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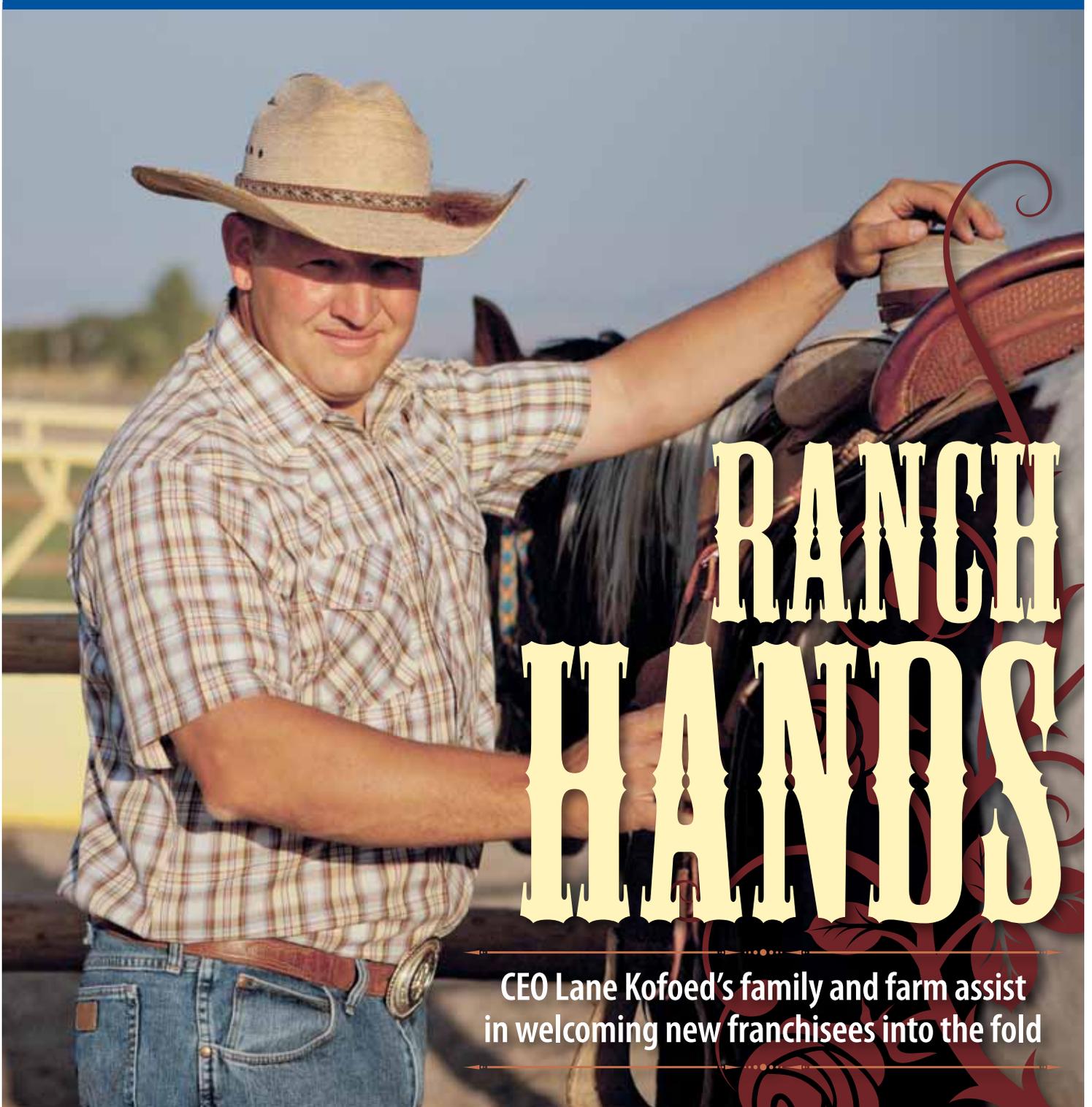
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