

# State of the City Address



**Mayor Eric Hogue**

**February 23, 2016**

Good afternoon, and welcome to the annual State of the City Address. A special thanks to the Wylie Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event, and to the Linebarger, Goggan, Blair and Sampson Law Firm for sponsoring this luncheon.

Today, as every year, it is my pleasure, honor and duty to deliver this State of the City Address for Wylie, Texas... that is now home to – are you ready? – over 48,000 citizens.

I'd also like to thank the Wylie East High School Jr. ROTC Saber Team,

Wylie Fire Rescue Honor Guard,

And Police Chaplain Dan Rainey.

As I begin, I'd like to introduce and acknowledge members of our city council:

Mayor *pro tem* and Place 1, Keith Stephens

- Has lived in Wylie for over 24 years
- Is in his third year on the city council
- Is on the board of the Wylie Chamber of Commerce and runs a couple of businesses in town

Councilwoman Diane Culver, Place 2

- Served a three-year term, then took a leave of absence due to an ill family member and was re-elected in May
- Diane works for FM Global which holds 35% of the commercial property insurance market in the world.
- And serves as President of the Women's American Legion Auxiliary in Wylie support our men and women in uniform.

Councilman Todd Wintters, Place 3

- Has lived in Wylie since 2007
- Is in his third year on the city council
- Is the owner of Engineering Concepts and Design here in Wylie

Councilwoman Candy Arrington, Place 4

- Was elected this past May
- Was instrumental in establishing the Back-to-School Fair providing school supplies for Wylie children in need
- And for many years was the force behind our annual Relay for Life Cancer Awareness Fundraiser.

Councilman William Whitney III, Place 5

- Has lived in Wylie for 13 years
- Is completing his second year on the council

- Manages a cyber-security team to help protect the energy industry and also has his own technology company that supports small businesses' technology systems

Councilman David Dahl, Place 6

- Moved to Wylie 14 years ago
- Is also about to complete his second year on the council
- Retired from the HVAC manufacturer Lennox Industries

I'd also like to introduce our City Manager Mindy Manson, who just celebrated her 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service to our city.

She has been our city manager since 2006, does an outstanding job serving our community and is the BEST city manager in the city's history.

She's backed by Assistant City Manager Jeff Butters, our former police chief, who has worked for the city since 1998. He became assistant city manager in 2006 and is our city's right-hand man.

I am also honored to have some special guests with me today.

Former Mayor William Martin and his wife Ann, who celebrated 60 years of marriage this past August ...

My mother-in-law and father-in-law, Mac and Geraldine Mathis, who became citizens of Wylie two years ago. I am truly blessed that they treat me like I am one of their own children.

And the one person who pushed me to register to vote in 1987... and is still pushing me to do better every day ... my best friend, my toughest critic and my bigger supporter ... the first lady of Wylie and my wife ... Tammie Hogue.

**As for the State of the City ... the news is outstanding.**

Wylie has been a recipient of many honors and awards over the past few years. In August 2015 we received another one.

And this was a big one.

We got the news that a little magazine named *Money* had chosen Wylie as the 25<sup>th</sup> Best Place to Live – in the entire United States of America.

Let's stop and think about that for a moment.

Out of all the cities in the country, 30,044 to be exact, impartial magazine editors evaluated key aspects of our community and ranked Wylie in the top .008%

We could've saved *Money Magazine's* editors some time and effort and just told them what an amazing place Wylie, Texas, is.

We have known that all along.

But they didn't ask us – they did research of their own and published some of the many aspects that make Wylie such a wonderful and special city.

They found out why, let's say it all together ... "We Love Wylie!"

### ***The Community Gathers***

Referring to the early days, when our town earned the nickname "Wide-Awake Wylie," *Money* noted our residents' "late-night socializing and shopping."

*"Today, Wylie residents still like to get together for good times,"* the magazine noted, and listed some of the events that bring folks together: *"the Chamber of Commerce Rodeo ... Bluegrass on Ballard ... and the Wylie 500 Pedal Car Races."*

***And here is some big news:*** Fireworks will once again light up the Wylie sky... on July 2 ... as part of Bluegrass on Ballard.

A huge shout-out to Bloomfield Homes for sponsoring the fireworks. More details will be coming soon, but it will be a unique show you won't want to miss.

All of these events are made possible by the hand-in-hand partnerships enjoyed between the City of Wylie and organizations like the chamber and the Wylie Downtown Merchants Association, our partner for the bluegrass festival and pedal car races.

