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Neighbors of

HEATH

APRIL 2024



62 Years of Marriage
While Serving Others Across the Globe

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Cover photo by Heather Lanae Photography

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Dr. Alexandra Padilla, D.C.

100% Chiropractic | Heath, Texas

✉ | DrAlexandra@100percentdoc.com

📞 | (972) 722-7304 • 🌐 | 100percentchiropractic.com



INSURANCE

Erin Neill, Principal Agent

Hanby Insurance

✉ | erin@hanbyinsurance.com

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Publication Team

Publisher
Michael Rohlf

Content Coordinator
Shannon Bennett

Designer
Lindsey Shinn

Contributing Photographer
Heather Lanae Photography

ADVERTISING

Contact: Michael Rohlf

Email: mrohlf@bestversionmedia.com

Phone: 214-499-0100

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Have feedback, ideas or submissions?

We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 20th of each month. Go to www.bestversionmedia.com and click "Submit Content." You may also email your thoughts, ideas and photos to: sbennett@bestversionmedia.com.

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CITY OF HEATH

200 Laurence Drive, Heath, Texas 75032
Phone: 972-771-6228

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972-771-7724

UTILITY SET-UP AND BILLING:

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UNBUNDLED BRUSH COLLECTION SERVICES:

Monday, April 1 and Monday, 15

CONTENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Content Due:	Edition Date:
November 20	January
December 20	February
January 20	March
February 20	April
March 20	May
April 20	June
May 20	July
June 20	August
July 20	September
August 20	October
September 20	November
October 20	December

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Welcome to the Month of April!

April gets its name from the Latin **aperire** meaning "to open" just like flowers do in the spring. It's time to get our gardens prepared for planting and start fertilizing the lawns!

This April has a special gift for all of us. We have all heard the saying, "I am over the moon" which is usually out of joy for a special event. Monday, April 8, 2024, will offer a phenomenal event which will be the Solar Eclipse. Simply put, a total eclipse of the sun is the most beautiful site you will ever see in the sky. Nothing can prepare you for the amazing site when the sky suddenly darkens in the sun's corona shines in the sky no photograph can capture the stunning beauty... you must see it for yourself. Texas will be a desired destination as the eclipse will be visible across North America and the Texas Hill Country will provide the best sightings. Make sure you wear the proper viewing glasses!

We have a beautiful love story to share with you this month. John and Janie Curtis have been married for 62 years and have been giving back to communities around the globe. Heath and Rockwall are so blessed to have them in our community providing "service above self" as dedicated Rotarians. You will enjoy reading their story.

On behalf of my Publication Team, we would like to thank our wonderful business sponsors who support our publication. They make it possible for us to provide the information about what's happening around town and for you to learn from the expert contributors who provide articles that offer great advice about their business. They help us bring people together!

If you would like to be an Expert Contributor or a Sponsor for our magazine, please reach out to me at mrohlf@bestversionmedia.com and I would be happy to assist you.

Have an awesome April!

Michael Rohlf

Publisher
Neighbors of Heath



Michael Rohlf



Shannon Bennett

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

ROCKWALL COUNTY NEWCOMERS & FRIENDS LUNCHEON

Thursday, April 11

10:00 am - 12:15 pm

Cost is \$20

RSVP deadline is April 1, by 6:00 pm

Occasions at Stone River

1250 FM 2453

Royse City, TX 75189

Welcoming all women of Rockwall County whether new to the area or long-time residents.

For more info: newcomersrock.com

ROCKWALL KIWANIS - FOOD FOR KIDS EVENT

Tuesday, April 16

12pm-1pm

Divine Peace Church

305 S Fannin St Rockwall TX 75087

Food for Kids is a service project proudly started by the Rockwall County Kiwanis Club a few years ago. We were looking for a service project that would focus on the children in Rockwall County.

It was pointed out to us that there were many children in the RISD on the free and reduced meal program that had very little or nothing to eat over the weekends. We determined to focus on these children and find a way to give them food for the weekend that would be both easy for them to prepare and food that they would want to eat.

