

December, 2015

A MONTHLY MESSAGE
FROM



MAYOR
TODD GOTTEL



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It's no secret that I feel Rowlett is truly a blessed community. What makes us a blessed community? Our people. During this time of year, as I reflect and give thanks to God for all we have been given, I would also like to take time and thank all of the individuals, organizations and businesses that continue to give back to THIS community in so many ways. In 2010, Money Magazine ranked Rowlett in its *Top 25 Best Places to Live*. In 2013, Movoto designated Rowlett the *#1 Small City in America To Move To*. Rowlett is also listed among the *50 Safest Cities in Texas*. These accolades are a testament to our amazing sense of community, which is not created entirely by having sewer access or running water (although I certainly don't want to be without either!). A community is created by its PEOPLE. One of the greatest assets Rowlett has is the sheer volume of individual citizens, organizations and businesses that volunteer to help their City, giving back more than \$1 million of their time every year! It never ceases to amaze me, the number of people who love this community and show it through their volunteerism on a daily basis. Please see the last page for a few shining examples of those we are so blessed to have in our community, recognized this month at the Boards and Commissions Volunteer Banquet.

I could give hundreds of other examples demonstrating our community spirit, but here I would like to highlight just one. The Kids Kingdom community playground build days, which took place earlier this month. **Over 850 volunteers worked for 3,339 hours during the nine-day Kids Kingdom build**, just think on THAT for a moment! These volunteers included individuals and groups, such those from ATMOS Energy, Frost Bank, The Home Depot, Wells Fargo Bank, Keep Rowlett Beautiful, Boy Scout Troop 1989, the CERT Explorers and Girl Scout Troop 1996. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Matt Stanford, who not only gave 80 hours, but even paid his skilled employees their regular wage for a week while working at the playground. Other standout volunteers include Rich Arthur, who

gave 70 hours, Mike Lancaster with 60 (as well as countless hours serving on the Playground Committee) and his wife Nancy with 48. Members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board also really stepped up, volunteering 217 hours! Another way our community gave was by loaning us their tools, hundreds of tools, which would have been purchased had they not been loaned freely. Again, thank you!

This playground also would not have been possible without our business community sponsors. Milestone Electric gave \$20,000, which funded the Dino Sandbox. Tri-Con Services, which also donated \$20,000, brought in their heavy equipment and helped grade the site. The Rowlett PARDners, the DeLatte Family and Sanford Realty Renovations gave \$10,000 each. The Home Depot donated \$6,500 to purchase tools and supplies, Atmos gave \$5,000 and the list goes on. I am so moved to see the way our beautiful, amazing Rowlett COMMUNITY came together to help build this playground for this and future generations, thank you so very much to everyone who volunteered and donated, this playground would not be possible without you!

I would be absolutely remiss if I did not recognize your incredible City staff. From the Public Works and Parks guys who spent weeks not only readying the site for construction, but also giving hours and hours during the build days, to the rest of the employees who volunteered their own time to the build. Wow, I'm just blown away by the hard work and dedication this group has shown!

For some of us, the Christmas season can become a time when we get lost in the commercialism of the holiday and miss the true meaning. My wish and prayer for you during this reflective time of year is that God continue to watch over you and your family, bringing health and prosperity now and throughout the New Year!


Mayor Todd Gottel



Members of the Playground Committee, along with some of The Home Depot volunteers.



Parks and Recreation Advisory Board...

Folks, without the incredible passion exhibited by the members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, this playground would simply not be possible. Since the removal of the old playground, this board has been dogged in their determination to bring Kids Kingdom back... only bigger and better!

Wayne Baxter
Lonnie Cornwell
Mike DeLatta
Linda Fugitt
Bruce Hargrave
Matt Grubisch
Zabrina Martison

Ken Romaine
E.C. Umberger
Rheta Bowers (alt.)
Dolores Henning (alt.)
Josh Kramer (alt.)
Kaitlyn Freeborn (jr alt.)
Blake Margolis (jr alt.)

Playground Committee...

The Playground Committee was formed earlier this year to facilitate donation solicitation and the incredibly detailed build days. And boy did they, displaying a level of community service not often witnessed. Countless hours, phone calls, personal visits, email blasts and more ensured that not only did we have the donations necessary, but the volunteer manpower as well, to build the new Kids Kingdom. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their *extreme* dedication to the children of Rowlett!

Zabrina Martinson, Playground Chair
Wayne Baxter
Elise Bowers
Lonnie Cornwell
Matt Grubisch

Bernadette Hagmeier
Bruce Hargrave
Mike Lancaster
Lindsey Livingston
E. C. Umberger

Corporate and Private Donors Have Funded Many Special Features of the New Kids Kingdom!



