Meeting Notes – Feb. 8, 2022

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, February 8 at noon. Sheriff Sid Lockhart provided the program today and invited Major TJ Wood to talk about his experiences with the Sheriff's Boys' and Girls' Ranches and an upcoming fundraising opportunity. Major Wood has been personally involved with the ranches for about a year and a half. He and his wife and daughter sponsor two of the girls at the Tallapoosa ranch, which includes inviting the girls to spend time with them on the weekend in their home and the girls becoming part of their family.

Major Wood began by showing a video made by the Boys' and Girls' Ranches and then gave us some background information about the ranches. The first ranch opened in1966. There are now a total of four ranches: the Baldwin County Boys' Ranch, the Colbert County FAME Girls' Ranch, the Tallapoosa County Girls' Ranch and the St. Clair County Boys' Ranch which will reopen this year. The children/youth are placed there not because of their behavior, but because of their family's circumstances. Most of the children/youth are placed there by the Department of Human Resources (DHR), although parents can privately place their child as well. Currently, the youngest girl at the Tallapoosa Ranch is nine. Youth may stay until graduation from high school, or beyond if they are enrolled in college. The ranches are made up of individual homes on the ranch, with houseparents staffing each home. Typically, there are 7-9 residents per home. Individuals or families wanting to sponsor a rancher must go through the DHR background check and foster parent training program.

A fund raiser for the Tallapoosa Girl's Ranch, Grillin for Girls, will be held on Saturday, March 19 at the Valley Community Center. There will be a dinner and a live auction. To-go plates are also available. Dinner includes a rib-eye steak, sides, and drinks. They are fortunate this year to have three generous sponsors, in addition to the sheriff's department: Kimble's Food Direct, NCIC, and Jeremy Duerr. Tickets can be purchased from the sheriff's office at the courthouse in LaFayette or in the annex in Lanett. All proceeds will go to directly to the Tallapoosa Sheriff Girls' Ranch.

Diane Sherriff