

# RIVER LEGACY

RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION • RIVER LEGACY LIVING NATURE CENTER • RIVER LEGACY PARK

Newsletter vol. 30 • Summer 2022



## HERE BE DRAGONS: FROM LIZARDS TO LEGENDS

River Legacy Nature Center will debut its newest visiting exhibit, **Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends**, on Saturday, November 19. Here Be Dragons:


From Lizards to Legends, celebrates dragons in literature, pop culture, history, music, art, paleontology, astronomy, astrology and science. Created by Build4Impact, **Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends** is unique in its approach to education, conservation message and celebration of cultures around the world through live and mythical dragons.

The exhibit is split into three dragon realms: Medieval, Asian, and Paleontology, each with a colorful and intricately designed set such as a fire-breathing dragon to greet guests. The Medieval realm takes visitors through the dragons of myth and lore from European literature and includes a replica castle and a large replica of the Hungarian Horntail Dragon featured in the Harry Potter series. Kids can stage a play in the royal puppet theater and experiment with a fascinating mini catapult.

The Asian realm explores the mystique of dragons in Asian culture and includes a full-sized Chinese dragon costume display and a dragon tattoo station. The Paleontology realm lets kids get hands-on with a dragon explorer dino dig pit where they can put on goggles

and grab a brush to uncover fossils just like a real paleontologist. Plus, guests will interact with more than 6 real-life lizards, including the white-throated monitor, albino green iguana, European legless lizard, Egyptian uromastix, frilled dragon and clubtail iguana.

Our amazing Naturalist team, headed up by Dr. Ellen Ravkind, Naturalist Manager, will be feeding, cleaning and maintaining the lizards' enclosures during the duration of this exhibit. They are excited to have this opportunity to get up close and personal with these "live" mythical dragons. "I have always loved and been fascinated with dinosaurs and dragons. Lizards are living examples of these amazing creatures. My absolute favorite is the Komodo Dragon and other Monitor Lizards! So I am thrilled we are going to have one with us for 3 months!" says Dr. Ellen Ravkind.

These and many more exciting, hands-on experiences will be on display during **Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends**, located in River Legacy Nature Center's Discovery Room from November 19, 2022 to February 11, 2023. The cost is \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, military and first responders and \$7 for ages 2 and older. 

*Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends is made possible by the generosity of:*



Annual Sponsors:



*Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends is organized and produced by Build4Impact, Inc. All rights reserved.*



## Directory

**Officers:** Robert Blake, *President*; Mark Warren, *Vice President*; Mike Davis, *Treasurer*; Elizabeth Marks, *Secretary*

**Directors:** Paul Brodie, Keith Cargile, Marcelo Cavazos, Ph.D., Stephen Cavender, Susan Eaves, Richard Greene, Carole Hoyer, Vince Hrabal, Pete Jamieson, Rezolia Johnson, Robert Kembel, Steven G. Martindale, Jerry McCullough, Dick Moise, Judy Rupy, Cindy Salter, Scott Slocum

**Staff:** Jill Hill, *Executive Director*; Shannon Porter, *Associate Executive Director*; Sherrie Ripple, *Director of Education*; Becky Nussbaum Gerro, *Director of Development*; Karla Hernandez, *Marketing Coordinator*; Amy Evans, *Administrative Assistant/Registrar*; Shawna Bateman, *Volunteer Coordinator*; Dr. Ellen Edwards Ravkind, *Naturalist Manager*; Anne Alderfer, Chad Etheridge, Jorge Garcia, Sarah Morris, *Naturalists*; Cindy Barry, Tiffany Dragun, Traci Alley-Brown, Janet Stephens, *Nature School Teachers*; Blake Kuppinger, Linda Dryden, Robin Swindle, Kelsey Hickson, *Early Childhood Field Investigation Facilitators*; Lisa McCaskey, *Assistant*; Mary Moreno, *Assistant & Venue Coordinator*; Shawna Sikorsky, *Accounting*; Martin Wallace, *Docent*

**Contributors:** Shawna Bateman, Chad Etheridge, Becky Nussbaum Gerro, Karla Hernandez, Jill Hill, Lisa McCaskey, Shannon Porter, Dr. Ellen Edwards Ravkind, Sherrie Ripple

**Photography:** Edward Agura, Shawna Bateman, Karla Hernandez, Arno Knapen

**River Legacy Foundation**  
**River Legacy Nature Center**  
703 NW Green Oaks Boulevard  
Arlington, Texas 76006  
817.860.6752 fax 817.860.1595  
[www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)

Newsletter Volume 30. Summer 2022

### SOCIAL MEDIA

 River Legacy Nature Center

 @rlnaturecenter

 @rlnaturecenter

 **YouTube** riverlegacy

## Letter From the Executive Director

# Nature Is For Everyone!

*"All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child."*


Marie Curie



That's it! The joy of a child that nature brings, belongs to us all! Nature affects all of us at every stage of life. It is an amazing, living gift to cherish, it is not manufactured or replaceable, but shareable.

At River Legacy we offer "new sights of Nature" every day! The childlike wonder of sharing secrets of the forest shines in the eyes of parents and grandparents. The curiosity developed at the Nature Center is a vital skill which lasts a lifetime. Your donations and contributions are an investment in your future and the future of your children and grandchildren. River Legacy Foundation would not exist without your support.

Becoming a regular patron of River Legacy Foundation helps us continue the legacy and preserve the richness of our woodland forest. We invite you to experience the power of this precious resource and invest in its continued preservation.

Thank you for being a part of our continuing River Legacy journey. 

*Jill Hill*



**DONATE HERE!**

[www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)

## Ten Unexpected Benefits of Time In Nature:

- Improves Short Term Memory
- Reduces Stress
- Increases Levels of Vitamin D
- Improves Sleep
- Strengthens the Immune System
- Increases Happiness
- Reduces Inflammation
- Improves Vision
- Inspires Creativity
- Develops a Deeper Sense of Spirituality

*"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."*

John Muir



## A Look Back at Dinosaur Safari:

# A ROARING GOOD TIME

Families who visited the Nature Center this past winter were able to immerse themselves in a jungle setting and get up close and personal with fascinating prehistoric creatures, ranging from the mighty T-Rex of North America to the armored Stegosaurus. They experienced hands-on activities which included climbing behind the wheel of a life-sized Jeep safari to explore the prehistoric jungle and uncover realistic dinosaur bones at ADA-compliant dig sites.

This exhibit offered something for all ages, from six life-size animatronic dinosaurs to a Tyrannosaurus Rex photo-op, two junior archeologist dig sites, and even a paleontologist tent with a discovery lab. This ultimate, immersive safari experience provided an interactive space for children, where they could play the paleontologist role, uncover hidden treasures, and tame some iconic dinosaurs.



River Legacy Nature Center was thrilled to host this exhibit which provided engaging opportunities for over 5,000 guests to learn more about dinosaurs and where on Earth they lived, and the discoveries paleontologists have made about how they ate, moved and behaved. "Dinosaur Safari" was a great opportunity to teach about the importance of wildlife conservation, and provided us with a big platform to educate guests about extinction and the impact they have on the environment.

