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From the Publisher

Thank goodness 2020 is almost over!

I always love the holiday season. October through December brings so many wonderful, fun things to do and see, and family becomes an important part of that equation. Christmas is the finale for the season. Jesus' birth means that there is new hope for anyone who wants it. He is there for you.

Many people struggle through December. Having family together can definitely become a stressful situation for a lot of people. For me, I love having my family here. It is a wonderful time of sharing and catching up with my kids, grandkids, and even my great-grandkid. Food, fun, and family. What more can you ask for?

Well, for some, this year has definitely been a trial - and I will say that my family has had our share. This month, we are highlighting nonprofit organizations throughout the Texarkana area. Some of them you may know. Some you probably do not. All of them have especially struggled this year. With closures throughout the US, nonprofits have been unable to have fundraisers that keep their organizations going. That means that many, who are in need that these organizations typically can help, are going without. Whether that is for food, healthcare services, or whatever, the struggle has been real.

During the month of December, many people donate to nonprofits, hoping to get that last tax deduction for the year. If you have not done this in the past, consider starting a new tradition. You know, 2020 has been the year of firsts, so why not make it a new tradition for you? There are lots of different ways you can support these wonderful organizations. Please consider choosing one this year. Every dollar counts. Make it a family affair. Teach your children that giving yourself is a source of happiness that you cannot create any other way.

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1ST CHOICE PREGNANCY



- **Mission:** The mission of the 1st Choice Pregnancy Resource Center is to empower and encourage those affected by an unintended pregnancy to choose life by providing limited medical and consultation services for pregnancy (and pregnancy loss), educational services, and Christian spiritual support.
- **Location:** 602 Main Street, Texarkana, TX
- **Proud Moment:** “Generations of women, men, and children have been impacted by their choice to come to the Center. There are countless babies who may not have been born without the support their mothers received at 1st Choice. Some of those babies are now adults with their own children and even grandchildren. The work done here truly impacts generations.”

In October 1974, approximately one year after the Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion, a group of concerned citizens established Right-To-Life of Texarkana, Inc., with the hopes of providing emotional, spiritual, and practical support to women and teens with unplanned pregnancies. That focus has not changed over the years, but the vision has expanded. They eventually adopted an assumed name, Maranatha Pregnancy Center, which later became 1st Choice Pregnancy Resource Center. They have operated in several locations over the years, including a small building behind St. Edward's Catholic Church, Jefferson Street, Arkansas Blvd, Olive Street, and now, Main Street.

Executive Director, Kristie Wright, joined the organization in February of 2013, but she has supported the organization as a donor for 20 years. “I became a financial supporter of 1st Choice because I felt as if my gifts were making an immediate and eternal impact on the lives of others in our community, including some of the most vulnerable—the unborn,” Kristie says. “The path to joining the staff as the Executive Director was a walk of faith. I practiced law for 17 years and was really struggling with the fact that my career had taken me to a place where I

was no longer helping people, which was why I went to law school in the first place. I was working very long hours, yet nothing I did professionally had any eternal value.”

After struggling with this for several months, Kristie had a revelation at the end of 2012 when she realized that she was not exhibiting much faith by staying in a job where she knew she no longer belonged. So, she resigned from her firm, not really knowing where that path would lead. About that same time, Kristie had a conversation with a friend who asked her what she would do if bills, family, insurance, etc., were not a factor. “I told her that I would work for a nonprofit organization that promoted adoption.” Because I was a supporter of 1st Choice, I was aware that the previous Executive Director, Kim Banks, had left to move out of town. I spoke with a friend who was also a board member regarding the position and, although it seemed impossible financially, submitted my resume. After several interviews, I was still being considered for the position, but I was not sure that it was what God was calling me to,” Kristie says. “When I committed to pray and fast about it, one of the scriptures that was given to me was Proverbs 31:8, ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.’ That was confirmation that it was where I was meant to be.”

1st Choice offers a variety of free services to women and men facing an unplanned pregnancy, including pregnancy testing, limited OB ultrasounds, peer counseling (practical and spiritual support), prenatal and parenting education (for moms and dads), and opportunities to earn much-needed items like diapers, clothing, even cribs, and car seats. “Thousands of men and women have benefitted from our Earn While You Learn program, which allows clients to gain skills that equip them to parent well, all while providing essential items for their children,” Kristie says.

The Center also offers a post-abortion recovery study for those struggling with a past decision to abort and a prevention program in local schools that encourages teens to maintain their sexual integrity outside of marriage. “People who have never needed our services may not know that we are here. Others may have heard of us but have misconceptions about what we do. If you or someone you know is pregnant or think they might be—especially if that pregnancy is a surprise—we want them to come see us,” Kristie says. “Although we never believe that abortion is the right decision for our clients or their babies, we never try to substitute our judgment for anyone else’s. We firmly

believe that if people can fully evaluate their options as well as their life situation without judgment and with love, they will be empowered to choose life."

COVID has caused 1st Choice Pregnancy to change the way they do many things, but they feel blessed to continue to serve those in need safely. "There has been a significant increase in the number of unplanned pregnancies, so our services are as essential as they have ever been," Kristie says. "Although we have reduced our hours and have fewer appointment times to allow for adequate cleaning, we continue to offer peer counseling, pregnancy testing, and limited ultrasounds for those facing unplanned pregnancies. Classes are also being offered virtually, rather than in person."

1st Choice had to cancel their Walk for Life in the spring, and their fall fundraiser was held virtually, rather than in person. "We have definitely lost significant funding since March, but we are grateful that it has not impacted services at this point," Kristie says. "COVID has created personal challenges for our staff and volunteers as well. We continue to try to extend grace, patience, and flexibility and take each day as it comes!"

According to Kristie, the holidays usually bring special blessings from groups and individuals hoping to bring cheer to 1st Choice Pregnancy and their clients in various ways—special gifts, holiday celebrations, get-togethers, etc. "Much of that will look different this year, but we still hope to find ways to celebrate with staff, volunteers, clients, and friends of the ministry," Kristie says.

All donations to 1st Choice stay local and assist men, women, and children in our community. 1st Choice is the only organization in the area that offers free, confidential, non-judgmental encouragement and support to women (and men) contemplating abortion. "We firmly believe that when people find loving

support and know they are not alone, they will find the strength to choose life for their babies," Kristie says. "These choices impact generations."

If community members want to get involved with 1st Choice Pregnancy and support their mission, they have several options. "In the past, we have had churches and individuals who have 'adopted' client families and assisted with Christmas—this would certainly be welcome again this year," Kristie says. "Year-end financial support is also a blessing, and this will definitely be true this year. Donations can be made online at www.firstchoiceprc.com/donate or can be sent/dropped off at 602 Main Street, Texarkana, TX 75501. Anyone interested in assisting clients with Christmas needs or a similar project can contact us at (903) 792-5735 or director@firstchoiceprc.com. Some of the most-needed items year-round include toiletries (baby shampoo, baby wash, diaper cream, etc.) and diapers (sizes 4, 5, and 6)."

In 2021, 1st Choice Pregnancy is looking forward to the arrival of their mobile unit. This mobile unit is a specially built van that will allow them to take services to the more rural parts of our area. "Transportation is often an issue for our clients and can be a huge obstacle for those who live in more remote areas. The mobile unit will allow us to take our services to them!" Kristie says. "The unit will be fully equipped to allow us to counsel with clients, do pregnancy testing, and even offer ultrasounds. We hope that eventually, we will also be able to teach classes in the areas where we utilize the unit."


In the new year, 1st Choice Pregnancy also hopes to return to seeing clients in-person for classes and return to evening hours to accommodate more people's schedules. They are also excited for the opportunity to gather for our annual Walk for Life on the

first Saturday in May and hold their fall fundraiser in person in 2021. "Those who work within this organization do it because we love people and want to support those facing an unplanned pregnancy. While we never believe that abortion is the best decision for anyone involved, we understand that circumstances will often drive people to consider that option—even those who never thought they would or could make that choice," Kristie says. "We want to be the first stop for anyone considering an abortion and can ensure that they will be met with kindness, compassion, and truth, and without judgment."

No one should make this decision alone, nor should they make it without adequate time to reflect and fully consider its full impact. Often, the Pregnancy Center is a safe place for women to come and literally 'take a breath' so they can see through the chaos, confusion, fear, and panic they feel."

For more information, please call 1st Choice Pregnancy Center at (903) 792-5735. The hours are Tue-Fri 10 a.m.-4 p.m.





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AREA TEXARKANA AQUATIC CLUB



- **Mission:** ATAC is an Amateur Athletic Union year-round competitive swim team offering high-quality professional coaching and technique instruction for all ages and abilities. They want to introduce kids at a young age to the sport of swimming.
- **Location:** Texarkana, Texas
- **Proud Moment:** "Every year, we take a large group of kids to the AAU National Championship Junior Olympics. We travel all over the United States to swim at the Junior Olympics and meet swimmers and coaches from all over the world."

Area Texarkana Aquatic Club (ATAC) started in Texarkana 25 years ago and has been providing families with an opportunity to love the sport of swimming ever since. It is an Amateur Athletic Union year-round competitive swim team offering high-quality professional coaching and technique instruction for all ages and abilities. "We want to introduce kids at a young age to the sport of swimming," Coach Susan Likens says. "The ATAC Team strives to instill in its athletes an understanding and appreciation for such concepts of high esteem, personal accountability, constructive self-motivation, goal setting, and achievements through hard work. These ideas relate to their success in training and competition. We believe that the process of achieving is as significant as realizing the achievement itself. We want to instill that 'Life is a journey, not a destination.'"

