign nonprofit and is eligible to receive donations. *Please encourage all government employees and military members to donate to charity:*

#51197

2025 Financial Report

Over the past year, Holbrook Farms has continued to grow in both reach and impact as we support our retreat participants, building upon two pivotal transitions made in 2025—the partnering with Tellwell and introduction of paid staff. Tellwell is a Fargo-based story-telling and branding firm that helped rebrand Holbrook Farms and produce a high-quality website, videos and social media that capture the heart and purpose of our organization.

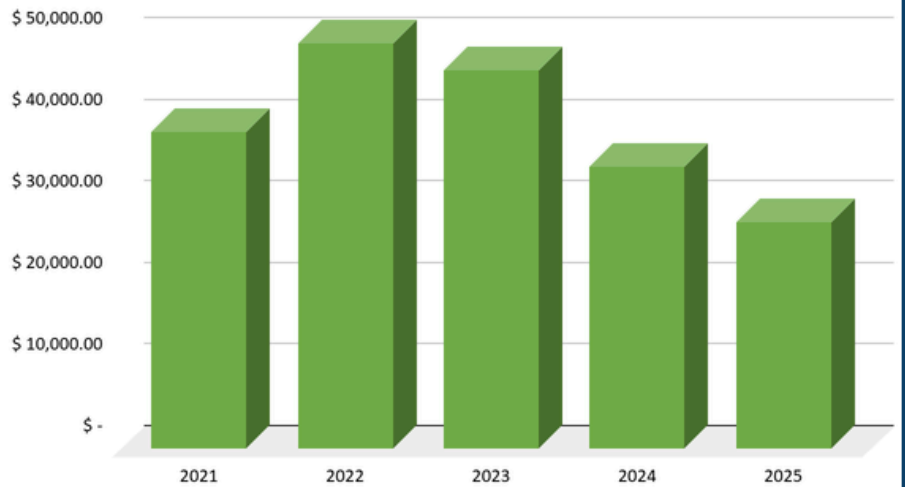
Contributions, Grants and Donations



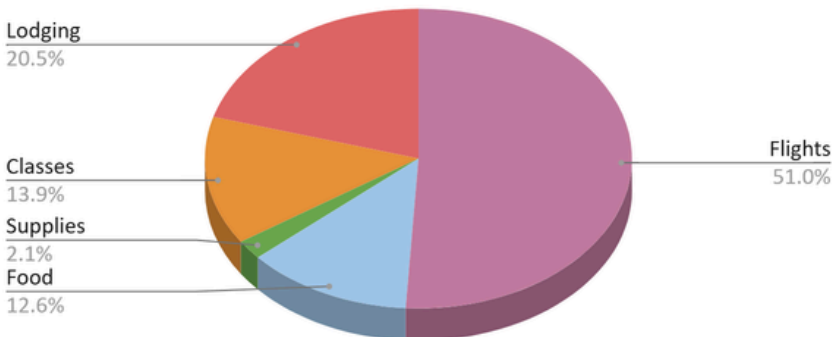
In her first full year as Executive Director, Sarah Merwin provided consistent leadership and operational support, enabling our volunteer Board to focus on long-term strategy and contributing to a 10% increase in overall donations.

Our Executive Director and Retreat Coordinator strengthened retreat planning and execution, achieving a 20% reduction in retreat-related expenses by leveraging Detroit Lakes connections to secure volunteers and in-kind donations.

Retreat Expenses



2025 Retreat Expenses

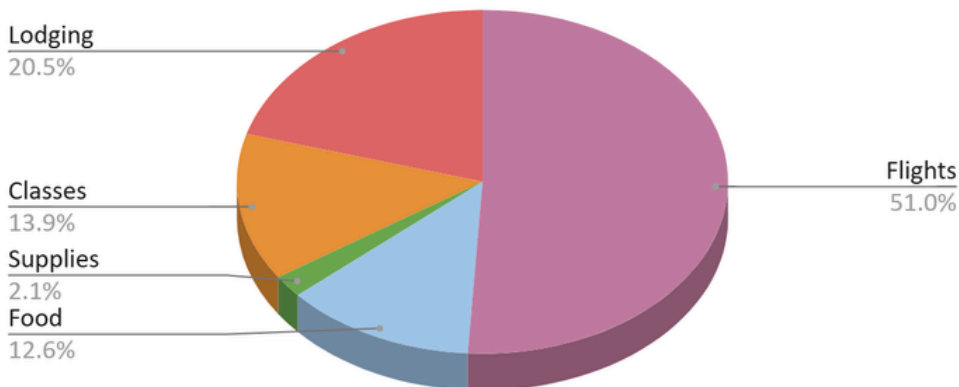


As in previous years, airline travel remains the largest portion of our retreat expenses, followed by lodging, meals, and the costs of classes and activities.