Today our club provides 1000+ food bags every month during the school year for children to take home on Fridays to have nutritious food over the weekend. Please contact one of our members or call us at 972-722-6001 to discuss how you can be a part of this great program.

ROCKWALL COUNTY CHILDRENS ADVOCACY CENTER'S 8TH ANNUAL GO BLUE FOR KIDS GALA

Saturday, April 27

For details and tickets, visit <https://rockwallcac.org/gala>

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 5- HAPPY CINCO de MAYO

May 12- HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

May 27- Memorial Day

SAN JACINTO MUSIC SERIES - MAY-OCTOBER

Friday & Saturday Nights, 7-9:30 PM

The City of Rockwall Main Street invites you to come celebrate summer! Spend an evening in Downtown Rockwall's quaintest public space, San Jacinto Plaza. Enjoy free live music each Friday and Saturday from 7-9:30PM.

ROCKWALL FARMERS MARKET - MAY-SEPTEMBER

Historic Courthouse Square in Downtown Rockwall

Saturdays, 8AM-Noon

<https://www.rockwallfarmersmarket.org>

CONCERT BY THE LAKE - MAY-JULY

Bands from around the DFW area come and rock out the Harbor

Thursday evenings

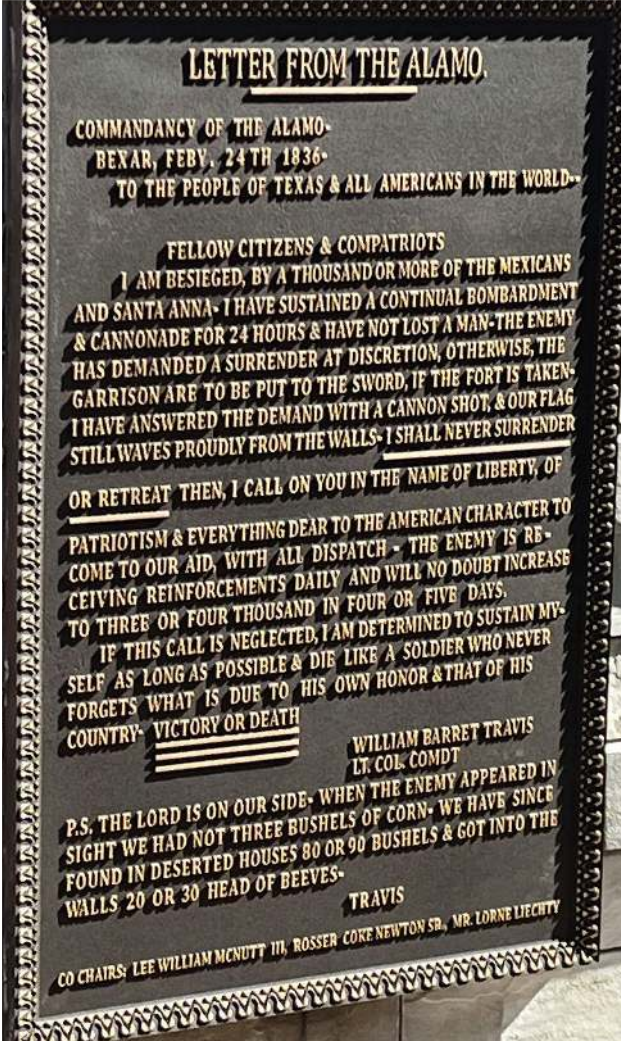
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A Letter to Remember

Written by **Mark Russo**

History occurs every day and history doesn't slow down. However, there are moments in history that have an everlasting effect that transcends time. One of those moments was captured in a letter written by William Barret Travis. On February 24, 1836, Lt. Col. Travis wrote a plea for help while being surrounded at the Alamo. He included in his letter these words "If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor; that of his country." Signing Victory or Death. The letter was not his last as he wrote four more letters. The letter gained national attention in 40 hours. It is now considered one of most patriotic letters in Texas and American history. Some would argue that David Burnet would prevail over Samuel Carson 29 to 23 votes as the Interim President of the Republic of Texas due to this letter.



