Dear Potential Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in Heartland Girls' Ranch (HGR) and our important work serving at-risk and sexually exploited girls. Our Motto: ***"Healing Youth and Building Lives through Success"*** signifies our commitment to providing a safe place for girls to experience success.

Heartland Girls' Ranch is located in Benson, MN approximately 150 miles from the Twin Cities and 30 miles west of Willmar, MN. Founded in 1992, Heartland Girls' Ranch is a working ranch and residential group home for girls ages 12-21 that provides comprehensive support services including; housing, life/job skills education, mental/physical health support, equine programming and other trauma-informed therapies and a dedicated school for the girls in our program. HGR serves an average of 70 girls each year. We provide female and culturally responsive services based on best practices to meet the physical, emotional, educational and spiritual needs of the girls in our care.

The girls served by the Ranch come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and circumstances, but their common trauma experiences unite them**.** Many of the girls report prior physical, emotional and sexual abuse, have run away from home and/or have experienced homelessness before coming to our program. The majority have been in foster care or other out-of-home placements and many are from families surviving at or below the poverty line. Due to this trauma exposure, all of the girls have some form of emotional and mental health challenges.

Girls referred to HGR are considered to be high risk for sexual exploitation and many have already been victims of sex trafficking. HGR has capacity of 24 beds in our main facility and 8 beds in our Hearts for Freedom program.

Our location outside the Twin Cities metro area has allowed girls the opportunity to work on themselves and build skills with little fear of perpetrators finding them.

We will begin construction in 2017 on a new home for the Hearts for Freedom program that will house up to 10 girls at a time and allow dedicated space that will improve our service delivery and allow us to provide more intensive and specialized services to meet the individual needs of sexually exploited girls.

Because of this, the work we do takes on incredible importance statewide, Minnesota is counting on us to do the very best we can to provide guidance and support to help girls get on the right path and to help them begin the healing process from life stressors and trauma.

I ask you to review the enclosed information carefully before you decide to go further with the application process. Working with troubled girls is rewarding and challenging at the same time. Our organization is working diligently to provide a residential program that meets girls' gender

and cultural needs and to maintain a dynamic and productive staff team that shares HGR values and goals and takes the responsibility of helping girls very seriously.

In order to accomplish this and achieve our mission, it requires that we hire staff who like working with girls from a variety of backgrounds and staff who possess the necessary skills, compassion and commitment to do the work. The work we do and the way we do it is incredibly important as many of the girls we serve have been hurt and traumatized many times. Because of girls' experiences, many have difficulty building trusting relationships with adults. This is why we are determined to hire healthy, stable and safe people to work at HGR. We welcome staff who have survived traumatic experiences in their lives and expect that any staff who works at HGR will have done whatever personal work they need to in order to keep their personal histories from spilling over into their work in adverse ways with girls and/or with other staff.

This work is not for everyone, which is why I want you to take time to review *all* of the information in this packet *before* you fill out and return the application form, and then to carefully decide whether or not you are willing and able to do this job. If you decide that you would not be a good fit for this position or this work, we appreciate your honesty, thank you for your time and we wish you well in your job search!

If, after careful consideration, you wish to go further with the application process, the next steps are as follows:

Sign and return the enclosed "I have read and fully understand the information contained in the applicant information packet and am submitting the enclosed application form."

Sincerely,

Jeannie Thompson
Chief Executive Administrator

Heartland Girls' Ranch Motto:
"Healing Youth and Building Lives through Success" signifies our commitment to providing a safe place for girls to experience success.

Hearts for Freedom Program –Youth Counselor Position Applicant Information

Explanation of Job Description & Required Qualifications

Position Title: Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselor
Position Type: Part-time
Reports to: Hearts for Freedom Program Manager, Administrator
Position Summary:

The Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselor develops and maintains safe, healthy, and therapeutic relationships with residents in order to meet the specialized needs of girls who have been sexually exploited. The Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselor will ensure that the daily needs of all Residents are met including, but not limited to, physical, emotional and self-care, through facilitating healthy relationships, supervision and mentoring.

