



RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION

January - December 2023

DEEPENING OUR ROOTS GROWING THE LEGACY



RIVER LEGACY
FOUNDATION



WELCOME

**RIVER LEGACY
NATURE CENTER**



RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION
EST. 1988

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 that we have been truly changing the world, then and now. Our early efforts laid the groundwork for the creation of the River Legacy Foundation as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the preservation of 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 of environmental clubs, staff at River Legacy have been instrumental in planting the seed and cultivating our next generation of environmental stewards outside of our borders and into area schools.

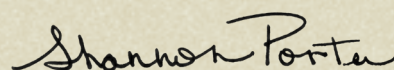
“WE HAVE BEEN MORE EFFECTIVE THAN EVER IN EDUCATING AND GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS.”

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,



Executive Director





2023 RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF MEMBERS

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Dick Moise <i>Board Member</i>	Jude Rodriguez <i>Guest Experience Host</i>
Judy Rupay <i>Board Member</i>	Elly Khoei <i>Guest Experience Host</i>
	Mary Humes <i>2nd Grade AISD Liaison</i>
	Angela Chadwick <i>2nd Grade AISD Liaison</i>
	Robin Swindle <i>4th Grade AISD Liaison</i>
	Traci Alley-Brown <i>Nature School Teacher</i>
	Janet Stephens <i>Nature School Teacher</i>
	Cindy Barry <i>Nature School Teacher</i>
	Tiffany Dragan <i>Nature School Teacher</i>

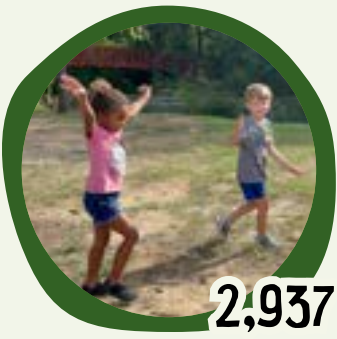
2023 ANNUAL SPONSORS



**“CHILDREN SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO DEEPEN THEIR UNDERSTANDING
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP TO IT.”**

RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATION | RECREATION | PRESERVATION



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!



7,403 STUDENTS

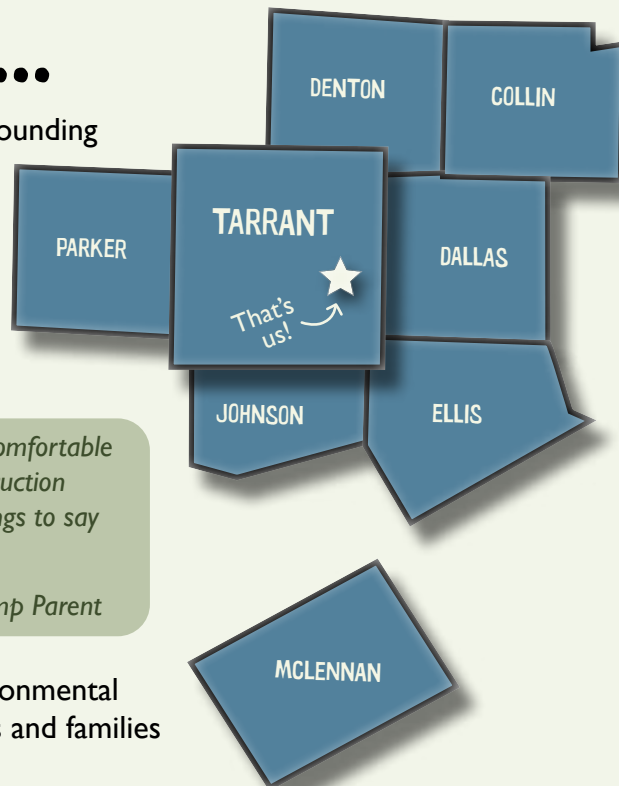
made a connection to nature during a STEM related field trip. Hands-on activities, animal encounters, and naturalist-led hikes are just a few of the many tools offered to inspire connections to nature.

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.

“RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN RIVER LEGACY PARKS SHALL NOT ENDANGER THE ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY OF THE PARKS OR THE SAFETY OF PARK USERS. POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES MUST BE MEASURED AGAINST A NATURE STANDARD, AS WELL AS AN URBAN STANDARD.”

RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION RECREATION PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATION | RECREATION | PRESERVATION

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!



940
VOLUNTEERS



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.

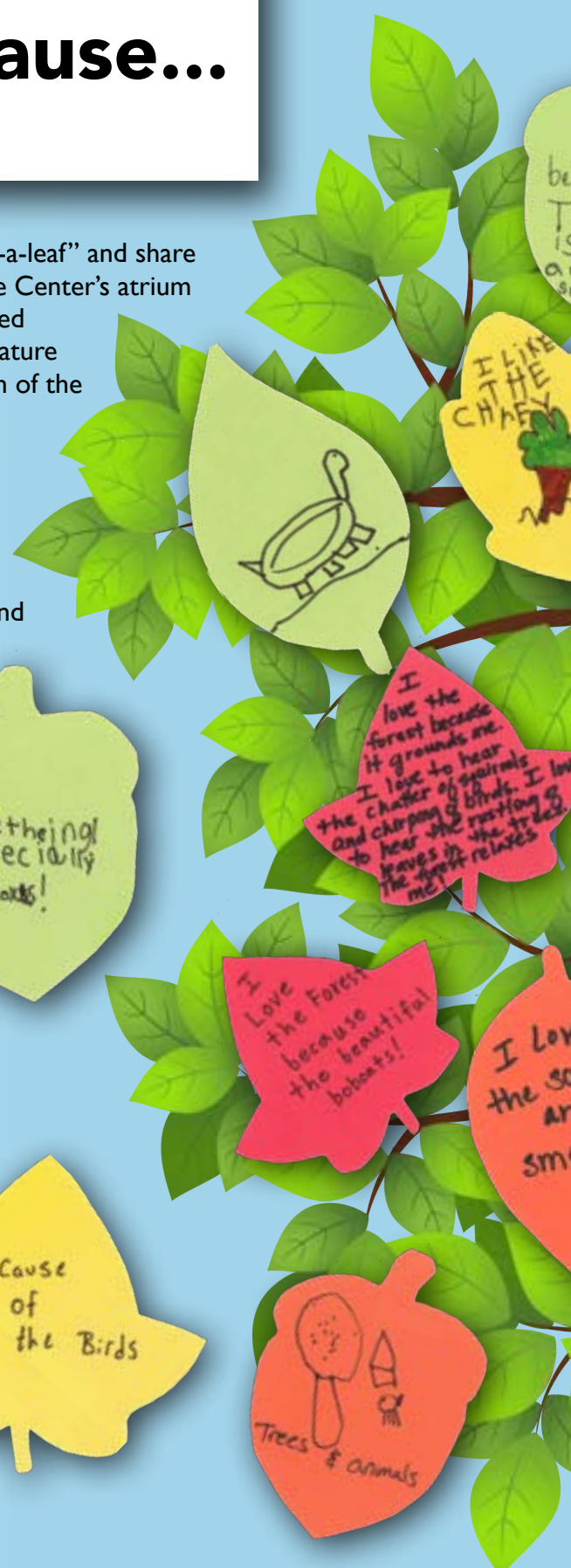
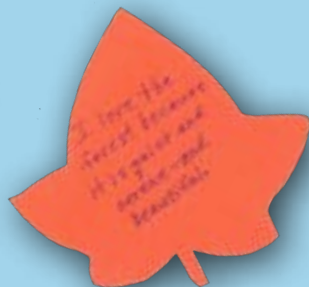
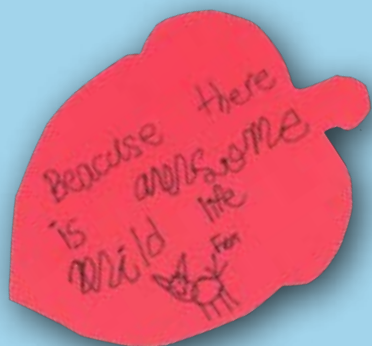
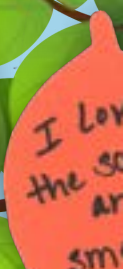
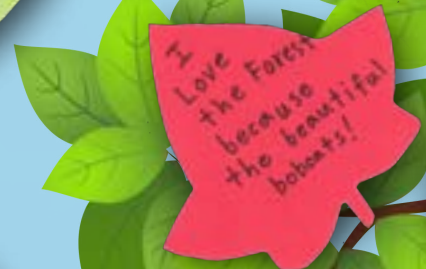
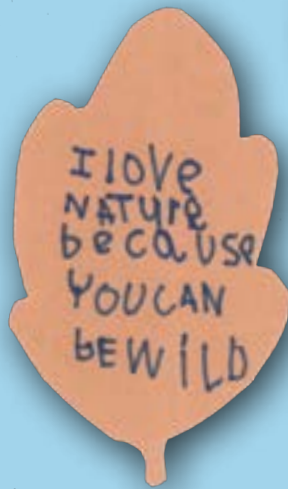
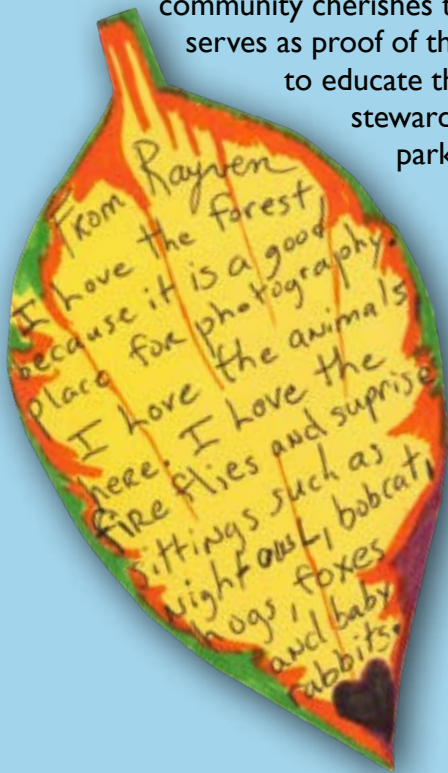
-Anonymous, Nature School Parent



