

## COMMUNITY LEADER'S MESSAGE

## City ranked No. 2, but second to none

A financial website recently rated Wylie the second-best small city in the country in which to raise a family. As mayor of that city, I was proud and honored — and also curious. The ranking was based on criteria such as income levels, housing, schools, amenities and proximity to larger cities, but I wanted to dig a little deeper, to find out what was beyond the numbers. What do the citizens of Wylie think? Out of all the cities in Texas — in fact, the world — why does Wylie continue to be their hometown of choice?

We turned to social media for answers, posting a question. “Why is Wylie a great place to raise a family?” We asked, and our citizens weighed in.

Opportunities for recreation were mentioned: sports



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programs; the recreation center, housed in what one woman called our “Beautiful, artistic City Hall”; and parks. The 2005 bond that funded the municipal complex included \$12 million for the rec center, and it is used from morning until night by young and old alike.

Several people posted praise for Ballard Avenue and the rest of Wylie’s vibrant downtown area, calling it charming and full of history.

Some citizens mentioned the number and variety of unique city-sponsored gatherings; events are indeed held

year-round, hosted by the city and/or the Wylie Downtown Merchants Association and the chamber of commerce.

Wylie Fire Rescue scored points with one mom who had arranged for a fire truck to visit her son’s birthday party — and then it rained.

“They still came and gave the kids lessons inside our home and then took them out one-by-one with their umbrellas to explore the fire truck. They were ecstatic.” She listed “public servants” as one of Wylie’s strengths.

Many mentioned the quality of the schools, caring teachers and top-notch administrators. No argument there; Wylie ISD is an outstanding school district serving more than 14,000 students. While the district has continued to grow and has been acknowledged by the state of Texas for

its outstanding efforts for our students, any parent can still pick up the phone and talk directly to the superintendent about their child or the Friday night football game.

But most intriguing to me as mayor were comments about the intangibles, the chord Wylie strikes with its community members. The phrase “small-town feel” is used often, but it was expanded by citizens who noted the tight-knit community; quiet and welcoming neighborhoods; convenient stores and restaurants that seniors can reach with minimal driving; and friendly people.

“For me, it’s a new place to start my new life,” said one woman. “As I moved from India to Wylie last year in April, I got a great feeling about Wylie.”

Although faith is an impor-

tant part of our community — and the abundance of religious organizations was mentioned by more than one person — diversity is embraced and we welcome any new member of the community, wherever his or her journey may have begun.

So is it the schools, the sports or the small-town feel? Is it the cost of living, the charm of downtown, the city events or the culture of servant leadership? The rec center, the library or the parks? The answer is yes. Wylie is a community with its arms flung wide open, looking to the future with a respectful eye to the past — a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. It is the Wylie Difference!

*Eric Hogue is mayor of the city of Wylie.*

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