Summary of Formal Job Description Duties and Responsibilities:

- Provide direct care and supervision of residents in their daily activities and in following the daily schedule as directed by the Hearts for Freedom Program Manager.
- Engage residents by facilitating or assisting with activities/chores and being actively involved with the residents during activities/chores.
- The Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselor will work specifically to help meet the specialized needs of girls who have been sexually exploited by developing a therapeutic relationship with them.
- Demonstrate clear, healthy and safe boundaries with residents and all HGR staff.
- Monitor all residents' activity to ensure compliance with HGR policies and procedures regarding health and safety.
- Monitor residents health, illness and injury and for following proper procedures in caring for and reporting these to the nurse or supervisor.
- May be responsible for transporting residents to and from medical appointments.
- Ensure the HFF house is maintained in a neat, clean and safe fashion. Staff will do their part in maintaining the home and ensuring that the residents do their part in keeping the home and grounds in a neat, clean and safe manner.
- Maintain positive relationship with parents, schools, employers and social service agencies.
- Ensure residents have well balanced, nutritious, well prepared meals that meet the individual's dietary restrictions and needs, and follow the pre-prepared menu.

Summary of Additional Requirements:

- Staff are required to attend bi-weekly staff meetings.
- Ensure that confidentiality of all residents, guardians and family members are respected and kept at all times, to include ensuring that the resident's rights to confidentiality are

protected as determined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

- Ensure the implementation of all regulations under which Heartland Ranch is governed; specifically the Maltreatment of Minors Act, Physical Restraint, and Children's Residential Facilities Chapter 2960.
- All employees of Heartland Ranch are mandated reporters. The Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselor is expected to have a sound knowledge of what is required by being a mandated reporter and will adhere to these requirements.
- Demonstrate clear, healthy and safe boundaries with residents and other staff.
- Adhere to all HGR Policy and Procedures.

Summary of Required Qualifications:

- Must be 21 years of age or older.
- A High School Diploma or GED is required. Some college or pursuit of higher education preferred.
- Current MN Driver's License and ability to transport residents in an HGR vehicle.
- Emotional and physical ability to manage an assaultive or physically aggressive resident using trauma-informed practice.
- Current CPR and First Aid Certification or ability to become certified.
- Demonstrated ability and skills at good self-care in a high stress environment.

Helpful and Desired Qualifications:

- Experience with at-risk girls, and with girls from diverse cultural communities.
- Knowledge of child development, child maltreatment, childhood traumatic stress, and specific knowledge of sexually exploited youth.
- Knowledge of effective trauma-informed care and practice in working with girls is desired.
- Knowledge of female and culturally responsive services for girls from diverse backgrounds is desired.
- Knowledge of what constitutes physical, emotional and culturally safe services for girls in a residential setting.
- Knowledge of, or experience in working with professionals in mental health, the juvenile and criminal justice systems and other systems girls may be involved with.
- Knowledge of Minnesota's Safe Harbor Law and the 'NO WRONG DOOR Comprehensive Approach to for Minnesota's Sexually Exploited Youth.
- Knowledge of word processing programs and basic Microsoft Office programs.

Please Note: Heartland Girls' Ranch is a smoke free facility and property. Using tobacco or electronic cigarettes is prohibited on any Heartland Girls' Ranch grounds or in vehicles.

Feedback from HGR Girls:

We asked the girls in our program what they wanted applicants to know about them:

"We want to change, we don't want to be 'in the system'."

"I want to be a better person." *"We've been through a lot."*

"Before you judge us, our behaviors and attitudes, think about where we come from, ... think about it, we weren't raised like you, we may not be able to just 'act good' like you be wanting us to act."

"We would like to be able to get to know you as much as you get to know us... it sucks when it's all one-way and we don't get to know anything about you."

"Honesty is important to us." *"We have a lot of strength and integrity, honor."*
"We are resourceful." *"We are very independent."*

"Our community and our culture are important to us... sometimes that's all I had who was there for me."

"We need support." *"We're thoughtful of people we care about."*

"Loyalty and trustworthiness are very important to us."
"We remember EVERYTHING."

"We are each different from each other... each unique... no person's situation is the same as another's."
"We each have a story."

We also asked what qualifications they felt are important for staff:

"Experience in 'the industry' / 'the life'."

"Not strict, but able to be firm/able to enforce structure."