Coach Susan Likens, or Coach Susan as she is known to her swimmers, originally got involved with ATAC when her own children were young and started to swim

competitively. The other ATAC coach is Eric Vogan, and they both also coach Texas High Tigersharks. Susan has been coaching with ATAC for 12 years now, but she says it's inspiring that Coach Vogan has been involved for 17 years. He is ATAC's fourth head coach ever.

Kids as young as four-years-old start swimming with ATAC. "We offer the opportunity for kids of all ages to participate in the sport of swimming. We start teaching them as young kids, and families stick with us through their high school careers," Susan says, "Many of our ATAC swimmers go on to swim for our Texas High Tigersharks varsity swim team."

At each level of the ATAC program, athletes are guided to strive for excellence. To ATAC coaches, excellence represents the achievement of a level at which a person knows that they've done their utmost to become the best they are capable of becoming. "This philosophy is consistent throughout our program," Susan says. "ATAC athletes are instructed in high

levels of sportsmanship, respect, and discipline. Discipline in the way of showing respect and dedication to the coaches, teammates, competitors, and most importantly to oneself."

According to ATAC, swimming is a tremendous example of a team sport where success often comes down to the strength of each individual. "This is where personal accountability, self-motivation, and goal setting play such an important role in the ability of each athlete to see long term success in a very demanding sport," Susan says. "One of the most inspiring accomplishments of ATAC is that every year we take a large group of kids to the AAU National





Championship Junior Olympics. We travel all over the United States to swim at the Junior Olympics and meet swimmers and coaches from all over the world."

COVID-19 affected ATAC like so many other nonprofits and businesses. "When COVID-19 shut our world down, our team had to shut down too. We could not practice and participate in meets," Susan says. "This felt like a big setback at the time, but our kids are amazing, and as soon as they could get back in the water, they jumped in with both feet and haven't stopped yet!"

Coach Susan says that the holiday season is always challenging for youth sports because families are so busy, and it's easy to start missing practice. "Families also encounter a lot of expenses around the holidays and sometimes the after school activities that cost extra are the first thing to be cut," Susan says. "ATAC is a valuable resource

in our community. We are the only year-round youth swim team in Texarkana and about a hundred miles in any direction. Any donations are used to help the team cover monthly operating costs and travel expenses to and from meets. We also would love for you to give your kids the gift of year-round swim for Christmas gifts. Give memories and accomplishments instead of material things!"

In 2021, ATAC hopes that as the world starts to open back up, they can start to host meets and invite friends and families to cheer their swimmers on. "Kids LOVE to swim! Get your kids in the water. It is not only a youth sport but a lifetime activity that they will continue to love. Kids who live active lives are happier, healthier, and smarter because they keep their blood pumping through their bodies and brains, which is essential for development in children," Susan says. "Come rain or shine, winter or

spring; swimming is an activity that your child can enjoy all year round. Also, because swimming uses huge amounts of energy, your children will fall into a deep sleep better in the evening, helping them develop, rest, and have more energy the next day. Swimming is a great confidence builder, helping children become body confident and developing belief in their athletic abilities and their social skills, especially as part of a team."

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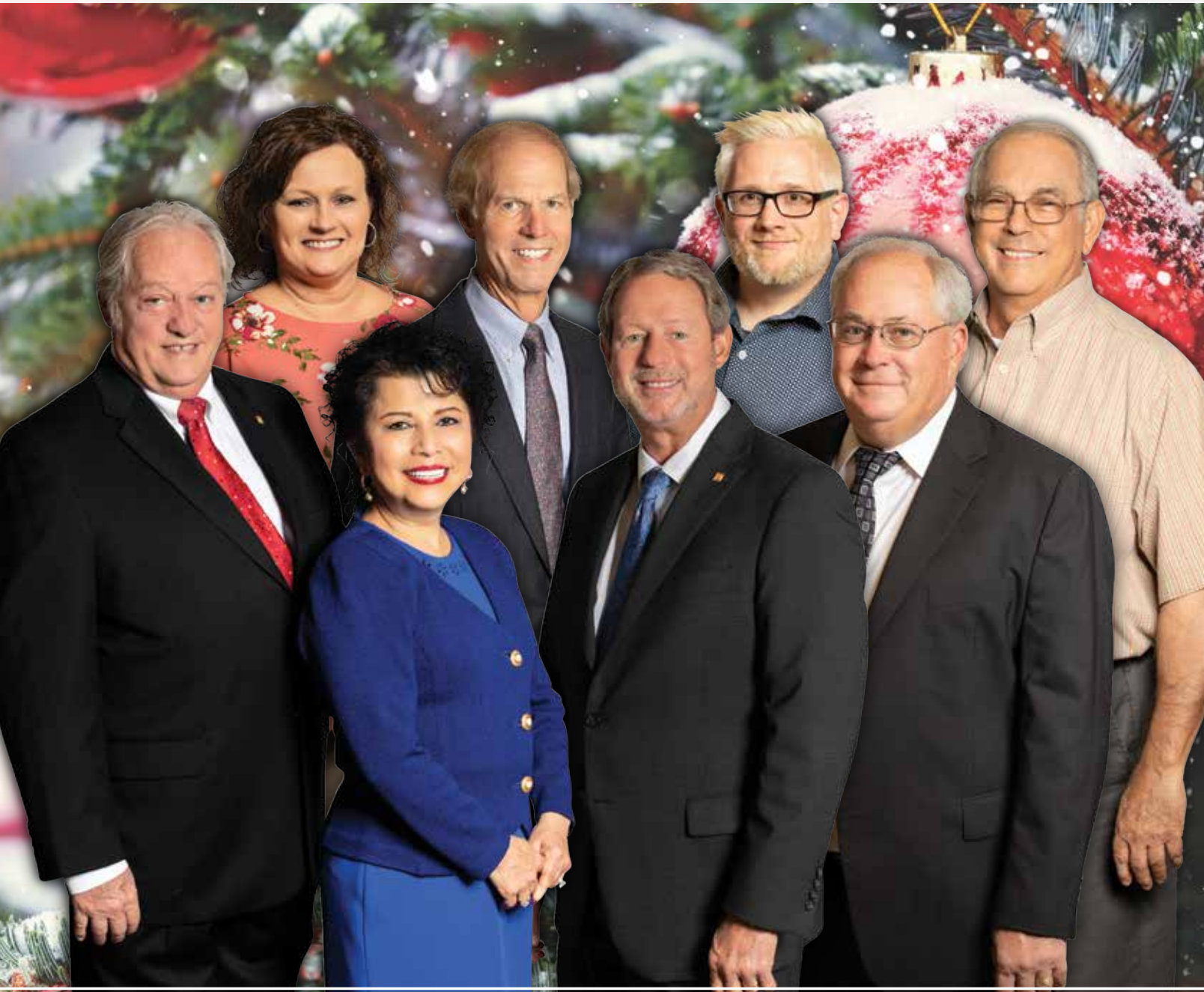


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CHLOE'S JOURNEY OF FAITH



- **Mission:** Chloe's Journey of Faith is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that raises funds and awareness for pediatric brain cancer research and advocates for families who have children facing this disease.
- **Location:** Texarkana, Texas
- **Proud Moment:** "Chloe's Journey of Faith has had the opportunity since 2018 to award two students with a Bible and a check to go towards their college expenses."

Chloe's Journey of Faith began when Michelle Cox's youngest daughter, Chloe, was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2016. Even though she was facing cancer herself, Chloe's compassion for others led her on a mission with some of her closest friends and members of local school districts to hand-make fleece blankets. Then, Chloe would hand them out to children with cancer at MD Anderson during her weekly treatments. "She told me that she felt so fortunate and wanted to bring some joy to others she believed were less fortunate," Michelle says. "She chose her favorite scripture, Philippians 4:13, to go along with the logo that was inspired by her and designed especially for her."

Chloe hand-delivered her blankets weekly from December of 2016 until June of 2017, one month before she passed. "Devastated by her quick departure, I decided that her mission had to continue," Michelle says. "The first opportunity I had was by handing out 2000 Bibles with her testimony placed in each one at our local Fields of Faith assembly. It was led by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes two months after her passing."

The following month, Michelle made her first trip back to MD Anderson to visit Chloe's doctor. This time, she made the trip on her own. "It was the hardest trip I would ever make, but I left fulfilled as I was given the opportunity to hand out Chloe's blankets in the adolescent and PICU units. I still continue to do so," Michelle says. "In February of 2019, on Chloe's actual birthday, Chloe's Journey of Faith foundation became an official 501c3 nonprofit. We never planned on it being official on such a monumental day, but the Lord above blessed us with the perfect confirmation that Chloe's mission was to continue no matter what mountains we had to climb! Her mission is now ours, and it always will be. We will continue to fund and aid pediatric brain cancer research in finding a cure, to aid children with funding for clinical trials, and to improve the quality of children's lives living with these diseases by advocating and providing resources."

Currently, Chloe's foundation aids multiple families in our area by passing out Chloe's blankets, resources, providing funding for travel to treatments, and giving special gifts when they need a little encouragement.

The nonprofit also started the Chloe Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2018. "Chloe also had a passion for bringing laughter and joy to those around her," Michelle says. "Education was also very important to Chloe, and she longed to be able to attend school with her friends again one day. Because fellowship and education also meant so much to our daughter, we started the scholarship fund. Chloe's Journey of Faith has had the opportunity to award two students each year with a Bible and a check to go towards their college expenses."

