

# Blue Ribbon News

ROCKWALL/HEATH

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Volume 10, Issue 4 | July 2022

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*"At Blue Ribbon News, we shine the spotlight on people, places, and events that impact our community in a positive way. We believe that if we tell your story – big or small – it can truly make a difference, and more 'good' will follow."*

~Dawn Redig  
Publisher/Managing Editor

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Blue Ribbon News is Rockwall County's No. 1 source for positive hometown news and events, in print and online at [BlueRibbonNews.com](http://BlueRibbonNews.com). Our Rockwall/Heath print edition is published 8x/year and delivered to about 17,500 homes and businesses throughout Rockwall County. Pick up free copies while supplies last at the Rockwall County Library, Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, and various local businesses.

Our small but mighty team comprises professional journalists, contributing writers, guest columnists, social media managers, graphic designers and marketing experts who share a passion for local business and community.

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## Marvin Washington of Fate named YMCA Father of the Year

Each June we celebrate Father's Day, BUT did you know Father's Day started at the YMCA?

Father's Day was founded by Sonora Louis Smart Dodd, daughter of a single father who served in the Civil War. Her father was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in Washington State. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent.

On Mother's Day in 1909 Smart Dodd heard a sermon honoring mothers and wondered why there was no similar tribute for fathers. With the support of ministers and the YMCA in Spokane, Smart Dodd launched the first Father's Day celebration at the Spokane YMCA on June 19, 1910. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Finally in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day and President Nixon signed Father's Day into law in 1972.

### Father of the Year

The YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas celebrates the anniversary of Father's Day by honoring local Dads as the YMCA Fathers of the Year. This year, the JER Chilton YMCA at Rockwall honored Marvin Washington of Fate. Marvin and his wife Casey have three boys who participate in sports programs and summer camps at the Y.

Casey nominated Marvin for the award, writing, "Marvin's journey to walk closer with God and to raise good men is a constant progression that is my privilege to witness. His full-time job supports our entire family of 5 (plus 2 dogs).

He comes home from work, eats and takes one of our three kids to whatever YMCA sport practice there is that evening. Every game he is there, assistant (and sometimes sideline) coaching. He keeps our children accountable for their emotional and their academic behavior with logical and consistent consequences, whether they are good or bad. He gives them a safe space to grow and encourages them to discover their own interests and talents.

Marvin shows all three of his sons (ages 10, 8 and 8) that everyone in our family contributes both in and out of the home. Together, he and I have our kids doing their own laundry, chores and age-appropriate meal preparation and creation. He teaches them the value of honoring women, from holding open doors to asking for permission before holding hands (our 10-year-old has had the same girlfriend since 2nd grade). Marvin is a father who loves his kids and strives to teach and lead them as God leads us."

Blue Ribbon News staff report.  
Photo by BRN Media.



**On the Cover:** Rockwall-based Patriot Paws Service Dogs recently celebrated the graduation of four new veteran/service dog teams, making a total of more than 380 service dogs placed from the program since its inception in 2016. Featured on our cover are United States Army Veteran, Tom, and Patriot PAWS Service Dog, Donovan. Photo by Donna Dicksson Photography.





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**\$100 could help provide vaccines for children**

**\$50 could help provide sports physicals for children**

**\$25 could help provide a backpack full of supplies**



## ‘Smirl Girl’ celebrates 90 years at historic chapel

### GOOD LIVING

Lifelong Heath resident Clarice Smirl Isbell turned 90 on June 2. She celebrated with friends and family at the historic Smirl Chapel, which now sits on Tate Farms.

Clarice grew up in those four walls, attending church weekly. When asked if she was baptized in the building, she said, “Oh no, honey, there wasn’t even a baptistry... they used a trough out in front of the building.”

Clarice has seen many changes to the building, which was built in 1898. As Evan and I were

surveying the structure as we planned to revive it, there were layers and layers of building material on the walls. You could tell it changed as the world around it changed: original beaded board walls covered in wallpaper you had to use tiny nails to adhere, then wooden paneling, then sheetrock with paint and texture, then another coat of paint.



Clarice with Melissa and Evan Tate.

When Lisa Jayroe, Clarice’s niece, reached out about her birthday, I was elated to host a party. We are almost ready to wrap a bow on the chapel – to set down our hammer and paint brush and claim this revitalization “complete.” One of the things we are wanting to do in the chapel is host tea parties – old, vintage serving wares topped with generational family recipes, enjoyed by people from all over. A story to be told of the walls, the dishes, and the recipes. As we sat in that chapel to celebrate Clarice, it was full of people that had been married on that pulpit, raised their kids in those aisles, and even memorialized loved ones from time to time.

As it sits now, the walls you see in the chapel are original – 124 years old. Clarice said her 90th celebration was her “favorite party she’s ever had.” I guess that means we have to go bigger and better next year, celebrating 125 years for Smirl Chapel and 91 years for Clarice.

*Story and photo by Melissa Tate of Tate Farms.*



# Murder of the Loaded Librarian

Community leaders take the stage to raise funds for Friends of Rockwall County Library

## GOOD CAUSE

Delayed since 2020 due to the pandemic, the long-awaited 'WhoDunit' murder mystery play directed by Barbara Doudt and featuring a stellar cast of Rockwall community leaders was presented last month at The Center.

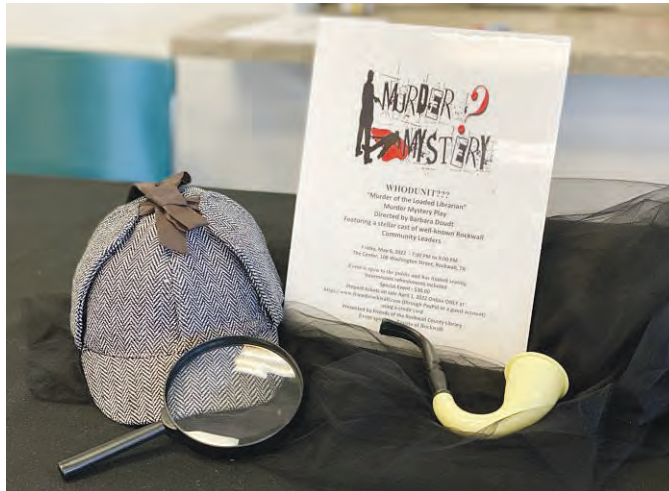
Blue Ribbon News had the pleasure of being front row and center to record the two-act comedy – 'Murder of the Loaded Librarian' – which was filled with laughter, drama, wit, and a few improvised lines that added to the hilarity.

