

DEEPENING OUR ROOTS GROWING THE LEGACY







MISSION

TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE LAND ALONG THE TRINITY RIVER
AND ITS TRIBUTARIES AS AN EXTRAORDINARY RECREATIONAL,
EDUCATIONAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE.

VISION

TO PRESERVE A LIVING LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR... I am filled with pride about what we've achieved together and with optimism about our growing impact and influence. Thanks to your support, we have been more effective than ever in educating and growing the next generation of environmental stewards. I firmly believe that River Legacy Foundation is an exceptional nonprofit organization in the environmental conservation sector with a bright past and boundless future.

2023 marked our 35th anniversary an opportunity to look back over the past decades of groundbreaking education and conservation work. The only conclusion possible is **WE HAVE BEEN MORE** that we have been truly changing **EFFECTIVE THAN** the world, then and now. Our EVER IN EDUCATING early efforts laid the groundwork for the creation of the River AND GROWING THE Legacy Foundation as a 501(c)(3) **NEXT GENERATION** nonprofit and the preservation of OF ENVIRONMENTAL our beautiful 1,300 acre park and its amenities. Then we built our Nature Center, which represents the gateway to this wondrous natural resource, and where future environmental stewards are created everyday to continue the legacy of those visionaries that stood on a dream and acted upon it.

In 2023, we made enhancements to our outdoor learning areas, introduced new programs and increased access to nature in a variety of ways, including the start of our new Enrichment classes, while continuing to bring diverse visiting exhibits to the center.

Throughout the pages of this year's annual report, we are pleased to share highlights of these efforts.

One accomplishment I'm particularly proud of: River

Legacy Foundation working with area public school

students and teachers to help guide and create outdoor learning classrooms. These classrooms truly enhance the students' learning and creativity, as well as support their emotional, mental and physical well being. From the construction of raised bed gardens, to supplying schools with soil, mulch and gardening tools to supporting the creation

> Legacy have been instrumental in planting the seed and cultivating our next generation of environmental stewards outside of our borders and into area schools.

of environmental clubs, staff at River

As we pause to celebrate River Legacy Foundation's bright past, it is efforts like these — growing in reach, influence, and scale — that give me confidence that we have a boundless future. The reason we are able to do what we do is that you, our supporters,

have placed an immense amount of trust in us. We will continue to do our best to earn this trust.

I hope you will join me in supporting the work that all the staff and volunteers at River Legacy Foundation, and all of our partners and supporters around our great state of Texas, do every day to address the environmental concerns we face.

Together, we can do more!

Sincerely,

STEWARDS.

Executive Director

Shannon Porta



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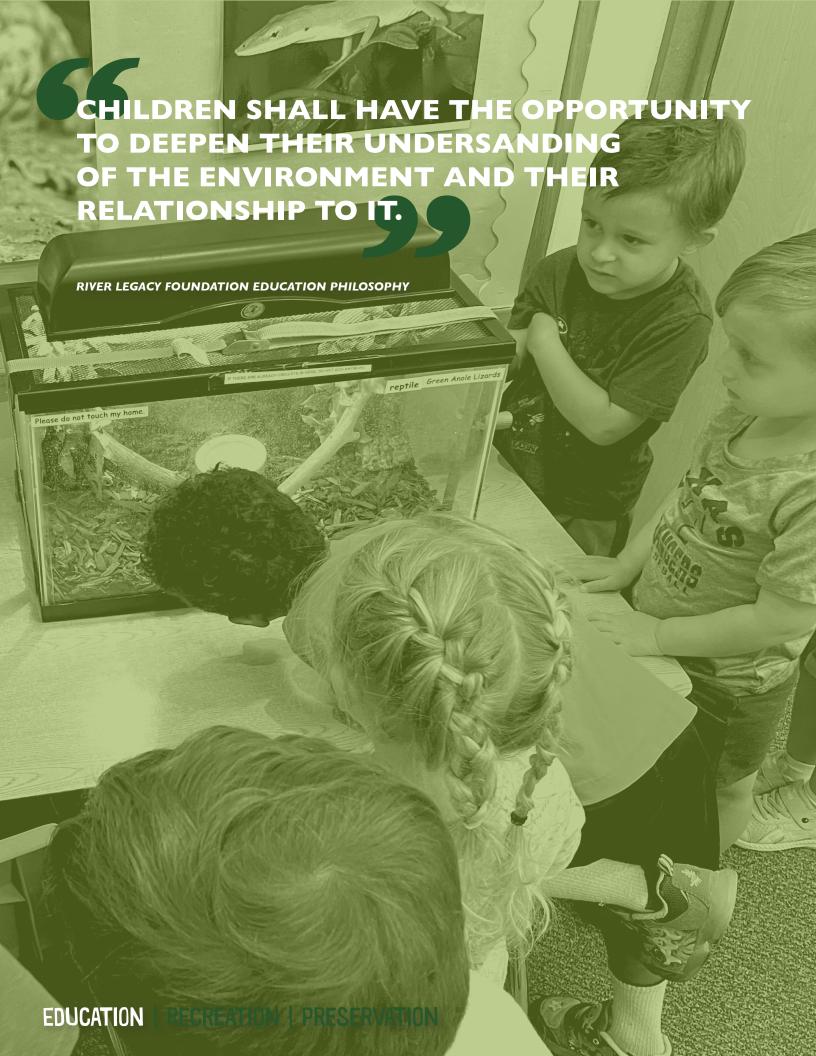
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Traci Alley-Brown	Nature School Teacher
Janet Stephens	Nature School Teacher
Cindy Barry	Nature School Teacher
Tiffany Dragun	Nature School Teacher