Michelle feels blessed to have great community support for Chloe's Journey of Faith and a board that



helps make financial decisions and aid in all of their fundraising events. "Our board is composed of some of our closest friends, family, and a couple of families who have dealt first hand with brain tumors, childhood cancer, and the loss of life from it," Michelle says.

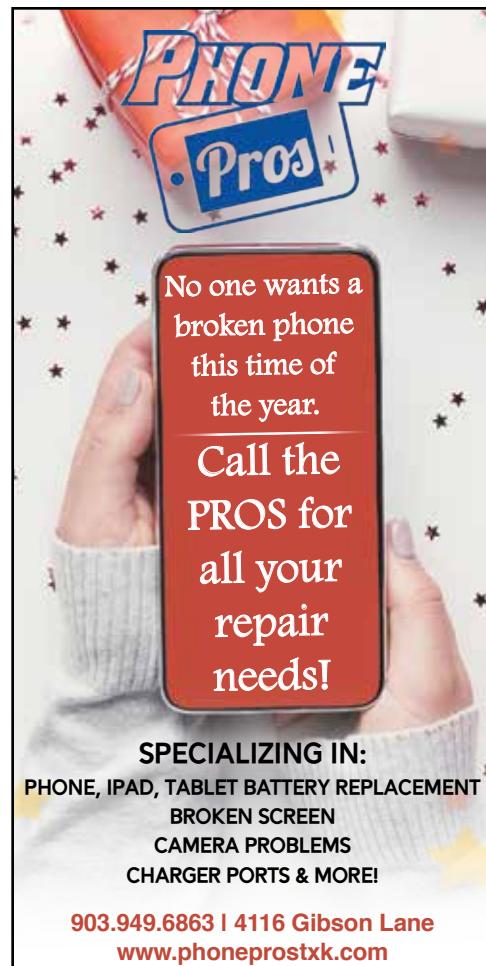
Over the past three years, Chloe's Journey of Faith has had the opportunity to advocate for the local cancer community. They have worked with several local schools to support other organizations in the area. "We are currently involved with Alex's Lemonade Stand Hero Fund to help raise money for brain tumor research," Michelle says. "Texarkana Independent School District has chosen to get their kids involved by holding lemonade stands in 2021 to help raise awareness and funds for pediatric cancer as this pandemic makes its way out the door!"

COVID-19 has put a halt to all of Chloe's Journey of Faith's fundraising events, like their Second Annual 5K Knots for Noggins race and their first annual Clays for Gray sporting clay

event. "Through this pandemic, our organization has depended on monetary donations and the sale of T-shirts," Michelle says. "We are always looking for new sponsors, donors, volunteers, and new members to grow our board."

Every Christmas season, Chloe's Journey of Faith raises money to buy food and gifts to deliver to children at MD Anderson, but, this year, their operations have been brought to a halt due to the limitations that COVID has enforced. "Last year, we granted gift wishes for our local children dealing with this disease, so this year once again, we will be looking for families that would like to grant our children a wish this season!" Michelle says, "We would love to hear from you if you would like to be a part of this awesome opportunity!"

For more information about Chloe's Journey of Faith, please contact Michelle Cox at 903-278-9184 or email cjofministry@gmail.com.



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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY TEXARKANA



- **Mission:** Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Our vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Our motto is a Hand UP, not a Hand OUT.
- **Location:** Texarkana, Texas
- **Proud Moment:** "The organization created seven taxpayers in the last two years. These are families living in housing, which was substandard, crowded, and entirely unsuitable for young families with no yard for children or pets. Now, these families are paying a mortgage and establishing secure futures for themselves and their children."

Habitat for Humanity of Texarkana Inc. (HFHT) is a nonprofit and the eight oldest of Texas' affiliates of Habitat for Humanity International. They began in Texarkana in the late 1980s and initially rehabilitated homes, selling them to qualifying applicants who repaid the loans with 0% interest. In 1998, they turned their focus to new construction and built their first home from the ground up. Since then, they have built 14 new homes and rehabbed eight existing homes. They have one home currently under construction in Redwater, Texas, with the expectation for completion in early 2021. Their goal is to build two new homes a year. "The organization created seven taxpayers in the last two years. These are families living in housing, which was substandard, crowded, and entirely unsuitable for young families with no yard for children or pets. Now, these families are paying a mortgage and establishing secure futures for themselves and their children," Executive Director for Habitat of Humanity Texarkana Mary Wormington says. "HFHT holds a home dedication for new homeowners, and anyone in attendance usually remarks on how touching it is to see a family receive the keys to their home."

Mary joined the HFHT Board in January 2018, and in April of 2018, she took the position of Executive Director. "The previous Board Chair Carol Giese asked

me to visit a board meeting; she knew of my nonprofit background and thought I would be a good addition to the group," Mary says. "I liked the camaraderie of the group, and I stayed. I also believed in the mission, vision, and motto."

Mary says that one of the most common misperceptions about HFHT is that they "give away houses," which is not true. Affordable housing is designed for median-income wage earners living in the Texarkana area who do not qualify for a conventional loan. Residents currently living and renting an apartment, a house, a trailer, or a condo can own their own homes. Habitat Homeowners are selected based on income eligibility, need for housing, ability to repay a mortgage, and willingness to partner. The homeowners pay a down payment upfront, which covers their escrow at closing. They must also contribute a total of 200-300 hours of "Sweat Equity" before and during the build of their home. This can include volunteering with a nonprofit, assisting with a current build, and attending homeowner education classes. "Children can even contribute to sweat equity by having good grades on their report card; everyone in the family can be involved. Contributing to the home build develops a sense of accomplishment and pride for the homeowner and the family," Mary says. "We are often asked where we get our lots to build on. The lots we build our

homes on are primarily donated. We currently have lots in Texarkana, Texas; Texarkana, Arkansas; and Hooks, Texas."

Mary and Habitat for Humanity board members are involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Texarkana Young Professionals (GTYP), Texarkana Homeless Coalition (TXKHC), Harvest Texarkana, and other nonprofits and civic clubs. "Staying connected and forming partnerships with other nonprofits allows the parties involved to fulfill our mission," Mary says. "The Homeowner Support Committee also encourages current and future homeowners to stay connected in the community."

According to Mary, the HFHT volunteers are the most inspiring part of the organization. "They are very versatile, talented individuals. They can write and establish policies, make financial decisions, plan strategically, and dress down and swing a hammer, paint a wall, nail shingles, and lay tile. Most of them have full-time jobs, families, and other commitments, yet they have a passion for service and believe in our mission," Mary says. "They make time to serve with Habitat, which is amazing, considering how busy everyone is! You don't need to be a DIY'er to volunteer; every member brings something to the table, has a servant's heart, and knows

how to get a job done, often after five o'clock or on the weekends."

COVID-19 put several obstacles in the way of the organization's plans for 2020. Because HFHT is a volunteer organization, little can be accomplished without volunteers. In February, the rain did not stop for several weeks, then COVID hit, and two projects were put on hold. Volunteers were unable to gather because they were all sheltering, trying to stay safe. "HFHT ended up utilizing paid trade professionals to complete the work. This caused a shortfall of funds. Thankfully several COVID grants were awarded, and HFHT was able to finish our projects, which included creating a new homeowner!" Mary says. "We also were unable to hold our annual fundraiser, Diamonds for Doorways, sponsored by Crocker's Jewelers. Our fundraising committee got creative and held a "Nail a Stud" event, which was successful. We are also holding a raffle for a 9mm Hellcat handgun with a drawing to be held on December 15, 2020. Throughout 2020, we have adapted and kept our mission at the forefront."

Normally the holidays are a joyous time, but the challenge for Habitat is the weather. "Due to COVID, our spring build turned into a fall build, and now we are challenged with the flu season, the ongoing COVID pandemic, hunting season, holidays, and mother nature. However, we are always up to a challenge!" Mary says. "Last year, our volunteers, the Project Manager, and the homeowner worked on the weekends to finish a home on the Arkansas side. We held a 'There's Snow Place Like Home' dedication five days before Christmas. It was wonderful."

Although a subsidiary of Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI), the Texarkana affiliate receives no funding from them. Habitat for Humanity of Texarkana (HFHT) is funded through donations and grants from individuals and businesses in the local area and the interest-free mortgage payments they receive from their homeowners. HFHT needs a source of steady income to continue the affordable housing program. To help with that, they are hoping to open a Habitat ReStore where gently used items, building materials, fixtures,

and even new items are sold with the money going directly back to HFHT to assist in building more homes! "A Habitat ReStore is a proven model to support the work of Habitat for Humanity affiliates. By supporting a ReStore the community would be supporting the entire organization. At the ReStore, individuals can show support by shopping, donating, or volunteering; it also helps the mission to provide decent, affordable shelter," Mary says. "When a gently used building material or household product is donated to a Habitat ReStore and then sold at a discount to a community member that needs it, that item is recycled and kept out of the landfill. We also need monetary support to purchase a box



truck, a forklift, in-store signage, cash registers, tagging guns, labels, PC, monitor, keyboard, printer, paper, general office supplies. The list is long."

They hope that the ReStore will have a grand opening with a Texarkana Chamber conducted ribbon-cutting in 2021. They also plan on dedicating two houses in the new year. "In addition, The Greater Texarkana Young Professionals (GTYP) helped us with our Nail a Stud fundraiser this year in the midst COVID. In 2021 the Nail a Stud will hopefully be a fun, live event with a runway show where the participants can strut their stud and have the audience bid on them," Mary says. "We are also hoping we will be able to hold our Crocker's Jewelry sponsored Diamonds to Doorways event where a piece of jewelry is raffled in addition to holding a silent auction and enjoying great food and our supporters."