A huge thank you to our sponsors for supporting River Legacy Nature Center's largest attended visiting exhibit yet "Dinosaur Safari" and to the families that joined us on this wild safari adventure. Because of your support we can continue to bring exciting, immersive and one-of-a-kind visiting exhibits to your Nature Center. 🦖

*Dinosaur Safari is organized and produced by Omaha's Children Museum. All rights reserved.*



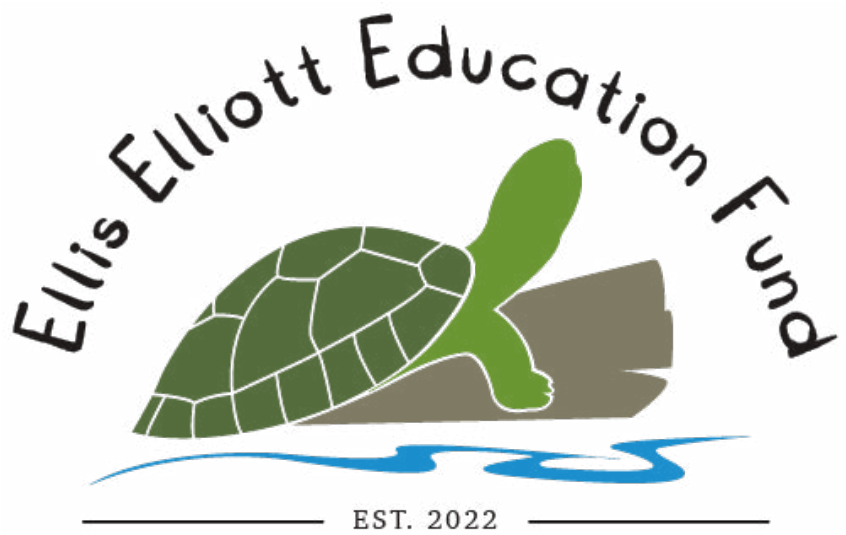
Arlington Tomorrow  
Foundation

McQueen Foundation

Annual Sponsors:







## Growing Her Legacy

Last December we lost a special friend, teacher, and long time supporter of the foundation. Ellis Ann Elliott, better known as “Ms. Ellis,” was a master environmental educator who impacted hundreds of students’ lives throughout her 25 year career at the Nature Center.

Ellis was many things: a wife, mom, and a fabulous friend... but here at the Nature Center and around the community her name was synonymous with Nature School. She established the foundation for Nature School when she wrote the first curriculum for the three-, four- and five-year old

classes. Her engaging core curriculum is still used to this day and features the Discovery method of teaching and learning. Her contributions to the curriculum facilitated tremendous strides in knowledge, as it teaches children how to learn and explore!

Her devoted husband of 40 years, Sam Elliott told us, “Ellis’ passions were teaching, children and nature. She found her dream job: preschool Nature School teacher at River Legacy Foundation. For 25 years she taught the children of DFW the ‘whats and whys’ of the forest, trails, plants and animals of River Legacy Park.”

Ms. Ellis taught Nature School in the Turtle’s Log classroom, where she welcomed many wiggly, uncertain three-year old students with her thousand-watt smile. She gifted each child with her incredible kindness. Her unique teaching style gave them confidence in their own ability to think and solve problems. These little ones quickly became nature-lovers, scientific explorers, and ultimately passionate environmental stewards.

It has been a difficult year without her calm, funny and brilliant view of life. But we are comforted when we sing one of her songs about insect body parts or bunnies hiding in greenbrier. Our hearts are lightened when parents and children of all generations come back to share their environmental passions - inspired by Ms. Ellis’ immersive Nature Walks.

The impact of Ms. Ellis’ teaching has changed the world for the better. Her teaching has enriched Arlington and our North Texas community. **All who teach and learn here are walking in her footsteps.**

In fact, the Foundation honored her memory by renaming the classroom where she taught and inspired for 25 years to *Ms. Ellis’ Turtle’s Log*.

We talk about the *ripples of good that Ellis started* - like ripples in a pond - and how they are still spreading throughout the world! We are excited to



*Continued on the next page.*





**Grow Her Legacy** through the Ellis Elliott Education Fund. Through donations in her honor and memory, we will continue growing her legacy and keep spreading our high-quality program with children throughout our city and hopefully beyond.

The Foundation plans to share Ellis's hands-on/minds-on STEM curriculum with preschoolers in public school classes! This exciting new offering can have many components such as animal experiences, guided nature hikes, cross curriculum activity centers, and professional development classes for teachers.

The Ellis Elliott Education Fund has already supported the reclamation and transformation of greenspace at Lamar High School. Soon the *ripples* will continue to spread as literature, culinary arts, biology and

more classes begin to use this greenspace to learn and fall in love with nature. Ellis would have loved that!

YOU can help! You can spread ripples of good, Ellis's good, into the world.



**DONATE HERE!**

<http://weblink.donorperfect.com/ellis>

Please follow this link to learn more about the Ellis Elliott Education Fund. Keep checking back to see how you and River Legacy Foundation continue to grow her legacy. 🐢

## \$5,000 Matching Grant for Ellis Elliott Education Fund

The Fox Family is committed to high quality environmental education. They are so excited about the impact of STEM education with young learners that they have offered a \$5,000 matching grant to boost the Ellis Elliott Education Fund's development of outdoor learning programs for early education.

Double your donation! Help the Ellis Elliott Education Fund reach twice as many young scientists by donating now.



**DONATE HERE!**

[www.riverlegacy.org/ellis](http://www.riverlegacy.org/ellis)

## Welcome to Ms. Ellis's Turtle's Log

**You are entering a special place of learning named to honor the memory of a wonderful teacher: Ellis Ann Elliott.**

Ms. Ellis taught Nature School in the Turtle's Log classroom for 25 years. She welcomed so many wiggly, uncertain three-year old students with her thousand-watt smile. Ms. Ellis gifted each child with her incredible kindness. Her unique teaching style gave them confidence in their own ability to think and solve problems. These little ones quickly became nature-lovers, then scientific explorers and then passionate environmental stewards.

Ellis established the foundation for Nature School when she wrote the first curriculum for the three-, four- and five-year old classes. She could create a song to teach ANY scientific concept. Her creativity was legendary!

Ms. Ellis's teaching has enriched Arlington and our North Texas community. **All who teach and learn here are walking in her footsteps.**





# Local Schools Making A Difference



*Lamar High School's native shade-tolerant garden.*

In early 2020, River Legacy Foundation agreed to work collaboratively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to enroll two local schools into the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The schoolyard habitat projects, which are intended to provide habitat for urban wildlife, provide students with unique hands-on learning experiences through the disciplines of STEM education. Through this program schools receive technical assistance and funding to restore and enhance their outdoor learning spaces so more teachers, students and their families can connect with nature and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

This past year, over 100 combined teachers and students at AISD's Lamar High School worked together to clear, restore and enhance one of Lamar's forgotten outdoor learning spaces on campus. Through this collaboration, River Legacy Foundation has been able to assist and guide teachers through the initial planning and design phase of the courtyard renovation, and provide Lamar with supplies and connections to make this ongoing project possible.