"Sweet, nice, able to be gentle." *"Relatable, look approachable."*

"Be understanding, try to listen and understand, accept us for where we're at rather than trying to always change us."

"Be able to offer helpful real-life advice." *"Be open to building real relationships with us."*

"Genuinely NICE people (when I'm around nice people, I feel bad for being bad. When I'm around strict people, I don't care about whether I'm good or bad)."

"Able to get girls to communicate with each other"

"Staff should want to help and want girls to achieve their goals."

"Staff should support girls and be loyal and honest." *"Willing to share info."*

"Don't force us to talk, be approachable and let us open up when we're ready"

Staff Qualifications, "Informal" Job Duties, and Rewards as described by HGR Staff:

We asked HGR staff what they felt was important for applicants to know about the girls we serve:

"HGR girls are a blessing to this earth. They have had to walk a path few are even aware of; yet a path so destructive it harms their very soul. This is a step of hope, servitude, and unconditional love to our fellow humans. Each minute with the girls is an opportunity to assist them in finding their inner beauty, their gifts, and their strength. They are a blessing to all of mankind and that is somewhere underneath all the pain and mistrust."

"HGR girls are hurting from trauma, they are very guarded as they have had few (if any) people they could trust. They feel guilty, shame and lack self-worth from behaviors they were most often forced to engage in. They can be resistant and difficult in their behaviors, often responding from the trauma they have endured."

We asked HGR Staff what qualifications they felt were important:

"Girls respond well to people who haven't had a perfect life, people they feel they can relate to. The girls know almost immediately if a staff has had a relatively sheltered/stable life. The Hearts for Freedom program needs staff with real life experiences of overcoming hardships, from which to draw understanding, empathy, strength, wisdom, etc.. Our program does not need staff who are still needing to heal themselves."

"HGR girls are hiding incredible beauty within and are hoping to experience people who will truly love and care about them; people who are willing to go the "long haul" to help them uncover the beauty they possess."

"For staff to work at HGR there must be a commitment of time, and understanding (though limited as we are), and consistency. Can you make that commitment?"

"Staff are on their feet for hours at a time without breaks."

"There will be good days and bad days, we always manage to get through."

"Staff need to be firm, fair and consistent." "Need to be flexible and a team player."

"Staff need to be able to handle negativity, pessimism and drama without absorbing it, or getting caught up in it."

"Staff have to have a lot of patience." "Staff need to have effective and versatile communication skills and the ability to give and receive feedback well."

Non-financial Rewards of this Work (according to HGR Staff) :

"To have girls call back after a few years to tell us they are doing so much better and hearing that something I did or said as a staff meant something to them."

"HGR Leadership values our input and feedback."

"To see the relationships girls build with their horses."

"To witness the physical and emotional changes that girls go through – they take better care of themselves, they are more confident and have better self-esteem, and are overall healthier when they leave here."

"Our staff are supportive of one another, we become friends."

"As staff we are encouraged too, and are able to grow and develop professionally. Working here is always challenging and we are provided with the tools to meet the challenges."

"Life lessons - even though we teach the girls, they teach us."

"Working at HGR is something to be proud of."
"Working here makes life meaningful, this is not just a pay check, it gives us purpose." "Great environment, great staff."

"I am privileged to work with a competent staff team, we learn from each other."

"Everyone helps one another, makes me a better person."

"Every work day is different. I've learned a lot about mental health."

"Having our voices heard by administration."

"Doing fun outings with the girls, going out to eat, to movies…"

"Knowing that we have positively impacted girls."

Other Information Applicants Should Know:
HGR staff interact and collaborate with teachers, social workers, probations officers, law enforcement and other stakeholders. It is important that all HGR staff represent themselves and HGR in a professional and respectful manner.

HGR is a fast paced environment which requires staff to be positive, energetic and good "multi-taskers". This work can feel overwhelming at times and it is important that staff who work at HGR are able to handle stress in healthy ways.

Because HGR girls have experienced a great deal of trauma in their lives, some girls may act out verbally and physically aggressively at times which may lead to the need for staff to safely physically restrain girls if they are risk to harm themselves or others. Staff need to work hard not to take girls' behavior personally.

Staff and Program Schedules

Hearts for Freedom Youth Counselors work every other weekend with the option of picking up other shifts as available. The weekend shifts vary between 3pm-11pm and 8am-4pm.