I love the forest because...

During the Forever Forest exhibit, our guests were invited to “leave-a-leaf” and share the reasons they love the forest. These leaves decorated the Nature Center’s atrium for the entire duration of the exhibit, creating a display that captivated visitors’ attention and sparked conversations between guests and Nature Center staff members. The leaves presented here are only a fraction of the submissions we received.

Take a look at some of the *tree-mendous* reasons why our community cherishes the forest so deeply. Each message serves as proof of the importance our role and efforts to educate the next generation of environmental stewards has on the preservation of forests and parks like River Legacy.





there is
Snakes and
Birds! ☺

I love the
forest because
you'll never know
the animals you'll
find and the
adventurous trails
it may lead
you to.

cause
here
bobcats
and snakes.

I like to see all
of the different species
of birds, trees and
bobcats!
It's all so
beautiful to
look at!

I love where
I feel the
most beautiful!

I
love how
I can go into
the forest +
reduce my stress
and improve my
mood very
quickly!!

I Love how
Beautiful Nature
makes me feel.

I like the
turtles

I Love
The Forest
because I
see happy
HEADS!

TREES

The Tree
make 02/
It looks good

I love
seeing all the
little critters in their
habitat

Forests are
a gift of sustenance
and beauty for all
living beings.

The forest reminds
me that the world
is so much greater
than any of my daily
concerns. T.D.

it helps out
air food and water

i Love
nature
and there
you find a
lot

I love the forest
because of all the
homes it provides
for our animal
friends.

the
hands
and
cells!

I Love The
forest because
the trees help
us breathe

I love
the
animals

I love the forest
because it makes me
feel like I'm in a
happy world!

I Love The
forest
because
it is fun!
♡ xo ♡
xo
xo

**“RIVER LEGACY PARKS SHALL BE PRESERVED,
MANAGED, AND RESTORED IN A MANNER
THAT PROTECTS THE PARKS RESERVOIR OF
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.”**

RIVER LEGACY FOUNDATION PRESERVATION PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATION | RECREATION | PRESERVATION



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 I 2nd graders.
- Internship opportunities for college students.

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.