*Continued on the next page.*



*L to R: Sam Elliott, Dr. Erin Fogleman (Lamar AP), Mike Jones (Lamar Teacher), Shannon Porter (RLF Associate Executive Director), Ayesha Qadri (Lamar Teacher), David Wilbanks (AISD Board Member), Melody Fowler (AISD Board President), Becky Nussbaum Gerro (RLF Director of Development)*





Ayesha Qadri's regular/AP/IB Environmental Science students along with other Lamar coaches and teachers worked for several months planning, designing and planting native shade plants and vegetable gardens, composting bins and a monarch waystation. "Students love being outdoors and seeing that they are having an impact outside of their schoolroom. Students buy into the curriculum and are more motivated and engaged in the class," explained Ayesha, when asked about how outdoor learning has impacted her students.

When asked how this project has enhanced her teaching experience, Ayesha said "This project has helped me bring more hands-on learning to my classroom and teach students about soil, composting, runoff, erosion, etc. This project has pushed me to become a better environmental science teacher and encourages me to continue bringing experiences to my students that they may never get!"

With mounting support and more teachers buying into this remarkable project, Lamar is planning more impressive enhancements to this area that will allow cross-curriculum integration. This coming school year, teachers and students will be planning, designing and constructing ADA compliant raised bed gardens so culinary classes can grow herbs to

use in class, planting orchards and re-designing the pond area to incorporate an aquatic ecosystem for students to explore and study. When asked how outdoor learning has impacted Lamar teachers, Mike Jones, Lamar's Science Department Chair and biology teacher said "Our teachers who have utilized the outdoor classroom have greatly enjoyed the activities and interactions with the students. Being outside in a different arena while participating in hands-on activities makes for more useful learning experiences."

River Legacy Foundation has also been working with Pantego Christian Academy in Arlington to help update and enrich their outdoor learning classroom which includes numerous raised bed gardens. The funding provided by USFWS helped install new drip-line irrigation and rainwater collection systems for sustainable watering, and helped purchase gardening tools, gloves and a shed for storage. These updates will help alleviate time spent maintaining the garden, and will increase the time that teachers and students can dedicate to spending time exploring, discovering and connecting with nature.

It truly has been an honor for River Legacy Foundation to work with both

schools and assist with the planning and design of these outdoor spaces. Seeing the transformations and experiencing the impact it has had on teachers, students and their communities firsthand, makes us eager to see the ripple effect of this project. Our mission at River Legacy Foundation is to educate the next generation of environmental stewards and preserve the Trinity River and its unique ecosystem through education. Through these types of projects and partnerships we can inspire other schools and even entire communities to develop more outdoor learning spaces that offer students a unique opportunity for cognitive and physical development. Connectedness to the outdoors preserves the physical and mental well-being that is the springboard for making academic strides.

A huge THANK YOU to Lamar High School and Pantego Christian Academy for all their dedication, hard work and time devoted to completing their outdoor classroom restoration projects ahead of schedule. The perseverance and resilience shown by teachers and students over the course of this partnership and a pandemic has been inspiring and monumental. *LR*



*Pantego Christian Academy's vegetable garden.*



# FUNdraisers

## Feature FUN for all ages!

### 13th Annual Sporting Clay Shoot – May 6

More than 175 shooters registered for River Legacy's 13th annual Sporting Clay Shoot and enjoyed a day of camaraderie and friendly competition at Defender Outdoors Clay Sports Ranch in Fort Worth on May 6. Afterwards, shooters gathered for a combined lunch provided by Spring Creek Barbeque, raffles and silent auction. Thanks to the generosity of our shooters, company sponsors and guests, more than \$50,000 was raised for River Legacy Foundation! To check out more event pictures and results, visit <https://riverlegacy.org/sporting-clay-shoot-tournament>.



## COMING UP:

### 2nd Annual Charity Golf Classic – September 30

Tee up at Riverside Golf Club for River Legacy's 2nd Annual Charity Classic on Friday, September 30. Players can participate in a variety of contests such as the longest drive and closest to the pin. Players will also partake in an awards ceremony, door prizes, raffles and a delicious lunch provided by Spring Creek Barbeque. Thanks to last year's generous golfers, sponsors and donors, more than \$40,000 was raised for River Legacy Foundation. So, get your team together and join River Legacy Foundation "FORE" a great day of golf supporting a great cause, connecting children to nature.





# FUNdraisers

## Feature FUN for all ages!

### 3rd Annual Fall Festival Saturday, October 8 from 11am-9pm

Families will enjoy some of their favorite festival activities, such as live entertainment, games, food trucks, climbing wall, bounce house, dunk tank, animal explorations, hayrides and MORE combined with a mix of eco-demonstrations and vendors for a one-of-a-kind fall festival on Saturday, October 8. Special discount ticket packages will go on sale in September. Thanks to the thousands of guests who enjoyed the festival last year and our gracious sponsors, Fall Festival garnered almost \$45,000 for the Foundation's environmental education programs. We are looking forward to another great event and hope to see you and your family in October!



### 10th Annual A Night with Nature Friday, November 4 from 7pm-10pm



S'mores by the fire, stargazing, live animal encounters, food and drinks, raffles and an online auction are all features of the 10th annual A Night With Nature on Friday, November 4. Thanks to last year's generous attendees, sponsors and donors, more than \$45,000 was raised for River Legacy's educational programs. So be sure to join us and our dedicated event hosts, Jeff and Karen Williams, for a fantastic fall evening!



To request your  
invitation, e-mail  
**shannon@  
riverlegacy.org**  
or call  
817.860.6752,  
ext.119

**Join us for these FUNdraisers and more in 2023!**  
**[www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)**



# THANK YOU to all our event sponsors!

For registration or sponsorship information on any of these events, contact Shannon Porter at 817.860.6752 ext. 119 or by e-mail at [shannon@riverlegacy.org](mailto:shannon@riverlegacy.org). Details are also available at [www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org).

Volunteers are a major part of the success of all of our events and we are grateful for their contributions of time and skill. To learn more about volunteering, go to [www.riverlegacy.org/volunteer-with-us](http://www.riverlegacy.org/volunteer-with-us).

Be sure to visit and support our 2022-2023 Event Sponsors:



Buffalo Wool Co.  
Graham Assoc.  
Touch of Grace Day Spa  
State Farm Insurance – Rob Becker



David Atnip  
Molly Davis Design LLC  
Steve Martindale  
Debby Pond



Leslie & Lee Friedman  
Kendall Lake



Andy & Linda Broadus  
Kay & George Duggan



Rezolia Johnson  
Jerry McCullough  
Ben & Jenny Bowers  
Susan Eaves  
Laura & Al DiStefano





# Children in Nature

By Sherrie Ripple

The lingering effects of the pandemic can still be felt around us, especially by families with young children. During the pandemic, families adapted to online learning and spending more time indoors in order to provide quality education for students while staying safe. In return, we've become accustomed to the increase in screen time and decrease in time spent outside. But children and nature go hand in hand! Research shows that spending time outdoors has multiple proven health benefits, such as lowering blood pressure and reducing stress, improving mood and focus, boosting your immune system, and enhancing creativity.