HFHT also gets many calls from homeowners asking if they can perform simple repairs on their homes. HFHT was in the process of getting a critical repair program started when COVID hit. The critical repair program is designed

to assist residents (65 years and older that own their homes) with much-needed home repairs in the greater Texarkana area. "COVID put a damper on this goal since safety comes first, and we will not put our volunteers in jeopardy," Mary says, "but we hope to get this program started in 2021."

Mary believes that community members should donate time, money, and resources to Habitat for Humanity Texarkana because of its mission's worthiness. Our Motto 'Not a Hand OUT, but a Hand UP' speaks volumes. We are creating homeowners, taxpayers, neighborhoods, and communities. We are not enabling, we are ABLING. Supporting Habitat means making a difference in the life of another person, another family," Mary says. "We are all put on earth to help one another. Building materials and trade professionals all cost money, and a donation to Habitat is an investment in the economic development of the community. The investment takes Habitat 20-30 years to recoup, but each dollar donated is invested in the affordable housing program."

Mary says that they can use all kinds of donations this holiday season. Monetary donations are used to support the affordable housing program and will go towards the senior citizen repair program. Donations of items will go into the ReStore where proceeds go directly back into building homes. Volunteers donating time can help in the builds, office, and soon, in the ReStore. "This organization allows people to become a homeowner, a dream for many which often feels unattainable," Mary says. "Habitat is truly a worthy organization that benefits families and communities. It has my heart."

To learn more about Habitat for Humanity Texarkana, follow them on social media to learn about volunteer opportunities, fundraising events, and other news about their affiliate. They are on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. To volunteer, donate, or receive an application for a HFHT home, please reach out to info@habitat-texarkana.org or call 903-832-1746.

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HAVEN HOMES



Haven Homes

- **Mission:** Our mission is to bring restoration to broken people through grace-based discipleship. We seek to reach those in pain from addiction and, through God's grace, help these individuals receive love, joy, hope, and healing.
- **Location:** Texarkana, Texas
- **Proud Moment:** "The success of the graduates! We have worked relentlessly within our community. We have helped build churches at Church on the Rock and Vessel. We have passed out food to tens of thousands at food pantries. We've loaded and unloaded, moved, and removed. We have struggled, and we have thrived."

Haven Homes began seven years ago to provide transitional housing for women graduating from the Bowie County women's recovery center. It was founded by Jeni Eldridge and has helped transition over 150 women while restoring families and keeping them plugged into God's word. They also helped women finish their court and community obligations. Two years ago, the Men's Center opened. The Men's Center is a twelve-month in-house recovery program that is free. "Seeing the changes in the residents is by far the most rewarding thing about our mission. As an employee, it is easy to get caught up in the many tasks at hand. Jeni, our founder, does a wonderful job of keeping us focused on God's grace," Operations Manager Chad Coleman says. "In the Men's Center, we have two paid positions who have over 60 years of experience dealing with mental health and addiction. Our volunteers will absolutely bring tears to your eyes with the love that outpours through them, absolutely amazing. From cutting hair to buying shoes, food, Bibles, books, and teaching classes, it is amazing."

Chad Coleman has been involved with the organization for two years as the operations manager. "I had been down a road of addiction and was

trying to find God's purpose for my life. Part of that search was going to church, attending Celebrate Recovery, volunteering, and coaching. I was asked if I could help with Haven Homes," Chad says. "Within thirty minutes of being asked, God put together some supernatural acts, and our Men's Center was in the works."

Chad says the most inspiring aspect of Haven Homes is the success of the graduates. "We have worked relentlessly within our community. We have helped build churches at COTR and Vessel. We have passed out food to tens of thousands at food pantries," Chad says. "We've loaded and unloaded, moved and removed. We have struggled, and we have thrived. But it comes back to God's grace; we start and finish there."

Haven Homes residents are also very active in their church homes. Chad says

they constantly volunteer within the Texarkana community. "We answer the call. We assist other nonprofits and churches in their efforts," Chad says. "Our men's program is a work therapy program, and they, as well as the women, are actively working jobs throughout our community. We hope that our logo and participants become a beacon to others who are searching or in need."

According to Chad, COVID-19 has made things more complicated for Haven Homes. They had ten positive cases at one point in the Men's Center, and that shut them down. Three months of the year, they were under quarantine, which shut down the work therapy that helps fund their ministry. "Plus, the cost of meds, testing, and doctor visits were also an issue, as well as purchasing cleaning supplies and masks. We also had to spend additional hours disinfecting," Chad says. "COVID has been a headache. You just do what has to be done and keep going."

Haven Homes currently has improvement projects going at the Men's Center, fixing the floors, plumbing, and roof as well as a large expansion by adding 24 more beds. Also, Haven Homes has recently



opened a resale shop in the old Bryce's building; however, they still have big plans for what it will become. "Getting the resale/pie shop/coffee shop off the ground will be huge in supporting our efforts. We also have a donation center drop off in Oaklawn Village on New Boston Road, in between KFC and Whataburger," Chad says. "If anyone wants to volunteer, we have needs for those. And if anyone wants to make a contribution, monthly or one time, that would be incredibly special for us."

Usually, the holiday season has been wonderful for the residents of Haven Homes. "Many in the community have provided to ensure that we are fed and loved," Chad says. "We have had carolers, and we had personal gifts provided for all residents last year as well as Christmas parties." When thinking about a place to donate time or money to this holiday season, Chad urges the community to think about Haven Homes because most everyone knows someone that has battled addiction. "We are the only Christian-based large recovery program and housing in the area. Our doors are open to teaching responsibility and servitude to our residents, and we want to be able to help in our community with every opportunity we receive," Chad says. "This work is only possible due to donations and grants. We can stand on our ministry mission by doing this, but it takes a village. All donations are fed into daily operations, and our administration cost is very minimal. We hope to be somewhat self-sufficient, but we aren't there yet. The unforeseen is sometimes costly."

In 2021, Haven Homes plans on moving forward with the bedding expansion and the resale/pie/coffee shop. They also want to add educational classes on top of their daily Bible study and classes. "We are doing our best to be good stewards of what we have been blessed with, and ready to follow the guidance bestowed on us," Chad says. "Our area is one of the highest per capita for drug abuse in the nation. We are winning and making a difference, but it is an overwhelming battle. We lean on our faith and know we are answering the call, but we absolutely HAVE to have community support. Whether it's by volunteering, providing job opportunities, donating, or becoming a mentor, our doors are open, and we are excited to see God's plan unfold."



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Location: Texarkana, Texas

Proud Moment: "On October 15, 2020, we presented a check for \$32,241 to the kids of TAPD PRIDE Academy. Our goal was to impact their lives in a way that they have never experienced: a complete group of strangers raising money on their behalf and instilling the belief that they are loved and supported by so many unknown people, businesses, and corporations. We accomplished our mission, and we look to do even more next year with the TTPD Better In Texarkana program once it is operational."

Just Love and Kindness (JLK) was established in October of 2019 in response to a personal tragedy that Robert and Laura Klein experienced with the death of their son. On November 26, 2017, every parent's worst nightmare unfolded with a simple knock on the Klein's door: their son, Jarrod, was murdered by someone he knew and was trying to help. "After the trial was over, we flew out to Alabama to get away and decompress, to regroup if you will. We asked ourselves where we go from here, and we decided that our son's legacy, life, and death would not be in vain," Laura says. "We tried and tried to get Jarrod straightened out, with great frustration and no real help from the authorities. Once they hit 18 years of age, you simply can't put the genie back into the bottle, especially one with a traumatic brain injury and drug addiction. This needs to be changed legislatively, but we decided to do what we can in our own community."

The nonprofit's mission is simply to reach kids and to provide hope for a better way of life, despite what the world throws at them. JLK is 100% volunteer-based, with all the funds they raise being directed to various causes, initiatives, groups, and persons in our

community. "We strive to be agents of change within our community. If not us, then who?" Laura says. "This is our community, and we want better for our future leaders, our citizenry, and our town. Our great desire is to reach the youth of Texarkana before they get into trouble, rather than after the fact, to assist our community with youth outreach, to prevent drug abuse and set people on a path for good, and to be a light to those who choose to embrace it and see life from a different perspective."

Just Loving Kindness was named to mirror the initials of Jarrod L. Klein, and it's run by a team of volunteers: Laura Klein, president; Robert Klein, vice president; Connie Loomis, treasurer; Robbie Klein, secretary; Lisa Lee Knighten, member; Karen Martin Lansdell, member; Jessica Pearson, member; Kim Polk, member. "Each of us has always quietly helped people within the community; it is just part of who we are," Laura says. "For myself, the most inspiring aspect about JLK is to be able to see our good deeds in action, to see the appreciation of doing selfless acts for those who can never repay you, and who will most likely never even remember your name. We know that in some small part of God's plan, we

have met someone else's needs and hopefully given them the opportunity they needed to have a better quality of life with hope for a brighter future."

COVID has really affected the nonprofit's efforts this year. Right now, they are not allowed in the schools; they cannot meet with the kids at the Juvenile Detention Center, Juvenile Drug Court, FINS participants, or the Youth Probation Dept. They had planned to host a fundraiser for TAPD PRIDE Academy on Jarrod's birthday in May, but they postponed it to September. "I believe that our board's strategy and planning to pivot and focus upon the areas where we can be effective now, to keep building relationships within the community, and to keep persevering through tough times is where we have exceeded even our own expectations," Laura says. "We are continuing to help where and when we can and to build upon successes and setbacks. We try not to get discouraged. It is true that when people say 'no,' it's not necessarily a 'no.' It could be a 'no, not right now.'"