"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

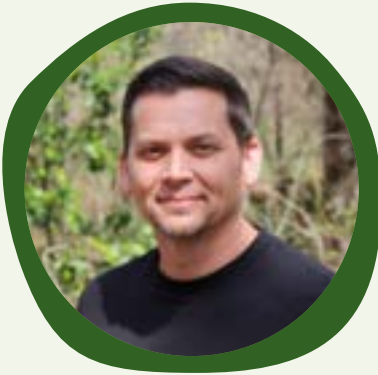


Lamar High School Environmental Club

L to R:
Amanda Lowery, President
Jude Rodriguez, Vice President
Jesse Allan, Lamar Teacher & Sponsor

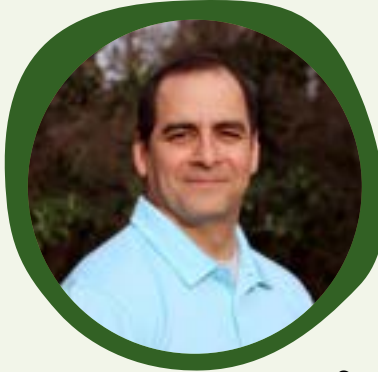
2023 LEADERSHIP NEW BOARD MEMBERS

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 has built an impressive resume that includes working for the Dallas Sheriff'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.

DONORS

GRANTS

Anita Berry Martin Memorial Endowment Fund at North Texas Community Foundation
Fort Worth Audubon Society
Gary and Judi Martin Charitable Fund
Jack W. and Paula J. Winter Charitable Fund
James A. 'Buddy' Davidson, Charitable Foundation
North Texas Community Foundation, Anonymous Fund
Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation, Inc.
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\$5,000 AND ABOVE

Baylor Scott and White Orthopedic and Spine Hospital at Arlington, LLC
Bourbon Gospel
North Texas Community Foundation
Viridian

\$2,000-\$4,999

Bob and Marge Dawson
Brad & Judy Rupy
Mike & Becky Gerro
Network for Good

\$1,000-\$1,999

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Jack & Becky Upchurch
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\$250-\$499

Anonymous (2)
Brian & Karen Ellen Anderson
Buttermilk Sky Pie Shop
Chaplain Rich & Reecia Stoglin
Curt & Ginger Osiek
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Ruth Lane
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Sandra Godwin

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\$100-\$249 (CONTINUED)

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Scott & Elizabeth Marks
Scott & Genia Matula
Scott & Linda Church
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Tom Reneau
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\$1-\$99

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HONORARIUM

Alfred & Laura DiStefano In Honor of Jill Hill
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 Hill
Bruce Novak In Honor of Mike and Becky Gerro
Carole Harston In Honor of Jill Hill
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 Jill Hill

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 Anne
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
Glenn & Kim Ritchie In Honor of Jill Hill
Golf Center of Arlington In Honor of Jill Hill
Jack & Becky Upchurch In Honor of Jill Hill
Jay & Barbara Pritcher In Honor of Sherrie & Mollie Ripple
Jeff & Karen Williams In Honor of Jill Hill
Julie & Jay Ryan In Honor of Jill Hill
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 & Sandy Ray In Honor of Jill Hill
Missy Singleton In Honor of Jill Hill
Nick Dalley In Honor of Jill Hill
Pete Jamieson In Honor of Jill Hill
Rai & Barbara Mehta In Honor Of Laura & Al Distefano's 50th Anniversary
Richard & Sylvia Greene In honor of Jill Hill

DONORS

HONORARIUM (CONTINUED)

River Legacy Foundation Staff In Honor of Jill Hill
Sally Hopper In Honor of Jill Hill
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
Steve & Vicki Dixon In Honor of Jill Hill
VanDella Menifee In Honor of Jill Hill

MEMORIALS

Bill & Sarah Block in memory of Jerry O'Rear
Bill & Sarah Block in memory of Jerry O'Rear
Brittany Liu in memory of Jerry O'Rear
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 Elliott

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

IN-KIND

Al & Laura DiStefano
Ana Gant
Charley & Nancy Amos
Chris Olsen
Cindy Salter
Dave & Lisa McCaskey
Donnitta Smith

James & Amy Evans

Julie & Jay Ryan

K.B. Ribelin

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Mike & Becky Gerro

Pete Jamieson

Robert Blake

Robin Swindle

The Dan Dipert Family Fund

4 Kahunas Tiki Lounge

Abuelo's Mexican Restaurant

Andy's Frozen Custard

Anything Goes

Arlington Chamber of Commerce

B&B Butchers

Baseball Diamonds

Boo-Ray's of New Orleans

City of Arlington Parks and

Recreation Dept.