Spending time in Nature also has exponential and invaluable impacts on learning. Teaching and learning in natural environments encourages self-mastery through risk taking, physical fitness, resilience, self-regulation, and student-centered discovery. Burning off excess energy outdoors makes children calmer and fosters prosocial behaviors while enhancing their imagination and inborn sense of wonder.

How our young students learn and develop their attitudes, characters and core beliefs will determine how they act and make decisions throughout their lives. Teaching them early on about their environment and how it affects the world around them has a lasting effect. If children learn, play in and interact with their environment, they will appreciate it and care for it thus becoming the next generation of environmental stewards.

We've learned and adapted through all the changes, but there is one thing we've always known: nature education is a vital part of childhood intellectual development. On the basis of this belief, we have been proudly providing the community with nature programs for over 25 years, and our commitment to this core principle has only gotten stronger. Our students go outside during each class meeting and get the opportunity to visit the habitats right here behind the Nature Center. These include investigating the creek and pond for aquatic animals, digging under the leaf litter to find snails, millipedes, spiders and beetles, and looking way up high in the canopy of the trees for a variety of birds. New discoveries are made on each trip into the woods. Students get to experience first-hand why native plants and animals are so vital to our health and survival and how we can all be better environmental stewards.

The environmental education programs at River Legacy Nature Center give children the opportunity to develop a *hands-on, minds-on connection with nature*.

We are excited to be celebrating over 25 years in environmental education with YOU! Take advantage of River Legacy's experiential learning practices through Nature School, After School Clubs, Homeschool Classes and Summer Camps. Visit our website at [www.riverlegacy.org/education](http://www.riverlegacy.org/education) to learn more!

Help us sustain and steward these programs through a donation to River Legacy Foundation. 🦋



# Women Inspiring Philanthropy Meaningful Change at River Legacy



Women Inspiring Philanthropy (WIP) is making meaningful change in Arlington once again! Thanks to a generous \$57,000 grant from WIP, there are three new ways to explore and discover the wonders of the natural world around the Nature Center.

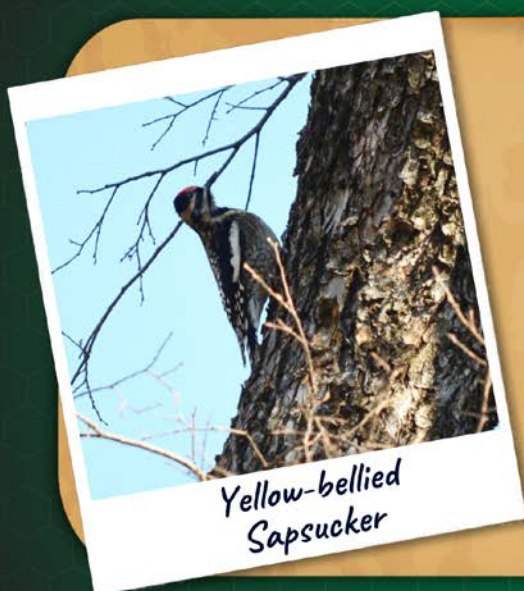
## #1 DISCOVERY TRAIL

The Discovery Trail App uses technology to invite and inspire a new love and appreciation for nature.

The Discovery Trail App takes guests on a “guided” nature hike through 11 trail markers. It teaches an interesting fact or concept with virtual reality images, photos and sometimes sounds - like the call of a yellow-bellied sap sucker. Learners test their knowledge with a multiple-choice quiz. Guests are invited inside the Nature Center to claim a small prize and share their latest discoveries to the delight of their family and our front desk ambassadors.



*Continued on the next page.*



Yellow-bellied  
Sapsucker

## A WOODPECKER'S FEAST

The Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, a type of woodpecker, are known for drilling numerous horizontal rows of small holes in trees for sap wells and to find insects. After drilling holes in trees, sapsuckers will return to the best sap producing trees day after day to drill more holes or drink sap from existing holes. Hummingbirds, warblers and other woodpeckers frequently take advantage of sapsucker holes for drinking sap.

## DISCOVERY

- Look up at the bark on the Cedar Elm tree. Can you see any woodpecker holes?
- Use the stumps nearby for a listening time. What birds can you hear or spot in the tree?

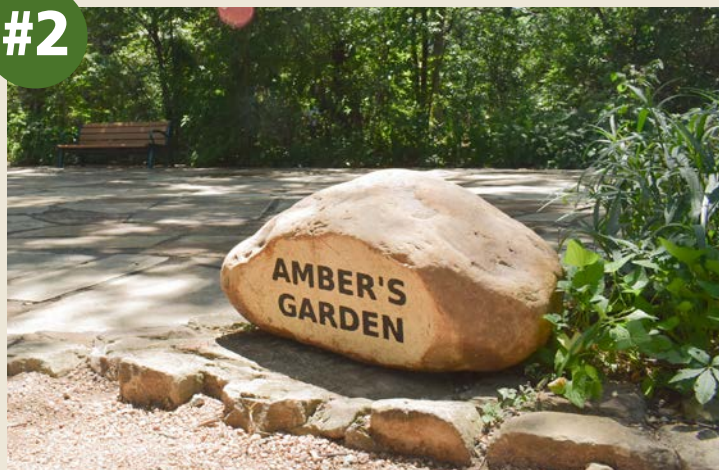




Amber's Garden is an area that was the first permanent memorial to Amber Hagerman, the little girl for whom the Amber Alert is named. It was a lovely sensory garden in 1996. Over the years, the area around the garden suffered flood damage caused by drainage problems.

Thanks to WIP, Amber's Garden is transformed! The area is now a handicap accessible outdoor classroom enjoyed by guests of all ages. Naturalist Manager, Dr. Ellen Edwards Ravkind explained "rosemary is the herb of remembrance." It is a perfect perennial plant to remember Amber and to make new memories in Amber's Garden. Be sure to stop and smell the rosemary and touch the Lamb's Ear provided by Dr. Ellen in late summer.


#2



#3

Natural Play Pocket is a special place where children can learn and play outdoors. They gain all the benefits of time in nature such as reducing stress and increasing happiness. It also combats childhood obesity and insulin resistance when children get creative with what's native.

Thanks to WIP, the first Natural Play Pocket around your Nature Center is now fenced, secure for children to explore freely, and has new and updated play areas. The children are free to explore and engage in imaginative play everywhere in this area.

Thanks to WIP for making STEM education accessible AND FUN for the next generation of environmental stewards. More and more people are exploring the post oak forest that surrounds the Nature Center. And many people are discovering the offerings inside the Nature Center. 



## Inspired to do more?

River Legacy Foundation is seeking funding to expand these projects and bring more educational resources to the Center.

Connect families with Nature!



DONATE HERE!