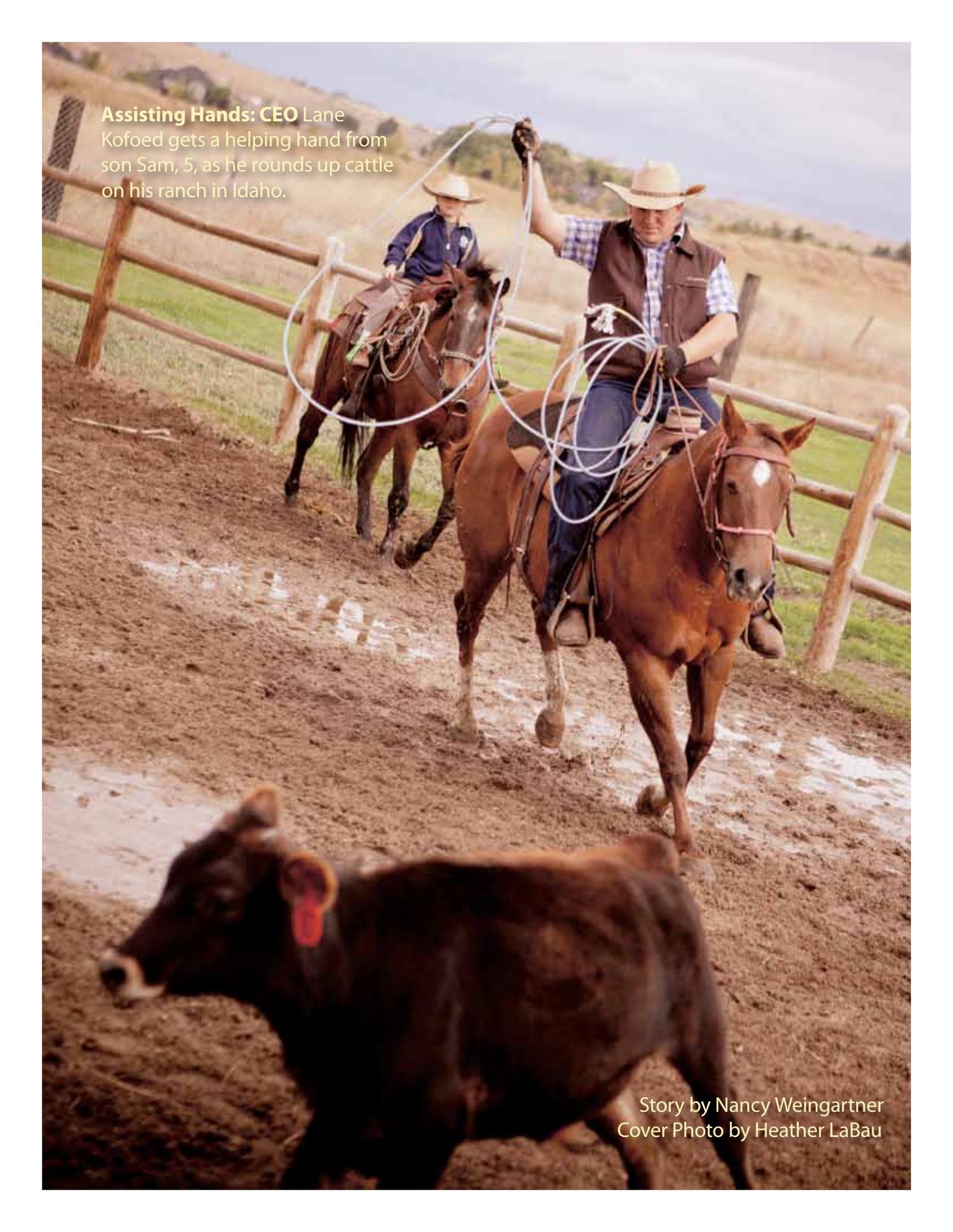
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RANCH HANDS