Crayola Experience

Dyno Rock

Entertainment Properties Group, Inc. (Pinstack)

Epic Waters Indoor Waterpark

Fort Worth Crawling

Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo

Four Day Weekend

Free Play

G-creates

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La Madeleine

Lone Star Park at Grand Prairie

Maner Fire Equipment

OI' South Pancake House

Pappas Restaurants

Piccolo Mondo

Pluckers Wing Bar

Rooftop Cinema Club

Sanford House Inn and Spa

SeaQuest

Spring Creek Barbeque

Stockyards Heritage Development Co.

Studio Movie Grill

Tangerine Salon

Texas Distillery

Theatre Coppell

Total Wine & More

Urban Country Flower Co.

UTA Planetarium

Viridian

Whitewater Express Car Wash

Wild Birds Unlimited

2023 EVENT SPONSORS



LESLIE & LEE FRIEDMAN

STEVE MARTINDALE

DEBBY POND



AL & LAURA DISTEFANO

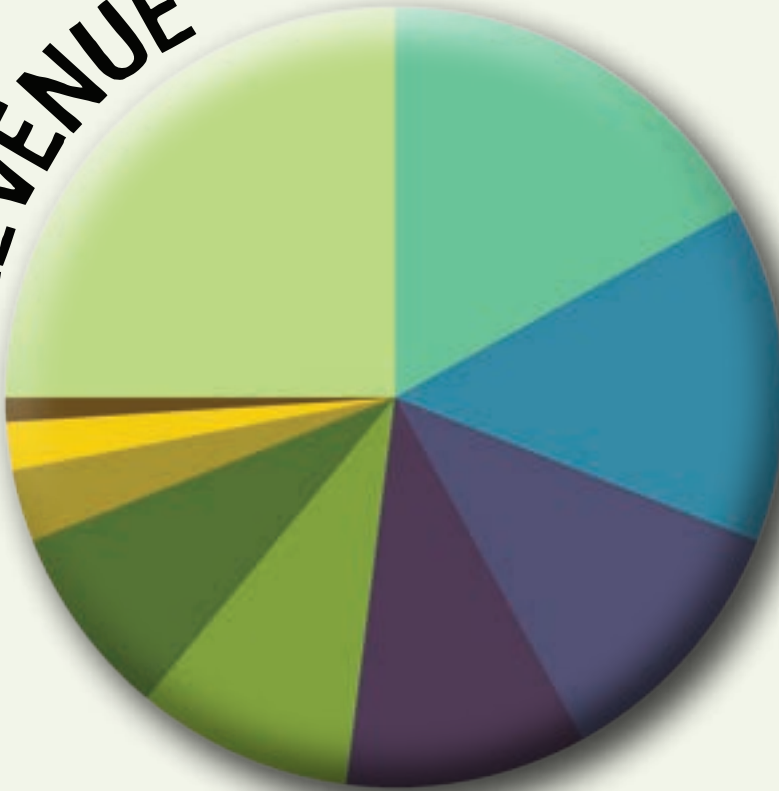