The event benefited Friends of the Rockwall County Library, and was sponsored by Toyota of Rockwall/Jackson Automotive Group with special thanks to the City of Rockwall.

Rockwall's Edie Zehr and Milly Cundy produced the show, written by Penny and Tom Warner. Melissa Williams was the pianist who played Henry Mancini's Pink Panther theme, setting the stage for the audience of sleuths to help Inspector Clueseau (aka, Rockwall County Commissioner Lee Gilbert) determine who killed paramour and playboy Rockwall Stallion (played by Rockwall County Judge David Sweet).

The cast of characters (and we do mean 'characters'!) also included Marcine McCulley, who performed her role as Librarian so expertly that one might think she had done it before...

Local attorney and former Heath Mayor Lorne Liechty played the inept lawyer, Mason Rumpole. Rockwall County Commissioner Dennis Bailey was Heathcliff Bux; Dr. M. Joan Terry was Madonna Bux; Dr. Jean Conway was Nurse Hatchett; Ed Schwaneke was Chef Porky Prudhomme; Hal Hutchins was Guy Happy; CPA Mike Conway was Indy Kowalsky (complete with a left nipple ring); and Carrie Pickell was Nanny Jane Bronte.



Rockwall County EMS even made a surprise appearance as they wheeled away the deceased body of Rocky Stallion. Upon the conclusion of the show, prizes were awarded to two audience member for their guesses of 'WhoDunit'.

Friends of the Rockwall County Library is the primary supporter of the library in our community. Funds raised and donated by Friends supplement existing library programs and provide additional books, materials and equipment. Become a 'Friend' and learn more at friendsrockwall.com.

Director Barbara Doudt serves as Vice President of Production at Rockwall Summer Musicals, and encourages everyone to join them for their 2022 season which includes *Singin' in the Rain* (June 17, 18, 19, 24, 25 and 26) and *The Sound of Music* (August 5, 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14). Learn more at rockwallsummermusicals.org.

By Dawn Redig, Blue Ribbon News. Photos and video by BRN Media. Play written by Penny and Tom Warner.

Wish you had gone? You can watch the play in its entirety at <https://blueribbonnews.com/2022/05/murder-of-the-loaded-librarian-community-leaders-take-the-stage-to-raise-funds-for-friends-of-rockwall-county-library/>.

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# Rockwall Women’s League awards scholarships, grants from record-breaking charity ball



Several area high school graduates are headed to college with scholarships thanks to the efforts of the Rockwall Women’s League and their annual charity gala.

This year’s gala theme was East Meets West. With the help of more than 700 gala attendees, the RWL raised a record \$300,029. These funds are given back to the Rockwall community by way of local non-profit grants and scholarships.

A total of \$209,000 in scholarships were recently handed out to 18 students from Rockwall High School, Rockwall-Heath High School, and Royse City High School.

Scholarship awards ranging from \$4,000 to \$25,000 were presented to Noella Barron, RHS (Patsy Hendrickson Distinguished Scholar Scholarship); Kelsey Contreras, RCHS; Kimberly Culebro, RHHS; Elise Davis, RHS; Isabella Dominquez, RHHS; Gabrielle Dong, RHHS; Sarah Doroshov, RCHS; Sydney Hunt, RHHS (Electra Malone Scholarship); Mazie Johnson, RHS; Makenna Kirkwood, RCHS; Kylie LaPlante, RHHS; Alyssa Pense, RCHS; Haley Petton, RHHS; Micah Sullivan, RHHS; Emily Tran, RHHS; Sebastian Valerio-Oveida, RCHS; Wyatt Voth, RCHS; and Angela Walter, RHS.

“What an honor and a privilege it has been to work on the Scholarship Committee. To meet the students of our community and know that many of them will go on to change the world is humbling. The commitment the students have shown to their academics, community service and extracurricular activities is impressive to say the least,” said Judy Kunhardt, RWL Scholarship Chair.

In addition to these scholarships, Rockwall Women’s League awarded \$91,029 in grants to 25 local non-profit organizations.

Disbursements went to: Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Camp Summitt, Children’s Advocacy Center for Rockwall County, Empower 7, Helping Hands Children’s Medical Fund, Hope Dawning, Kiwanis Club of Rockwall County, Lone Star CASA, Meals on Wheels Senior Services of Rockwall County, New Friends New Life, One Man’s Treasure, Patriot Paws, Poiema



Foundation, Rockwall Art League, Rockwall Grace Clinic, Rockwall High School Robotics Booster Club, Rockwall Summer Musicals, Shoes for Kids, Stronger Families, The Veterans Outpost, Women In Need, JER Chilton YMCA at Rockwall, and the Rockwall County Library.

“We are proud of the work we continue to do that directly impacts the community in such a positive way,” said Jessica Metts, who currently serves as RWL President.

Founded in 1973, the Rockwall Wolmen’s League has raised approximately \$3 million for Rockwall County through their annual Big Hat Affair and charity gala events.

The RWL is already gearing up for what promises to be an exciting gala on April 1, 2023, when the theme will be Rhythm of the Night.

To learn more about the RWL, visit their website at [rockwallwomensleague.org](http://rockwallwomensleague.org) or follow them on Facebook.

By Dawn Redig. Courtesy photos.

## Boot Scootin’ Birthday Girl



When Rockwall County resident Joann Dunphy posted on social media that her 99-year-old grandmother missed her days in the dance halls, several kind gentlemen in our community stepped up to two-step with her at Southern Junction Nightclub and Steakhouse. *Courtesy photo.*

# In Colour

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# Team Effort

## Veterans and service dogs paired up for Patriot Paws graduation ceremony

### GOOD CAUSE

Rockwall-based Patriot Paws Service Dogs recently celebrated the graduation of four new veteran/service dog teams, making a total of more than 380 service dogs placed from the program since its inception in 2006.

In mid-May, four U.S. Army and Navy veterans from Texas, Arizona, and Kansas were officially recognized during an official graduation ceremony at the Rockwall campus.