Even with the postponement to September, the nonprofit's first golf tournament was very successful. "All

of our teams filled quickly and the community came out to support us and our mission in a big way. Our hearts go out to the youth community of today as they do not have the life we all grew up in," Laura says. "On October 15, 2020, we presented a check for \$32,241 to the kids of PRIDE Academy. Our goal was to impact their lives in a way that they have never experienced: a complete group of strangers raising money on their behalf and instilling the belief that they are loved and supported by so many unknown people, businesses, and corporations. We accomplished our mission, and we look to do even more next year with the TTPD Better In Texarkana program once it is operational."

While their primary focus is youth engagement, JLK also wants to help veterans and underserved members of society. Before they formed JLK, the Kleins supported Haven Homes with a financial donation and their time and efforts at both their women's homes and the new men's center. Laura created an outreach campaign to assist with the facility's needs, which resulted in a significant and actionable response from some very generous organizations across America. "We have also quietly supported many members of our community, such as those who get stuck here as they are passing through, those who are escaping domestic violence or trafficking, and runaways," Laura says. "We have supported other nonprofits by sharing resources, sponsoring teams in their golf tournaments, buying socks, cases of water for the elderly food distribution drives, marketing support, and we made another donation to the Friends For a Cause organization last week. We are working on a veteran project right now, and we are also working on a grant to get a young man a prosthesis and hopefully get him to accept help in a dual diagnosis treatment facility. God has a plan; we're just following His lead."

The primary mission of JLK's efforts is to work behind the scenes to help

others without seeking recognition. They work with kids with specific needs that are not met at home or school on a case by case basis. They often bring



food, toiletries, and essentials to those who are truly struggling but do not feel confident seeking help. "There are so many struggling individuals in our own community who often hide within the shadows, leading them to less than favorable situations. We respect these individuals' privacy and do not post on social media or our website. We do not capitalize upon other's misfortune in any of these sensitive cases. In a world full of self-glorification and social media attention, we have taken a little different approach," Laura says. "We know that the One who sees what we are doing is the only One we seek praise from. We trust that He will show others."

This holiday season, JLK is always looking for ways to help and give back. "It is a great time of the year to gather, count our blessings, and work towards new goals while enjoying the holidays with loved ones, and remembering those who have gone before us," Laura says. "Because we are a close-knit group and think of each other as family, we are so committed to making a difference in Texarkana. We continue to do our work within the community, and sure, we'd love to get many donations. But, even more than that, we'd really like to be an even greater force of good within our community."

There are several ways that the community can support JLK's efforts. First, they are expanding their board and would love to have new members with the same passion and belief in

their mission and goals. They are seeking members with the following skills: social media/graphic designer; CRM /database management; email communications; fundraisers/public relations; grant writers; event volunteers; and donors. They are also hoping to have several events in 2021. They are working on a car show and cook-off event with live music, their second annual golf tournament, possibly showing free, inspirational, and thought-provoking movies at Cinemark. "We welcome the community's input," Laura says. "We are open to all ideas and suggestions."

Donations to JLK in the form of time, effort, and money will go directly to helping deserving members of the community. "Each of us does this for the love of kids, community, and the future of our community. If the community reflected upon their tax dollars and really thought about how much of that money goes towards incarcerations, judicial processes, probations, parole, and so on, it trickles down to each and every one of us in one way or another. What is the budget for orange jailhouse attire? As crazy as it seems, this is our reality. We're saddened seeing the pictures of people in orange shirts every single day in the news," Laura says. "We have a long term plan, and we have shown our desire to make an impact within our community despite COVID. Our goal for 2020 was to generously support worthy causes, such as the TAPD PRIDE Academy, that create a synergistic change within our community and our own individual efforts to support specific needs on a case by case basis. We intend to do even more, which is where the community's support comes into the picture. United together, we can make a difference. We hope the community will support us in whatever form of fashion they choose."

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LITERACY COUNCIL



- **Mission:** The Literacy Council strives to help everyone in Texarkana to become lifelong learners.
- **Location:** 4014 Summerhill Road, Texarkana, Texas
- **Proud Moment:** “For our students, it takes a lot of courage to come in and ask for help. Many of these men and women are motivated to provide a better life for their children, and that is so inspiring! What we do has the power to impact generations.”

The Literacy Council started in the Texarkana Public Library, and in 2021, they will celebrate their 35th anniversary. “We are unique in that we are not affiliated with a larger state or national organization,” Executive Director Jenny Walker says. “We are a true, Texarkana, original non-profit organization. We exist solely to serve the people of our local community.”

For adult learners, the Literacy Council works to help people in Texarkana who want to earn basic education competency, English for non-native speakers, and literacy skills. This semester, they expanded to begin offering programs for teens and children, including ACT and College Prep and Life Lessons. “Life Lessons for teens is an after-school program where guest speakers teach skills students need to know as they enter adulthood such as changing tires, addressing letters, and more,” Jenny says. “There is no charge for any of the classes or tutoring services offered at the Literacy Council; everything is completely free.”

Jenny started as the executive director on July 1, 2020, and she truly believes the work they do every day has the power to bring positive change to Texarkana. “Having a strong education is the core component in being able to help people in our community work toward providing a better life for their families. That creates a ripple effect that spreads to so many other areas. When people have an education, they make better employees. Better employees mean strong businesses. Strong businesses improve our overall economic development and quality of life in Texarkana,” Jenny says. “Also, parents who are educated can help their children find academic success, which allows us to break the cycle of generational poverty. When education is a priority, we all win.”

At the Literacy Council, their mission is to care about the whole student. They are partnering with Texas A&M University Texarkana and interns from the sociology and Master of Social Work programs to be sure

that students who come to the Literacy Council are well connected to any other community resources they may need. “Research tells us that students cannot worry about academic success if they are concerned about meeting some of those more basic human needs. For example, if a student comes into our office for GED test prep, but we notice they may not be eating, we work to get that student connected to a food pantry. We know that once their belly is full, we can work to fill their mind,” Jenny says. “Public schools do a great job of looking out for children and making sure they have the things they need. However, once a student graduates or drops out of school, which is the case for many of our students, there is often nobody to look out for them. That’s where we come in. We help students choose a path, and then we provide the support and accountability they need to be able to follow the path.”

For Jenny, the most inspiring aspect of the Literacy Council is

the students and their strength to pursue education. “It takes a lot of courage to come in and ask for help. Many of these men and women are motivated to provide a better life for their children, and that is so inspiring!” Jenny says. “What we do has the power to impact generations. I love watching our students set and reach goals, and I love being able to give them the tools they need to build confidence and change the course of their own lives.”

COVID-19 has had a big impact on the Literacy Council’s budget. Their annual Spelling Bee is their biggest fundraiser of the year, but they had to cancel, resulting in the immediate removal of a large portion of their annual budget. Additionally, some of their sources of funding received across-the-board cuts, which ultimately meant that the Literacy Council also received cuts in funding. Plus, some of their loyal donors have had to cut back on their giving as well. “These financial strains caused us to have to move from our 4,000 square-foot campus into an 800-square-foot learning center to save on rent and utilities. Although we had to downsize our location, we have not downsized our goals and programs for our students,” Jenny says. “In fact, not only have we been able to maintain our pre-COVID programming, but we have also expanded to offer a stronger Language Learning program, including beginning Spanish for children and a Bilingual program where we not only work

to teach English to non-native speakers but also Spanish to English speakers who want to learn. We have been able to do this with creative scheduling and a handful of extremely dedicated volunteers.”

With the holiday season, colder weather makes a large impact on the Literacy Council students. “For many, the Literacy Council is a safe place where they can find encouragement and support, so, like always, we will serve as a place of joy and hope during the holiday season. However, as the temperature drops, things do become more difficult for our students, particularly those who ride public transportation to get to and from our center,” Jenny says. “So, in that respect, we do find the challenge in making sure that our students have the adequate clothing they need for warmth and protection from the weather.”

There are many ways to support the Literacy Council’s efforts in the community. Community members can donate funds or offer support through the Literacy Council’s March membership drive. Additionally, they have wish lists on Amazon and are part of the Amazon Smile program. They also need volunteers in many capacities, from teaching and tutoring to general office duties and bookkeeping. “Everyone has a gift that we can use at the Literacy Council!” Jenny says. “People should consider donating their time, efforts, or money to the Literacy Council because the work we do

here truly impacts us all. I truly believe that changing the world begins with loving the people right here in our own community, and that’s exactly what we do at the Literacy Council. Donations to the Literacy Council will be used to directly support programs that help improve the lives of local people.”

The Literacy Council is planning some great activities for 2021. In the spring, they will begin offering citizenship classes for those in the community who are immigrants or refugees. The Literacy Council also will continue expanding its language learning program, and they will add computer and digital literacy as well as new health and wellness program options, including yoga. Even through a year of uncertainty and change, the Literacy Council is ready to continue its mission in Texarkana. “We have a strong board of directors, a fresh vision from the Executive Director, and a dedicated team of volunteers and tutors, but we need the support of the community in order to make our big plans for the future a reality,” Jenny says. “This organization is growing and expanding in order to impact the community like never before!

To learn more about the Literacy Council, check out their website at www.literacytxk.org. Donations can be sent by mailing a check to P.O. Box 1111, Texarkana, Texas 75504.