[www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)  
Or contact Becky Nussbaum Gerro  
Director of Development  
[becky@riverlegacy.org](mailto:becky@riverlegacy.org)



WOMEN  
INSPIRING  
PHILANTHROPY



# Immerse Yourself In NATURE

"Why don't you go outside and play!" I'm sure that everyone is familiar with that bit of parental advice being hurled through the house. However, when I was young, I more often heard, "Why don't you come inside and go to bed, it's been dark for hours!" I imagine that phrase is very seldom heard by today's technology crazed, smart phone obsessed, binge watching batch of human beings. Don't get me wrong, there is definitely a need and a place for technology, (I love having my coffee brewed and ready when I wake up!), but there is also a definite need to immerse ourselves into nature. Nature has a way of calming, relaxing, and even healing both body and mind. When we get outside and actually take notice of our natural surroundings, we simply feel better. At River Legacy Nature Center, we are constantly trying to promote the natural surroundings concept. We intentionally place interpretive signage and exhibits in naturally calming spaces.

One of these is our bird blind area, built by friends of Mike Goodrich, in his memory. A bird blind is simply an area that is divided by a wooden fence that keeps people on one side and our feathered friends on the other. There are viewing slots cut into the fence which allow curious humans to peek through and observe the feeding birds without disturbing their repast. We entice these avian diners to fly in and sample our fare by presenting tasty morsels on feeding stations created from natural, reclaimed,



and repurposed materials. The stumps, sticks, and bark we use to create our imaginative feeders blend in perfectly with the woodland setting to which the birds are accustomed. Thanks to the Fort Worth Audubon Society, this area also includes our "What's Your Wingspan?" kiosk, which is always a fun activity for kids of all ages. There are eight life sized bird silhouette cutouts that allow visitors to stretch out their arms and see how they compare in size to area birds. There is something extremely soothing about just watching and listening to birds in their natural habitat.

Another area where we try to get people connected with the natural world through natural materials is in our Nature School playground area. We call this area a Natural Play Pocket. Here we utilize reclaimed timber that has fallen in storms or been tactically removed. By utilizing this wood we avoid the brightly colored playground

areas that are the norm in most parks. Our "attractions" are natural colors and tend to lead the children that play in the area to use their imagination. For instance, we have a grasshopper that is neither green nor yellow, however the children have no problem identifying what critter it is as they climb up on the hind legs, slide down to the naturally curved log body, and sit on the head. By using reclaimed natural materials we help reduce the carbon footprint of producing the plastic and metal that is so prevalent in the majority of playgrounds. It also makes the area more visually attractive as the natural colors blend into the surrounding forest area. Nature, natural areas, repurposed materials, imagination, and calming experiences all work together to make us all feel just a little bit better. So get outside and immerse yourself into nature. Just don't stay out too far past your bedtime! 🦋





# Tiny, But Mighty:

# Gizmo The Gator

By: Chad Etheridge




September 2019. It was a hot humid morning. Low scud clouds skimmed overhead as they made their way out into the Gulf of Mexico. A tiny nearly inaudible, gluck...gluck sound emanated from a small leathery egg that had been deposited into a neatly built nest about 60 days ago. Time had arrived. It was time for the world to welcome Gizmo the Gator into the foreboding mysteries of the swamp. He would be shielded from possible predators by his extremely protective mother. Or at least he would have been if she'd been around. In Gizmo's case he was welcomed by a human surrogate that would stand in for his mother and become, along with other humans, his guardian and protector for the rest of his life. Gizmo was hatched at an alligator sanctuary in Beaumont, Texas.

About this same time, River Legacy Foundation began the process of acquiring the appropriate permits, equipment, and inspections that are required to obtain an American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*.) Eventually, it all came together, and in May of 2021, I made a trip to Beaumont and picked up Gizmo to transport him to his new home. He was a handsome little gator and an immediate hit with the staff. I quickly started conditioning Gizmo to the routine of presentations. Training for the naturalist staff also began and before long we were able to introduce Gizmo to the public. He instantly became our star attraction. Gizmo helps us educate the North Texas public about an animal that many do not even realize lives here in the wild. Even though over 7 million people have heavily encroached on their natural



habitat, the alligator has maintained a self-sustaining population out on the West Fork of the Trinity.

The River Legacy Nature Center is very fortunate to work with many animal ambassadors that help us in our mission to educate people about our local fauna. Thanks to your generous donations, we can show people the actual animal up close and personal, and attention spans suddenly become longer. We are also extremely lucky to have our tiny, but mighty Gizmo to help us spread the word. Like all healthy

animals Gizmo has grown quickly. He will be with us a while longer and then he will become too large for us to easily handle. I will take him back down to his birthplace where he will join others of his kind and spend the rest of his long life in a sanctuary where he will be fed, cared for, and protected. We will then get another, tiny but mighty, ambassador and start the process over. Gizmo has helped us reach out to hundreds of people and his contribution to understanding his species has been invaluable. 



# Native Plant Society of Texas: The hands that make the Nature Center bloom!

As you drive into the River Legacy Nature Center, you are greeted by a gorgeous display of flowering plants! Around this time, you will find Purple Coneflowers (Echinacea), Turk's Caps, and Texas Lantana to name a few. In other areas of the center, you might see Desert Willows and Red Yucca. Your senses, much like those of the Monarch Butterflies and Hummingbirds you might see visiting these flowers, will appreciate the blend of colors, textures, and fragrances these plants produce.

These beautiful gardens of native plants are courtesy of the dedication and hard work of Josephine Keeney and her pollinator crew from the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT). Their mission is to "promote research, conservation, and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas through education, outreach, and example" so during a visit to the Nature Center, when Josephine noticed our gardens were in dire need of help, she and her crew added us to

their list of ongoing projects. Since Fall of 2019, these dedicated volunteers have come at least once a month, each donating 3 to 4 hours of their time to plant and maintain our beds. Their time adds up to well over 200 hours a year!

NPSOT plays a critical role in developing and maintaining the ecosystem around the Center. Think of the bitter, bitter cold, snow and ice we experienced the last two winters... most native plants survived! Now think of our hot and dry summers, native plants tend to be more drought tolerant. Unlike non-natives, the plants you see here can handle that weather, they don't require special pampering or the excessive use of resources like water. Most importantly they provide food, shelter and vital habitats for butterflies, bees, birds, and other local wildlife. These plants are representatives of our regional biodiversity and help preserve our history.

Josephine and her crew continue to expand their work area and plan for further enhancements to the gardens surrounding the Nature Center so keep



From L to R: Gordon Scruggs, Dick Schoech, Josephine Keeney and Charley Amos.

your eyes open next time you visit to see what native plants you can spot.

THANK YOU to The Pollinator crew/ NPSOT Members: Jane Oosterhuis, Kay Dansby, Phyl Baloga, Dana Austin, Ramona Gratton, Charley Amos, Dick Schoech, Josephine Keeney. 🦋

If you'd like to learn more about native plants or about the Native Plant Society of Texas visit [npsot.org](https://npsot.org).





# The **BIG DEAL** with natives, non-natives, and invasives

Native, non-native, and invasive species are frequently discussed in the news and can be found almost anywhere. It's important to understand these words and how each affects our environment.

