Welcome to the 2023 Annual Impact Report from the Fort Worth Report!

Three years ago, a group of concerned residents and six founding Fort Worth Report team members turned a vision into reality, embarking on a journey to fill the void left by the decline of local news coverage.

Since our humble beginning, our nonprofit news organization has grown into a trusted source of information, thanks to the support of our community. This trust is reflected in the city of Fort Worth’s recent community survey, showing that residents now turn to us for Fort Worth news more often than to the 100-plus-year-old legacy newspaper.

Alongside our neighbors, we’ve celebrated milestones, tackled tough stories and championed the values of transparency, accountability and community.

As we mark this milestone, our work is far from finished. Our commitment to serving our community doesn’t end at year three. We’re here, showing up every step of the way, because we know that in this era of overwhelming information, it’s essential to have a reliable source to help you make sense of it all.

One significant highlight of 2023 was the announcement that the American Journalism Project decided to invest $1.1 million in the Fort Worth Report’s financial future. Impressed by our community’s support, this national venture philanthropic organization aims to sustain our momentum and ensure our continued service to Tarrant County. In response to this investment, we launched our Community Journalism Fund at the end of 2023. This fundraising drive is crucial for shaping the future of our news team and enabling us to cover more of the issues that our community has told us are important.

As we head into year four, I feel profound pride in our team and immense gratitude for the community members moving us forward into the next chapter of the Fort Worth Report. Together, we are building a future where the stories of our vibrant, ever-evolving community serve as a catalyst for connection.

Yours in service,

Chris Cobler
CEO and Publisher, Fort Worth Report
OUR TEAM

We are passionate about delivering trustworthy, in-depth news to our neighbors and fostering meaningful connections within our community.
Our mission
We pledge to produce high-quality objective local journalism that informs public decision-making, addresses the quality of life of our community’s citizens, holds our policymakers accountable and tells our readers’ stories by listening to them and making sure they are valued and understood. In all that we do, earning the trust and respect of our audience is paramount. Our reporting is free to all who access our primary digital channels.

Our vision
The Fort Worth Report is committed to making Fort Worth and Tarrant County better through reliable local news reporting and information.

Our accomplishments
We bring a fair, nonpartisan approach to local news. On our website and in our weekday newsletter, we published hundreds of pieces of original journalism over the past year that garnered attention from readers, community leaders and governing bodies for our detailed and accurate reports on what is happening throughout Tarrant County.

Our work also gained the attention of those who take the hardest looks at good reporting and writing.

In April 2024, environmental reporter Haley Samsel, government accountability reporter Rachel Behrndt and growth reporter Sandra Sadek were honored for work done in 2023 as finalists for First Amendment Awards in general, green and business news categories by the Fort Worth chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

A collaboration between the Fort Worth Report and nonprofit news outlet San Antonio Report that centered on Panther Island and the San Antonio River Walk won second place for team effort. The effort featured work by Haley Samsel and Rachel Behrndt. Jacob Sanchez placed third in the infographic category for his visualization of campus enrollment and capacity in all of Fort Worth ISD’s 140 schools.

Faith reporter Marissa Greene and Sanchez received an honorable mention in deadline writing for coverage about Nolan Catholic High School rescinding an alumna’s lifetime honor because of her public support of abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.

statewide journalism group that honors reporting excellence. Sandra Sadek’s story about a city-offered tax break for a developer to bring luxury car dealership Autobahn to Clearfork won first place in business writing. Education reporter Jacob Sanchez placed second for the Star Reporter of the Year award. His entry included stories about low reading rates, school finance and vouchers. Also on the education team, reporter Matthew Sgroi placed second in the video category for his story about an 88-year-old Air Force veteran who walks 6 miles every day.
The Fort Worth Report Board of Directors is made up of civic and business leaders who are committed to informing, engaging and empowering our community through local journalism.
YEAR IN REVIEW

FEBRUARY
• Bob Ray Sanders, veteran journalist and community leader, moderates panel discussion on the “Fort Worth Way”

APRIL
• Business Manager hired
• Fort Worth Report’s Second Birthday Party at Hotel Dryce

MAY
• Three summer reporting fellows join the team

JUNE
• Fort Worth architect Michael Bennett moderates a panel discussion about the two-decade-old, billion-dollar Panther Island project

AUGUST
• Healthcare reporter hired
• Content Editor hired
• Membership Manager hired

OCTOBER
• Haley Samsel, environment reporter and award-winning journalist, moderates panel discussion on flooding in Tarrant County.

DECEMBER
• Director of Development hired
• Launch of Community Journalism Fund with the goal of raising $1.5 million by the end of 2026 to power local news, matching a $1.1 M investment by the American Journalism Project
Public records requests filed: 52

1,500+ original photos, including multiple photo galleries from news events across the county

Monthly unique viewers, as of December 31, 2023: 248,024

Newsletter subscribers as of December 31, 2023: 40,840

Stories published: 1,984

Page views, January 1 to December 31, 2023: 4,928,969

Nearly $2 million raised to support factual local journalism

Individual donors: 1,194
Keeping our schools and government accountable

We closely covered the ongoing challenges faced by all Tarrant County school districts, both financial and academic. Shrinking enrollment, looming school closures and budget investigations kept us attending many school board meetings.

City and county elections and their aftermath are always on our radar, as are the often minute changes to the agendas at the numerous public meetings that we regularly cover.

Our education team continues to focus its research and reporting efforts on both academic and financial difficulties faced by the Fort Worth ISD as it struggles to balance its budget — as pandemic relief funds disappear — in face of population shifts and increasing number of charter schools, which siphon attendance.

