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For Immediate Release: 01-26-17

New London, Wis.—Rawhide Boys Ranch, founded by John and Jan Gillespie in 1965, was informed today that Jan has passed away at their home with John by her side on Wednesday January 25, 2017.  Jan Gillespie was 82 years old and married to her husband and best friend John for 59 years.

During Jan’s tenure at Rawhide with her husband John, Rawhide Boys Ranch became a nationally- recognized, non-profit organization providing residential care to at-risk boys from throughout Wisconsin. John and Jan Gillespie were joined later that year by Green Bay Green Bay Packers Quarterback Bart Starr and his wife, Cherry as co-founders. Together they helped raise awareness of Rawhide and were successful in growing the facility from one boys home into a campus that today includes, seven boys homes, Starr Academy, an accredited private high school, a mental health outpatient clinic and numerous job training facilities on over 600 acres along the scenic Wolf River outside New London, Wis.

Jan served as a Housemother at Rawhide for 27 years to over 350 boys. During her tenure, boys from throughout Wisconsin were referred to Rawhide and would live on-grounds for periods of four months up to two years of their lives. She was instrumental in providing care and direction to teens in need of the unconditional love that she provided to them. Jan would frequently say about the boys at Rawhide she parented, “they’re like your children and even though they weren’t born into your family, you treat them like your children and you love them unconditionally.”  Rawhide was unique in the field of residential care due to the family living model that was utilized. To this day, houseparent couples live in each of the seven youth homes at Rawhide and provide a family living structure while supervising and caring for boys aged 13 – 18 years of age.

Jan was also an avid horsewoman who utilized her love of horseback riding to work with young men residing at Rawhide. In the early days of Rawhide, she would pair up a youth with a horse and give him the responsibility to care for that horse. Youth would then learn to ride and could saddle up a horse and utilize area trails to ride the horses with staff. One youth in particular, David Claus was paired with a horse named, “Smokey” and he credits that relationship with his horse and the Gillespie’s with redirecting his life in the 1970s.  In fact, just two months ago Dave wrote, recorded and released a music video entitled “I’m a Rawhide Guy” as a tribute to John and Jan Gillespie and the three years he was a resident at Rawhide. Those interested can view the music video at [www.rawhide.org](https://www.rawhide.org/)

Funeral arrangements will include visitation from 9 – 11 a.m., memorial service at 11 a.m. and lunch following at 12 p.m. on Monday, January 30, 2017 at Appleton Alliance Church. The family has asked that those interested in lieu of flowers can support a memorial to Jan Gillespie that has been established at Rawhide Boys Ranch to support the building of a home on the grounds at Rawhide, contributions can be made online at [www.rawhide.org](https://www.rawhide.org/)  or mailed to:

Rawhide c/o Jan Gillespie Memorial  
E7475 Rawhide Road  
New London, WI 54961

**About Rawhide:** Located outside of New London, Wisconsin, Rawhide Boys Ranch emphasizes a faith-based residential environment as an alternative to juvenile corrections for court-referred and at-risk young men. In addition, Rawhide provides services to youth and their families through community-based programs, such as outpatient counseling, adventure based summer camps and intensive family weekends. Families interested in scheduling an appointment for outpatient counseling services in Green Bay should visit [www.rawhide.org/strongfamily](https://www.rawhide.org/strongfamily) or call toll free 1-877-300-9101. Most major health insurance plans are accepted and a sliding fee is also available. Learn more about Rawhide by visiting the website at [www.rawhide.org](https://www.rawhide.org/).