Truly, as the city works with these strong organizations, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

In addition to the events *Money* published in their article, I would add Boo on Ballard ... in fact this event was expanded in 2015 to include the first-ever **Magic of Wylie Festival**, including a Parlor Magic Show, featuring Jared Kopf, a magician who wows audiences regularly in Hollywood's Magic Castle; street magicians on Ballard Avenue; and a "Night of Wonder," a magical gala featuring headliner Trigg Watson, fresh from "Penn & Teller's Fool Us" and Pop TV's "Don't Blink."

BUT, the year wouldn't be complete without the Wylie Arts Festival, a holiday celebration that brings thousands to our historic downtown each December, and

includes over 120 quality arts-and-crafts vendors, the Festival of Light parade sponsored by FBC Wylie, and the Christmas tree lighting in Olde City Park.

### ***Community Spirit***

*Money* also listed our “strong community spirit,” as one of the many reasons Wylie had landed on their “Best Places” list.

***Indeed, our community spirit is one of the strongest anywhere.***

Examples include: the way the community comes together every autumn for the Week of Compassion, donating money and commodities to the Wylie Christian Care Center, an all-volunteer organization ... led by the one and only Raymond Cooper.

In 2015, approximately 2,450 families visited the center, and 231,000 food items were distributed to citizens in need. The center donated \$132,000 to area families for rent and utilities, along with a large quantity of clothing. Last year, Wylie ISD donated over \$10 thousand and 90 thousand food items to the cause.

**This is just one example of how we come together to help out our fellow citizens.**

### **It's the WYLIE DIFFERENCE!**

Another example of our community spirit is something that literally happened on Christmas Day ...

In a letter to the city, Jeff Denton of Waterbrook Bible Fellowship wrote that on Christmas Day he received a call from one of the church's neighbors alerting him to a water line break.

Jeff arrived to find water pouring out, in his words, “like a small river.”

He spoke to Wylie Police Officer Chris Taylor, who contacted Wylie Dispatch, who got in touch with Public Works.

Chris Blue with public works arrived and shut off the water line.

Jeff wrote, “*Chris could have understandably left quickly to return to his own Christmas Day activities, however, recognizing we would need water to our buildings for Sunday services right after Christmas, he offered to assist us in pumping water from the service holes to determine where the break had occurred.*”

He went on to write, “*After some help and digging on his part, he showed us the break was in our irrigation line. He gave some direction on how to shut off that specific line, we were then able to turn water service back on for our buildings.*”

The church held Sunday activities as planned.

Jeff called the service from the city “fantastic” and described our employees as “gracious and as helpful as they could be,” even though they had to work on Christmas Day.

When he expressed his thanks, Chris’ response was, *“I can’t think of a better day to be helping people than on Christmas Day.”*

It’s that community spirit that shows itself time and again as our residents, our city employees, our schools, our businesses and places of worship link arms and work together.

### ***Places for Recreation***

*Money* editors also spoke of Wylie’s desirable location and how it lends itself to outdoor and indoor recreation.

Right in our own backyard, a mile-long hike and bike trail has been created on the campus of the Wylie Municipal Complex, offering families an opportunity to walk through wooded property, across creeks, and through meadows.

We recently received word that Wylie has received a \$500,000 grant from Collin County to add our hike and bike trail, which will form a loop of almost two miles.

This year, the North Central Texas Council of Governments awarded Wylie a Celebrating Leadership in Development Excellence Award for the municipal complex, noting that these buildings invite diverse educational and recreational activities and incorporate good environmental stewardship into their design and operation.

*Money* mentioned the state-of-the-art Wylie Recreation Center, with its 28-foot climbing wall, fitness area, walking track and basketball courts.

The city recently acquired the Birmingham House, now known as it was originally called, the Brown House, named after its builders Thomas and Mattie Brown.

This new city facility is available for rental.  
We remain committed to historic preservation and value this peek into Wylie’s past.

A joint effort by the city, Wylie Parks and Recreation, Wylie Historical Society and Douglas Properties recently relocated and preserved the Stone family home located at the intersection of Alanis Drive and South Ballard Avenue.

The developer has dedicated almost two acres to the city as parkland and donated the house to the Wylie Historical Society.

The cooperation of the entities involved in preserving this historic treasure is another example of the strong relationship Wylie enjoys with many groups.

One such group is the Wylie Advocates for Senior Activities, or WASA, which formed in order to raise funds to convert the old library building into a state-of-the-art senior center.