2023 ANNUAL SPONSORS











2,937 OUTDOOR HOURS

were accumulated by students in our paid education programs, with a minimum of 30 minutes of outdoor play per day! Learning in a natural environment enhances a child's imagination and inborn sense of wonder.



16:195 VISITORS

came to the Nature Center and learned about the environment through a regular day visit, community festival, exhibit, or public program at the Nature Center.



2,692 GUESTS

gained a deeper understanding of our nature environment thanks to our public programs and outreaches. Our ability to teach in and away from the Nature Center helps us reach further into the community!



PARKER

403 STUDENTS

made a connection to nature during a STEM related field trip. Handson activities, animal encounters, and naturalist-led hikes are just a few of the many tools offered to inspire connections to nature.

OUR STUDENTS COME FROM...

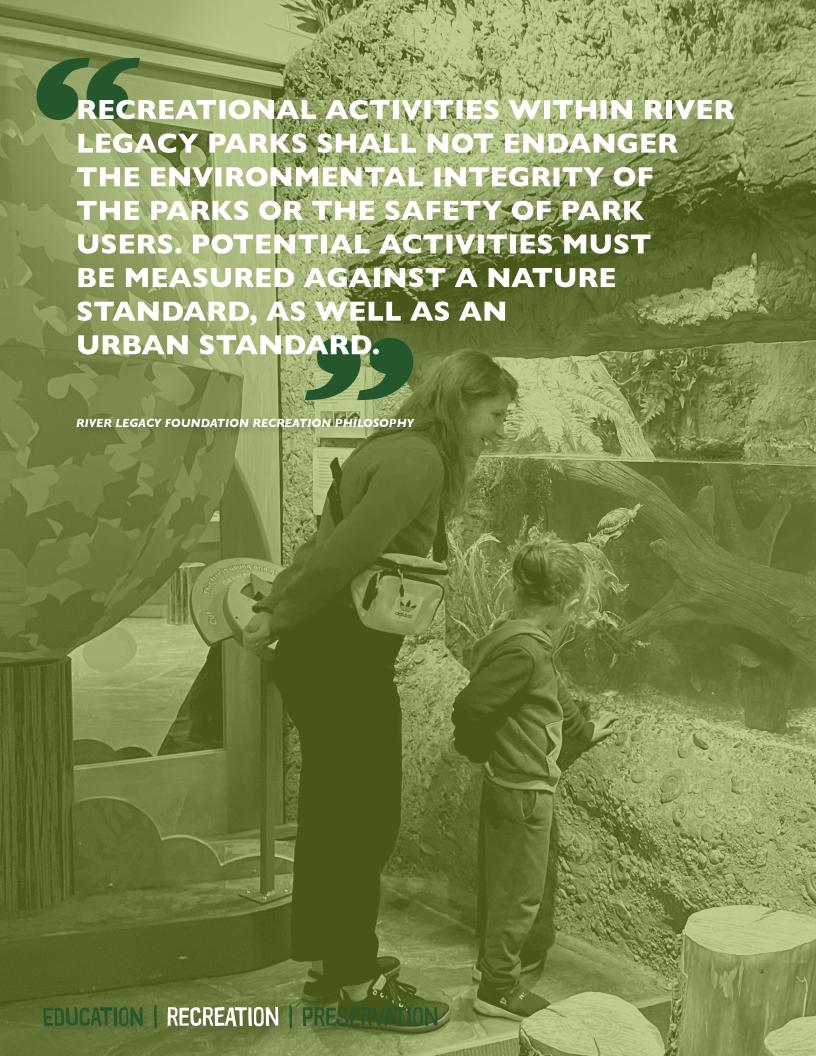
River Legacy Nature Center offers Arlington and surrounding communities a unique opportunity for environmental education and outdoor exploration in a rapidly growing urban area. The quality of our programs is unmatched... just ask the families that travel every week, month, and summer to take part in our programs!