CEO Lane Kofoed's family and farm assist in welcoming new franchisees into the fold



Assisting Hands: CEO Lane Kofoed gets a helping hand from son Sam, 5, as he rounds up cattle on his ranch in Idaho.

Story by Nancy Weingartner
Cover Photo by Heather LaBau

RANCH HANDS

CEO Lane Kofoed's family and farm assist in welcoming new franchisees into the fold

It's a 10-minute drive from Lane Kofoed's home to his office in Nampa, Idaho. Depending on the time of day, the only traffic jam he may encounter is from a sun-weathered farmer relocating his combine harvester from one corn field to the next, or youngsters out for a joy ride on their horses.

Before setting off for the short trek to the Assisting Hands office, Kofoed has already polished off his morning chores. The same holds true of his return trip.

There's no settling in comfortably for the evening until he rounds up one or two of his five kids to feed the horses and toss out bales of hay for the cows residing on the 150 or so acres he leases across the street from his residential six acres. But at least he doesn't have a barn full of cows to milk. Their one milk cow now has two calves "on her"—a reward earned by the older boys who now can play soccer or football instead of milking twice a day.

One could say it's duty before pleasure,

but in Kofoed's case, duty is pleasure. There's a sense of rightness in hard work, whether it's physical or mental.

At first glance, being a rancher and a CEO may seem to be two different careers. And yet, Kofoed says the two, along with raising a family, have more in common than not.

"If it's all business all the time, stress can take over," he says. "My family and ranch let me get back to my core values."



Home on the range: The Kofoeds, left to right, Sam, Jonny, Lane, David, Tammy and Jacob and Sarah.

Kofoed's core values are strong. They've been sculpted over his 39 years by his Mormon faith and his training as an Eagle Scout. It was his Eagle Scout rank, by the way, that landed him in the CEO spot at Assisting Hands Home Care.

Cline Waddell, co-founder of the home healthcare franchise, was Kofoed's scout master, as were the other two partners in the Boise office. "His name came to my mind at 2 o'clock in the morning," Waddell says, even though he hadn't seen him in years. Waddell and Gail Silverstein, one of the other co-founders, were running their own home-care units in two different locations and didn't want the full-time job of CEO. Waddell is the CFO and the majority partner. Silverstein is senior vice president in charge of training. "She's the healthcare expert," he says. Or the "brains" of the operation, as Kofoed calls her.

In essence, the co-founders were doing the same thing in different areas of the country. Waddell's endeavor began as many senior-care businesses did—he needed help he couldn't find with a close relative, in this case his mother. He mortgaged his ranch, and he and a couple of friends with similar issues started the company. The original name was Helping Hands, but it was changed to Assisting Hands, because "H" was too far down the alphabet in the phone book, Waddell says, grinning. They came across Silverstein's operation in Arizona when they were researching similar businesses to tap into. The two groups teamed up after they found their skill sets were a match. Headquarters was in Arizona and Waddell flew down when needed.

Their first foray into franchising didn't go smoothly, and the pair had to back off expansion plans to iron out the wrinkles. They separated from the franchise arm of the business and brought in Dick Rennick, a former chair of the International Franchise Association and the founder of a large, successful company, American Leak Detection, in Palm Springs, as interim CEO.

But they knew they needed to find a permanent leader, which is when Kofoed's name popped into Waddell's head. "Those kinds of things are just a blessing," Waddell says.

It's really not that strange, Waddell adds. He knew Kofoed's father well and Kofoed had been out to his ranch to ride horses

when he was in college. "We'd also been on 50-mile hikes together," he says. "I knew he was a hard-worker; honest; that whatever he believed in, he'd do; and I knew accounting was his background. I knew his ethics and his heart."

Wearer of the white hat

At the time, Kofoed was running a saddle shop near where he'd grown up in Nampa. After getting his B.A. and master's in accounting at Brigham Young University in Salt Lake City, he was part of "a team of people fixing companies." He worked for Price Waterhouse, and later consulted for government agencies and dot.com companies. When the dot.com bubble burst, so did his job.



Suitable times: Lane Kofoed cleans up nicely for those times when a tie is not optional.