SAMUEL BRIONES

STATE FARM INSURANCE - ROB BECKER

EDUCATION | RECREATION | PRESERVATION

2023 FINANCE REPORT

REVENUE



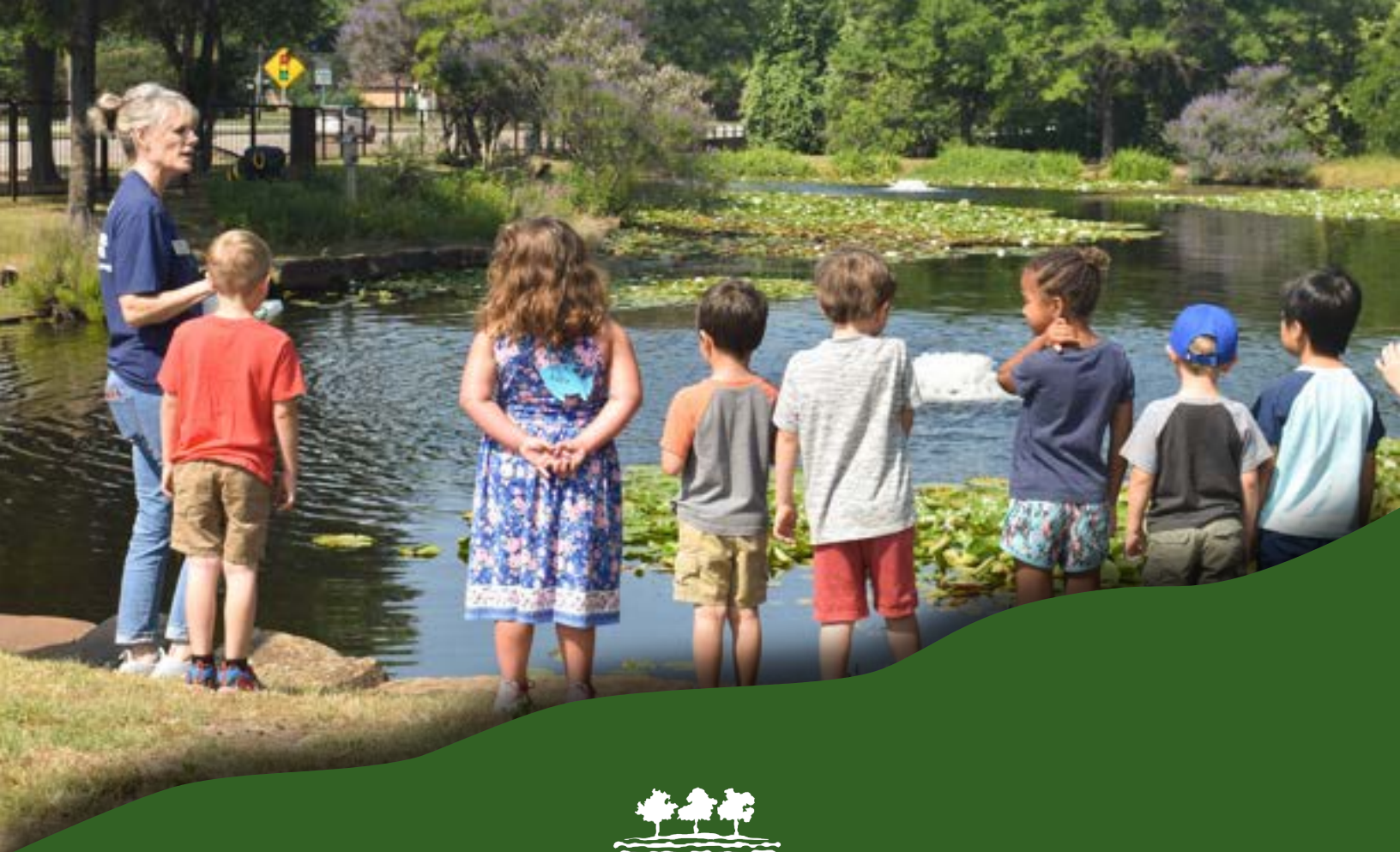
- Education Programs - 25%
- Special Events - 17%
- City of Arlington Maintenance - 14%
- 2023 Campaign - 11%
- Grants/General Funding - 10%
- Interest Income - 9%
- Cell Tower - 8%
- Discovery Room Admissions - 3%
- Venue Rentals - 2%
- Gift Shop - 1%

EXPENSES



- Personnel - 70%
- Programs & Services - 8%
- General Operating - 8%
- Nature Center - 6%
- Special Events - 6%
- Gift Shop Inventory - 1%
- Marketing - 1%

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FOUNDATION



CONNECT



DONATE



VOLUNTEER

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RIVER LEGACY NATURE CENTER | 703 NW Green Oaks Blvd. Arlington, TX 76006
817-860-6752 | www.riverlegacy.org