“I would like to thank EVERYONE who donated. Whether you're a large corporate sponsor or a grandparent purchasing a fence picket to honor a grandchild, Kids Kingdom would not be a reality today without YOU!!”

THANK YOU to our Community Donors!

- \$20,000**
Milestone Electric
Tri-Con Construction
- \$10,000**
Rowlett PARDners
The DeLatta Family
Sanford Realty Renovations
- \$6,500**
The Home Depot
- \$5,000**
Atmos Energy
- \$2,500**
Denton Parks Foundation
Keep Rowlett Beautiful
- \$1,500**
Lions Club
Inwood Bank
Honoring Vernon & Lorene Schrade
Rental One
- \$500**
Bounce 'N More
Oncor
Capital One
Linebarger Goggin Blair & Sampson



Wells Fargo
Spirit Outfitters
Chick-fil-A
Super 8 Garland



Bahai Faith
BB&T
Hargrove
ANB



Kids Kingdom

Let's Build This Playground!

Volunteers and City staff worked side-by-side to bring the community's vision to life!



Kids Kingdom
Let's Build This Playground!

*Volunteers and City staff worked side-by-side
to bring the community's vision to life!*



Kids Kingdom
WE Built This Playground!



BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS VOLUNTEER BANQUET

The annual event, held this year on Thursday, December 3, honors the City's many volunteers and thanks outgoing Boards and Commissions members for their service.



**Diamond Volunteer of the Year
Sharon Porter**

*The **Diamond Volunteer of the Year** is awarded to the volunteer with the most volunteer hours.*

Perhaps the volunteer with the longest tenure with the City, Sharon has an incredible work ethic and even makes herself available when she ISN'T scheduled to volunteer, filling in wherever she is needed! Over the years, she has volunteered with Fire Administration, Purchasing, Development Services, Economic Development,

Public Works, Finance, Utility Billing, the City Secretary's Office, the City Manager's Office, Communications, Human Resources, Parks and Recreation...there are very few City departments who have not benefited from Sharon's commitment to her community. Married with three daughters and four granddaughters, Sharon volunteered 707.75 hours in Fiscal Year 2015. She is also the recipient of the 2008 Volunteer of the Year Award and the 2013 Diamond Award.



**Platinum Volunteer of the Year
Barbara Grisell**

*The **Platinum Volunteer of the Year** is awarded to one who made a significant contribution by way of their volunteerism.*

Barbara was the recipient of the 2015 VIPS Officer of the Year, which was voted on by her peers, and she is a longstanding, faithful and dedicated member of the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program. She is extremely active in VIPS and works in numerous capacities including, vehicle inspections, administration work and

as a Volunteer Training Officer, schooling new VIPS members in the policies and procedures of the VIPS program and the Rowlett Police Department. She volunteers at most City events and her participation is invaluable.

Barbara's commitment to God, family and the community is to be commended and admired. Her kind words, dedicated service and willing participation is well deserving of the honors and recognition which she has received.



**Richard Huff Excellence in
Community Service Award
Dretha Burris**

*Beginning in 2005, Rowlett Mayors have had the honor of recognizing another volunteer with the **Richard Huff Excellence in Community Service Award**, named for one of Rowlett's most civically engaged citizens.*

Dretha is the Associate Pastor of First United Methodist Church and is ALL about community! She is an active member of CERT, lends significant support for Relay for Life, and provides extensive

counseling, conflict resolution and emotional support. She is the "glue" that holds many difficult situations together. Such as fostering and adopting older children, providing support for Hope in Hand Food Pantry, or starting the GISD backpack food ministry. A former teacher and counselor for GISD, and ultimately principal of Coyle Middle School, the atmosphere and reputation of Coyle improved significantly under her leadership, turning it into a "go to" school. The list of her community support goes on and on!



Volunteer of the Year Valencia Woodruff

*The **Volunteer of the Year** award recognizes outstanding individual contributions to the City of Rowlett and its programs, services and events.*

Since moving to our community last year, Valencia has devoted her time to helping the City of Rowlett. She previously worked in the administrative field for an insurance company and could have accepted volunteer opportunities with many other entities. Luckily for us, she chose to stay with the Parks and Recreation Department, even though multiple projects exist and the work can be quite overwhelming. She comes to the office with a contagious smile and a willingness to tackle any unfamiliar tasks. In this fast paced environment, her mellow personality exudes calm and brings a tranquil atmosphere. So modest, she likely doesn't realize what a difference her contributions to the Kids Kingdom rebuild project have made to the Parks and Recreation staff and in our community!

I would like to thank ALL of our volunteers, without whom our City would not be able to offer the high level of services currently available!

**In Fiscal Year 2015...
19,349 volunteer hours were donated
\$452,767 taxpayer dollars saved
9.3 Full Time Employee equivalents!**