

Sullivan came out here with hometown friend Laura Mahoney, a senior at Villanova University in Philadelphia who's employed as a waitress on the ranch. The two Albany, New York, natives have spent four summers together working away from home. This year, after three summers of working on Martha's Vineyard, they decided to try a "totally different experience," Mahoney says. "My sister went to school with Matt Turner [Harold's son], and that's how we found out about the ranch." They like what living out West has to offer.

"The last three summers we were surrounded by East Coast college students who were just like us," says Sullivan. "It's nice to come out here where people are different, really laid-back."

And by working at Triangle X, Mahoney says, she now has a better perspective on what she wants to do with her life. "Most people in the East are really just career-oriented, wanting to get a time-to-five job and make lots of money," she explains. "But that's not really what I'm interested in, and people here accept that. They're not geared toward the workaday, either. Now I don't think I could ever work that kind of job."

Some staffers become so enamored of the Western lifestyle that they end up taking some time off from school. Dan Guggenheim, a floater, and Kevin "Wally" Watkins, a pack-trip guide, did—one skied all winter and the other spent the fall guiding hunting and camping trips for the ranch. Watkins, who's lost 50 pounds in the year he's been out West, stayed as a means of getting himself together. "I drank too much beer and had too much of a good time while I was at school. I had to get away."

While Watkins, a student at University of North Carolina, and Guggenheim, a student at Brown University, actually took the time off, Mahoney only dreams about it. "If I weren't a senior," she says with a sigh, "I'd think about taking a year off. It's really tempting not to go back."

Picture a place where you step off the dining-room porch and look out at the Grand Teton mountains drenched in the purple light of morning. Then add a meandering river, level plateaus, and lots of sagebrush and you'll have a pretty good idea of what it's like to live at Triangle X. It's a part of working there that's especially difficult to give up at the end of the summer. Those with the glamour jobs—floaters and wranglers—may have the hardest time, since they work mostly outside. "I just love the mountains," Burleson says, "and, being a float guide, I get my share of nature." Of course, for those whose jobs involve more grunt work than communing with nature, going back to school—where they have only themselves to cook for and clean up after—may actually be a relief.

Whatever its fringe benefits, ranch work is just that—work, and lots of it. It's a tremendous experience, as long as you're adaptable, Harold Turner says. The pay isn't bad, though. First-year staffers can make \$350 to \$800 a month, depending on position, room and board included. In addition, most everyone can expect to pull in double their salary from tips. Jobs here have the usual frustrations. And

certain jobs are looked upon with more respect than others.

Sarah Hill, one of three women wranglers in charge of the kids' program, can count herself as nearly having one of the most prestigious positions—but not quite. Most wrangler jobs go to noncollege male staff. That's because, for one thing, college students often lack experience with horses, especially when it comes to breaking in new ones and guiding guests on horseback rides. But of the students who do have enough

ACCESS

FINDING A RANCH JOB

A dude or guest ranch is great for getting away from home for the summer, seeing a part of the country you may never have seen, and working hard. These ranches come in several varieties, from the rustic to the deluxe, and they tend to take on the flavor of their owners and surroundings. As a result, every experience will be different. The work is taxing and sometimes tedious, but the environment can ease the burden. "It's the kind of thing you do for the experience more than the money," Harold Turner of Triangle X says. "Students who come out with that idea in mind enjoy it more."

As Jim Gordon, owner of Tumbling River Ranch in Colorado, says, "It's not a place to party, but if you're a giving kind of person, it's the best place for you." Dude ranches across the country depend heavily on college students to round out their work forces during the peak season, which typically runs from May to September. "Students who don't have to return to classes until after Labor Day are a real boon for us," Turner says, "since our season doesn't slow down until then." Ranches prefer to maintain a ratio of one employee for every two guests. Typically they start recruiting and hiring for the following season in mid-March. (If you're interested in working at the Turners' ranch, contact them at Triangle X Ranch, Moose, WY 83012, 307-733-2183.)

The Colorado Dude and Guest Ranch Association has 38 member ranches, each of which employs 15 to 20 students for the summer (the number varies from ranch to ranch). The students are hired as drivers and mechanics, groundskeepers, cooks, children's counselors, and wranglers. Everyone who works on a ranch is allowed to ride the horses. Some ranches also need

lifeguards and babysitters.

Tumbling River Ranch, for example, hires 25 to 30 students each summer. They help mostly with cleaning and waiting tables, but some are also maintenance workers, drivers, and children's counselors. Gordon says he looks for polite, responsible employees who don't necessarily need to have experience. "We can train them to do the job."

Contact the Colorado Dude and Guest Ranch Association (303-887-3128) for a directory of ranches, a letter specifying how to find the ranch and type of work you want, and directions on how to apply. About 15 of the ranches are open during the winter and can help during peak times like the hunting, Christmas, and ski seasons. Look in the guide for an indication of such winter sports activities as skiing and snowmobiling.

The Dude Ranch Association is a group of 93 small family ranches. Member ranches may hire as many as 32 students each season. Some, however, don't hire any. Jobs are almost exclusively in the cooking and cleaning categories, but the atmosphere at these ranches is likely to be cozier and more family-oriented than in some of the bigger operations.

Busterback Ranch in Ketchum, Idaho, hired two students last summer to help cook and clean. "The girls were here for dinner with their parents and liked the lifestyle so much that they asked the managing director if they could work here," Debbie Wood says. "It was a real nice experience for them and for us."

The Dude Ranch Association has members in Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, California, and Arizona. If you're interested, send an inquiry or a resume to P.O. Box 471, La Porte, CO 80535, or call 303-493-7623. The association will pass the information along to the ranches through its newsletter. Or it will send you a directory of ranches that hire.

—Jane Clover