“It has been a privilege to play a part in bettering the lives of these four veterans,” said Rick Stevens, General Manager of Patriot Paws. “We have witnessed unbreakable bonds form before our eyes throughout this process and have no doubt these teams will go on to do amazing things together.”

Founded by Lori Stevens, Patriot Paws is a national non-profit that trains and provides service dogs of the highest quality at no cost to disabled American veterans and others who suffer from mobile disabilities, post-traumatic

stress and traumatic brain injuries.

Patriot PAWS is honored to be an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International – the only service dog accrediting organization in the world. Patriot PAWS currently trains their dogs at their main facility in Rockwall; through the Patriot PAWS of Aggieland program in College Station; with Dallas-Fort Worth Volunteer Puppy Raisers; and their partnership with Texas Department of Criminal Justice, where inmate trainers work with program dogs within their prison units.

Patriot PAWS currently has veteran/service dog teams located in 39 states and over 80 veterans still waiting to receive a service dog from their program. Each Patriot Paws service dog takes 18 to 24 months to train at a cost of \$35,000; however, recipients will never receive a bill as Patriot Paws firmly believes they have already made such sacrifices for our freedoms.

For more information, or to donate to Patriot PAWS, visit [patriotpaws.org](http://patriotpaws.org).

*Blue Ribbon News staff report. Photos courtesy of Donna Dickson Photography.*



Tom and Donovan



Cody and Ray



RJ and Hero



Pete and Magic

## TO THE RESCUE: Rockwall firefighters honored for lifesaving efforts

### GOOD JOB

During a recent Rockwall City Council meeting, several members of the Rockwall Fire Department were presented with Lifesaving Awards for their extraordinary actions that directly contributed to saving a life.

On March 29, 2022 at 5:33 p.m., the Rockwall Fire Department responded to a reported unconscious person at 219 Blanche Drive. While en route, Dispatch notified the crew that a person was working with electrical equipment under his house and appeared to have been electrocuted. Upon arrival, crew members found a male patient pulseless and not breathing. He was quickly extricated from under the house, and CPR was initiated. The crew quickly assembled the needed medical equipment for treatment and continued performing CPR.

After multiple rounds of CPR, including two shocks from the AED, the patient began spontaneous respirations and developed a palpable pulse. Patient care was then transferred to the responding ambulance crew from Rockwall County EMS, and prior to departing for

the hospital the patient was awake and alert with good vital signs.

The rapid, coordinated actions of the crew from Ladder 02 “A” shift, including the use of the AED, played a direct role in the survival of the patient.



Firefighters Michael Sauder (left) and Tyler Baumgartner. Not pictured: Captain Michael Caffey.

patient. Upon arrival of Rockwall County EMS, the patient was moved to the ambulance where it was noted that he had developed an accelerated heart rhythm and weak blood pressure. The patient was transported to a cardiac center where he underwent further treatment and was released from the hospital approximately two weeks later.

The resuscitative efforts demonstrated by the crew of Engine 2 “A” shift were key to the patient’s survival and played a direct role in saving his life. The level of professionalism demonstrated by all involved is to be commended.

On February 6, 2022 at 2:24 p.m., the Rockwall Fire Department responded to a reported breathing difficulty at 2083 Summer Lee Drive. While en route, Dispatch notified the crew that the patient had become unconscious and CPR was in progress. Upon arrival the crew took over resuscitation efforts from a bystander who had started CPR on a 60 year-old male



Captain Todd Rowan. Not pictured: Firefighter Abel Austin.

his fingers. Despite their best efforts the food could not be removed; however, with each Heimlich maneuver the patient was able to inhale and exhale a small amount of air. Upon the arrival of a unit from Rockwall County EMS a member of the ambulance crew was able to utilize additional tools to visualize and remove what turned out to be a portion of a corn cob.

The repeated performance of the Heimlich maneuver allowed the patient to open his airway enough to take small breaths and played a direct role in the survival of the patient.

*Blue Ribbon News staff report.*



From left: Driver Engineer Adam Honea, Firefighter Michael Sauder, and Firefighter Tyler Baumgartner. Not pictured: Captain Michael Caffey.



# Celebrating Citizenship

**GOOD PEOPLE**

The Reading for Adults Literacy Center, part of the Rockwall County Library, celebrated 23 years of the RFA program and honored 28 adults who recently passed their exam to become a United States Citizen.

Each new citizen was recognized and awarded a certificate and US flag during a June 11 reception at the library. The Rockwall Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented patriotic gift bags to each new citizen.

“We are changing the world, one word at a time. Initiatives that change people’s lives and a community for the better begin with a great idea. It succeeds by people working together in response to the need. That has certainly been the case of the Reading For Adults literacy program,” said Carol Cease, RFA Literacy Coordinator.

Presentation of Colors and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Boy Scout Troop 83. Gloria Bishop, Founding Literacy Coordinator and RFA Advisory Board member, shared the history of the RFA program. Gail Lasky, Barbara Matthews, Jamie Rubush and Debbie Weigant performed America the Beautiful and This Land Is Your Land. Carol Childress, former Citizenship Tutor and RFA Advisor Board member, gave remarks on the role of being a citizen. Peter Hancon, RFA Tutor, led the Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America. Ana’s Catering, COSTCO, Lakeside Florist, Nothing Bundt Cakes, and Party City contributed to the celebration.

To date, 128 adults have become citizens with the RFA’s Citizenship classes. The RFA Literacy Program began in late 1999, to fulfill the need for English as a Second Language adult classes in the community. GED classes were added that helped adults obtain a



An 88-year old new citizen (second from left) and her family member (far right) stand with RFA Citizenship Tutor Susan Laszynski and Lady Liberty (Jan Self, Chair of the American Committee, Rock Wall Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution). Photo by Carol Cease, Literacy Coordinator.

high school equivalency degree. A third program of Citizenship Education evolved to assist students prepare for their written and oral citizenship exams. Adult Literacy was added as a fourth part of the program. The classes, led by community volunteers, are free to attend with a nominal fee for books.

More than 60 tutors have been trained and contributed thousands of volunteer hours to assist the ESL, GED and Citizenship students annually. Classes are held at the library and in classroom space donated by the adjacent First United Methodist Church Rockwall.

Funds for RFA Literacy Program include gifts from Friends of the Library, foundation grants and scholarships, private donors and fundraisers. For more information, call 972-204-7705.