The saddle shop wasn't a money maker, especially for a family of seven. Kofoed had learned from his father that if you have a big family, you need a professional job, along with a "hobby farm." The farm might be able to feed the family, but the professional job paid the mortgage, college tuitions and put cleats on the boys' feet and clogging shoes on their daughter's.

Kofoed's father, who had grown up on a farm, originally set out to be a history teacher, but by the time his fifth child was born—Lane—he had started law school. Good thing, because his wife gave birth to five more children. He was a "small-town

attorney," serving as both the city attorney and the attorney for the school board. Kofoed remembers him as the kind of man who would help people out with their legal troubles even if they couldn't pay.

Neither his father nor he could afford to be full-time farmers (Kofoed uses the terms "rancher" and "farmer" interchangeably). There are farmers who make good money, he says, but it's all about owning the land. "You need a lot of acreage that's paid for," he points out.

Business lesson No. 1

Businesses don't necessarily need land to grow crops, but owning your own real estate is a boon to your business. Why do you think McDonald's owns its franchisees' real estate?

After getting the job offer, Kofoed took just a day to make up his mind to work with Assisting Hands. He liked the idea of working with his old scout master, plus a partner with senior executive experience with Medicaid and Medicare. In addition, Rennick agreed to stay on and teach him "the 101 on franchising."

"Companies can't be fixed if they don't have strong management," he says.

He was hired as COO with the idea that if he proved himself he'd take on the CEO role. The business was losing around \$100,000 a year, he said. It's now safely in the black. He went about solving the problem line item by line item. Like most things in business, it sounds simple, but ferreting out unnecessary expenses is hard, especially when it deals with personnel.

"I learned in consulting if you don't make tough choices, everything (in the business) suffers," he says. Sometimes that involves letting people go who are long-time employees or friends of the owners. Other times—happier times—it involves discovering an underutilized employee and promoting him or her and then watching that person blossom.

Coming into someone else's company and making changes is hard—even if you know you're doing the right thing for the company, but it's not a popular decision. One such layoff came about by listening to the franchisees and what they needed in that particular support person role.

Another area that needed tackling was the revenue stream. Headquarters had been thinking about moving from a developer model to a single-unit one, but hadn't



pulled the trigger. “In this economy people can’t afford big development agreements,” he says. A U.S. map in his office has two different colors of pins marking the new, single-unit franchisees and the area developers. His goal is to increase the number of pins representing single units.

Kofoed also looked at outsourced services and brought inhouse anything he could have his administrative people do. Some tasks are cheaper to outsource, of course, or there’s no expertise inhouse, such as PR. In that instance, he kept the public relations agency, E.H. Anderson, based in Texas.

The company which now focuses on personal care for seniors is in the process of changing its Franchise Disclosure Document to add medical services.

“We’re trying not to do too much outside the core,” he says. New franchisees will focus on non-medical services for the first six months while they get the franchise up and running, and then can add medical services if they want.

Assisting Hands has two headquarters, one for the location of each founder. The franchise headquarters was relocated to Nampa, Idaho, from Phoenix when Kofoed came on board.

Actually, both he and Waddell point out they have the best of all seasons. When it’s over 100-degrees in Phoenix, prospects can come to Idaho, and when it’s snowing in Idaho, sunny Phoenix is more welcoming.

Prospects who come to Idaho for Discovery Day spend some of that time at Kofoed’s ranch. His

wife, Tammy, cooks for them and the two older boys play their guitar and fiddle. Prospects ride horses and sit around a campfire under the starry skies.

It’s not hokey and it’s not a ruse. Prospects are literally welcomed into the Kofoed family. Tammy says she often stays in touch with some of the franchisees she’s met through the process.

The first franchisee meeting under Kofoed’s leadership included a day at his home, where franchisees enjoyed life on a ranch, along with white-water rafting. It was that unexpected franchise experience that captured Franchise Times’ attention. Almost every franchise claims they are a family. We wondered if Kofoed’s claim was lip service, or it really was the case. And we wondered if Kofoed would let us ride one of his horses.