RUNNIN' WJ RANCH



Mission: Runnin' W J Therapeutic Center, Inc. provides therapeutic horseback riding to special needs children and teens.

Location: Texarkana, Texas

Proud Moment: "Last year, we had a student who wouldn't ride, but this fall, he got on the horse with no hesitation. He was so proud of himself, and we were too! He was just beaming with his smile!"

Runnin' WJ Ranch was started in 2001 by Mrs. Patricia Weldon. She said that God had given her a vision about a facility where special needs children and adults could come to ride horses. Then, a family that Patricia knew very well showed up on her doorstep, asking her if she would start a facility like the one she had imagined. "From there, it was all God. He gave her the volunteers, materials, and vision to do it," Program Director Brittany Rogers says. "In 2008, she retired, and Mr. Sam Clem took over the ranch. We are a part of five different school districts that ride here at the ranch. We are also a United Way community partner."

Brittany has been involved with Runnin' WJ since the very beginning. Her dad was one of the volunteers when the facility was being built. Her mom was one of the area school teachers who brought her students out to ride. Then, at age 14, Brittany began to volunteer. "When Mr. Sam took over, he approached me about being an instructor and told me to pray about it. After lots of prayer and consideration, I finished school and came to teach in the arena," Brittany says. "Now, I handle

all the paperwork and scheduling for our students. I keep up with all the standards that govern us and keep us safe, and I teach a couple of classes per week."

Runnin' WJ Ranch Therapeutic Center, Inc., exists to enhance the quality of life for individuals with special needs, those who are challenged with physical, emotional, cognitive, or social disabilities and/or situations in lives which may be debilitating. They seek to do this through several goals: development of an equine-assisted intervention to challenged individuals; provide education and training for students, volunteers, staff and families/caregivers; provide social interaction for students, volunteers, staff, and families/caregivers; increase community awareness of the benefits of equine-assisted activities; develop a sound base of financial support to ensure those individuals needing the services of Runnin' WJ Ranch go without due to inability to pay. "The mission of Runnin WJ is so inspiring. Each person that works here or volunteers is here for different

reasons, but when they leave here, they are changed. Being in this arena with these kiddos changes you. The joy and laughter we hear brings so much happiness to all those around," Brittany says. "Just last week, we had a volunteer say, 'My cheeks hurt already from smiling so much!' Then, we had a student who wouldn't ride last year, but last week, he got on the horse with no hesitation. He was so proud of himself, and we were too! He was just beaming with his smile!"

COVID-19 really affected Runnin' WJ Ranch. They normally service five different school districts at the time and clients from the surrounding areas, but they shut down in March when COVID closures began. "We lost the last 12 weeks of the riding season due to COVID. We also lost the first six weeks of riding due to the uncertainty of our school districts knowing or not knowing whether they could attend," Brittany says. "But, we have put policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of everyone that is involved in the program."

Due to this extended closure, the last seven months have been extremely difficult for Runnin' WJ Ranch. "We have been blessed with donations of hand sanitizers, masks, and other safe cleaning supplies, but, as always, monetary donations are always needed," Brittany says. "We have been working on getting our horse herd sponsored. Thankfully, we have gotten 13 of the 19 sponsored. Sponsoring a horse costs \$1200 a year, and that can be paid in full or broken down by months or quarters. We are so thankful to our Horse Champions that have already chosen to sponsor our amazing horse staff."

However, the staff is already looking forward to having a special year in 2021 as they celebrate 20 years of giving back to the Texarkana community. "Our 15th Annual Barrel Race will be in June of 2021. We are also so excited to plan a few activities for the community to come out and see us," Brittany says.


"You can find details of events posted on our website and Facebook page."

The staff wants the community to know that any donations they make to Runnin' WJ go straight to scholarship opportunities for students to come to the Ranch without paying. "All our students are on scholarship," Brittany says. "We cannot survive without community donations, and I think people enjoy donating because we are such a unique ministry. We truly are one of a kind. Plus, we try to partner with different organizations to help others around us and share God's love."


Normally, the holiday season is a wonderful time for Runnin' WJ Ranch because as people look for ways to give back, they come in contact with the Ranch and its mission. "We get to share with our volunteers and students about God's love," Brittany says. "I think a lot of people don't realize the unconditional love our students bring when they come. This is a judgment-free zone; we are in their world for a short period of time, and that feeling is amazing. You do not know the feeling until you've been here to experience it. Get involved, volunteer, and come see what we are talking about!"



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THE CALL IN MILLER COUNTY



Mission: "To educate, equip, and encourage the Christian community to provide a future and a hope for children in foster care in Arkansas."

Location: 600 Walnut Street, Texarkana, Arkansas

Proud Moment: In the last three years, they have trained 18 foster families in Texarkana, Arkansas, and helped four children find forever homes.

The CALL is a statewide nonprofit organization that helps bridge the gap between the church and the foster care system. They have been in Miller County for three years. "We chose to bring The CALL to Miller County because the need for foster homes is so great in our area. Our local kids had to be placed all over the state because there were not and still aren't enough homes for foster children," Church Recruitment and Family Support Coordinator Holly Carver says. "The CALL encourages Christians to step up and open their homes to these kids while the churches help support them."

The CALL hopes that more people will see the crisis right here in Texarkana and will be inspired to help any way they can through community outreach and education. "There is not just one type of foster home. There are traditional foster homes, provisional (family members), respite (temporary), emergent (emergency placements), and adoptive," Holly says. "If one family from every church in Arkansas opened their home to foster care, there would be more than enough homes to provide for all the children in care. The CALL's vision would be accomplished, and there would be no more waiting children in Arkansas."

The CALL began in 2007 in Little Rock when a group of friends realized the dire need for foster homes.

They went to their local churches, and together they recruited more homes, encouraged and supported the existing homes, and started making a real difference in the foster care system. They developed a relationship with the Department of Children and Family Services and launched The CALL statewide. Miller County became the 47th county to join forces, and today, there are 52 counties involved. Last year, throughout the state of Arkansas, 969 families recruited by The CALL cared for a total of 3,685 foster children. When The CALL launched in Miller County, there were only four traditional foster homes. To date, they have trained and supported 18 families and cared for around 100 kids. Four children have been adopted into their forever homes with families recruited, trained, and supported by The CALL in Miller County. "What's inspiring about our mission is that it draws in other Christians that also believe the body of Christ should step up and care for these children in care," Holly says. "Our organization has lots of ways to get involved and truly believes that everyone can do something to help."

The CALL is located at 600 Walnut Street, Texarkana, AR, near the juvenile courthouse and Wadley hospital. They wanted an easily accessible downtown location. "We

offer a prayer room for caseworkers, courthouse staff, and families that need a moment of refuge. Our office also has a large area for support groups, meetings, and adoption parties. We have a meal program to help provide families with dinner on evenings they take a new placement, lose a long-term placement, or spent the day in court," Holly says. "The biggest part of our support services is our CALL mall that provides free clothing and essentials to care for foster children of all ages. We also work with individuals in our support churches who help meet needs during holidays, special events, or emergencies."

As a Texarkana based nonprofit, The CALL goes into the local churches to recruit, train, and support existing and future foster homes. They focus recruitment and training on Miller County but serve foster and adoptive families in all the surrounding counties for both Arkansas and Texas. "The CALL serves as a liaison between the families and DCFS by helping navigate the foster and adoption processes and beyond," Training Coordinator Kristi Wooten says. "We also encourage the churches to wrap around the foster families in their congregations with love, prayer, and additional support. Currently, there are 139 Miller County kids in foster care."

A team of volunteers runs the CALL in Miller County. Their leadership team consists of six individuals who devote their time and attention to improving The CALL's ability to offer continuous support to our foster community. Some of our team members are also foster parents themselves. They can provide advice and encouragement based on first-hand experiences. "We have been able to watch the impact those families have had on not only the children that have passed through their homes but also their surrounding community," Kristi says. "We have also seen our local churches, businesses, and individuals get inspired to come forward to help The CALL in Miller County by holding donation drives, hosting our informational meetings and trainings, helping raise funds, buying emergent supplies, and raising awareness for our cause."

When COVID-19 hit in March of 2020, The CALL's whole operation came to a halt. They were no longer able to go into churches to recruit families, and they were unable to hold any informational meetings or trainings. This left pending foster families waiting mid-process while the number of children in care continued to rise. "Our biggest annual fundraising event was canceled due to COVID regulations, but God still provided ways for us to continue to support our CALL families. We purchased cleaning supplies, quarantine groceries, baby essentials, and other monetary needs to help our families through this difficult time," Kristi says. "The CALL in Miller County recently resumed informational meetings and already has three families signed up to go through training in the upcoming months."

During the holiday season, people often feel more led to give back to their communities. The CALL in Miller County has been blessed with donations, toy drives, and church collections. These help fulfill foster children's Christmas lists and provide support to our foster families during the holidays. There are so many ways that the community can get involved with The CALL's mission. "We encourage anyone interested in learning more about The CALL or the foster care system to follow our Facebook page, The CALL in Miller County. We have started our monthly information meetings to provide participants with as much information as possible on fostering or adopting through foster care. The monthly meeting details will be posted on our Facebook page along with any upcoming events," Holly says. "Also, we are always accepting donations to our CALL mall. We take clothing and shoes in good condition and current styles, baby gear, children's bedding, children's furniture, hygiene items, and more! To donate, message us on our Facebook page, and we would love to set up a time that's convenient for drop off."