### **They came – they saw – they conquered.**

They finished their mission with a final \$16,000 donation to the City and Senior Recreation Center. Well done.

The center continues to grow and thrive, offering a wide variety of trips, activities and social events for our “most-experienced” generation.

Each year, the center holds a “Senior Prom,” and the theme for last year’s was “G.I. Jive.”

Earlene and Bruce Collinsworth, were named Queen and King of the Prom at the April event.

Bruce recently passed away. He was a proud World War II Veteran and today we honor him for his service to our country.

### ***City/School District Partnership***

Wylie ISD was listed as a reason the community is such a desirable one for families to call home.

Wylie’s students consistently score above the state and national averages on SAT and ACT tests.

The city enjoys a close working relationship with the school district; we meet regularly to share plans and updates between our two organizations to better serve our citizens.

The City Council also honors outstanding students every nine-week’s with “Shining the Wylie Way” medallions at our council meetings.

Wylie Fire Rescue visits our schools each October to present a light-hearted, interactive fire safety program.

The firefighters write, rehearse, create costumes, build their own scenery and head to local elementary schools, private schools and day cares.

Dubbed the “Wylie Wild Bunch,” their portrayals of characters such as aging superheroes teach fire safety lessons with humor.

The Wylie Police Department is a daily part of the Wylie ISD ... with SROs in our schools to work with the administrators, teachers and students.

Additionally, the SROs and students have created the P.O.L.I.C.E. club, an organization available to students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The club is sponsored by the School Resource Officers and the Wylie Police Association.

The organization gives students a better understanding of the law enforcement profession and teaches the importance of good leadership and character traits.

It is my honor each school year to talk to students at every level about our city government and the mayor’s responsibilities.

I enjoy meeting with our young citizens, establishing a relationship, and putting a friendly face on local government.

### ***A Safe Place to Live***

*Money* noted that Wylie’s crime rate is among the lowest in the state. In fact, as of last year, our crime rate dropped by 28% -- despite a 6-percent increase in population.

And, unlike many cities, our citizens embrace and support our Public Safety departments.

On Sept. 11, we dedicated the “Heroes of Wylie” sculpture at the Public Safety Building.

This 6-foot-5-inch bronze statue is dedicated to those who rush in when others are rushing out.

It was no accident that we chose September 11<sup>th</sup> to dedicate the sculpture.

We paid tribute to the first responders who courageously ran into those doomed buildings.

*At the statue’s unveiling, I reminded those gathered to always remember to honor the people who put their lives at risk on behalf of their families, their friends, their neighbors,*

*their fellow citizens and the strangers who come within our city limits. They assume that risk each and every day.*

I'm proud that two of our most prominent servant leaders began their careers here and moved up through the ranks to lead their organizations.

Police Chief Anthony Henderson began his law enforcement career with Wylie PD in 1999, first as a patrolman, then sergeant, then lieutenant, then assistant chief and now, as of September of 2015, chief of police.

This marks the first time in the history of the city that a police chief has been promoted from within the department.

Fire Chief Brent Parker, who assumed his leadership role in 2014, was a graduate of Wylie High School and has been with Wylie Fire Rescue for 14 years, moving through the ranks as a first year firefighter, all the way to chief.

**It says something about a city when its young people grow up here, choose to raise their families here, and assume positions of leadership in their home town.**

### ***Booming Economy***

*Money Magazine* also took note of Wylie's "booming economy," to use their words.

Indeed, Sam Satterwhite and the Wylie Economic Development Corporation are always at work, courting new businesses and encouraging them to come to town.

For the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive fiscal year, WEDC sales tax receipts have increased significantly – 2015 saw a 13% increase over 2014.

The 2015 sales tax total was over \$2.1 million, with The Rock and TJ Maxx bringing in a significant amount of that new tax revenue.

Additionally, Woodbridge Crossing, home of SuperTarget, reflected a 23% sales tax gain over the previous year, bringing in more than \$1.3 million to the City in sales tax revenue.

The EDC has also succeeded in a goal Sam and the board of directors set out for some time -- the acquisition of six industrial properties totaling 5 acres on Hwy. 78 near Starbucks. We look forward to converting this land to retail and commercial services.

**And of course we are trying to get more sit-down restaurants.**

The new La Quinta Inn & Suites, located at Sanden and FM 544, is projected to be completed in fall of 2016.

The former hospital and nearby three-story office building next to Brookshire's has also been sold. The investor is very enthusiastic about developing this property.