Native species are animals or plants that grow naturally in a particular region, while non-natives are ones that have been introduced into a habitat where they don't normally live. Not all non-natives pose a threat but they often require more care and resources to survive. When a non-native negatively alters the environment and causes significant impacts, it becomes invasive. Invasive species usually don't have ecological checks on them preventing uncontrollable growth and spread, these can have devastating effects on animal, including human, and plant health, and the economy in the area.


Next time you are out on a hike, you might notice an overabundance of a dense, understory shrub, privet. Privet was brought to the US from Asia and Europe as a landscape ornamental in the mid 1800's. It has since spread throughout most of the Southeastern US, including here in North Texas. Left unchecked, it can choke out sunlight from reaching the forest floor preventing the growth of native understory plants. Al Qualman began as a volunteer for Privet Patrol in 2017 because of his passion to help keep our forests natural. He now leads this monthly operation working with many volunteers, both corporate and private, to remove privet from trail areas frequented by our visitors. Thanks to Al and these volunteers, we've been able to maintain these areas clear and keep privet under control.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), native to Asia, is an invasive wood-boring beetle that was first detected in Michigan in 2002. It has since spread and killed millions of ash trees across Eastern and Central US. The elimination of these trees affects numerous segments of that environment and could lead to devastating long-term results. It was discovered in Texas in 2016 and in Tarrant County in 2018 by a 10-year-old-boy.



According to Dr. Demian Gomez, Regional Forest Health Coordinator, Texas A&M Forest Service, "Both healthy and unhealthy ash trees are susceptible to EAB attack and have no natural resistance to the exotic insect. Mortality can be 100%. Last spring, Texas A&M Forestry deployed nearly 500 purple sticky prism traps across the state, including Tarrant County, to track the spread of this beetle." If you're

curious, you can spot one of these traps near the entrance to our Nature Center again next spring.

There's all types of invasives across the world, from insects to animals, fungi to plants. It's important to do your part and pay attention to the things you introduce into your local environment. For more information, visit <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/> 

---

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) information provided by Dr. Demian Gomez, Regional Forest Health Coordinator, Texas A&M Forest Service.





# A round of applause for Volunteers!

Because of your continuous support throughout the years, we have been able to build, grow and nurture one of Arlington's beloved legacies. We can only do what we do because of your dedication to the River Legacy Foundation. Your support through unprecedented times was monumental, and we are thrilled to welcome you back to put your talents, skills and passion towards our ongoing efforts to connect more families to nature.

We want to give you, our volunteers, a BIG thank you for giving us the greatest gift of all... your time. As life picked up speed again in 2021, our volunteers came back stronger than ever with over 3,000 hours of donated time and are on track to beat that number in 2022!

THANK YOU. To our high school and college students, retirees, educators, outdoor enthusiasts, and everyone in between! You make the River Legacy Nature Center an extraordinary place to learn, play, give, and discover nature! 🦋



## YOU helped us grow in 2021, here's how you did it...

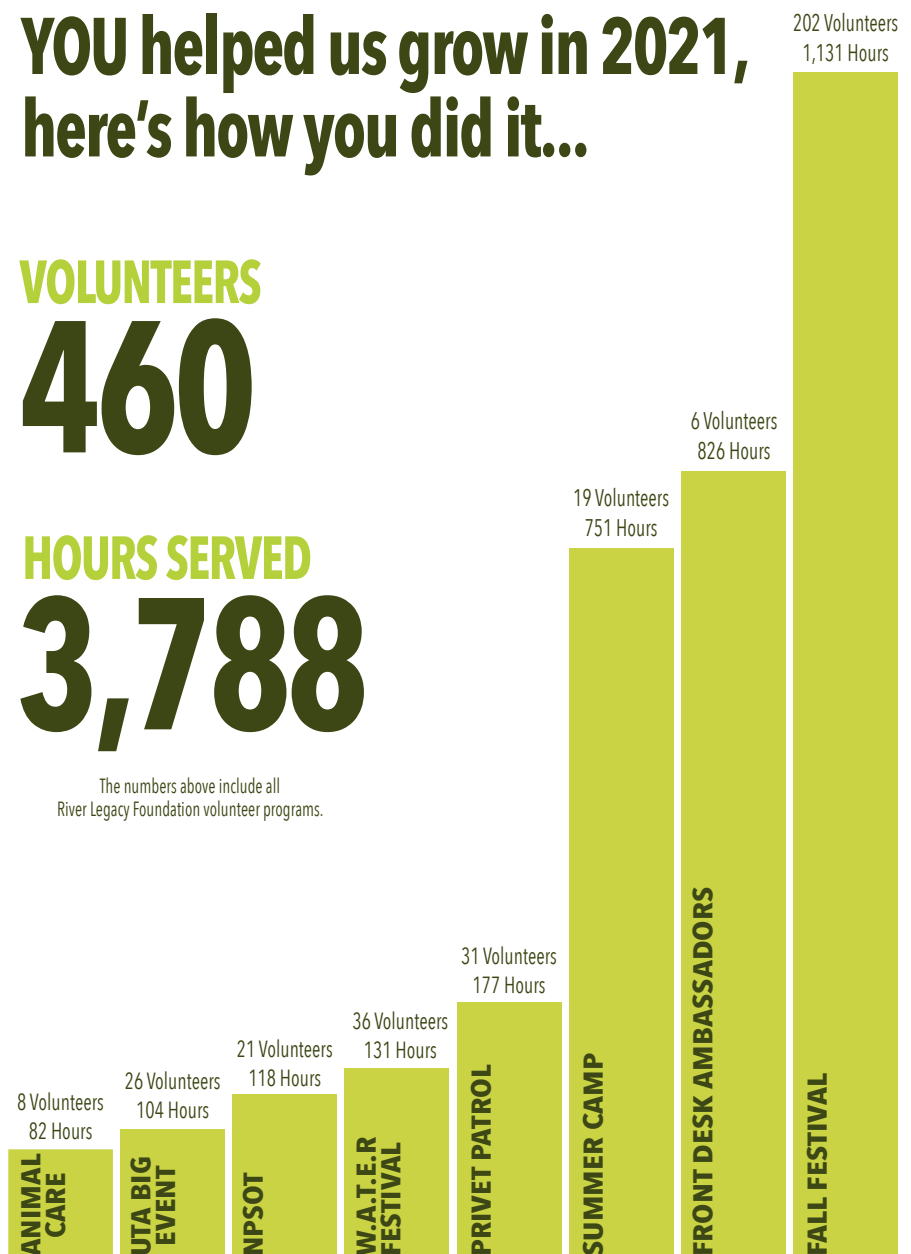
**VOLUNTEERS**

# 460

**HOURS SERVED**

# 3,788

The numbers above include all  
River Legacy Foundation volunteer programs.









# SAVE THE DATE:

## North Texas Giving Day is Thursday, September 22!

This year, on Thursday, September 22nd, 2022, River Legacy Foundation is once again participating in Communities Foundation of Texas 13th annual North Texas Giving Day, a one day giving extravaganza for our whole region. Get inspired and join the River Legacy Foundation this September to make it another amazing year. YOUR support helps more families Discover Nature!

