

# 2017 Texas Environmental Excellence Awards

## *Civic/Community Winner — Lower Rio Grande Valley Nature Center*

### **Hollie Johnston**

We're the oldest Nature Center in the Valley. We started back in 1984. Our primary mission is to educate both young and young at heart about the plants and animals of the Rio Grande Valley and the unique things that are here to this bio-diverse region.

### **Laura Summy**

We now have over 4,500 children coming in throughout the year, and many have never had the opportunity to see nature outside the zoo. They're so excited to be able to touch the live animals. They're so excited to see little rabbits and birds.

### **Mike Perez**

And if you can educate not just the children, but the adults, then we can have a greater appreciation for our environment and see what we can do about protecting the environment.

### **Hollie Johnston**

Many people come at lunch just to get away and to kind of decompress in the middle of their day because it's right here locally, we're surrounded by businesses, we're centrally located, yet, it's like getting away from it all.

### **Mike McClure**

We hope that with not only our nature park here but the aspects that we've incorporated into the nature center to educate people and that they can carry that home.

### **Laura Summy**

We can actually show people things that they can do in their yards and community and home.

### **Mike Perez**

It's an educational opportunity. It reminds us about how important it is to take care of the environment so that wildlife can live in unison with us as human beings. 25 years ago, you didn't see the population of Chachalacas that you see now, and now you see them, but it's because we are becoming more educated and realize that we have to share the same space with wildlife.

### **Hollie Johnston**

I think environmental education is important to the kids because it gives them a sense of the world around them. It gives them a kind of a way to bring it all together and have it make sense for them. We have some kids that come up and tell us that when they've come to camp, that it's the greatest week of their life. How do you not love it?

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