The CALL in Miller County has big plans for 2021. They are planning on changing up their biggest fundraiser of the year. Their bowling fundraiser,

Rally in the Alley, is potentially moving to the spring instead of the fall. They also are making plans to add another fundraiser throughout the year. In May, anyone in the community could join their awareness fundraiser, Flocking to Foster Care. "We believe people should consider donating to The CALL in Miller County because everything we receive goes directly to foster families to offset the cost of raising additional children. Monetary donations are used towards the cost of training foster families. Each family costs approximately \$500 to go through PRIDE training to become an open, licensed foster home," Kristi says. "We always encourage our local churches and businesses to host donation drives for specific needs. For example, diapers, wipes, formulas, underwear, and pajamas are a constant need for our foster families. These items are stocked in our CALL mall and available to foster families whenever needed."

For those who want to help but can't foster or adopt, volunteer positions are always available. "The CALL in Miller County is an organization that believes everyone can do something to help," Holly says. "Everything from prayers to volunteering to donations are greatly appreciated!"

If you would like more information about The CALL in Miller County, feel free to contact Laura Smith at 903.733.5164 or Holly Carver at 903.908.3905.





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TOUGH KOOKIE FOUNDATION



Mission: Tough Kookie Foundation is a 501c3 organization committed to establishing extraordinary levels of effectiveness in support, encouragement, resources, education, and advocacy for breast and childhood cancer survivors.

Location: Texarkana, Texas

Proud Moment: "During October, the foundation assisted survivors by preparing food, providing gift cards for meals, car washes, jewelry, and other donated items. The foundation also assisted with bra fittings. All these donations were made possible because of some great local vendors and restaurants."

In 2016, Tough Kookie Foundation Founder and CEO, Katina Levingston, was diagnosed with breast cancer. "While going through my own treatment, I became keenly aware that a support group would have provided me with some additional emotional and financial support," Katina says. "As a result, I knew that I wanted to help provide that service and more to others who were/are facing similar situations."

The organization started in May 2018 with the mission of providing year-round assistance to both breast and childhood cancer survivors. The name, Tough Kookie, comes from a moniker she earned and used as her Race for the Cure team name one year as she had to be "one tough cookie" to face and defeat cancer. "Since I am a survivor also, this foundation is something that I am very passionate about," Katina says. "I wholeheartedly believe that God is using my testimony as a way to give back and support the people who may not have family or friend support while going through their cancer journey."

Although they are a new organization, part of their mission is to assist the community by lending their time and resources in any way possible. They

envision being active year-round and not just in October during Breast Cancer Awareness month. They've already started hosting events and getting involved in the community. "We held our first 'Pink Out Day,' and we had great community participation. The foundation also visited local businesses in October with the 'pink car' that has been used in Texarkana for the last several years," Katina says. "The foundation also held its first Breast Cancer Survivors Art Wall Unveiling on October 28th, at TRHAC featuring paintings by survivors, their families, and friends. If needed, we would be more than happy to speak to any group or organization regarding the foundation."

Katina says that one of the most inspiring aspects of the Tough Kookie Foundation is the volunteers. "Our volunteers are hard workers and have the heart to inspire people and make them smile during a time when they are not at their best," Katina says. "Some of our volunteers are cancer survivors themselves, so they know exactly what a person may be going through. They just want survivors and their families to feel loved and supported."

COVID-19 has affected the nonprofit in

that they are taking every precaution as outlined by the city and state government. "All donations were delivered using social distancing practices, and we will offer Zoom meetings for anyone who wants to attend rather than face-to-face," Katina says.

The holiday season is always a great time to give to a nonprofit. "It is a time to give and show your love and support for those who are in need and less fortunate than ourselves," Katina says. "This holiday season, community members can support the foundation by participating in our raffle to raise monies to be able to assist survivors as the need arises throughout the year. Donations are always appreciated as well. Any donations can be mailed to Tough Kookie Foundation, P.O. Box 4947, Texarkana, TX 75504. You may also donate through Paypal using our email address or search for Tough Kookie Foundation."

Tough Kookie Foundation is looking forward to future plans to continue to help those in our community dealing with cancer. In 2021, the Tough Kookie hopes to start a support group for survivors and family members. Their

board meetings will begin at the end of this year, and they will begin planning for other events as well. The public will be able to find details of upcoming events on their Facebook page. "The foundation was established to assist in providing financial as well as emotional support," Katina says. "Donors can be assured that 100% of every dollar and any other types of donations received will be given back to those needing assistance in Texarkana and the surrounding areas."

Individuals or businesses can find out more details about our foundation by emailing us at toughkookietx@gmail.com or on our Facebook page at Tough Kookie Foundation.



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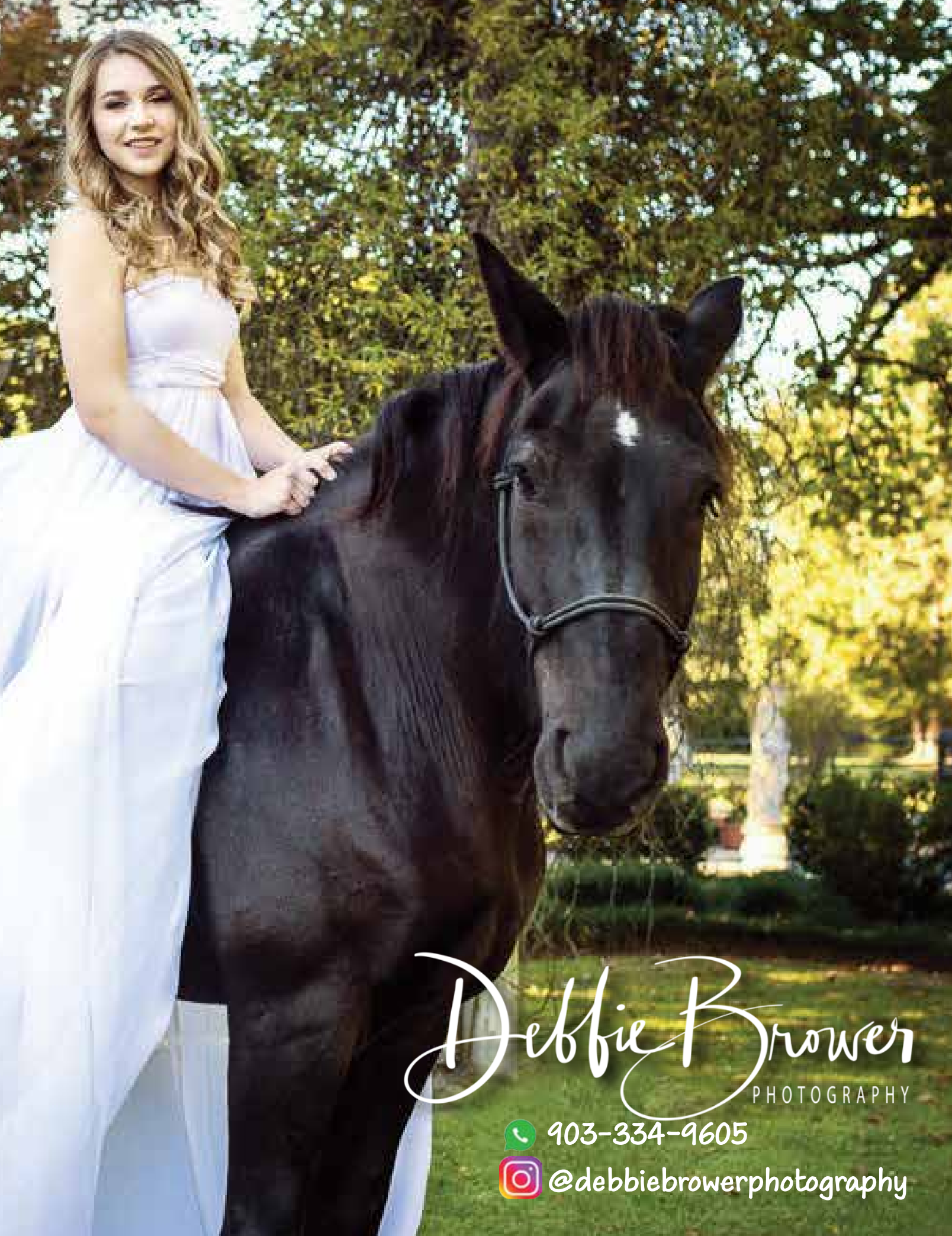
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A portrait of Monty Murry, a man with a grey beard and hair, wearing a blue plaid blazer over a white shirt. He is standing outdoors with trees in the background.