Mark Russo

Today, there are multiple groups determined to keep the spirit of this letter alive for future generations. One major group is the 1836 Project that is Chaired by Schreiner University's Don Frazier. It ensures the education and importance of Texas History in making recommendations to the Texas Education Agency. There is also a group called the Alamo Letter Society that has the ambitious goal of putting a plaque of the Travis Letter in all 254 counties across Texas.

On February 24th, 2024, Rockwall County unveiled the plaque at Liberty Hall. Interestingly, the plaque was unveiled 188 years later in honor of the 188 that gave their lives. Rockwall County Commissioner John Stacy's own family traces back to that moment in history. The money for the plaque was privately funded and was Chaired by Lorne Liechty. Rockwall County has one more place to read Texas History.



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Remembering Those Who Serve and Protect Us Daily

Written by **Brian Wilburn, Director of Operations for North Texas, V.H.A.**

V.H.A - Veterans Healthcare Alliance, is a Texas based 501c3 Charity specializing in Veteran Services.

Every day of the year can often be a challenging time for Veterans and military families. If you know of a military family, an Active-Duty Service member or Veteran who is in need, please reach out to Brian "Twelve" Wilburn, The Director of Operations for North Texas. V.H.A. is a wonderful organization with resources to is here to help meet the rising needs of veterans and their families. V.H.A utilizes "Mobile Aid Stations" that serves as the base of operations for a variety of programs and services for the veteran community. We're proud to partner with great Veterans Service Organizations and Individuals from the Disabled American Veterans D.A.V. Chapter 137, The Marine Corps League James A Randolph Detachment, The American Legion, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Recovery Ranger Corps and others who support our efforts in the community.

Since 2015 we've personally been involved in helping more than 2,750 Veterans and thousands more indirectly in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Oklahoma. We've personally provided access to Hundreds of Veterans needing help with Claims Benefits, hosted countless workshops & seminars and provided countless veterans with food, clothing, home & car repairs, and counseling services. We created a Backpack Program

that has distributed more than 10,000 fully equipped Backpacks, co-founded #WalkTheBridge US & UK, co-created the City of Rowlett's Municipal Courts Veteran Diversion Program, created "Hanging with Heroes" and instituted the use of "Mobile Warming/Cooling & Aid Stations for use in adverse Weather. We are committed to bringing long-term solutions to those who have served our great nation.

If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran in need, please give me a call at 214-815-4294, send me a PM, or Email to K9BENN@YAHOO.COM. (www.veteranshca.org)

#WalkTheBridge Event at Heroes Memorial Bridge.

#WalkTheBridge is an Awareness Effort to draw attention to the Mental Health Wellness of our Veterans and First Responders & provide them access to Peer Support, Training, and Counseling Services. More than 30 plus Veterans and First Responders take their own lives every day.

Thank you to all those that are leading the charge to raise awareness on this rising epidemic.

On the 3rd Sunday of each month- members of many communities come together and meet at Heroes Memorial Bridge (Highway 66 Bridge) on the Rockwall Side to walk the bridge. For more information, visit www.walkthebridge.org

If you would like to honor a local Veteran or First Responder, please send an email to sbennett@bestversionmedia.com

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Rockwall County Rescue Groups and Events

Written By **Shannon Bennett**

Absolutely April!

With shelters at capacity, if you are thinking of adding a new member to your family, now is a great time to give a permanent home to an animal in need. Attend area shelters and visit with rescue groups today and give that special animal their new beginnings in life with you and your family when you adopt them into a loving home.



Catalina, belongs to John and Janie Curtis

Rockwall Pets has been saving lives since 2010.

Come meet the next member of your family at a Rockwall Pets adoption event. These events are held every Saturday of every month.