Business lesson No. 2

Love what you do. Work hard, play hard. When you grow up mucking stalls, everything else is way more fun,” he says.

Welcome to the family

The sky was threatening rain when the plane from Minneapolis landed in Boise, Idaho. The previous day the temperature had been in the 80s, but now it was windy and chilly. We had arranged to meet after checking our bags at the Hampton Inn across the street from the office.

The drive from Boise to Nampa is a straight shot without a lot of exit choices—one would have to try really hard to get lost. The landscape was flat and short on trees, but Waddell was quick to defend his native state. On the other side of the mountains was the lush tree-heavy landscape Idaho was known for, he says. Because of the cloudy skies it was hard to see the mountains.

In one corner of Kofoed’s modest office is a fancy, tooled saddle on a stand. Some of his best thinking is done around a

saddle, he says.

After a quick tour of the office, we headed out for lunch and then to his house. The idea was to shadow him on a regular day.

With that end in mind, we attended his son David’s junior high football game—in the rain. We held large umbrellas as we sat in the stands. Ten-year-old Sarah stayed home with Jacob, 3. Sam, 5, and Tammy accompanied us in the oversized black pickup truck. After the game David jumped in the cargo space. We had to chase down a soccer mom’s car transporting oldest son Jonny, 14, home from soccer practice, before heading to their residential-looking home with a horse corral and red barn in the backyard.

Tammy pointed out their pool—a low, round horse trough. She laughed at how odd this must look to a city slicker, but in her world it was practical because it withstood five children’s antics in and around it. Another backyard circle was a large trampoline.

The ranch dog, Tootsie, a tiny dachshund, was dashing around the back yard. She likes to race along side the horses and “help” herd cattle. No one had bothered telling her she wasn’t much help, so Tootsie ran across the fields like she was bred for the task. The Kofoed’s newest dog is not any better suited—it’s a black and white St. Bernard puppy, another hand-me down dog.

While we were at the football game, Sarah had set the table. She made place cards for everyone and moved an arrangement of flowers to the center of the table. The guest’s plate was dished up first and then Jonny said grace. Sam wanted to sit at the table, not at the kitchen bar, so one of his brothers changed places with him—cheerfully and without slugging him in the arm.

The next day was to be horseback riding, a ranch tour and perhaps a ride down to the river. The rain held up our plans, but fortunately the local horseshoer showed up to shoe two of the horses, providing us with both entertainment and education.

Kofoed went into the muddy corral to lead in the two horses whose turn it was to be shod. He had tied Sam’s horse outside the corral, because as the latest horse to join the herd, the other horses were picking on it. Sam’s job was to shoo away the “mean”



horses if they started to hurt his horse. Actually, they weren't being mean, Kofoed explained. They were merely protecting their turf and their food supply from an interloper.

Jacob busied himself hunting down eggs from the odd assortment of hens. Once he handed them over to his mother, he took his turn being pushed on a rope ladder that just fit down the narrow aisle bordered on both sides by hay bales. Sam wanted to ride horses and didn't think the rain was a good enough excuse not to ride.

Since "we" had slept in—in order to take advantage of the free breakfast at the Hampton Inn and save our company money—we didn't witness chores being done, nor did we participate.

But working hard and living up to your responsibilities is something Kofoed believes isn't just for grown-ups. To that end he told us this story:



Jacob, 3, and his mother Tammy Kofoed watch the horses being shod from the vantage point of the hayloft. The eggs Jacob collected as one of his chores are in the red container.

The lesson of the milk cow

While the family enjoyed fresh milk, after a couple of years of having to milk the cow at 6 every morning and then again 12 hours later, the two older boys started complaining.

Kofoed knew their pain, because he had worked along side them milking until they were old enough to handle the chore by themselves. The problem, of course, is that cows have to be milked every day, whether it's a vacation day, national holiday or freezing cold out.

In the beginning, friends would help out, because it was something new and novel. But once the novelty wore off, so did the friends volunteering to come out and milk when they weren't home.