2025 Financial Report

While the Tellwell partnership represented a non-recurring \$19,000 expense in the current year, the resulting content will continue to support our outreach, fundraising, and community engagement efforts for years to come without the need for ongoing production costs.

2025 Retreat Expenses



Despite the strategic investments made in 2025, our primary focus continued to be delivering the three retreats throughout the year. Building on these successes, we look forward to leveraging our strengths for an even more impactful 2026.



Left to right: While their moms get some much need time at Holbrook Farms, our kiddos enjoy ice cream at Camp Cormorant / our Alumni paying it forward by volunteering at the Lakes Crisis and Resource Center / Sister Alumni Michelle and her friends and family in North Carolina Running for Holbrook!



2025 News

Inaugural Hearts for Holbrook

The first-ever Hearts for Holbrook campaign was a huge success! We ran a fundraising campaign for six weeks in August–September, culminating in a community event at Holbrook Farms on September 13th during the Alumni Retreat. From Facebook fundraisers to fun runs, support rolled in from across the country and we raised a grand total of \$22,279! The first-ever *Troy Boy Mud & Muscle Car Show*, in memory of Army Cpl Troy C. Linden, brother of Sarah Hudson, had 24 vehicles registered of all shapes and sizes. Live music by *Rustic Moon* was provided through a connection of one of our widow alumni and Anthony's Tex Mex food truck offered delicious food options. The Field of Flags, orchestrated by one of our surviving sisters and Veteran, Carrie Davis, lined the driveway and was a somber, beautiful reminder of why the work at Holbrook Farms will never be done. We are planning another Hearts for Holbrook and car show for 2026!



Investment for the Future

In 2025, Holbrook Farms made deliberate investments to strengthen organizational sustainability and expand mission impact. Through a strategic partnership with Tellwell, we completed a comprehensive rebrand that elevated our visual identify, storytelling, and digital communications—ensuring our mission shared with clarity, consistency, and purpose. We also transitioned to DonorDock, enhancing financial systems and donor data management to uphold the highest standards of stewardship, transparency, and accountability. These investments, paired with the increased capacity of our paid staff, position Holbrook Farms for long-term success. Our retreats are provided at no cost to survivors, a promise made possible solely through the generosity of our donors. Every gift directly funds retreat experiences—please consider becoming a **Holbrook Farms Patron** by visiting www.holbrookfarms.org

We Love Kiwanis!

The Kiwanis Club of Detroit Lakes brought a team of 7 people to prepare the property before the June retreat. They planted flowers, did landscaping work, and set up the deck and beach to welcome our group of widows. We appreciate their time and donations every year!



2025 News

Farewell and Appreciation for Board Members

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Matt Brancato, our President and one of our founding leaders, who stepped back from his role last month. Matt's vision, commitment, and passion have shaped this organization into what it is today – a space that truly makes a difference in people's lives. We are deeply thankful for his leadership and the foundation he helped build, and we wish him all the very best in his next chapter.



We also extend our sincere appreciation to Patty Mastel, who concluded her service as our Treasurer this year. Patty brought steady leadership, professionalism, and valuable nonprofit expertise to our board, strengthening our organization in meaningful ways. We are grateful for her dedication over the past few years and wish her the very best moving forward. Thank you, Patty!



Gary Sinise Foundation Collaboration

For the first time, Holbrook Farms participated in the Resource Room at Snowball Express 2025. One of our widow alumni, Cayssia David, represented Holbrook and spread the word about our retreats to hundreds of military families. Sarah Merwin also attended and reunited with dozens of Holbrook alumni who continue to express gratitude for their Holbrook experience.