Rockwall Petco from 1-5 pm
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www.rockwalladoptions.com • (972) 771-7750
HOURS: Monday-Friday 9 AM-6 PM, Saturday 9 AM-5 PM,
Closed Sunday



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Follow them on FB- Oak Hill Animal Rescue, Inc.
Call or visit their FB page or website to find out the details of their adoption events.

LONE STAR UNDERDOGS ANIMAL RESCUE

Rescue's President, Kim Crowder has been rescuing dogs since 2014. Since their official start in 2022, Lone Star Underdogs Animal Rescue has saved over 187 dogs/puppies. To learn more about how you can help, visit www.lonestarunderdogs.com.

To read more about this rescue and those who have made it possible, flip over to our Around Town page.



Lone Star rescue founder, Kim Crowder



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Professional Photos by Heather Lanae
Photography and Personal Photos
Submitted by the Curtis Family



62 Years of Marriage

While Serving Others Across the Globe

Written by **Shannon Bennett**

Welcome to the month of April. Each month that I begin to put my feature story together, I always take a moment to pause for just how grateful I am to be introducing our great families of Heath to you and the community. This month is certainly no exception to this sentiment as you will soon learn more about the Curtis duo and their family. John and Janie have been giving back to communities around the globe and Heath and Rockwall are so blessed to have them in our communities doing great things. We asked John to tell us more about he and Janie and their two wonderful kids Elise and James.

John, take us back in time and tell us how you met your lovely wife, Janie.

"Janie and I met in the driveway between our homes. My parents had moved there while I was away at university. Janie became the girl next door. We barely acknowledged each other when we met, but soon after we began to chat and shoot baskets in the driveway with her younger brother. Later that summer her family invited me to join them on a weekend trip to Long Island. There on a beach, Janie and I talked about our dreams. Mine was to see the world and build bridges in far off countries. Back then, little did we know that my dreams would become our reality. Later in the day we enjoyed our first kiss, and it was then that we knew our futures would be together. We have experienced the wonderful highs and challenging lows in our nearly 62 years of marriage."

Since you two met as neighbors, tell us more about where you each went to college and how it led you to your perspective career.

"I was at Cornell University in a five-year program that led to a Bachelor of Civil Engineering Degree when Janie and I met. I remained there a year to earn my master's degree. Jane was attending Duke University when we married, and she received her bachelor's degree from Mills College in California after we moved to the Bay Area.

We thought we would live forever there but soon we moved to San Diego, and I was an engineer on the construction of the San Diego Coronado Bridge. I finished work there as the Resident Engineer. This was the first of many bridges where I led my company on bridge construction projects. These structures were in Canada, Brazil and several states. My last major bridge structure was in Nanjing China, where I was a consultant to the government on the epoxy paving of the tied arch bridge over the Yangtze River.

I have been very fortunate to have a career in Civil Engineering that included even more than bridges around the world. I was able to work in the oil patch, placing platforms in the North Sea for several oil companies over a 9-year period where we lived in England in a 400-year-old forge that had been converted into a



home. Our kids received much of their education in schools there.

On our return to the states, I built a few subdivisions in Arizona and Colorado and was the design engineer on several golf courses in Southern California. After I received my master's in public administration, I became the City Engineer and Public Works Director in three California cities. With the teams of designers and contractors, we rebuilt the downtowns, separated rail tracks from the city streets, built parks and infrastructure systems in these towns.

We got to see the world as we dreamed, and we also got to be part of the communities where we lived. That includes Heath, where we are very happy to contribute our energy to our church, our community and the service organization where we are members."

Please tell us more about your adult children, Elise and James.

"Elise lives in McKinney and James also lives in Heath and are busy living out their own lives. Our one grandson, Liam, was the reason we moved to this area when we retired. Our kids did not get to know their grandparents because we did not live near them. We wanted to know our grandson and have him know us. We moved here to share our time with him. We have taken trips with him to Disneyworld, the Galapagos Islands, the Rhine River and to many attractions in this area."

Continued on **page 10**



Continued from page 9

Tell us a bit more about why you chose Heath and the neighborhood you settled upon?