Applicant Background, Health Screening & Reference Checks

HGR carefully screens all applicants before they provide direct service to residents in an effort to ensure that anyone who is hired has not in the past, nor will in the future, harm our residents physically, sexually or emotionally in any way.

a) ***Driver's License Check:*** Applicants must have a current driver's license, and there will be a check of their driving record.
b) ***Department of Human Services Background Study:*** *A*ny person considered for a job at HGR must successfully pass a Criminal Background check. Criminal convictions may not automatically disqualify an applicant for this position. The MN Dept. of Human Services does a background study on applicants who will be considered for the position.

c) ***Drug Screening****:* Applicants will be required to pass a drug screen before being offered a position. Once hired, HGR conducts random employee drug testing and will require an employee to take a drug test if there is reasonable suspicion that the employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and/or has violated any of the HGR chemical use policy.

d) ***MN Rule 2960.0460 Staff Qualifications Subpart 2 A and B*** *Employees having direct resident contact must be free of chemical use problems for at least the two years immediately preceding hiring and freedom from chemical use must be maintained during Employment. Overnight employees must be free from chemical use problems for at least one year immediately preceding hiring and freedom from chemical use must be maintained during Employment.*

e) ***Reference Checks:*** We ask for 3 employment references on our application for employment. References are checked prior to a job offer.

HGR Work Rules Summary

In order for the smooth, safe, and well organized day to day operation of HGR programs, it is essential that all employees demonstrate adherence to the HGR Work Rules. The following are examples of important employee work rules we wish to highlight:

- Staff are expected to actively engage in program activities with residents, and be outside with residents during all seasons which means coming to work in the winter with adequate winter clothes/boots for activity participation and assisting with horse chores.
- Staff are expected to be on time for each of their shifts.
- Staff are expected to finish their duties before they leave their shift, which sometimes means staying past the end of the shift to make sure girls are taken care of and to complete work.
- Employees are allowed to use personal cell phones as a means of communication between staff.
- The use of cell phones for personal reasons while on shift is not allowed.
- Cell phones should not be used when driving a vehicle as they distract the driver.

Pre-Service Orientation & Training

Staff must successfully complete 60 hours of pre-service orientation and training.

Staff Probation Period

All new staff must successfully complete a six-month probation period.

Termination from Employment

Summary examples of employee conduct that is considered unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action or termination of employment are as follows:

Work Performance

- Failure or refusal to carry out assignments or instructions.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information or records.
- Falsifying records or giving false information to other agencies or to employees responsible for record keeping.
- Failure to provide accurate and complete information whenever such information is required by an authorized person.
- Failure to comply with health, safety and sanitation requirements, rules and regulations.

Attendance and Punctuality

- Failure to report promptly at the starting time of a shift or leaving before the scheduled quitting time of a shift without the approval of the supervisor.
- Unexcused or excessive absenteeism.
- Failure to notify the supervisor of unanticipated absence or tardiness.

Personal Actions and Appearance

- Threatening, attempting, or doing bodily harm to another person.
- Threatening, intimidating, interfering with, or using abusive language towards staff, residents or others.
- Unauthorized possession of weapons.
- Use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs during working hours.
- Reporting for work under the influence of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs.
- Inappropriate dress or lack of personal hygiene that adversely affects proper performance of duties or constitutes a health or safety hazard.

Pay & Benefits

Pay: The hourly pay range for the Youth Counselor position is: $12.75 - $14.75. Wages and salaries are paid every two weeks.

Applicant Signature:

If you are not interested in applying for this position, it is not necessary to sign below. Again, thank you for your interest in Heartland Girls' Ranch.

If you are interested in going forward with the application process then please sign below:

"I have carefully read and considered all of the information in the applicant information packet and wish to apply for the open position. I have enclosed my application and resume for your review."

_____ _____

Applicant Signature **Date**

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Please fax, email, or mail this form, your completed application and your resume back to Heartland Girls' Ranch at:

Heartland Girls' Ranch
Attn: Sherry
185 Hwy 9 NE
Benson, MN 56215
Fax (320) 843-5105
Email: sherry@heartlandgirlsranch.org

We will notify you to let you know if you are selected for an interview.