*Blue Ribbon News staff report.*



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# A Labor-inth of Love at Chandlers Landing

## GOOD LIVING

Unless you live inside the gates of Chandlers Landing in Rockwall, you may not be aware of the beautifully designed labyrinth located across from the guard house, bordering Yacht Club Drive.

The Labyrinth at Chandlers Landing is the hard work and realization of several community residents and volunteers, including Holy Trinity by the Lake Episcopal Church of Heath member Herb Moltzan and his wife Jan, a licensed labyrinth facilitator with the international labyrinth organization known as Veriditas; graphic artist Linda Oistad and her husband Erik, an engineer who designed the Labyrinth; and community resident Jan Self.

Self dreamed of creating the Labyrinth at Chandlers Landing for a long time. She often walks the labyrinth painted on the back parking log of Holy Trinity, as well as other labyrinths



she discovers across Texas.

“I love labyrinths!” she wrote in The Mainsheet, the community newsletter of Chandlers Landing. “People around the world use the labyrinth to quiet the mind, find balance, and encourage meditation, insight and celebration.”

Self pointed out that unlike a maze – which is a puzzle – a labyrinth is a journey. A maze may have multiple entrances, exits and dead ends, with different choices of paths and directions. A labyrinth features a single non-branching path which leads to the center and exits back the same direction, with only one entrance/exit.

“When you start a labyrinth progression, your awareness shifts to your steps; your outside thoughts and distractions fade away. The pathway serves as both a visual and a physical cue, helping you turn your attention inward, toward the prayer, challenge, or emotion upon which you are working,” she explained. “Often I have set out upon walking

The center mosaic within the Labyrinth was created by the Winnsboro Mosaic Guild. It is a compass atop the Chandlers Landing burgee (logo). Photo courtesy of Jan Self.



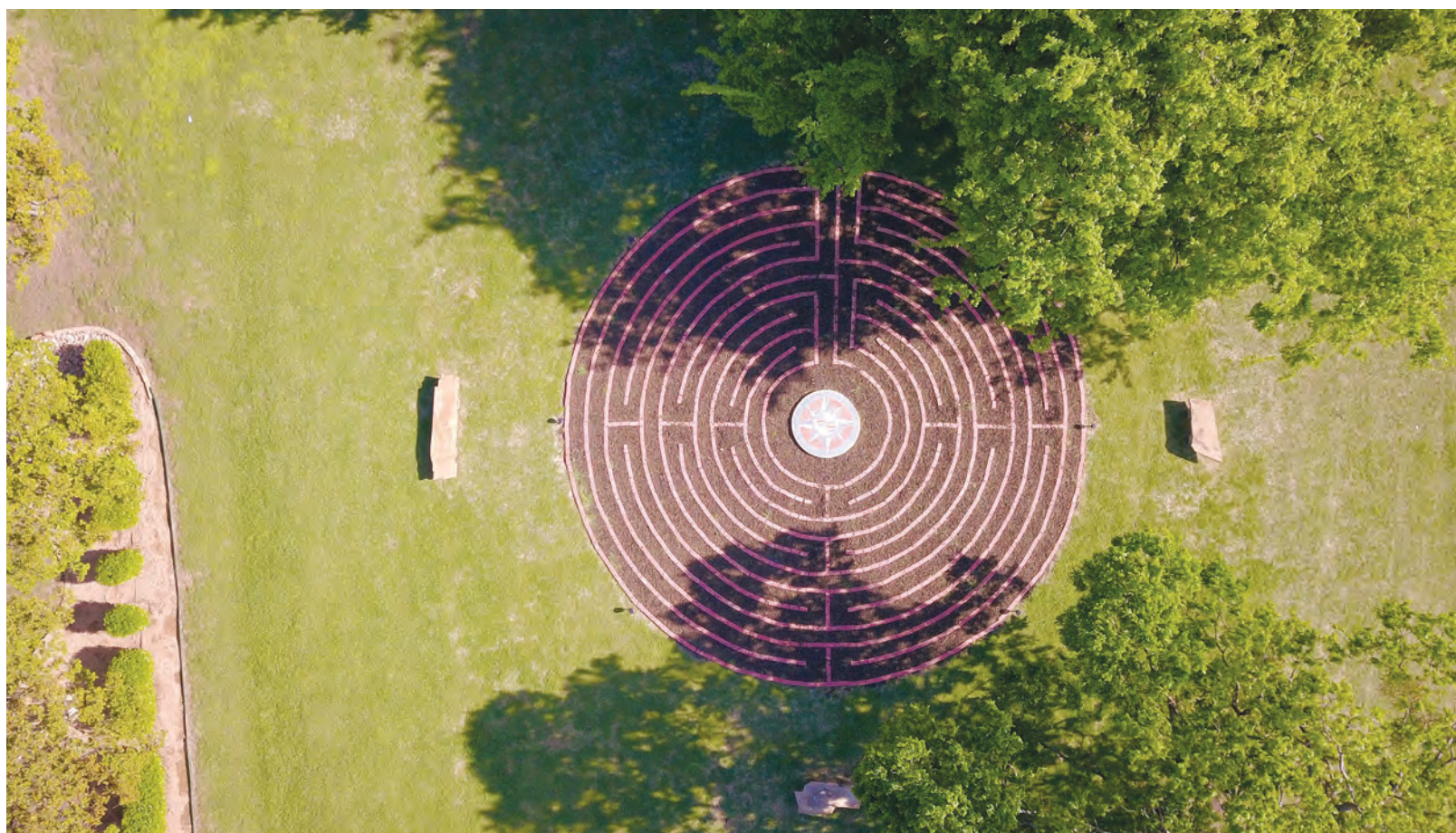
Photo courtesy of Jan Self.

the labyrinth with a problem/question. An answer or direction usually comes to me during my time. Other times I walk it with no purpose and find joy with my spirit.”

A formal dedication of the Labyrinth at Chandlers Landing was held in mid-June, when community residents were invited to recognize all those who made the project possible. Those not living within Chandlers Landing are welcome to experience the labyrinth when accompanied by a community resident.

“Experience The Labyrinth at Chandlers Landing! Use it, own it, claim it. It is to be enjoyed by all ages,” Self wrote to her neighbors in the newsletter. There are numerous people to thank for their contributions of knowledge, execution, muscle and fervent belief in the project. I could not have had this vision come true without the gracious help of these people.”

By Dawn Redig.