“When we were considering a move to Texas to be nearer our grandson, we discovered this beautiful lake, and then, a beautiful vacant property with a wonderful lake view. We designed our dream home and found a builder to bring it to reality. We have lived in Cove Ridge Estates 17 years, and I have served my term as President of the HOA.

This is a quiet and friendly neighborhood. It has doubled in population since we first moved here, but it is still quiet and friendly. The one hang-up many of us feel is the difficulty we have getting out on Smirl Drive during certain times of the day.”

What kind of neighborhood or community activities are you involved in?

“When I was involved with the HOA, we would meet to discuss building plans for the new homes coming into the Estate. We also met informally for street parties and with neighborhood police. It would be a benefit if we were to continue these social gatherings.”

Is the Curtis family joined by any pets?

“Catalina is our middle-aged Siamese Cat. She came to us from the Rockwall Rescue Service and is a delight to have at our feet and in our laps. We have been adopted by several Siamese cats in the past and one very lovely Miniature Collie, who took good care of us when our kids were young.”

John, you have had a more than impressive career that kept you quite busy. What do you and Janie like to do as hobbies, volunteer work or any other interests you may have?

“Janie and I enjoy travelling. We’ve been to all 50 states, 7 continents and 80 or so countries. We traveled with Rotary to India, Honduras, Nicaragua, Jamaica and Mexico. These journeys were mission trips to bring books and school supplies to those in need.

Janie loves to read. She is in several book clubs, and I am in one with her. When time permits, I play some golf, enjoy reading and

photography. Back in the day we raced sailboats, skied and played on softball teams. But that was a while ago. We have supplanted those activities with volunteer work.

Our first adventure together was to volunteer to present Marriage Encounter (ME) weekends. This began for us in England where, with 3 other couples, we started Anglican Marriage Encounter. This program continues today. We continued to be involved with ME when we returned to the States and became the Episcopal Lay Leaders. It is a source of fulfillment when we think back to the experiences of helping married couples on their journey together.

I also became a member of the Heath Special Events Committee when we moved here and soon moved to the Park Board, where I became Chair. Following that term, I joined the Architectural Review Board (ARB) as its first Chair. When I needed to prepare to become Governor of Rotary’s District 5810, I needed to focus on preparation for that task and left the ARB.

I had spent many years as member of the Boys and Girls Club Boards in Rockwall and Northeast Texas. This was a very rewarding experience of giving my energy to the kids. I termed out last year and was asked to become an Emeritus Member of the Board.

Along the way, I have been on the Vestry at Holy Trinity by the Lake Episcopal Church for two terms, with the role of Junior Warden during the freeze of 2021, when there was much damage to be repaired.

Janie and I have always enjoyed doing things together, whether it was church, Marriage Encounter or Rotary or travel.”

With all the most amazing and wonderful contributions you have made to so many communities around the world, please tell me more about one of your and Janie’s greatest passions.

“My passion for doing good in the world is centered around Rotary. Janie and I are both Rotarians and members of the Rockwall Club. Before retiring to Heath, we were in Rotary and shared the role of



District Youth Exchange Officer. I had been President of two clubs during that time. Here in Rockwall, I have been the International, Membership, Youth Exchange and Interact Chairs. We are drawn by the motto, "Service above Self". Imperfectly, we try to live that out daily.

When I joined Rotary, Janie joined soon after. The many things we did were done together. When we chaired the Youth Exchange for our District, we did it together. Now Janie has rejoined Rotary as a member of my club."

While we know more about Elise and James, you consider others your children as well throughout the world due to your involvement in the Youth Exchange in Rotary. Tell me more about that experience.

"You are correct, in a real sense, we have many children, and they are scattered all over the world. One of our early involvements in Rotary was hosting a teenager from Brazil who was in America on an exchange. We hardly knew what we were doing then but soon became the leaders in Youth Exchange for the District where we lived. Over the years we hosted nine teenagers from eight countries. They are our family all over the world and we love them and keep up with most of them. In May we will visit with our 'Australian Daughter' in Singapore at the Rotary International Convention."

