



The magic mayor

Wylie's Eric Hogue brings his passion to the job **16**



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WYLIE

Tricks of the trade

Mayor Eric Hogue's love of magic follows him to City Hall

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The conversation with a woman from KATV-TV (Channel 7) was brief, Wylie Mayor Eric Hogue remembers. He was trying to get in touch with Gary Weir, Arkansas' famed Bozo the Clown.

"I'm 15 years old, and I want to learn how to be a clown," Hogue said.

The teen from North Little Rock had just performed for the first time at a talent show, dressing up as a clown, with a wig made from yarn and his face slathered in powder and Noxzema while performing magic tricks.

It took Weir four weeks to return Hogue's repeated calls. He wanted to make sure Hogue was serious, he said. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship — and the beginning of Hogue's magic career. Today, the one-time clown is inspiring new generations with his passion for magic and working to get Congress to recognize magic as an art.

A shy kid

Hogue, 52, is the first to admit he was very shy growing up.

"I was the type of kid in high school, who if you walked past me, I would put my eyes down," he said.

He got his first magic kit, a standard, mass-produced Marshall Brodien set, when he was 12. He spent his time learning magic at Colonel Seymour's Magic Shop in Little Rock.

While he loved magic, Hogue's shyness meant his audience was just his mother and father — until a group of friends asked him to perform magic with them in a local talent show. Hogue agreed, but told them he just couldn't go out there as himself. He suggested they dress as clowns.

"We won first place," Hogue said. "Well, I thought that was the greatest thing in the world. My dad also saw where I was not afraid to get in front of people. So Clinky the Clown was born."

Hogue spent his free time in high school and college performing as Clinky at birthday



Wylie Mayor Eric Hogue incorporates his hobby of magic into his job. He performed as a clown, Clinky, when he was younger, and still performs tricks occasionally. Last month, Wylie hosted the first Great Texas Magic Festival.

"Had there not been that 12-year-old kid who got a magic kit, who then three years later decided to dress up as a clown at a talent contest, there wouldn't be a Mayor Hogue today."

— Eric Hogue,
Mayor of Wylie

parties and company picnics. He briefly retired, then picked up the show again when his wife decided to stay home with the kids and retired again when he decided to run for mayor — until the city's library director found out.

Hogue spent the next few years performing as Clinky to persuade elementary school kids to get their library cards. He also wrote a book featuring Clinky the Clown.

Today, Clinky is officially retired, but Hogue still uses magic to teach kids about City Hall and his position as mayor.

"That's been kind of the neat part about it," Hogue said. "I never thought when I became the mayor of Wylie that magic could be part of the mayor's job."

Hogue's wife, Tammie, said she loves seeing how happy magic makes her husband. It keeps things interesting, she said.

"The first time I saw Eric perform, he got me on stage to sing 'Old McDonald Has a Farm,'" she said. "I knew then that he was never going to be boring."

Clinky helped him get elected, Hogue says, because he's no longer uncomfortable in front of large crowds.

"In front of a crowd, I can talk to a thousand people, 2,000 people, it doesn't bother me at all," he said. "Had there not been that 12-year-old kid who got a magic kit, who then three years later decided to dress up as a clown at a talent contest, there wouldn't be a Mayor Hogue today."



Hogue talks with first-graders at R.F. Hartman Elementary School, where he performed a few magic tricks while talking about his job as mayor. He frequently hosts children at City Hall and visits local elementary schools.

Petitioning Congress

Hogue is a member of the Dallas Magic Clubs, and it's through his connections there that he learned magicians were trying to get magic recognized as an art by the government.

"You have magicians that they want to do shows for special-needs kids or they want to do shows for even nursing homes," Hogue said. "They can't get grants because it's a hobby. They don't have any legs to stand on."

Working with U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Dallas, Hogue is helping to shepherd a bill through Congress designating magic as an art. The idea was introduced into the congressional record in April 2014, and now Hogue is hopeful that a resolution will be brought to the floor early next year.

He also worked to create the first Great Texas Magic Festival. Wylie hosted the weeklong celebration in October, bringing in magicians and illusionists during the week of Halloween.

Hogue still loves the wonder of magic.



Hogue poses for a funny photo with first-graders at R.F. Hartman Elementary School, where he performed a few magic tricks while talking about his job.

"When I can see a look on an adult or child's face and their mouth kind of falls open and they can't figure out how it was done, that's neat," he said. "For a moment, it is magic. Everybody knows it's a trick, but it's magic for just a moment."

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Photo submitted by ERIC HOGUE

This composite was shot for business cards when Hogue was 18 and his clown career was taking off.



Photo by CRAIG KELLY/city of Wylie

Mayor Eric Hogue joined with other dignitaries at the historic Brown House in Wylie to proclaim Oct. 25-29 as National Magic Week. Dal Sanders (left), past president of The Society of American Magicians; Dallas Magic Clubs President Frank Seltzer, State Rep. Jodie Laubenberg, Hogue and Mayor Pro Tem Keith Stephens attended.



Photo by CRAIG KELLY/city of Wylie

Hogue performs his disappearing spot trick to teach Birmingham Elementary first-graders Matthew Davis and Makyrra Ford about municipal government.