

Heroes Among Us

As evidenced by their recent award as Business of the Year for 2017 from the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Barry and Laura Otts provide more than just home furnishing needs at their store, Otts Furniture and Appliance. The owners continually volunteer and contribute countless hours to the Gainesville community.

We should add that a tear was brought to every eye when Barry accepted the Chamber's award with his grandparents, who founded the store, and his adorable son Jackson, who will continue on the store legacy for many more years to come.

In 1961, Harold & Billie Jean Otts opened Otts Furniture with a focus on selling high quality furniture and providing impeccable customer service to the Cooke County area, and today the Otts family is dedicated to preserving that tradition. Barry and Laura continue the legacy as the third generation to operate the landmark store at the corner of Commerce and Main Streets in Gainesville.

The store is a cornerstone of the Gainesville square and essential to the continued appeal that surrounds Gainesville's courthouse. The store participates in Chamber shopping events and coordinates their very own Shop and Pop Balloon Sale, where customers pop a balloon at checkout and receive a discount on their purchase.

But more to their service history, as far back as the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce Rodeo, you could find Barry giving back to his hometown. More recently, both Barry and Laura helped with Depot Day festivals and were institutional in the creation of Young Professionals of Cooke County, a group designed for professionals aged 21-40 to network and serve to benefit local nonprofit agencies. Laura is an active participant in the Gainesville ISD Parent Teacher Organization and has served on the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce Board in the past.

"Laura & I are very thankful to be a part of this community. Gainesville has been so good to us for many years, and we are always happy to serve alongside the army of volunteers who are working to build a better Gainesville," said Barry.

Most notably, Barry and Laura spearheaded the Summer Sounds Concert Series in 2010, with the help of Lynette Pettigrew, which returns each summer showcasing live music of both the local and national talent levels. The Friday night concerts are free to the public.

"Barry and I worked with Lynette to start Summer Sounds," Laura said. "We were hoping to create an event where families and friends could enjoy a night of good music and good fun while experiencing the charm of Downtown Gainesville, and it has been exciting to watch the event evolve and grow over the years."

The two love seeing everyone from toddlers to grandparents gathering downtown for the shows. Nearly every summer, you'll notice groups holding class reunions during Summer

Sounds, using the event as a time to catch up with old friends and neighbors. “That is exactly what the three of us envisioned from the very beginning.”

This year’s Summer Sounds concert dates are May 25th, June 29th, and July 27th. Cory Morrow returns to Downtown Gainesville in May, Shane Smith & the Saints will take the stage in June, and straight from the Otts’ mouths, “we will end the summer on a high note with Zane Williams” in July.

When you see Barry and Laura setting up the stage, cleaning up after the concerts, or any time between, give them a handshake, a high five, or just a heartfelt “thank you” for their continued service to our community.

The “Heroes Among Us” story series will be released twice monthly, featuring local heroes and organizations who exemplify the Totally Texas, All American spirit that is the fabric of the Gainesville Community. Stories are contributed by the City of Gainesville, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Gainesville Economic Development Corporation, Gainesville Independent School District, and North Central Texas College. Keep an eye out for the stories and see who we celebrate next!

Release is coordinated by the City of Gainesville. Contact Caitlyn Huddleston, City Secretary, at (940) 668-4500 for more information.