I know you and Janie have traveled the world, but can you share some of your best memories during these travels?

"We don't have an annual trip like we used to when we had a place at Lake Tahoe. There we would go every winter to ski with the family. Liam learned to ski when he could barely walk, and he has grown to become a very accomplished skier. He has made us proud.

We mentioned our experiences with Youth Exchange kids earlier. Perhaps the most interesting story about them was when we were asked to be in the wedding party of our 'Brazilian Daughter'. We were asked to be Padrones, one of six couples to be at the altar during the ceremony. I was asked to hold the ring for the groom. As the ceremony was in Portuguese, I suggested Carlos give me the 'high sign' when he needed the ring. It was a beautiful ceremony. Though we have been in Rio many times over the years, this was our most memorable time in that exciting part of the world.

Perhaps our favorite trip ever was the expedition to Antarctica. We walked with the penguins and actually swam in the waters there. The swim was something I did as the ship's Captain invited us to go to this caldera where the water was warmer. It was, for about 12 inches off the shore; then it was freezing. I dove in and just as quicky dove out. Janie took a picture. I received a certificate for going in and Janie received a certificate for being smart enough not to go in."

As I wrap up this month's feature story, I hope you enjoyed getting to know your neighbors, John and Janie Curtis who are truly devoted and passionate about giving back. Michael and I would like to thank John and Janie for taking the time to share their many wonderful journeys with us. Many times, I felt as though I had traveled alongside them. It is so much fun to learn something new about the very people who have such great impact on others and help make our communities thrive.

I hope you have officially adjusted to daylight savings time and have "sprung forward" so much so that you are enjoying the longer days. Whether spent indoors or out, the feeling of warmer weather feels great to our bodies and to our souls. Soon, you will be getting out to enjoy the local events that are coming our way starting next month. Be sure to check out our calendar page for these events beginning in May.

Until next month, have an Adventurous April! **H**



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Sailing Summer Camp at Rush Creek Yacht Club

Written by **Shannon Bennett**, Submitted by **Kelly Dando**

Rush Creek Yacht Club was founded on the shores of Lake Ray Hubbard in 1969. Since then, RCYC has become a landmark for sailing in the Dallas area and the US.

Our Youth Sailing Program is one of the only year-round programs in the Dallas area. We also offer adult education programs and boat rental opportunities. RCYC is dedicated to promoting the principles and traditions of Corinthian sailing.

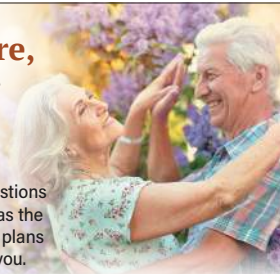
Our 2024 Summer Program at RCYC is open to youth with an interest in developing sailing skills and having an awesome experience, in an environment that fosters confidence, independence, teamwork, problem solving and sportsmanship.

This summer we are adding new games, drills and fun!! Register now at: <https://rcyc.org/summer-camp>

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When it comes to **Medicare**, it's important to consider all your options.

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REAL ESTATE STATS

City of HEATH - February Housing Statistics

PRE-OWNED HOMES							
Price Range Under \$1M	For Sale	Under contract	Sold in the past 30 Days	Price Range \$1M+	For Sale	Under contract	Sold in the past 30 Days
# Homes	35	5	11	# Homes	28	5	2
Median Price	\$575,000	\$500,000	\$730,000	Median Price	\$1,424,950	\$1,549,000	\$2,539,500
Price per ft	\$217.83	\$225.63	\$190.45	Price per ft	\$319.80	\$326.56	\$290.92
DOM	58	97	10	DOM	69	9	69

NEW BUILDS							
Price Range \$0-\$999K	For Sale	Under contract	Sold in the past 30 Days	Price Range \$1M+	For Sale	Under contract	Sold in the past 30 Days
# Homes	7	1	2	# Homes	18	3	0
Median Price	\$884,628	\$539,900	\$471,500	Median Price	\$1,572,450	\$1,349,900	-
Price per ft	\$257.72	\$193.51	\$208.49	Price per ft	\$366.37	\$335.71	-
DOM	51	6	130	DOM	144	90	0