Kofoed knew the cow was a good learning experience in tenacity. Plus it was teaching the boys to put the needs of another living thing above their own.

Finally the pair wore him down and he struck a deal with them: Show me you can be responsible, have a good attitude and do the job right, and I'll put a couple of calves on it.

"They went out there with big smiles on their faces," he says, and even more so when the calves came into the picture.

Business lesson No. 3

When you assign tasks, make sure they're valuable and not just busy work, or the person

doing them will feel picked on.

Kofoed's kids really perform valuable work around the farm. Everyone has a role to play and the entire team is needed. Two riders are required to herd cattle (remember, Tootsie's no help), and tossing out hay works quicker with one person driving the SUV and one person tossing. The youngsters also know that by being nice and polite to the franchise prospects who come over to their house, they're helping out their father's company. And they don't balk. His wife, Tammy, who was an R.N. before becoming a full-time mom, plays hostess, but it's a role she'd do even if not asked. She loves people and since both are from large families they're used to having big crowds for special occasions.

It's a way of life. And when you're used to entertaining large crowds, you become adept at finding ways to think outside the box.

Business lesson No. 4

Sometimes the seemingly easiest way to accomplish a goal is the hard way.

Tammy laughed when we were dumbstruck that she was removing multiple loaves of bread from the oven. "It's just as easy to make six as one," she says. She learned that when she ran out of bread one day and had to decide which was easier, putting five kids in their coats and car seats

in order to go to the store to pick up bread, or to bake a loaf. Now it's just a routine, and one taste of bread right out of the oven as your sandwich will make a believer out of just about anyone.

If there's one fault, Kofoed has, it's that he's too nice, according to Assisting Hands' attorney, Mike Drumm.

"He's the nicest CEO you'll meet, which is good and bad," he says. "Lane's done a great job facilitating a relationship with franchisees. He's learning to balance 'family' relationships with tough love."

Drumm, who's been the company's outside attorney for several years, says he's glad to see Kofoed onboard so the franchise can start to grow again. While the company was changing franchise consultants, a number of other concepts came into the market. Assisting Hands is now playing catch-up, he says.

Business lesson No. 5

Treat your franchisees like you would your family (but not like they're kids).

"You don't just have kids, you give them your time, your teachings" and whatever resources you have at your disposal, he says. You get close to them so they're talking to you.

That approach seems to be working for him. Now if only his franchisees can live up to the high standards set by his children. FT

When a writer finally becomes a rider

Despite Time magazine's recent cover story proclaiming all parents have a favorite child—whether they admit it or not—I love all three of my children equally. But that doesn't mean I can't have a favorite among Lane Kofoed's brood.

All five of his kids, ranging from 3 to 14, are extraordinary, but Sam, 5, won my heart when he told me I was "his favorite magazine editor that he'd ever met." Later, he admitted I was the only magazine editor that he'd ever met, but I'm confident that even if he did get to know a couple of other magazine editors, including Anna Wintour of Vogue, he'd still like me best.

Sometimes you meet people and you instantly feel like part of the family. I grew up in a nuclear family—that refers to the structure, not our family dynamics. As an only child—besides my sister—I'm often lonely, so I developed a bad habit of inserting myself into other people's lives—especially if I like their families.

I was introduced to Lane Kofoed, the new CEO of Assisting Hands and the subject of this month's cover story, right after he held his first franchisee meeting at his ranch near Boise, Idaho. Once I heard about the horse rides, white-water rafting and roasting marshmallows over an open fire, I campaigned to get invited to his ranch. Fortunately, Lane and his wife Tammy are not only used to entertaining people, they actually seek it out. Prospective franchisees visit the ranch and are entertained by his family as part of Assisting Hands' discovery day. I may be pushy, but I'm not a totally clueless guest. Even though Sam told me I could sleep in their guest room, I declined. I reassured him I was happy at the Hampton Inn, where I had a free breakfast, free Internet and a TV that wasn't tuned to baseball like the one at home.