Drone photo by Chandlers Landing resident Evan Matterson.



# Righting a Ship or a Nation

## GOOD FAITH

Twenty years ago, the USS Spiegel Grove went down near Key Largo, Florida. But the locals happily observe the anniversary since the sinking was intentional. The state had received title to the retired Navy ship hoping it could become a haven for marine life.

The sunken ship, just six miles off the coast at a depth of 130 feet, brings tourists and divers to the area. More than 100 species of fish also visit the former ship that serves as an artificial reef – covered in sponges and coral.

But repurposing the 510-foot vessel wasn't cheap or easy. Workers cut holes through thick steel and removed sharp objects to ensure safety for divers. Then came the greater challenge of correctly sending it to the bottom of the sea. That's when things went wrong.

Ready and waiting to be sunk in 2002, the ship took on water too soon and sank prematurely. It rolled upside-down and settled on the sandy seabed with the bow still above water. Weeks later, a special team arrived with tugboats, pumps, and airbags to sink the ship completely, and it came to rest on its starboard side, in a better position.

A greater intervention came three years later under the name of Hurricane Dennis. The powerful underwater currents generated by the storm winds turned the ship upright – to its intended position.

We like dramatic resolutions and good endings like that one, but they happen mostly in novels and super-hero movies, not so much in the nightly news. The real world is weighty with sin and sorrows, and, in the new millennium alone, our own nation has experienced enough conflict to alarm the most optimistic among us. We've gone from the terrorism of 9-11 to home-grown violence at the hands of troubled and angry citizens.

Besides our country's self-inflicted wounds, we face actual storms and fires that sweep across our land with the prevailing west winds, leaving communities void of homes and livelihoods. From other directions come threats we cannot outrun – viruses with names that change from one season to the next. And even if we feel safe from all of these, we may still fear those foreign despots who seek world domination through nuclear weapons.

All the king's men and women try hard to keep our nation on an even keel, and much of their work is commendable. But it's hard to right a huge ship with only airbags, pumps, and tugboats. It's even harder when so many hands are involved and they're pulling the ropes in different directions. It seems increasingly obvious that only a mighty hand can restore our land to peace and prosperity.

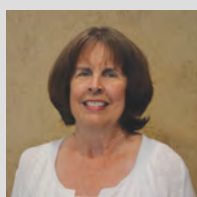
Isaiah 26:9\* says, "When [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." It's interesting that the Lord's judgments upon nations are often called tempests.

*The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth. . . before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: . . . "the world and its fullness are mine. . . call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me"* (Psalm 50:1, 3, 4, 12, 15).

God desires that all nations would right themselves. But since we cannot accomplish this on our own, he may be shaking the earth that its inhabitants might turn to Christ – our righteousness.

*The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*  
—1 John 4:14

\*English Standard Version



Patti Richter writes and edits Christian faith articles and has co-authored *Signs of His Presence: Experiencing God's Comfort in Times of Suffering*.

Read more of her essays at [BlueRibbonNews.com](http://BlueRibbonNews.com).

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# Sizzling success for Rockwall ISD's BBQ Club

## Rockwall-Heath senior Hunter Kirk wins BBQ Brisket State Championship

**GOOD  
KIDS**

Where there's smoke, there's fire – and wherever the Pitmasters BBQ Club goes, there are red hot winners!

Under the direction of Rockwall ISD's BBQ Coach Sean Hill at Dr. Gene Burton

College and Career Academy, members of Team Smoke and Team Fire of the 205 Pitmasters wrangled impressive wins in the High School BBQ State Championships, held near the end of the school year in Round Rock, TX.

The students competed against 85 other teams across the state. In all, 425 entries of beans, chicken, ribs, and brisket were judged. Team Fire finished 4th overall with a 27th place in chicken, 21st place in beans, 6th place in ribs – and a 1st place win in brisket – served up by Rockwall-Heath High School senior Hunter Kirk.

Hunter only began barbecuing at the start of his senior year, after he learned about the Pitmasters BBQ Club from his Virtual Business and Human Resource Management teacher, Coach Hill.

"I was really interested in something that wasn't a standard activity when you think of high school," Hunter said. "I knew this would be perfect for me because I love BBQ, but I had no experience actually making it. I was hesitant to join at first because of my lack of experience, but Coach Hill encouraged me, and I'm beyond thrilled that I did."

As the BBQ Brisket State Champion, it's no surprise that brisket is Hunter's favorite thing to cook. "It feels great to create something that can be enjoyed by the whole team and then some," he said. "In my opinion, brisket is the grand champ of all BBQ foods."

*What's the secret to good competition barbecue?* According to Hunter, "Once you find a recipe, stick with that recipe and don't change it up. Different styles of barbecue will do better in some regions than others, and if you keep changing it up, you won't learn who likes what. I cooked this brisket recipe five times before the state competition. Practice makes perfect!"

Coach Hill would agree. He left football, track and basketball after coaching for almost a decade to start the BBQ Club in the Fall of 2020. "It has been the best decision I have made," he said. "I started with four students and no smoker, and this year we have two teams, five Top 25 finishers, and a State Champion!"

Members of Team Fire include Brisket State Champion Hunter Kirk (RHHS senior); State Finalist Jonathan Chapa (RHS senior), 27th Place Chicken; State Finalist, Top Ten in State Ethan Trammell (RHHS sophomore), 6th place Ribs; State Finalist Jake Jenkins (RHS sophomore), 21st place Beans; and State Finalist Ryker Hayes (RHS sophomore), Dessert.

Members of Team Smoke include State Finalist Larson Trast (RHS junior), Top 20 in State, 14th Place Brisket; State Finalist Josh Griswold (RHS junior), Top 20 in State, 19th Place Beans; State Finalist Ethan Conaway (RHS sophomore), Ribs; State Finalist Isaiah Gosnight (RHS freshman), Chicken; State Finalist Jackson Jeffus (RHS freshman), Dessert.

As a former engineering teacher, caterer and barbecue lover, Coach Hill has been able to prepare the students for the challenges of competition, so they can fix things on the fly. "There's a lot of critical thinking that goes into this. There are obstacles and speed bumps and stuff that happens," he said. "At State, you take a 17 pound brisket and at 6 o'clock in the morning, you have to start trimming and injecting and seasoning it and getting it on the pit. It has to be sliced, presentable, and



ready to go to the judges by 3 pm. So you've got nine hours to smoke an award-winning brisket."