Source - MetroTex MLS on February 23, 2024

This information represents a snapshot in time of single family homes in Heath, TX. The information may vary and/or be skewed by non-standard listings, and/or sales, and/or data inputs. Not all new homes or sales are posted in the MLS, which is the source for this information. Heath Housing Statistics are provided on a monthly basis by Jerry Welch - The Welch Team for the purpose of providing you with up to date information about our local real estate market.

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jerry@thewelchteam.com
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Should you want more information or similar information for other cities within Rockwall County, they can be found on my website TheWelchTeam.com, under Rockwall Housing Statistics.

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CHARITY SPOTLIGHT

Photos submitted by
Amanda Casper



Greater Rockwall Youth Symphony

Written by **Amanda Casper, Executive Director & Founder Greater Rockwall Youth Symphony**

Greater Rockwall Youth Symphony, fondly known as GRYS, was founded in the summer of 2022. Our goal is to provide a musical outlet for students while serving our community. Our vision is to connect kids with community through music. GRYS is an inclusive organization that aims to make musical opportunities accessible for all. We accept students ages 6 and up, of all skill levels. We offer chamber music ensembles for all

instruments in addition to our orchestral programs. Our students perform year-round for seniors at nursing homes, assisted living facilities and memory centers. We also perform for veterans and for numerous non-profit organizations. Our students have performed at galas for Children's Advocacy Center, Boys & Girls Club as well as Meals on Wheels/Senior Services Alliance. We have performed for many events for the Rockwall Art League, Rockwall Women's League, the Rotary Club, Professional Women's Alliance, Soroptimist, and the Chamber of Com-





merce. Our mission is to enrich, educate and serve communities through classical music and inspire the next generation of musicians and patrons of the arts. GRYS is committed to Collaboration, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Social Responsibility and Altruism. In our first year, we had over 50 performances throughout the community, including several in downtown Rockwall (Scare of the Square, Hometown Christmas, the statue dedication) along with 5 full orchestra performances in Rockwall, Heath and Royse City. GRYS allows students to become better musicians, but truly, GRYS is a youth civic organization. We are helping raise better people, who are actively engaged in the community. We measure our success by social and community impact- and our students have been absolutely incredible at serving through music. They learn all about collaboration and seeing how our local non-profits serve our community. They learn to respect and honor our veterans and seniors. They spread joy and cheer to all who hear them perform, while simultaneously, making friends and developing important professional and personal developmental skills. They develop the ability to communicate and collaborate; build confidence and make eye contact while standing taller as they feel a sense of accomplishment; they develop time management skills, grit and discipline. We have worked with 144 students in our first

year- and these are some of the hardest working students I have ever had the joy of working with.

80% of our students receive financial aid. Of those, 55% receive full scholarships. GRYS will never turn away students due to economic hardship. As a non-profit, we rely on sponsorships, grants, student tuition and ticket sales in order to function as a sustainable and solvent organization. In our 1st year, we raised nearly \$50K. While this sounds like a great first year, it was barely enough to cover general operational expenses. GRYS brings in guest artists throughout the country- for instance, the music director from the Phoenix Symphony, the music director and conductor of the Chicago Youth Symphony as well as professional conductors throughout the NY tri-state area and Pittsburgh. We also bring in members of the Dallas Symphony and Dallas Opera on a regular basis. We provide world-class, conservatory-level training to students who can't afford private lessons. We have 2 phenomenal conductors as well as a 7-chamber music faculty. In order to continue to grow and develop as an organization and a fixture in the community, we need your support. We have been fortunate to have large sponsorships from Atmos Energy and the Rockwall School of Music. To learn how you can support GRYS, please visit us at [www. https://greaterrockwallyouthsymphony.org](https://greaterrockwallyouthsymphony.org)



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