

Giving thanks for 'Wylie Difference'

It's hard to believe that another year has come and gone. We have much to be thankful for as we look back over the past year in Wylie.

A few months ago, during a live interview regarding our Bluegrass on Ballard event, a reporter asked me about our community and what makes it such a great place to call home. I told him that while Wylie may be a suburb of Dallas, we don't see ourselves that way. We are our own unique, vibrant, growing community, and that is what sets Wylie apart from other towns. I call it the "Wylie Difference."

We kicked off 2014 with a visit to Savage Precision Fabrication with representatives from our local, county, state and federal governments. Savage builds key parts for our military's next generation F-35 Lightning II fighter jets — single-seat, single-engine, multi-role fighters under development to perform ground attack, reconnaissance and air defense missions with stealth capability. Thanks to the work being performed by the employees at Savage, Wylie is doing its part to protect our country.

A few months later, I had the opportunity to tour the new multi-million-dollar production line at Sanden International. Sanden is more than just the big building at the corner of FM 544 and Sanden Boulevard; it's the largest independent manufacturer of automotive air conditioning compressors in the world. Sanden produces 2.5 million compressors per year in the Wylie production facility. If your car has an air conditioner, chances are it's because of Wylie.

New neighborhoods, featuring homes that families can grow into, are also popping up in Wylie. Our goal is to provide not only the first home, but the next one and the next one — homes to accommodate families as they grow, so there is no reason to leave the 39 square miles that we call Wylie.

In the spring, we also held our first-ever JazzArts Festival on the grounds of our award-winning, architecturally-stunning Wylie Municipal Complex. Professional bands performed at this event, as well as many of the high school jazz bands from around the region. We also had arts and crafts vendors promoting their goods at this musical event.

We shut down the streets the first weekend in July and partnered with the Wylie Downtown Merchants Association for our



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second annual Bluegrass on Ballard festival and set a new attendance record for a downtown event. A great time was had by all, and it was a profitable day for our downtown merchants.

We ended the year with another record-setting turnout for our sixth annual Wylie Arts Festival, also held in our historic downtown. The crowds were shoulder-to-shoulder as they shopped at the more than 110 booths featuring unique, handmade arts and crafts. The annual Christmas parade and tree lighting ceremony followed the festival with great floats and huge crowds.

The next day, the KCS Holiday Express from the Kansas City Railroad came to town with over a half mile of people standing in line waiting to see the train and Santa Claus.

As we reflect over the past year, I encourage all of the citizens of Wylie to stop and consider the outstanding businesses and all the great events we have in our community. I hope you will also consider the outstanding services offered in Wylie, like our more-than-600 acres of parks and open spaces; how our crime rate has gone down another 12 percent over the past year, due to the outstanding work of our police department; how our fire department was awarded an ISO-1 rating; how 30,000 of our 45,000 citizens have their own library card; and how Wylie has one of the best recreation centers in North Texas.

I am proud to be the mayor of this one-of-a-kind community. Many of us chose to live in Wylie for the hometown feeling or because of the wonderful school district. I believe, however, there is much more to Wylie than just schools, parks, stores and festivals; it's the "Wylie Difference" that keeps us here!

Has it been a while since you have visited Wylie — or have you never stepped foot in our town? I encourage you to come out and experience for yourself.

Eric Hogue is mayor of Wylie.