*What is Coach Hill's favorite thing to cook?* "I like taking pork belly and cubing it up, smoking it, adding a little brown sugar, butter and honey and then turning it into pork belly burnt ends," Coach Hill said. "Don't get me wrong; I love brisket. Brisket's a commitment. It's a marriage. That's 14 to 18 hours worth of work. You can get burnt ends done in four to five hours and they're delicious; they're like bacon candy."

As for Hunter, he says he will continue barbecuing through college and beyond. He plans on entering a few competitions soon with two of his current teammates, Jonathan Chapa and Larson Trast.

"My experience with the team was truly remarkable. I went from not knowing how to trim a brisket to being able to cook a state champion brisket all within a few months. I had the most fun I've had in high school, and I'll be forever thankful for my time with team – whether we were cooking or just talking and having a blast."

Hunter gives special thanks to Coach Hill and mentor Cody Malin for giving him the right tools for success.

Malin is an award-winning BBQ cook and founding member of Outlaw BBQ Association, which allows head cooks as young as 14 to compete against professional adult teams. "None of this would

have been possible without them!" Hunter said. "I'd also like to thank my family for encouraging me to try something new and different, and for traveling all the way to Round Rock to celebrate our team's victory."

Reflecting upon his State Championship win, Hunter adds, "My best piece of advice is this: If you're thinking of joining something, but you're nervous you won't fit in, go for it anyway! It may be the greatest thing you stumble upon and may be something you can take with you the rest of your life."

Coach Hill echoes that advice, as he would like to see the program grow in the coming school year. Students who are taking classes at the Dr. Gene Burton College & Career Academy or the Ag Barn can be part of the 205 Pitmasters BBQ Club. Coach Hill encourages interested students who are coming into their freshman year, or even in middle school, to contact him at [Sean.Hill@rockwallisd.org](mailto:Sean.Hill@rockwallisd.org). In addition to having a whole lot of fun, "we have to adapt, overcome, and persevere; that's what we do."

*By Dawn Redig, Blue Ribbon News. Submitted/courtesy photos.*





# Kukka by Sally Kilgore: The Gaggle

## GOOD LIVING

Birds have a flock.  
Geese a gaggle.  
Cows a herd.

I thought that hippos also gathered in herds, though I am corrected by Google. You would find a bloat of hippos, (insert giggle) and very appropriately, a tower of giraffes.

Humans have groups. Groups of friends. Circles of women. Groups of yayas, besties, friends who play cards, supper clubs.

In the past 25 years, I have learned to have friends. It took me longer than most. I was well into my late thirties before I realized I needed to do something intentional to develop friends. Always wishing for comfortable friendships, other than one or two friendly neighbors over the years, I just did not have friends.

I had no idea how to reach out and bring friends into my everyday life. It seems intuitive for many people. I am a nice person, though introverted. Seeking connection is not naturally ingrained within the introvert and it can be challenging to seek out people and become friends. Finally, well into my third decade, I took my lonely self in hand, and vowed to make friend finding happen.

It was uncomfortable to get started, and awkward at times. Friendships did not develop in a week. When acquaintances happened, when just the right mix occurred; I learned friendship is delightful. I became part of a tribe. And smaller units of singles or doubles too. At times I gather them together in one place. This can be delightful for the extroverts, daunting for introverts, and sometimes the instinct is not to shake the pudding, leave the protective skin of comfort in place.

I recall a brunch party twenty five years ago, early in my “process,” when I invited a few mixed groups of women over on a Saturday morning. An acquaintance was being introduced around, when she said in dismay “Oh! I thought it was just going to be US”. Just one particular group. I get that. But, there is no “just US.” There are bajillions of women (and a few man humans) to be located and morph our way into one kind of friendship or another. I embrace it these days. A mentor guided me all those years ago to make friendship intentional. He provided me a gift.

Not long ago, with many years in our previous neighborhood, trees grown tall, comfortable neighbors surrounding us, we took the plunge

into downsizing our home. Looking at the future, it seemed the time to move into a new phase. We sold our home, built a new home and moved to a new location. I found myself longing for new neighbor friends. I am so aware now, of the need



for community, for familiar faces to call on in joys and troubles, and to borrow that cup of sugar, share the homemade soup.

In the old neighborhood, I had a soup friend. My husband is not fond of homemade soups. Let me assure you – it is not due to the quality of my soups. In fact, I am told and I concur, my homemade soups are delicious. (He prefers canned soup, the poor soul, and this is a subject we may cover at some future date.) And so, if we are not having guests and I get a hankering for a pot of soup, there is plenty to share.

My soup friend was one whom I could call and say “bring your container down – I have soup.” She would come down, sometimes in pajamas, we would share some chit chat, and soup would be transferred from my kitchen to hers. There is comfort in friendships such as this. They are literally comfortable. They don’t require an elaborate invitation or setting. Just face to face, passing soup. Sharing words on the driveway. Texting a neighbor to come over and enjoy the evening on the patio with a cold drink.

Sometimes new friends simply pop up out of thin air; a Lagniappe that appears and we feel the magic happening. I hoped for this, but I was occupied with unpacking, settling our home, and planting a new garden; good excuses not to put myself out there. Pandemic had made it easy to revert into old, solitary habits. Still, I was longing for community and I recalled, I would have to make it happen. I would need to be intentional in reaching out and

locating prospective pals. I am again in that process now, and happily having a bit of success.

It seems there are a number of us in my new neighborhood. Women – can we say – of a certain age? Our nests are empty, for the most part. A number of us are new or newish to this neighborhood and we have been longing for a group of friends. Coincidental to my longings, a social media post on a neighborhood page, seeking to begin a women’s group, started the process. I was the



first to respond! A group of women who wish to enjoy the company of each other gathered; to play games, eat the cooking, raise a glass, talk, share, and develop community. It is intentional. It has been that simple. And it is working. New friendships are developing. Others are branching off. We are gathering in, creating community.

We now have a neighbor who brings warm cinnamon rolls over on Sunday mornings. We have been enjoying friendly fence talk with young neighbors on one side. They invited us next door for a baby shower recently, and some of us are making plans to visit the Margarita truck in Fate, as soon as possible after the new baby makes his appearance. A delightful friendship has developed with a new pal, who already feels like a sister. And there is a group with which to share laughter and concerns.

