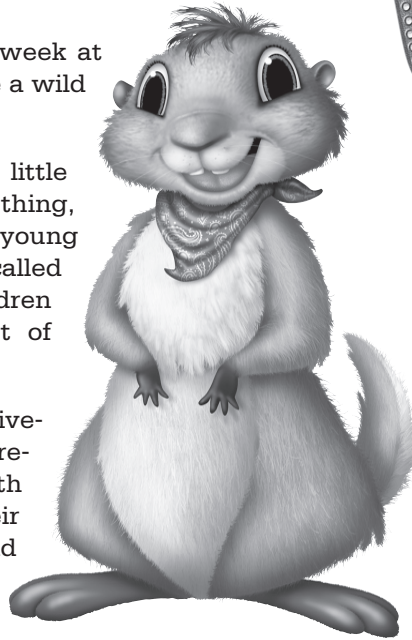


## Dear Parents:

We're so glad you've signed your child up for an exciting week at Avalanche Ranch. This VBS program will give your little one a wild ride through God's Word.

You'll notice that things at Avalanche Ranch are...well, a little different from what you might be used to. For one thing, preschoolers will be in mixed-age groups with other young children, ages 3- through 5-years-old. These small groups, called Ranch Crews, are led by adults or teenagers who love children and love the Lord. Ranch Crews are an important part of Avalanche Ranch! But you still might have some doubts...

**My 5-year-old will be bored with all these little kids.** Five-year-olds play an important role in their Ranch Crews. Pre-kindergartners now become the "big kids" who can cut with more accuracy, glue more easily, and (gasp) even write their names! Younger children will love being with your child and will show their affection generously. All this admiration is wonderful for your child's self-esteem and allows him or her to serve younger children in hands-on, practical ways.



**My 3-year-old will get hurt by those older kids.** Actually, younger children will be loved, served, and doted on by their older crew mates. Plus, in a mixed-age small group, a crew leader has much more time to spend one-on-one with your child. And you can be sure that Avalanche Ranch activities are all specially designed just for mixed-age groups, so younger children won't be in over their heads.

**My child won't come if she can't be with her friend.** While it's true that your child may not be able to be with her very best friend, she will have the opportunity to make many new friends. Studies show that children learn as much—or more—when they're linked with kids of different ages. In fact, one study observed that children naturally chose to play with other children their age only 6 percent of the time. They played with children who were at least one year older or younger than they were 55 percent of the time. If your child really needs the security of a familiar face, we can most likely pair him or her with one special friend.

Millions of children have experienced this multi-age approach with Group's VBS, with surprise and delight at the outcome. Children's ministry experts agree that combining ages has numerous benefits: teaching children to work together, experiencing what it means to be a family, and serving others in love. However, the most important factor in making this program a success is your attitude. If your child has doubts, reassure him or her that this is a wonderful opportunity to try something new. Your support will speak volumes to the children we're serving.

We look forward to ministering to your child at Avalanche Ranch.

Prairie Dog Preschool Director