In addition, unemployment rates in town are a low 3.1%, and projected job growth is estimated at a "whopping," again, quoting *Money Magazine*, "19.1%, compared to the country's overall outlook of 7.4%."

Our finance department continues to be recognized for its exemplary record keeping and transparency.

This past year, The Government Finance Officers Association recognized Wylie with the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

In addition, Wylie was recognized with the Platinum Leadership Circle Award for financial transparency by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts ... *recognizing our clear, consistent, user-friendly format that lets taxpayers easily drill down for more detail.*

We appreciate Finance Director Linda Bantz and her team for continuing to make financial transparency a priority.

Also bringing honor to the City of Wylie was Director of Developmental Services Renae Ollie, one of only eight women to be recognized by the League of Women Voters at the Celebration of Collin County Women in Public Administration.

Our City Manager says, "Renae lives and works in Wylie and is absolutely committed to ensuring that we have quality development and quality of life in our community."

These are only a few of the individuals who focused the spotlight on our community due to their dedication and desire to do the best possible job for the citizens of Wylie.

Our partnership and spirit of cooperation with the county and neighboring cities have contributed to our ability to make positive changes in our community.

Collin County, Sachse and Wylie worked together to fund the new section of Woodbridge Parkway that connects FM 544 with Hwy. 78, keeping traffic moving and developing businesses easily accessible.

### ***Infrastructure***

Speaking of roads, let me update you on improvements to area thoroughfares.

Since the 1999 bond, \$110 million has been spent on 140 lane miles of roadway, funded by the City, county and Texas Department of Transportation.

Currently, we have Country Club and Ballard Avenue under construction at a cost of \$7.55 million.

TxDOT has another 20 lane miles under construction on Hwy. 78 at a cost of \$16.3 million. (If it ever gets done)

Wylie continues to pursue a Collin College campus ... and without giving a bunch of details ... for the first time ... ever ... Wylie is seriously being looked at by the college.

Wylie's cooperation with other organizations doesn't stop at the city or even the county level; thanks to the relationship we enjoy with U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions, the EPA is now cleaning up a piece of property that has been contaminated for over 25 years at no cost to Wylie, opening up additional property for retail or commercial development.

### ***Representing the Community***

As mayor, it's my honor to represent the city at various functions and in a variety of ways.

Some of you may find it hard to believe that, as a boy, I was extremely shy and introverted and really struggled when I had to speak to new people or, heaven forbid, to an audience.

What a difference a few decades makes!

One of the reasons I was able to overcome my shyness was that I learned magic and performed as a clown named Clinky, entertaining folks of all ages and backgrounds.

I also had some neighbors who were deaf, and I learned sign language in order to communicate with them.

This turned out to be another tool against my shyness; I began interpreting sermons and accompanied deaf students to college classes, signing the lessons to them.

Imagine my pride at having been recently named the head of the governing board of the Texas School for the Deaf, a board I've served on since my appointment by the governor in 2009.

I'm thrilled to be able to give back to the deaf community, and this position of leadership on a state board gives me further opportunity to represent Wylie and spread the word about what an amazing place it is.

You know, we didn't need *Money Magazine* to tell us how wonderful our community is.

There is something special here, as everyone gathered today knows.

Call it the Wylie Difference or being Wide Awake, Wylie is a remarkable, positive place to live and raise a family, to do business, to visit, or to retire.

I would correct *Money Magazine* on one fact, however; Wylie isn't the 25<sup>th</sup> best place to live in the country; in the hearts and minds of those who live, work and play here, it is number one.

We launched a new city website this year, and the City of Wylie's mission statement has a prominent place in the upper left-hand corner of the home page.

It reads, "Honoring our past; Embracing our present; Planning our Future."

The City Council and I are committed to this three-fold focus.

We are ever mindful of those who have gone before us, paving the way for the excellence we now enjoy.

We are firmly rooted in the present, realizing our strengths and celebrating our accomplishments.

And we look to the future.

As we prepare to cross the threshold of 50,000 residents, we will continue to build a positive and vital, forward-moving community, fostering strong partnerships at every level, and will continue to be an influential leader in Collin County, in Texas and in the United States of America.

We are ready, we are focused, we are Wylie.

Thank you for allowing me this privilege and honor of being able to serve as your mayor.

I hope you know without a doubt, that I LOVE WYLIE!

May God continue to bless each of you and may God continue to bless the great city of Wylie, Texas.