Just a word. If you are an introvert, I know this prospect may not be an easy one. I have walked the path and I know. Put yourself out there – someone is looking for you. Having friends is life and spirit changing. Let me know if you need encouragement.

I’ll cut this writing short, as ten of us are trekking out today for lunch. I think I prefer to call them a Delight of friends, as opposed to a Gaggle! I am looking ahead with a smile.



*Sally is a former resident of Rowlett, and a recent transplant, across the lake, to Fate. She is married to her long-time flame, Chris Kilgore. When not writing, gardening, filling in at the local flower shop or hanging out with grandkids, Sally devotes her time to serving Bob Kilgore, a generously sized, Tuxedo cat with panache. Read more of her column, Kukka (Finnish for bloom or flower) at BlueRibbonNews.com and see more of her work on her website, sallyakilgore.com. Get in touch with Sally via email at sallyakilgore@gmail.com.*



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# Cooking with Ease

## Homemade Peach Ice Cream

**GOOD EATS**

Homemade ice cream is not something I make often, but I want to change that. And I want to change it because of the reason I don't make it often. I love homemade ice cream. I think everyone probably does. But it takes so long to make that I rarely slow down to make it. That's what I want to change. I want to slow down.

We have a loved one that is nearing their passing. We are lucky enough to know this. To know that it's coming. In the past week, family has gathered. Friends have stopped in. We have eaten meals

together and watched movies. Sliced pie and sipped cups of coffee. We have all slowed down. As I was leaving their house last night, I thought how nice it was that we could all do that. That we just got to spend that time together. And then I wished we had done that before our loved one was sick. I wished we had slowed down in a time when all of our hearts were light and our heads clear.

I can't guarantee anything, but my goal this summer is to slow down. To make time to sit with my people. And not to plan an event or talk over something on the horizon. Or say my goodbyes. But to just sit. To be slow and calm and peaceful and take in the stories I'm hearing, the meals I'm eating, the smiles I'm seeing. Making things like homemade ice cream may be the catalyst some of us need to slow down. It takes time.

I hope you enjoy this recipe as much as we did. It's not super sweet so feel free to add more sugar if you'd like. I also hope you get to slow down. To take some time this summer to really enjoy life. Plug some slow recipes into your plans and let that lead you.

*Enjoy!*

*Melissa Tate*



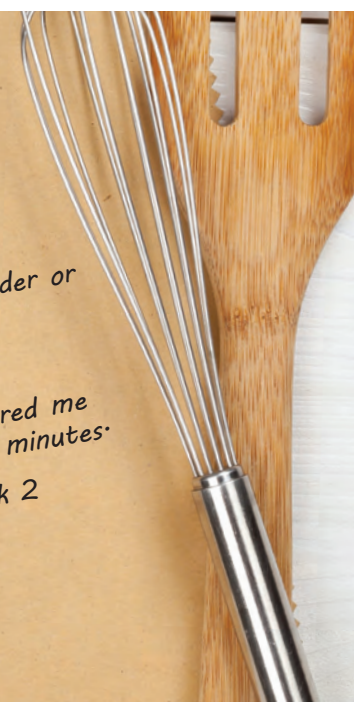
Melissa Tate of Rockwall is a freelance food writer and owner of Photo-Wagon mobile photo booth. She also helps her husband run their family farm, Tate Farms, and event center, Summerfield at Tate Farms. They are currently managing the Smirl Chapel Relocation & Preservation Project. Find Melissa at [melissatetx.com](http://melissatetx.com), on Facebook or Instagram at [@melissatetx](https://www.instagram.com/melissatetx) to follow the adventures. Headshot by Kelly Alexander Photography. Read more of her recipes online at [BlueRibbonNews.com](http://BlueRibbonNews.com).

### Homemade Peach Ice Cream (with ice cream maker)

2 1/2 lbs fresh peaches - peeled, pitted and chopped  
 1/2 cup sugar 1 pint half-and-half cream  
 1 (14oz) can sweetened condensed milk 2 cups whole milk  
 1 (12 oz) can evaporated milk 1 tsp vanilla extract

#### Directions:

1. Puree peaches with the sugar and half-and-half in batches in a blender or food processor.
2. In a gallon container, mix together the peach mixture, sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk and vanilla. Pour in milk and stir.
3. Proceed with instructions from your ice cream maker. Mine required me to pour the liquid into the frozen ice cream maker and mix for 25 minutes. The amount of liquid makes almost a gallon of ice cream which took 2 batches of mixing for my maker.





# Local blogger creates viral dino drink to celebrate release of Jurassic World: Dominion

## GOOD TIMES

Looking for the perfect drink for a Jurassic Park-themed party? Local food and party blogger Katie-Rose Watson, creator of The Rose Table (therosetable.com), came up with this fun dino drink for her Jurassic Park party, which was the most successful Rose Table party release in history with over half a million views on the content in just one week. Named after one of the most iconic lines in the film and inspired by the green Jello that jiggles on Lex's spoon when she spots a raptor in the dining room, the Clever Girl will thrill any Jurassic Park fan!

The drink involves flaked Jello and sparkling white grape juice. For a grown-up version, make the Jello using vodka. You can get all of the recipes from Watson's Jurassic Park party and read more about the party (including how Watson projected dinosaurs on her window!) on the Entertaining section of thesrosetable.com.



### Clever Girl – Alcoholic

4-serving package green Jello (lime flavored)

1 cup boiling water

1/2 cup cold water

1/2 cup vodka

Sparkling white grape juice

1. Place jello mix in a bowl. Pour boiling water on top of gelatin mix, whisking for two minutes or until gelatin is dissolved. Stir in cold water and vodka. Cover and refrigerate for four hours or until set.
2. Use a fork to flake the jello. Add a half cup of jello flakes to each glass. Top with sparkling white grape juice and mix with a straw.
3. Note: the drink will turn totally green in about ten minutes. Let it sit and keep stirring!

### Clever Girl – Non-alcoholic (kid friendly!)

4-serving package green Jello (lime flavored)

1 cup boiling water

1 cup cold water

Sparkling white grape juice

1. Place jello mix in a bowl. Pour boiling water on top of gelatin mix, whisking for two minutes or until gelatin is dissolved. Stir in cold water. Cover and refrigerate for four hours or until set.
2. Use a fork to flake the jello. Add a half cup of jello flakes to each glass. Top with sparkling white grape juice and mix with a straw.
3. Note: the drink will turn totally green in about ten minutes. Let it sit and keep stirring!