"River Legacy is a special place for my kids, where they feel comfortable being 100% themselves. The quality of programming and instruction are phenomenal, and my kids have nothing but wonderful things to say about their experience every day when I pick them up."

- Anonymous, Summer Camp Parent

We've built a reputation for offering high-quality environmental education, and we hope to continue to reach students and families across Texas and beyond.





VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers continuously help us build, grow, and nurture one of Arlington's beloved legacies. From high school and college students, retirees, educators, outdoor enthusiasts, and everyone in between... volunteers are essential in making River Legacy Nature Center an extraordinary place to learn, play, give, and discover nature!







4,796 HOURS



\$134,274 OF VALUE

FEATURED EXHIBITS

As River Legacy Foundation endeavors to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards, sparking an interest in wildlife, the forest and conservation is an important first step. Visiting exhibits, like Here Be Dragons: From Lizards to Legends created by Build4Impact and Forever Forest created by Omaha Children's Museum, are just a few of the ways the Nature Center facilitates such moments through hands-on exhibits.

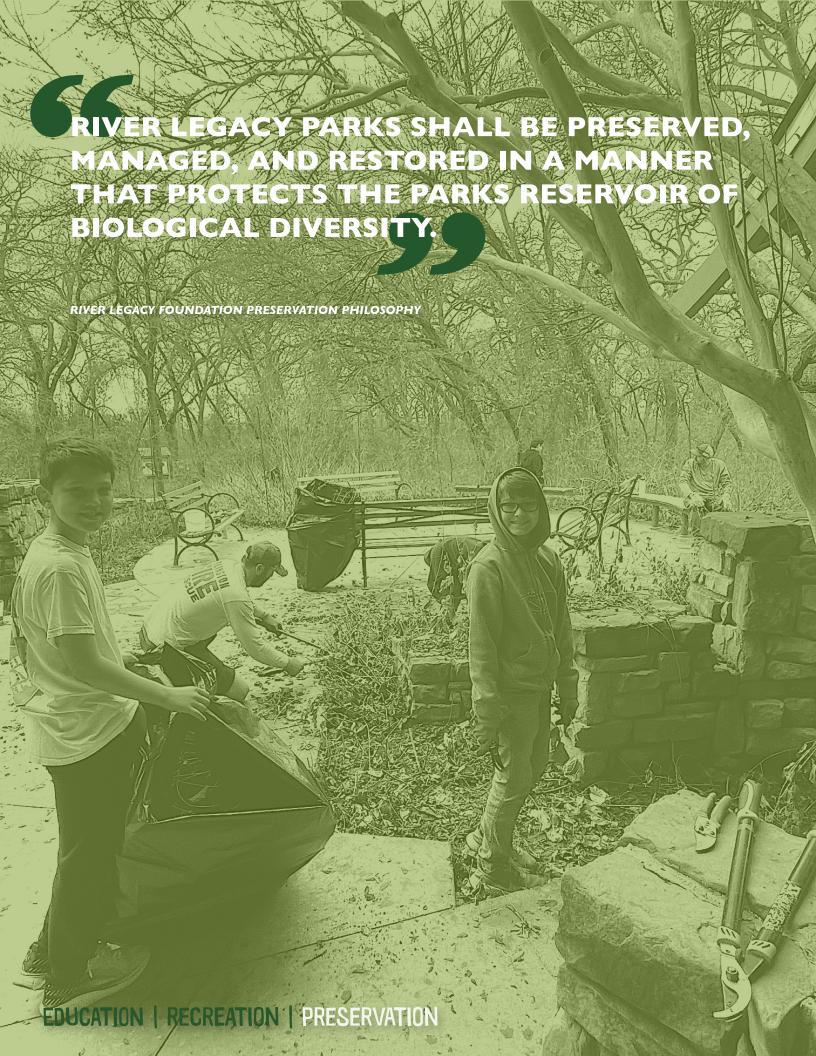
The Nature Center's traveling exhibits are such an enriching addition to all that River Legacy offers our kids and families. The exhibits provide a hands-on, play-based experience that is not only a great outlet for exploration and fun but also a wonderful place to learn about our world, its creatures, and how to care for it all. I even find myself getting lost in the activities and walking away with new knowledge.