Last year, Communities Foundation of Texas brought together more than 3,300 organizations to raise 66 million. Thanks to your generosity and our own matching donor, River Legacy Foundation raised \$80,817, making it our best year yet! Help us do it again!

Join your friends from River Legacy Foundation (both human and animal ambassadors too!) at the **Levitt Pavilion for the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation's celebration and Arlington Gives! Concert on Thursday, September 22 at 6:30 p.m.** Hang out with us, celebrate, and visit the food trucks as you wait for the concert, featuring Brad Thompson Band to begin at 8:00 p.m.

Bring all your friends and remember to vote River Legacy Foundation for the People's Choice Award. The organization receiving the most votes will receive additional grant funds.

### HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

#### 1. GET UP AND GIVE ON

**SEPTEMBER 22!** Your gift matters!

On September 22, if you donate to River Legacy Foundation online at [NorthTexasGivingDay.org](http://NorthTexasGivingDay.org) between 6 a.m. and midnight, your dollars will be stretched with bonus funds and prizes raised by Communities Foundation of Texas.

**Not available on September 22?** No worries! Show your support early and give during the early giving period between September 1 and September 22.

**2. SPREAD THE WORD!** Spread the word to your friends and loved ones about River Legacy Foundation and NTX Giving Day. Don't forget to tag [@riverlegacyparks](https://www.facebook.com/riverlegacyparks) on Facebook and [@rlnaturecenter](https://www.instagram.com/rlnaturecenter) on Instagram. Make sure to use [#NTXGivingDay](https://www.instagram.com/NTXGivingDay) if you're posting online and encourage your friends and family to get up and give as well.

**3. FOLLOW US!** Follow our social media [@riverlegacyparks](https://www.facebook.com/riverlegacyparks) on Facebook and [@rlnaturecenter](https://www.instagram.com/rlnaturecenter) on Instagram and check [facebook.com/NorthTexasGivingDay](https://www.facebook.com/NorthTexasGivingDay) to stay up to date on NTX Giving Day!



COMMUNITIES  
FOUNDATION of TEXAS  
—NTX—  
**GIVING  
DAY** presented by  
amazon

# 9.22.22



# THANK YOU to our Donors

June 1, 2021 — May 31, 2022

## Annual Sponsors

Baylor, Scott and White  
Orthopedic and Spine Hospital  
at Arlington  
Capital Street Scapes, a division  
of SA-SO  
Viridian

## Grants

Adeline and George  
McQueen Foundation  
Arlington Tomorrow Foundation  
Bank of America, Philanthropic  
Management  
Fort Worth Audobon Society  
Hayes Charitable Fund of the  
Bank of America Charitable  
Goft Fund  
Helen Irwin Littauer  
Educational Trust  
Honey B Foundation, a  
Hive of Grace  
James A. "Buddy" Davidson  
Charitable Foundation  
Sid W. Richardson Foundation,  
Grants and Investments  
Texas Mutual Workers'  
Compensation Insurance  
Texas Workforce Commission  
Women Inspiring Philanthropy

## \$5,000 and above

Anonymous Fund at the North  
Texas Community Foundation

## \$2,000-\$4,999

Central Bible Church Friends  
Mike and Becky Gerro  
Dick and Helen Moise

## \$1,000-\$1,999

David and Kathy Atnip  
Steve and Ann Cavender  
Steve and Vicki Dixon  
Terry and Teresa Gaines  
Richard and Sylvia Greene  
George and Nesha Morey  
Scott and Sammie Slocum  
Jim and Mary Turner  
Mark and Jennifer Warren

## \$500-\$999

Brian and Karen Ellen Anderson  
Tommy and Carol Crumpton  
John and Denise Dillow  
Dan and Susan Eaves  
Jan Barton Gerro  
George and Carole Hoyer  
Pete Jamieson  
Robert and Keri Kembel  
Christine Park  
John and Priscilla Promise  
Dr. Kent and Dr. Diane  
Rasmussen  
Joe Schneider

## \$250-\$499

Chuck and Margaret Baskin  
Martha Bell  
George and Sandra Campbell  
Keith and Catherine Cargile  
Pete Dahlberg  
Dr. Al and Laura DiStefano  
Lee and Leslie Friedman  
Jill and Steve Hill  
Jerry and Becky McCullough  
Tim and Barbara Perry  
Thomas and Nancy Reneau  
Debra Roesler

Rotary Club of Arlington  
Highlands  
The Virtual Wild/Jay Rutherford  
Peter Scott  
Chaplain Rich & Reecia Stoglin  
SWCA Environmental Consultants  
Ron and Ann White

## \$100-\$249

AT&T United Way/Employee  
Giving Campaign  
Tim and Laurie Ackerman  
Charley and Nancy Amos  
Karen Atfield  
Dennis and Jan Barry  
Beth Behrmann  
The Benevity Community  
Impact Fund  
Robert Blake, Jr.  
Justin and Anna Chapa  
Scott and Linda Church  
Allen and Mollie Clemson  
Sharon Cole  
Dustan Compton  
Donald M Davis  
Molly Davis  
Teddy Dillingham  
Charles Duke  
Jeff and Terry Eaton  
Tiffany Eaton  
Sam Elliott  
Kathleen Emerson  
Kevin and Diane England  
Larry and Melody Fowler  
Fidelity Charitable on behalf of  
James L. Marshall  
Richard S Frazier  
Ronny Abrams and Denise Gage  
Lynda Gearheart  
Ashley Golsorkhi  
Raul and Kerry Gonzalez

Barbara Hinds  
Susie Hood  
Sally Hopper  
Rezolia Johnson  
Everett E and Pamela Johnson  
Steven W. and Cathy Latham  
Dorothy Leaderer  
Richard and Margaret Lenz  
The Lester Family  
Curtis and Mary Jo Linscott  
Scott and Elizabeth Marks  
Ella McGovern  
James and Shelby McLean  
Grace Murray  
Ryan Nordberg  
Kermit and Joyce Olson  
Marianne Petrelli  
Don Powell  
Kathy Fox Powell  
Jim and Peggy Poynter  
Prospera Financial Services  
Michael and Claudia Pugh  
Mike and Sandi Ray  
Ronnie and Cathy Flores  
Ridgeway  
Scott and Cathy Russell  
Jay and Julie Ryan  
Dick Schoech  
Fred and Louann Schulze  
Deborah Simek  
Jay Six  
Paul and Kay Sweeney  
Kathy Tipps  
Jack and Becky Upchurch  
Debbie Vernon  
The Walkenhorst Family  
Teresa and David Weldon  
Kathryn White  
Gena Williams  
Trey and Shana Yelverton