Detroit Lakes Partnerships Power Holbrook Farms

In 2025 we felt the support of the Detroit Lakes community more than ever before! Thank you to these local businesses who supported our mission:

Price's Fine Jewelry, Nereson Automotive, Webber Family Motors, Summit Customs, Kiwanis Club of DL, Rotary of Detroit Lakes, Bell State Bank, SJE Rhombus, Holy Rosary Catholic Daughters, DL Gourmet Cooking Club, Lakes Pace LLC, Spanky's Stone Hearth, Bleachers Bar & Grill, Drew Barker of Northwestern Mutual, Boys & Girls Club of DL, Let's Go Fishing, Project 412, Home Sweet Bakehouse, Intuitive Touch LLC, DLACF, Arvig, Detroit Lakes VFW, DL Papa Murphy's, Earth Moon Magic, DAV Lakeland, VFW Auxiliary, Midwest Bank, DL Walmart, Central Market, GoGo Rentals, Beyond the Horse, La Barista, Lakes Place LLC



2025 News

Parade of Lights

In December 2025, Holbrook Farms participated in the Detroit Lakes Parade of Lights, strengthening our connection with the local community we are proud to call home. Army Cpl Troy C. Linden's Jeep—festively decorated with lights and signage—joined the parade, sharing our mission with families lining the streets. Despite frigid temperatures, the event provided a meaningful opportunity to engage with the community and increase visibility for Holbrook Farms in a fun and memorable way.

Continued Care for our Alumni

At Holbrook Farms, care extends well beyond the retreat experience. We intentionally support ongoing connection and community among alumni through a variety of virtual and social engagement opportunities to foster

lasting relationships and continued healing. Throughout 2025, alumni participated in a series of connection-focus events, including an online social hour, a wellness session featuring yoga, virtual bingo, a breath work clinic, and an interactive online game night.



Grief Recovery Scholarships

We continue to fund scholarships for Survivor alumni, ensuring access to *Grief Recovery Method* therapy with Dr. Rachelle Reinisch to provide long-term emotional support beyond the retreat experience.

Online Swag Store

Holbrook Farms partnered with a local Fargo, ND small business, Bee Seen, to open a new online store offering branded merchandise, with personalization options to support Holbrook Farms. Visit www.holbrookfarms.org and click Holbrook Farms Store at the top to purchase branded items such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hats.



Local High School Honors our Heroes & Survivors

Sarah Hudson and Kaley Nord represented Holbrook Farms at Detroit Lakes High School as guest speakers at the **DLHS Veterans Day program**. Sarah and Kaley shared their stories of their fallen loved ones as well as the positive impact Holbrook Farms has made on their grief journeys. Thank you to Ms. Holmquist and other DLHS staff and students who collected over \$1k to help continue our mission!

2025 News

New Partnership with Southwest Airlines

We are thrilled that our band of supporters has reached to the friendly skies of **Southwest Airlines**. To support employees in their passion for their communities, Southwest encourages volunteering through a program called Tickets for Time. The company tracks employees' volunteer hours and for which charities, then the Airline donates round trip tickets to those charities based on the hours accumulated. Thanks to the incredible volunteer efforts of Steve "Chester" Whisler and Richard "Juicy" Couture, Holbrook earned 5 vouchers for \$400 round trip tickets!

Southwest 

Reflection on Connection

Gold Star Sister and Survivor Representative Sarah Hudson

One of the first places I went upon arriving to my parent's home after we lost my brother Troy was his Jeep and his Subaru... I was looking for some connection. He had lovingly detailed them both and stored them under car covers when he was home on leave in April of 2006, shortly before we lost him. Troy took so much pride in his vehicles! I was hoping to find a letter or a t-shirt or something but there was nothing. So instead, I drove them. I blasted his music and I found the connection to him that I couldn't find anywhere else. Since the day I began driving my brother's cars, I always wanted to hold a car show for regular people and regular cars - Troy's Jeep is certainly not a typical "show" car but he was so proud of it.

This year I was able to finally hold that car show in his memory with the partnership of Holbrook Farms and our giving campaign of *Hearts for Holbrook*. There were 24 cars, trucks, 4x4's, and JEEPS! We had everything from custom show cars that have been meticulously restored, daily drivers, and custom-built rigs. We chose 5 categories for awards and the competition was fierce! Money raised between donations from participants and businesses donating to the car show for prizes equaled approximately \$5,512. My parents and I were so proud to honor Troy in this way. I cannot wait to expand upon the 24 entries that we had in this first year when we hold the show again in 2026.