2020 Texarkana's Top Lawyer

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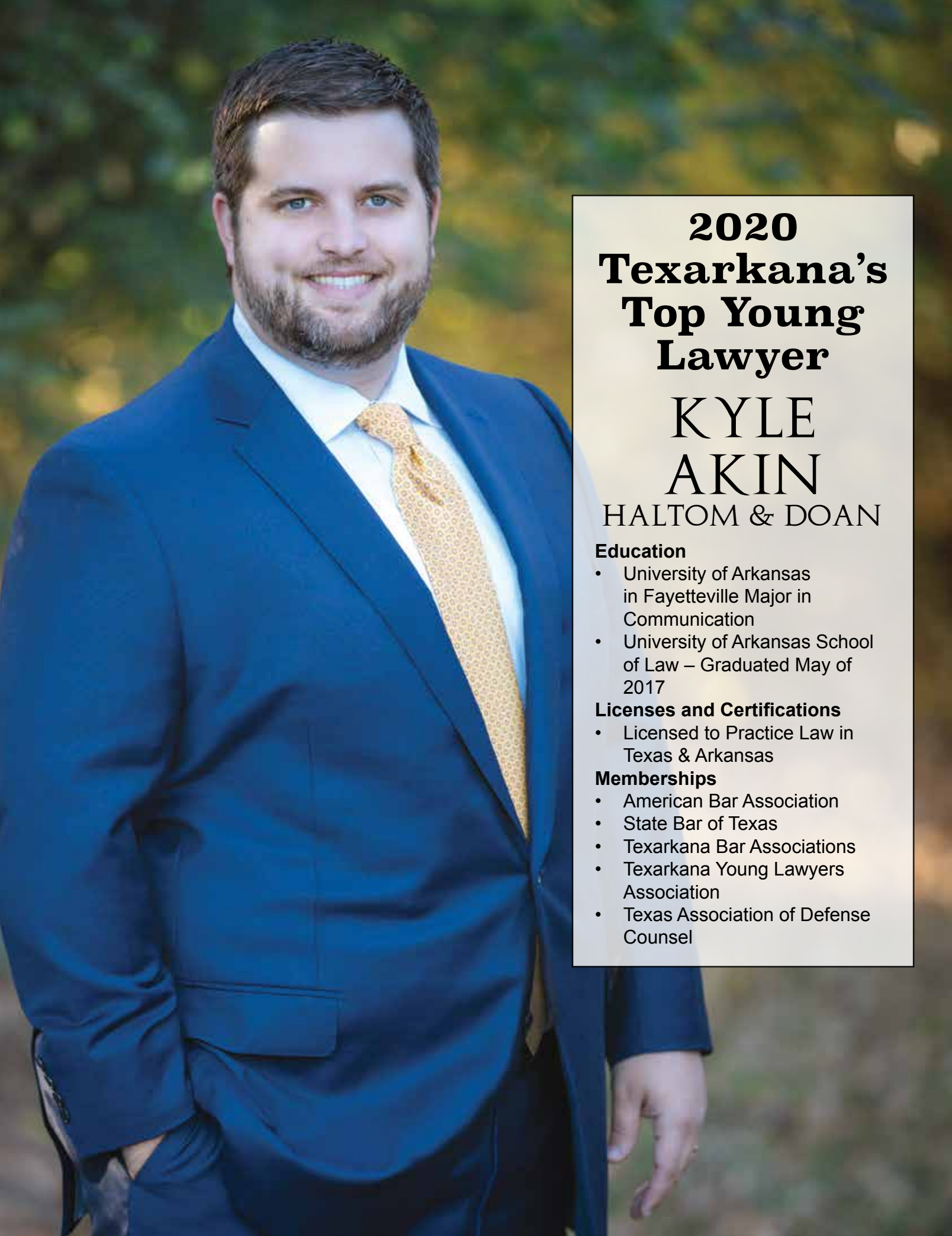
- Baylor University – BA 1983
- Baylor University School of Law – JD 1985

Licenses and Certifications

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- Licensed to Practice Law in Texas & Arkansas
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- State Bar of Texas
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- U.S. Supreme Court
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**KYLE
AKIN**
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- University of Arkansas School of Law – Graduated May of 2017

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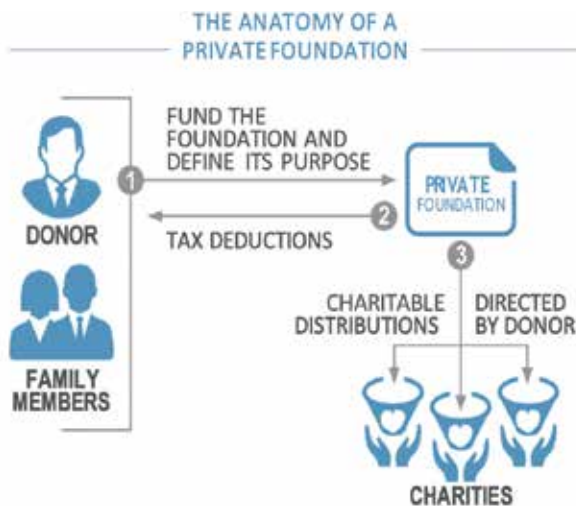
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A foundation for family generosity

For those with significant wealth and a generous spirit, a private foundation can be a powerful vehicle for meeting both your charitable and estate planning goals. Unlike public charities, private foundations are set up, funded, and controlled by an individual, family, or family entity. They are tax-exempt entities, just like hospitals or universities, but must pay a nominal excise tax of 1% or 2% on their net investment income. And of course, they are required to make charitable distributions throughout their taxable year.

trigger an immediate tax deduction, plus those assets are removed from your taxable estate. You can also avoid capital gains tax by contributing highly appreciated stock or other investments.



Private foundations are often considered costly and complicated to set up, however thanks to increased efficiency, economies of scale and technological advances, that is less and less the case. While at one time it only made sense to start a private foundation with a minimum contribution of \$5 million, now \$2 million is widely considered a sufficient initial contribution. Your foundation can also be funded with a wide variety of assets including stock, real estate, jewelry, art, insurance policies and more, making it an advantageous option for those looking to minimize their estate. Contributions

OTHER BENEFITS OF PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS INCLUDE:

Foundations often make grants to public charities but can also run programs, provide services, and conduct direct charitable activities such as hardship aid.

It may be possible to hire a staff to assist with administration and your charitable efforts.

Founders select a board of their choosing to manage the foundation.

Foundations encourage collaboration and harmony among family members, who can get involved as staff or board members.

The foundation can reimburse you for operating expenses.

You're able to negotiate and enforce grant agreements.

NEXT STEPS

Private foundations offer the opportunity to make a real difference while also enjoying tax benefits to help you reach your wealth planning goals.

- Consider your charitable goals and how they could be carried out with a private foundation.
- Have a conversation with your family about your values and how they can get involved as staff or board members.
- Work with your financial advisor, accountant and attorney to consider the implications and tax benefits of a private foundation for your comprehensive financial and estate plans.

Your decision to start a private foundation is a significant one. Your financial advisor is readily available to serve as a knowledgeable sounding board as you explore the charitable vehicles and estate planning strategies available to you.

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FISH TALES WITH MIKE BROWER

It's now the off season for tournaments and folks are trying to decide what to fish next year. It's important to understand just what you will be fishing, and lakes are not the issue. It's more of what is the entry? How many boats will they pay back, and most importantly, what is the percentage of payback.

We tend to get caught up in how much first place pays and that's fine as long as the payback is carried out down the line and the last paid place at least gets their entry back. A reasonable payback is good for everybody and promotes return fishermen, just as much as lake selection, and in some ways is even more important since most complaints about tournaments stem from either the percentage paid back at the lake, any holdout for an end of the year, or how much, if any, is held out for expenses.

There is no magic formula that makes everything right. It is what the fishermen want, after all they are the ones who make it work. Make sure you understand the whole system when deciding what to fish and you will be happier.

Happy fishing!



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DECEMBER

4

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7

36th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADE

Celebrate the holidays with “A Tale of Two Cities”, Main Street Texarkana’s 36th Annual DRIVE-THROUGH Christmas Parade in Historic Downtown Texarkana. Monday, December 7, 2020, at 7 PM.

12

CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA

Come celebrate with us as we kick off December! This is our Holiday Shopping Extravaganza Fundraiser. Grab some friends and shop unique items, new and donated thrifted goods, enjoy good food, water, soda, and Door Prizes!!! Help us continue to make our #MissionPossible which is to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities or disadvantages. This is accomplished through education, training, and placement in gainful employment. Saturday, December 12, 2020 at 8:30AM – 5PM at 3410 St Michael Dr, Texarkana, TX 75503

16

FANNIE MARCHMAN GARDEN CLUB KICKOFF MEETING

Join us for our first meeting of the 2020-2021 year. We are excited to kick-off this meeting with the theme “It’s a Whole New World”. The new year will allow us to explore exciting ways to celebrate the seasons. Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 9:30AM – 11AM. The Fannie Marchman Garden Club is the oldest garden club in Texas and we are celebrating all the beautiful things our gardens bring to us.

17

COWBOY CHRISTMAS BALL

The 1st Annual Cowboy Christmas Ball will be held December 17, 2020, at Crossties in Downtown Texarkana. Tickets are \$50 via EventBrite, event is Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 7PM-10PM, and is hosted by Miller County Fair Association and Lacey Nalls Power.

19

PEROT HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Downtown Texarkana is going FROZEN! ‘Frozen’, ‘Frozen II’, and ‘Olaf’s Frozen Adventure’ will be on the biggest screen in town during the day, and ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ hits the screen that night. Food trucks, vendors, crafts, Santa, and 100% chance of snow on Main Street! Saturday, December 19, 2020 at 10AM-11PM, at 221 Main Street, Texarkana, TX 75501.

25

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Please note, all dogs adopted from this shelter MUST be spayed or neutered. Spays cost \$89-\$104, neuters are \$76-\$92 depending on the weight of the dog.

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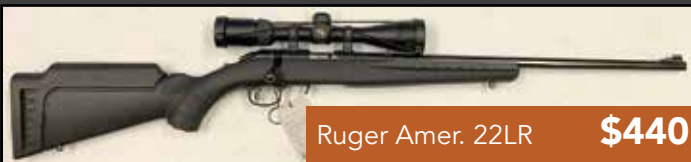
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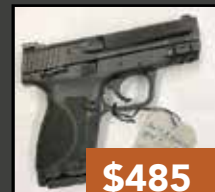
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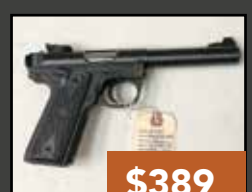
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