Katie-Rose Watson often covers Rockwall on thesrosetable.com, from the Farmers Market to Founder's Day Festival. The Rose Table has over 200,000 fans on Facebook (fb.com/therosetable), millions of video views, and can be found on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Pinterest @therosetable.com.



# BLUE RIBBON REPLAY

So much good news and only so much space! See [blueribbonnews.com](http://blueribbonnews.com) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more highlights from our schools, clubs, and community!



## ▲ Glad Grads

We present to you the 2022 Senior Class panoramics for Rockwall High School and Rockwall-Heath High School! RHS photo by Steven Offield, RISD. RHHS photo by Goldbeck Photography.

## ▲ Honoring Courage. Saluting Sacrifice. ▲

During National Police Week, county and city officials, law enforcement and community members gathered for the Rockwall County Law Enforcement Police Officer Memorial Commemoration, in which the names of Texas fallen officers were read aloud. The event was held in the Public Service Garden at Rest Haven's First Responder Memorial. Photo by BRN Media.



## ▲ Strike a Pose

These live performers are standing on a platform where the Rockwall Discovery Statue will soon be, depicting the founders of the original rock wall for which Rockwall is named. The soon-to-be completed life-sized bronze statue is being sculpted by local artist Jim Bryant. The actors were part of Founders Day festivities. Photo by BRN Media.



## ▲ Butterfly Reveal

Nine butterfly sculptures — handcrafted by Rockwall Park Superintendent Brian Sartain and painted by student artists from Rockwall and Rockwall-Heath high schools — were recently unveiled in Downtown Rockwall before landing in their respective butterfly gardens at various local parks. The prototype for this Art in Public Places project was also on display, created by Art Commission member Susan Guzman and her colleagues Lynne Milner and Cindy Mosby, local artists and Rockwall ISD art teachers. Photo by BRN Media.



## ▲ Leadership & Patriotism

The Rockwall Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution recently presented Youth Citizenship Awards to several deserving students like Jaedyn King from Lupe Garcia Elementary. For the full story, visit [blueribbonnews.com](http://blueribbonnews.com). Courtesy photo.



## ▲ Shoes for Kids

On Saturday, July 30, First United Methodist Church Rockwall — in partnership with area churches and civic organizations — will host a massive distribution event providing shoes, socks, dental hygiene items and school supplies to more than 1,000 kids in need from Rockwall ISD and Royse City ISD. To donate or volunteer, visit [fmcrockwall.com/shoesforkids](http://fmcrockwall.com/shoesforkids). Courtesy photo.



# AROUND TOWN

To submit your events, email [editor@BlueRibbonNews.com](mailto:editor@BlueRibbonNews.com). Events are subject to change.

**Family Fun Friday Splash Day | Friday, June 24**  
Family activities and games begin at 6 p.m., feature film at dusk, Harry Myers Park, 945 E. Washington: [playrockwall.com](http://playrockwall.com).

**Anniversary Celebration | Saturday, June 25**  
Join the festivities 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. as Jungle Trek celebrates its anniversary, 1505 Airport Road, Suite 100.

**Junk Prom | Saturday, June 25**  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Helping Hands Thrift Store and Boutique, 950 Williams St., Bldg. B.

**Royse City Celebrating Freedom | Saturday, June 25**  
6 p.m. to midnight at Royse City High School featuring live music, food trucks, fireworks.

**Fate Family Movie Night | Saturday, June 25**  
Bring lawn chairs, blankets and the family for movie night at the Food Haul, 107 W. Elmhurst Drive in Fate. Movie starts at 9 p.m. but come early for refreshments.



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[WWW.EMPOWER7.ORG/5KRUN](http://WWW.EMPOWER7.ORG/5KRUN)

**Empower5K | Saturday, June 25**  
At Rockwall Aquatics Center, 6:30 a.m. packet pickup, 7:30 a.m. 1 Mile Fun Run start; 7:45 a.m. 5K start, and awards at 8:45: [empower7.org/5krun](http://empower7.org/5krun).

**Freedom Sunday BBQ Fundraiser | Sunday, June 26**  
First Baptist Church Fate, 813 W. Holiday. 12:30 p.m. \$15 plate meal includes brisket or slab of ribs, sides, bread, dessert, drink. Open to the public. Proceeds support veterans and their families suffering from military trauma.

**Singin' in the Rain | Through June 26**  
Rockwall Summer Musicals presents Singin' in the Rain at Rockwall High School Performing Arts Center, followed by The Sound of Music Aug. 5-14: [rockwallsummermusicals.org](http://rockwallsummermusicals.org).

**Hot Dogs for Heroes | Friday, July 1**  
Highland Meadows Health & Rehab drive-thru event for first responders, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Independence Day in Heath | Saturday, July 2**  
Annual parade with 8 a.m. staging at Amy Parks-Heath Elementary School (330 Laurence Drive) judging at 8:15, 9 am parade starts, followed by a patriotic program in Towne Center Park: [heathtx.com](http://heathtx.com).

**Rockwall Fourth of July Celebration | Monday, July 4**  
Parade starts at 11 a.m. at Utley Middle School; parachute jump, live music from 7 to 9 p.m. and fireworks at dusk at Harry Myers Park.

**Fireworks on Main, Rowlett | Monday, July 4**  
5 to 10 p.m. at Pecan Grove Park, featuring live music by Texas High Road, Blaze of Glory/Bon Jovi Experience and Emerald City Band; Kid Zone, food, and fireworks display.

**Family Fun Friday Splash Day | Friday, July 22**  
Family activities and games begin at 6 p.m., feature film at dusk, Shores Park, 2358 Shores Blvd: [playrockwall.com](http://playrockwall.com).



**Concerts by the Lake**  
7:30 p.m. Thursdays through July 28  
The Harbor Amphitheater  
Music line-up: [playrockwall.com](http://playrockwall.com)



**Rockwall Farmers Market**  
8 a.m. to Noon  
Saturdays through Sept. 24  
Downtown Rockwall Square



**San Jacinto Plaza Music Series**  
7 to 9:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through October  
San Jacinto Plaza, Downtown Rockwall





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