Our winners:

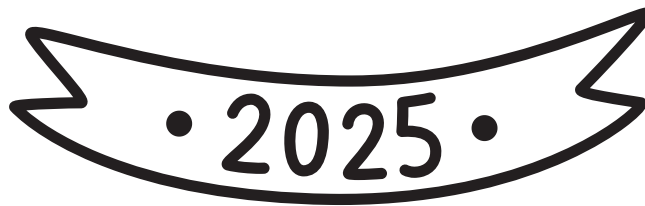
Best Car: 1969 Chevrolet Camaro
(Tim & Stefani Alexander)

Best 4x4: 1948 Jeep Willy's (Jason Bristlin)

Best Wild Card: 2003 Nissan 350Z (Wyatt Nelson)

People's Choice: 1968 VW Van (Eric Rotter)





Volunteers of the Year



*Mike & Raenelle
Bentson*



Susan Kotte

Our Volunteers of the Year are really Volunteers of the Decade! Every retreat at Holbrook Farms has included a Lake Day, and every single one of them since 2014 has been hosted either by Mike & Raenelle Bentson on Lake Maud or by Susan Kotte on Lake Eunice. It's no coincidence they are the parents of two our Founders, Micaela and Sarah! The Bentson and Kotte Lake Days offer the best hospitality that Minnesota has to offer. In our early years, Lake Day at Lake Maud often lasted well past sunset culminating in a Raenelle-led piano singalong. More recently, Susan has served as cook and pontoon captain, driving the ladies around Lake Eunice and offering her personal insight into all things "Minnesota lake life." And then there's the food! Raenelle's snack and beverage offerings put any caterer to shame, and after a day on the water there has always been a delicious dinner lovingly prepared for each group. Whether it's BBQ pulled pork or Norwegian-themed foods, our retreat guests are well-fed and well-cared for. They rave year after year about the love they feel and the way it feels like family after just a few hours in the Bentson and Kotte homes. Thank you Mike, Raenelle and Susan for the love you have poured into Holbrook Farms Lake Day since 2014!

Thank You

Holbrook Farms is incredibly thankful for the generous individuals, families, businesses, and organizations who made significant contributions this year. Their support directly fuels our mission and strengthens the programs and experiences we are able to provide. **We proudly recognize the following significant donors for their generosity:**



Guest Angela with Reuben the horse @Beyond the Horse

- Matt & Micaela Brancato
- Kristi & Larry Boyes
- Bill Daggett
- Laura Goodman
- Nick & Sarah Helms
- Nicklas Hebekeuser
- Liberty Pumps
- Jerry Merwin
- Mark Murphy
- Matthew & Jill Munn
- Jadee Purdy
- Nisa Stansbarger
- Andre Toman
- Raymond Turcotte
- Val Ziegler
- Giles Whiting

It takes a village...

Each gift—whether supporting Hearts for Holbrook, honoring a graduating class, or contributing to our general mission—helps make Holbrook Farms a place of hope, growth, and opportunity. We are deeply grateful for the trust and generosity of our donors and Friends of Holbrook. While we are honored to highlight these significant donors, we would like to acknowledge that many generous individuals, families, and organizations are not listed here due to space limitations. Every gift—no matter the size—plays an essential role in advancing our mission!

Abigail Patrick
Alex & Michelle Turner
Amanda Evans
Amy Dellentesh
Amy Lundberg
Andre Toman
Angela Sutton
Anita Price
Anita Sullivan
Ann Donnelly
Anna Keithley
Anna Moser
Anne Coleman
Ashley Schafer
Ashley Sik

Audrey Rodriguez
Beth Harris
Beth Pridday
Betsy Hinkel
Betty Smith
Bill & Nelaina Daggett
Brad & Melissa Lorentz
Brandon Brancato
Brian Merritt
Brittany Amezaga
Bryan & Erin Petersen
Carla Martin
Carol & Steve Olson
Carol Winkler
Carrie Davis

Thank You

continued...

