



As **River Legacy Foundation and River Legacy Parks** are about to celebrate 25 years, I reflect on my personal 20-year association in order to convey my appreciation of being involved with such an important organization a good part of my life.

It all began in 2000. Things started small with walks in the park as I discussed the future with my then fiancé. After we married and had kids, the park continued to provide joy as we walked there as a family with our dogs.

Somewhere along the way, we discovered a hidden gem in the **River Legacy Living Science Center**. We started taking our boys to **After Dark in the Park**, now called **Fall Festival**, where they enjoyed games, decorating a pumpkin, and climbing into an Arlington Fire Department truck that is on-site every year. I have several pictures of them talking to the firemen, and I always found it amazing that I was just as excited as they were to check out the fire truck.

When my sons were old enough to start going to the summer programs, they were exposed to a whole new world of excitement and knowledge. These special classes turned my kids into environmental stewards as they learned about the animals, trees, and plants surrounding the river. One of the most memorable classes for my oldest son was photography, where he came home thrilled to show us the picture he took of a bobcat kitten. Another time, they were excited to tell us they found a snake that was then caught and put on exhibit.

Even after they aged out of the summer programs, the River Legacy Living Science Center has continued to impact their environmental view. Both boys have restored an area of the park as their Eagle Scout project. After becoming volunteers at the Center, they have participated in events, given tours, and helped with the summer programs. They thoroughly enjoy exploring all the wonderful things River Legacy has to offer.

Our family involvement continued as I started volunteering, and my wife's pediatric dental office began sponsoring After Dark in the Park. Soon, I became an integral part of the technology at the science center and was excited to be part of the center's transition from an entirely analog grouping of exhibits to a state-of-the-art tech meets nature exhibit that rivals many larger facilities.

Two years ago, I was humbled when asked to be part of the **River Legacy Foundation Board of Directors**. I jumped at the chance because it brought me even closer to the place my family holds near and dear to our hearts. For the past ten years, I have been at the center weekly and can say with certainty that I see, learn, and experience something new every time I'm there.

Recently, I was honored to be elected president of the Board of Directors. I am proud to serve in this position and help the Center take steps towards its next 25 years. I

genuinely feel River Legacy is not only a hidden jewel for Arlington, but all of the Dallas Fort Worth area, and I encourage others to explore the wonders of the park and support the foundation. This can be done by volunteering, attending events, making financial contributions, or simply spreading the word about the programs and the River Legacy Living Science Center. It takes all of us to make it a success.

Thank you for this tremendous honor.

Sincerely,

Robert Blake