# THANK YOU to our Donors

continued

\$1-\$99		Honorarium	In Memory of David Moritz
Anonymous (2)	Christi Matthys	Mary Beth Anderson in honor of Samantha King	Gerald R Baker
Albertsons	Vince Merola	David and Kathy Atnip in honor of the fantastic members of River Legacy Foundation's Staff, past, present and future!	Kent Claxon
Ophelia Bacon	Brooke Mixon	Dan Dipert Family Fund in honor of Jeff and Karen Williams	Freeman Investment Company, LP
Mike and Susan Bartlett	Tim Moloney	Anna Gant in honor of Becky Gerro	Mike and Becky Gerro
Jock Bethune	Dave and Laura Munson	Lynda Gearheart in honor of Jill Hill's exceptional leadership	Ed Gray
Wendell and Linda Black	Jeanie Murrow	In honor of Mark and Lillian Hansen	Richard and Sylvia Greene
Kathleen Bliss	Network For Good	The Moritz Family in honor of Mike Reilly	The Guaranty State Bank & Trust Co.
Peter and Vicky Van Buren	Nakatomi Service llc	Brooke Qualman in honor of Allen Qualman	Larry and Marsha Hilcher
Paul G Brodie	Nancy Newsom	Cynthia Salter in honor of Carson George Radford Salter	Steve and Jill Hill
Sharon Brown	Julie Nicholson	Betty Susini in honor of David, Angela, Justin and Heather Chadwick	Debi Kempin
Stephanie Buduhan	Steven and Patricia Pierret		Jim Lewis
Chuck Chambers	Alma Pohler		Tim and Mary Jean Moloney
Karishma Chatterjee	Shannon Porter		Jeremy and Lori Mull
Jay and Nancy Dickson	Carolyn Price		Greg Nicholson and Annie Moritz-Nicholson
Jim and Julie Douglas	Allen and Leslie Qualman		Marianne Petrelli
Duncan Roofing Concepts	Dr. Aaron and Debra Reich		Reed and Pam Pigman
Fidelity Charitable on behalf of Tom and Kathy Barnard	Jim and Faye Reeder		Reilly Family Foundation
Anna Gant	Glenn and Kim Ritchie		Jay and Julie Ryan
Jack and Roslyn Glaze	Mary Beth Vono and Jeff Rowland		Graham Schadt
Randy and Betsi Goode	Tom Ryan		Mark and Lynn Swogger
Darya Gonzalez	Cyndi Salter		J. B. and Lori Ulrich
Pamela Hansen	Soul Body Works, LLC		Richard & Carol Wray
Mary Jean Hazlett	Krista Simmons		
George and Holly Heid	Kendall Simon		
Melinda Hunter	Becky Stumbaugh		
Michael and Anjel Hustedde	John and Suzanne Sweek		
Carl Johnson	Dan and Rebecca Tatsch		
Wilma W Johnson	Curt and Sue Taylor		
Beth Jones	Polly Walton		
Frank and Josephine Keeney	Sadie Ward		
Kroger Community Rewards	Randy and Catherine Williams		
John Leddy	Bo Yang		
Heather Lee	Joe and Jennifer Zamboni		
Bruce Leistikow	Roger and Ginny Zwicker		
Alison Bledsoe Lyons			
Steven and Carmen Marsic			
Martha Martin			
		Memorial	Ellis Elliott Educational Fund
		Anonymous memorial gift	Laurie Carroll-Appelbaum
		Anne Dye in memory of Dr. Gary Dye	Arlington Texas Exes
		Mike and Becky Gerro in memory of Dr. Gary Dye	Don Berman
		Mike and Becky Gerro in memory of Frances Kobty	Steve and Tracy Brooks
		Richard and Sylvia Greene in memory of Frances Kobty	Greg and Judy Brown
		Richard and Sylvia Greene in memory of Jan Duncan	Scott and Linda Church
		Richard and Sylvia Greene in memory of Paul Kelton	Tommy and Carol Crumpton
		Richard and Sylvia Greene in memory of Dr. Wick Alexander	Lori Davis
			Steve and Vicki Dixon
			Tiffany and Gregg Dragun
			Jim and Linda Dryden
			Paul and Martha Duesterhoft



# THANK YOU to our Donors

June 1, 2021 — May 31, 2022

Joseph Elliott

Sam Elliott

Mike and Becky Gerro

Kathy Goodrich

Annette Gray

Richard and Sylvia Greene

Alison Harla

George and Holly Heid

Steve and Jill Hill

Steve and Jennifer Horne

K.C. & Carol Jobe

Scott and Amy Johnson

Carolyn Krentz

Lou Kryder

Jack Loter

Frederick Moon

Dave and Laura Munson

April Poitras

Prince Lebanese Grill/Kobty  
Family

Jay and Barbara Pritcher

Rainbow Sunday School Class,  
First United Methodist Church

Lynn Roe

Charlotte Romero

Rotary Club of Arlington  
Highlands

Fred and Louann Schulze

Arlington Chamber Thursday  
Noon Networking Group

Debbie Vernon

Jody and Penny Vincent

Teresa and David Weldon

Judy Whitt

Gena Williams

Joni and Chuck Wilson

## In-Kind

AlphaGraphics

Charley and Nancy Amos

Anything Goes

Apple Glass and Mirror

Arlington Music Hall

Arlington Parks and Recreation

Bit by Bit Computer Consultants

Robert Blake, Jr.

Boo-Ray's of New Orleans

Andy and Linda Broadus

Paul G Brodie

Browning Seed

Jeff and Pat Carter

Steve and Ann Cavender

Chick-fil-A North Collins

City of Arlington Parks and  
Recreation Dept.

Dick's Sporting Goods

Dr. Al and Laura DiStefano

Duncan Roofing Concepts

Epic Waters Indoor Waterpark

Frost Bank

Lee & Leslie Friedman

Becky Nussbaum Gerro

GoGo Squeeze

Graham Associates, Inc.

Guaranteed Hydromulch

Jill and Steve Hill

Hot Worx

George and Carole Hoyer

Iron Horse Golf Club

J. Gilligans

Pete Jamieson

Kendra Scott

Kriya Hotels and Venture X

Legal Draft Beer Company

Maner Fire Equipment

Mansfield Funeral Home

Steve and Paula Martindale

May Financial Solutions

Dave and Lisa McCaskey

Kathleen Mead

Messina Hof Winery

Dick and Helen Moise

Mountain Sports

Nothing Bundt Cakes

Piccolo Mondo

Debby Pond

Prince Lebanese Grill

Jim Quinn

Regal Plastics

Kim Ritchie

Brad and Judy Rupay

Jay and Julie Ryan

Sanford House Inn and Spa

Scheels All Sports

Shady Valley Country Club

Shoot Point Blank

Southern Flair Photography

Spring Creek Barbeque

State Farm Insurance

Super Nails by NJ

Texadelphia

Texas Rangers Baseball Club

The Man's Shop

The Nehemia Company

Trader's Village

Train Caine

Under the Icing

Upland Bird Country

Urban Country Flower Co

Urban Tree Merchants

Debbie Vernon

Viridian

Gena Williams

Wild Birds Unlimited

Joe and Jennifer Zamboni

## SPECIAL THANKS

Arlington Parks and Recreation  
Department

Arlington Water Utilities

City of Arlington



**DONATE HERE!**

[www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)