Charlie & Toby Cook
Chris & Heather High
Christie Linn
Constance Richardson
Craig & Wanda Mozley
Cynthia Moulton
Danielle Charles
Danielle Yeager
David & Judy Stowman
Deborah Stollery
Delta Daggett
Dick & Mili McConn
Emily Espey
Dr. Rachelle Reinisch
Emily Newkirk
Gilbert Nortz
Giles Whiting
Gregory Bailey
Hannah Eure
Heather Phillips
Helen Boycourt
Henry Uyeda
Jadee Purdy
Jan Stowman
Jayne Dunnum
Jean & Lane Strickland
Jean Laing-Weber
Jeanette Cox
Jerry Merwin
Jesse Colburn
Jessica Domitrovich
Jessica Richard
John & Ruth King
Joseph Sundy
Joshua Heibel
Judy Cosset
Julie Briggs
Justin & Kate Fosberg
Kaley Nord
Karen Sager
Kari Marine
Kathy & Bobby Bisterfeldt
Kathy Michealson
Katrina Wight
Kelly Schiffner
Kim Potter
Kim Rogers Costello
Kim Schreiner
Kris Studniski
Kristen Bakotic
Kristy Balli
Larry & Kristi Boyes
Laura Goodman
Linda & Grant Aufderhaar
Lindsay Bozovsky
Lorence Parker
Mara Bandy
Marcia & Bradley Paulson

***"The alumni retreat had a profound impact on me. Seeing the American flags blowing in the wind with photos of our fallen heroes took my breath away...I was deeply touched to see so much love and support at the car show. It reminded me that I am not alone and that our heroes are always remembered. Thank you Holbrook Farms and to all that continue to support and honor our fallen heroes and our families. God Bless!
-Alumni Nisa***

Marcia DuPont
Margene Mobley
Maria Sutherland
Mark Murphy
Mary Ellen Hurley
Mary finnan
Mary Plunkett
Mary Rotter
Mary Wichmann
Matt & Micaela Brancato
Matthew & Jill Munn
Max Kringen
Melissa Ard
Merry Linden
Michelle McDonald
Mike & Debbie Purdy
Mike & Raenelle Bentson
Missy Vollmers
Mona Mendez
Mr. & Mrs. Decker
Nancy Hettwer
Nancy Soberg
Nick & Sarah Helms
Nicki Mench
Nicklas Hebekeuser
Nisa Stansbarger
Noreen Clarke
Patricia Ketterl
Patty Mastel
Rachel Paul
Raymond Turcotte
Rebecca Mercado Jones
Rob Slanger
Ross Nilson
Sandra Thielen
Sarah Hudson
Sarah & Bob Merwin
Sarah Merwin
Sarah Williams
Sean Finnan
Sheri Stansbarger

"Holbrook Family – words cannot describe this amazing retreat! From the moment you arrive you feel like family. Thank you to all who make this place so magical." –Sister

Sue Parkhouse
Susan Kotte
Thania Sayne
Tiffany Sigurdson
Tom Barry
Tom Schramm
Val Ziegler
Valerie Marietta
Wade & Michelle Warren
Wallace Haley
Zac Amrine

***"I had an amazing time here. I thank everyone at Holbrook...the ladies got me thinking on moving forward and living life the best I can, because life is very short."
-Widow***

GROWING FORWARD

Expanded Mission Focus for 2026



- Implement first-ever Mother's Retreat
- Expand emphasis and secure measurable increases on Combined Federal Campaign, Corporate Matching, Grants, & Cyber Grants
- Create and execute fundraising strategy through detailed fundraising plan to produce a 10% fundraising increase from 2025
- Continue strong social media presence
- Explore new opportunities for Alumni care and connection

Board of Directors & Executive Director



Jadee Purdy
President



Jessica Domitrovich
Vice-President



Jessica Richard
Treasurer



Bethany Keller
Secretary



Sarah Hudson
Survivor Representative



Sarah Merwin
Executive Director



HOLBROOK FARMS



EST
2014

CONTACT US

www.holbrookfarms.org

One stop shopping for donations, retreat information, Board bios, Annual Reports, Hero profiles, and shopping!

<https://www.facebook.com/holbrookfarmsretreat>

Our Facebook page is a great way to check out the latest happenings at Holbrook Farms

Holbrook Farms
912 McKinley Ave, #222
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

Phone: 218-234-2406



Micaela Brancato
Co-Founder



Matthew Brancato
Co-Founder