-Anonymous, Nature School Parent











850 PRIVET PLANTS REMOVED

Privet (Ligustrum) is an invasive plant that grows at an astounding rate, adapts easily, and will take over and kill native plant life that is beneficial to our ecosystem. Privet Patrol meets once a month to remove privet from River Legacy Park in an effort to control growth and help our local flora and fauna.

206+ NATIVE PLANTS FOR THE NATURE CENTER

Thanks to the pollinator crew from the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT), the Nature Center's ecosystem thrives and provides an exceptional habitat for butterflies, bees, birds, and other local wildlife.



COMMITTED TO OUR COMMUNITY

Our goal is to ensure all children, families and students have access to our hands-on educational experiences and resources. These experiences inspire stewardship and encourage our community to care for their local environment and more.

IN THE NATURE CENTER

- Scholarships for Nature Education.
- Subsidized admissions for 1st responders, military and veterans
- Field trips for all Arlington ISD 4th graders and Title 1 2nd graders.
- Internship opportunities for college students.

"Early on you made River Legacy camp possible for our family while my husband was deployed in Afghanistan. I would also like to say Thank You for the scholarships. Without that gift to our family I'm not sure she would have found her love for animals and science as deep as it is now at 16. You were her foundation."

- Jessica Murrah, Summer Camp Parent

IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Free access to our Discovery Trail App which helps families learn about the environment and get connected to nature.
- Free community festivals that provide families a chance to enjoy family fun activities, games, crafts and demonstrations while learning about the environment.

BEYOND OUR WALLS

- Outreach programs delivered directly to under-served students.
- · Provide technical assistance and funding to schools for outdoor classroom development and enhancements.



Jesse Allan, Lamar Teacher & Sponsor

2023 LEADERSHIP NEW BOARD MEMBERS

In 2023, the River Legacy Foundation Board of Directors welcomed two new members, Christopher Bookout (Horizon Plumbing Operations Manager) and Samuel Briones (City of Arlington Firefighter).

Bringing the current total to 16 River Legacy Foundation Board Members.



CHRISTOPHER BOOKOUT is an Arlington born, native Texan. He spent his formative years in the woods, trails, parks, creeks, rivers, and lakes of Texas. He received his formal education at Butler Elementary, Shackleford Junior High, Pantego Christian Academy, and The Military College of South Carolina. Chris is currently operations manager for Horizon Plumbing, an Arlington construction company serving the greater DFW metroplex for over 20 years.

"My passion for the outdoors is rooted in my connection to nature over a lifetime of sport in the field. I hope to use my time with The River Legacy Foundation to facilitate generational interest in and stewardship of the greater natural world... but specifically, TEXAS."



SAMUEL BRIONES is originally from San Antonio, Texas, where he went to San Antonio College Fire Academy and worked with Leon Valley FD until 2001. While in San Antonio, Sam also earned his EMT-Paramedic Certificate and spent most of his time working at University Hospital ER and pediatric unit. In 2001 Sam was hired on with the Arlington Fire Department where he has been for the last 23 years and has been awarded several Life Saving Awards.