Sam is one of those funny, fearless kids you can admire because you're not responsible for their welfare.

At 5, he ropes goats, rides a horse like a pro and has the natural instincts of a seasoned cowboy. He's also honest. When 3-year-old Jacob told me he could beat his older brother David in a foot race, I pretended to be impressed, even though I had seen David play football the day before and knew this wasn't the case. Sam slipped off his stool at the kitchen counter and came over to me and stage-whispered: "That's because we let him win or he cries."

One of the funnier stories his parents tell about him is the time he watched his mother dump a bag of goldfish in the horses' water trough to help keep down the algae. A little while later, Tammy says, she noticed the horses standing around staring at the water and backing up. She approached the trough to see if the fish were spooking the horses just as Sam, who had donned swimsuit and goggles for the occasion, surfaced. He wanted to swim with the fishes, he told them.

It rained most of the day I was at the ranch and Lane and Sam worried we wouldn't be able to ride horses, after all. Lane knew how much I was looking forward to riding—and Sam knew how much he was looking forward to it. We also weren't able to float down the river in tubes, another suggested activity, but since that would have involved wearing a

bathing suit, something I never do at work, I was secretly relieved. When Lane had mentioned the river in our previous conversations, I imagined floating along in some sort of boat—preferably a yacht.

It was really the horses I was interested in. I have this thing with horses. When I was 10 and a Girl Scout, I barrel-raced on a horse at camp and I remember being pretty good at it. (I also remember getting a hole-in-one in college, which my boyfriend at the time denied, but I think that's just because I broke up with him shortly after that—or did he break up with me?)

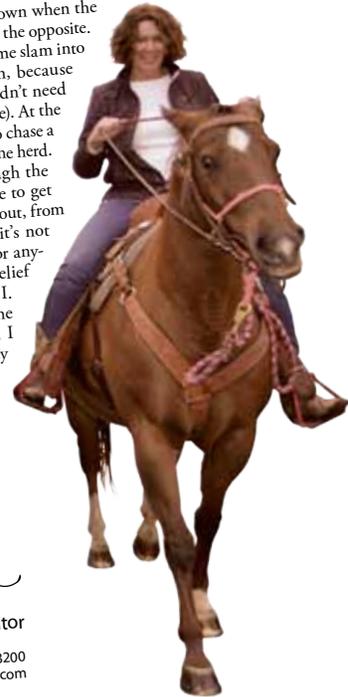
When I lived in Denver, I signed up for horseback riding lessons. I bought paddock boots and jeans I could tuck into them and never showed up for the two lessons because it snowed both days. Years later I bought a Groupon for lessons in Hudson, Wisconsin, but got cold feet—too bad I had long ago given away those unworn paddock boots.

In between raindrops, Lane saddled Tammy's horse Dolly for me. Two of the seven horses had gotten new shoes that day, but poor Dolly was shortchanged in the shoe and the rider department.

I should probably disclose that I know nothing about horses. I just know I like the idea of riding them. Dolly sensed she had a rookie when I allowed her to eat grass after being warned not to. Dolly didn't give me a choice, she surprised me by yanking her head down and pulling up giant weeds. I just assumed Lane was a little cheap with the horse feed; I didn't know letting a horse have her head made her think she was in charge. And I'm totally blaming her that I inadvertently rode on the neighbor's lawn instead of on the well-worn path at the back of the property.

Lane explained the way to ride was to go up when the horse goes up and down when the horse goes down. My body did the opposite. I think Dolly enjoyed feeling me slam into her back over and over again, because she trotted even when she didn't need to (notice the smirk on her face). At the river, Lane and Sam crossed to chase a calf that was separated from the herd. Dolly refused to walk through the deep water. "She doesn't like to get her feet wet," Tammy called out, from the 4x4. Geez, I thought, it's not like she just got new shoes or anything. Dolly sighed with relief when I dismounted. As did I.

After I boarded the plane to fly home the next day, I realized the best part of my job is trying on other people's lifestyles for a short period—and then returning to mine. E



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