We examined affordable housing issues in real terms, both from the points of view of the populations struggling to keep themselves and their families housed to the shifting requirements for new developments to provide required percentages of low-income housing within the city and what that means to investors and developers.
**Connecting our community**

Two ongoing series help readers better understand their neighbors. In Where I Live, readers share what makes their neighborhood special. In 2023, we took our audience to almost 50 diverse communities across Tarrant County — from South Arlington to the Fort Worth Cultural District.

Our Profiles in Leadership series has introduced dozens of community leaders. In 2023, these included Letatia Teykl, corporate banker turned music venue director at the nonprofit Levitt Pavilion Arlington; Sarah Ayala, a local multidisciplinary artist who’s working to make art accessible to everyone; and David Aspinall, who found a new career path as a corporate leader at a company that helps people with autism find employment.

**Educating, engaging and empowering our readers**

Our reporters delve beneath the surface, explaining the issues and what’s at stake.

**From Health Reporter, David Moreno:** The Braver Together nonprofit is uniting in hopes of purchasing the historic Brooks Clinic in 76104. In the 1950s and 1960s, the clinic offered primary care to Black residents across Fort Worth. The clinic closed in 2013 and there has been no primary care clinic in Historic Southside since. The organization believes bringing this clinic back will help with increasing the life expectancy rate in the area. Since the release of the story, Braver Together has seen increasing support rally behind the Brooks Clinic. I’ve also heard from residents of Historic Southside of how grateful they were that I was talking about a topic and a community that has historically been overlooked by the media.

**From Government Reporter, Emily Wolf:** Fort Worth’s EMS provider, MedStar, is struggling with increasing costs and declining reimbursements. After MedStar sounded the alarm this summer (2023) and requested a subsidy from the city, I dug into where, exactly, the provider was losing the most money. I discovered MedStar was losing millions as a result of uncompensated care at the Tarrant County Jail. Without a contract with the local hospital district, the provider was forced to bill inmates, the majority of which don’t have insurance and can’t pay. After my reporting, Fort Worth paused its subsidy plans while MedStar worked to get reimbursed for jail care. MedStar reached an agreement for reimbursement from the hospital district for jail care. As a result, the provider withdrew its request for subsidy. Jail inmates will no longer be billed for the full cost of ambulatory care.
From Senior Education Reporter, Jacob Sanchez*: School districts across Fort Worth are trying to figure out how to do more with less in the 2023-24 academic year. Many districts plan to spend more than their projected revenue next school year to cover their plans for employee raises. Some face cuts, too. This budget challenge was our most read of 2023. Our reporting informed Tarrant County residents about the changes coming to their school districts as a result of the Texas Legislature not increasing public education funding.

*The Texas State Teachers Association selected the story as one of the most outstanding news stories of 2023 and awarded Sanchez a School Bell Award for excellence in public education coverage in April 2024.

Shirley Benton has lived in the Historic Carver Heights neighborhood for over 50 years. “It’s so quiet and peaceful on my street,” she said. (David Moreno | Fort Worth Report)
## 2023 SUPPORTERS

Our mission is growing in Tarrant County, thanks to the individuals and organizations who have stepped up to support independent local news. For a full list of our supporters, visit fortworthreport.org.

### Foundation and Corporate Donors

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### Individual Major Donors, $5,000+

- Wes and Shirley Turner
- Marianne Auld
- Bill Meadows
- Ann and Bill Greenhill

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WE HAVE BIG PLANS FOR 2024

The Arlington Report weekly newsletter
(Launched February 2024)

Weekend Worthy weekly newsletter and community calendar
(Launched May 2024)

Launching Soon

Obituaries

Documenters:
A participatory civic engagement program that trains and pays citizens to attend public meetings and contribute to a public record under the supervision of a newsroom editor.

Continue growing our newsroom:
In April, we hired Tarrant County’s only full-time dedicated higher education reporter.

In June, we added a new business reporter. We’re raising money to hire more reporters to cover important topics, including public safety and transportation, and to embed them across Fort Worth and the county. We’ll welcome at least three new reporting fellows this fall.

Host events where the community can come together to discuss vital issues
Our Candid Conversation discussion series hands the mic to city leaders and experts such as Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker and Arlington Mayor Jim Ross.

Candidate debates include events such as our debate featuring Tarrant County races before the March primary, in partnership with League of Women Voters, Steer Fort Worth and KERA. We marked our third birthday with an April event to celebrate our readers and newsmakers.

We’re committed to giving you the free, fair, local news you depend on. And you can be part of this mission:
Ask your friends and family to read our journalism, subscribe to our newsletter - and if they find value in our work, to donate.

Book our publisher or one of our journalists to speak to your group.

Share your story ideas and your feedback on our reporting with us at hello@fortworthreport.org.

We read every email.
Teena James, a leader of the Echo Heights Stop Six Environmental Coalition, speaks during a protest before Mayor Mattie Parker’s State of the City address on Oct. 6, 2023. Letitia Wilbourn, right, and James are co-founders of the environmental coalition. (Cristian ArguetaSoto | Fort Worth Report)
A young charro, or Mexican horseman, holds onto his pony as it jumps at the All-Western Stock Show Parade on Jan. 14 in downtown Fort Worth.

(Cristian ArguetaSoto | Fort Worth Report)
A fan bearer known as the ‘uncle’ or the God of Smiles performs with the Hoa Dao Lion Dance team members at the Spring Blossom Festival on Jan. 15, 2023, at the Hương Đạo Temple, 4717 E. Rosedale St. (Cristian ArguetaSoto | Fort Worth Report)
Talk to us!

NON-PARTISAN, NONPROFIT JOURNALISM

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