Since moving to Arlington, Sam has earned two degrees from Tarrant Co. College, a Peace Officer License and and has built an impressive resume that includes working for the Dallas Sherriff's Posse Mounted Unit Patrol, the DWG Police Department, and the Tarrant County Constable's Office - Precinct 2. In total, Sam has 29 years' experience as a firefighter, 25 years as an EMT-P and 15 years of service as a peace officer.

Aside from being a first responder, Sam is a substitute teacher for the Carrollton/Farmers Branch ISD and served on Rainwater Elementary's PTA board as President and Vice President. This school year he is serving as a PTA board member for Blalack Middle School.

"My enthusiasm for health and wellness ties into why I support River Legacy. By being mindful of my wellbeing and health I am able to enjoy the outdoors. I enjoy the bike paths, the walking and hiking trails, and of course visiting River Legacy Nature Center. I like the enthusiasm of the staff and their dedication to educating the next generation of environmental stewards."

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Last year, River Legacy Nature Center facilitated more than 35,000 experiences for individuals across all age groups—children, teens, adults, and seniors—to explore nature. The Nature Center is a fantastic community resource, offering educational programs and a place for those seeking a tranquil retreat.

River Legacy's Mission only becomes a reality because YOU work alongside us.

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Alma Pohler In Honor of Richard & Sylvia Greene

Anna Gant In Honor of Becky Gerro

Anna Gant In Honor of Jill Hill

Anonymous In Honor of the Amazing River Legacy Teachers and Staff

Ben & Jenny Bowers In Honor of Jill Hill

Brad & Judy Rupay In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

Brandi Wright In Honor of Jill

Bruce Novak In Honor of Mike and Becky Gerro

Carole Harston In Honor of Jill

Cherry Kersen In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

Cindy Salter In Honor of Carson Salter

Cindy Salter In Honor of Jill Hill

Curt & Ginger Osiek In Honor of Jill Hill

Dan & Susan Eaves In Honor of

David Plump In Honor Of Laura and Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

David & Kathy Atnip In Honor of Chip May

Dennis & Jan Barry In Honor of Sherrie, Amy, Miss Ellen & Miss

Doreen & Joe Bruner In Honor of Jill Hill

George & Carole Hoyer In Honor of Jill Hill

George & Kathleen Duggan In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

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Julie & Jay Ryan In Honor of Jill

Kathleen Emerson In Honor of Jill Hill

Ken Mattner In Honor of the River Legacy Staff & Teachers

Kermit & Joyce Olson In Honor of Wife Joyce

Larry Lutz In Honor of Jill Hill

Mike & Becky Gerro In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

Mike & Becky Gerro In Honor Of Environmental Educators

Mike & Sandi Ray In Honor of Jill Hill

Missy Singleton In Honor of Jill

Nick Dalley In Honor of Jill Hill

Pete Jamieson In Honor of Jill

Rai & Barbara Mehta In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

Richard & Sylvia Greene In honor of Jill Hill

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Sandra Mulcahy In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary

Scott & Elizabeth Marks In Honor of Jill Hill

Scott & Linda Church In Honor of Jill Hill

Sherrie Ripple In Honor of Mollie Ripple

Sid & Lu Eppes In Honor of Jill Hill

Stacy & Terry Bridger In Honor of Jill Hill

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Carole Terry in memory of Joe Terry

Cindy Stites in memory of Jerry O'Rear

Craig & Terry Carver in memory of Ellis Elliott

Cristy Duke in memory of Jerry O'Rear

Deborah H Vernon in memory of Ellis Elliott

Dorothy Hionis in memory of Jerry O'Rear

Huagang Chen in memory of Dr. Joseph Fay

Kim Bair in memory of Ellis Eliott

Lauren Neal in memory of Ellis Elliott

Marianne Petrelli in memory of David Moritz

Mike & Becky Gerro in memory of Jerry O'Rear

Natalie McCalment in memory of Jerry O'Rear

Richard & Sylvia Greene in memory of Leon Williams

Richard & Sylvia Greene in memory of Bob McPhail

Sam Elliott in memory of Ellis Elliott

Terry & Teresa Gaines in memory of Mary Louise McKie

Terry & Teresa Gaines in memory of Jerry O'Rear

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Charley & Nancy Amos

Chris Olsen

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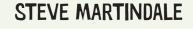








LESLIE & LEE FRIEDMAN







AL & LAURA DISTEFANO

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