**Interfaith of The Woodlands Announces 2025 Hometown Heroes** **to be Honored at the 2025 Celebration of Excellence Gala**

**The Woodlands, TX – November 7, 2024** – Interfaith of The Woodlands is proud to announce the distinguished honorees to be recognized as the 2025 Hometown Heroes. This cherished tradition, which began in 1999 to celebrate The Woodlands' 25th anniversary, continues to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations whose contributions have significantly impacted our community. The 2025 Hometown Heroes include four exceptional individuals, one nonprofit and one corporate honoree, each selected for their lasting contributions to The Woodlands.

The 2025 Hometown Heroes are:

* **Cathy Brady**
* **Jim Rapp**
* **Jim Wendt**
* **Nick Wolda**
* **Truluck’s The Woodlands**
* **YES to YOUTH**

These honorees will officially join 170 other distinguished individuals, businesses, and organizations as part of this prestigious legacy. They will be celebrated at the 2025 Celebration of Excellence Gala, presented by Woodforest National Bank, on **Friday, February 28, 2025**. The event is co-chaired by long-time supporters, Julie Lile and Jen McDonald. Throughout the coming months, Interfaith will highlight each Hero’s invaluable contributions and commitment to preserving Mr. George P. Mitchell’s vision for The Woodlands community. Mary Anne and Mark Whitney have also been selected as Honorary Chairs for their steadfast dedication and support of Interfaith. Mary Anne has served on the Interfaith of The Woodlands Board of Directors for the last eight years, served as Board Chair for the past two years, and will continue her leadership as the organization’s Ex-Officio for 2025.

**Missy Herndon**, President & CEO of Interfaith of The Woodlands, shared, “Our community is filled with remarkable individuals who, through their selfless service, make The Woodlands a better place to live, work, play, and pray. These Heroes, nominated by our neighbors, have demonstrated extraordinary leadership and dedication to our community. We are thrilled to celebrate them at the Gala in February, where each will receive their official Hometown Hero Medallion.”

The honorees were revealed at a special gathering on November 6th at The Woodlands Towers, surrounded by family, friends, and Hometown Heroes alumni. The event was graciously hosted by **Howard Hughes** and underwritten by **Truluck’s The Woodlands.** The Woodlands Towers was transformed by Premiere Events and Piney Rose, who generously donated all of the florals.

The criteria for selecting Hometown Heroes include demonstrating exceptional leadership, serving as a positive role model, and dedicating time and energy to volunteerism. These individuals and organizations have also shown a willingness to sacrifice personal gain in pursuit of noble goals. They exhibit courage, and embody the core values of The Woodlands community. Nominations were accepted from the public this summer and reviewed by a selection committee made up of past Hometown Heroes.

The Woodlands Celebration of Excellence Gala is the largest annual fundraiser for Interfaith of The Woodlands. Generously supported by local businesses and organizations, the event’s proceeds directly benefit Interfaith’s essential community Programs and Services providing basic needs assistance for families and Seniors in need in South Montgomery County.

For more information about the event, to purchase tickets, or to inquire about sponsorship opportunities, visit [hometownheroesgala.org](http://hometownheroesgala.org) or contact **Amanda Poole**, Director of Development at **development@woodlandsinterfaith.org** or 832-615-8225.

# 2025 HOMETOWN HEROES:

## Cathy Brady

## Cathy Brady prefers to stay out of the spotlight while supporting her husband, retired congressman, The Honorable Kevin Brady and their two sons, Will and Sean.

## She was a teenager when her parents purchased a lot the year The Woodlands opened. A few years later, they moved into the house her parents still call home. Cathy fell immediately in love with The Woodlands. “I was free to explore the nature trails on my bike”, something she had not been able to do where she had lived previously.

## After her degree, Cathy entered a management training and credit analysis program at Texas Commerce Bank, to later become an E&P lender. Not long after, she attained her dream to live and work in The Woodlands as VP at Texas Commerce/Chase Bank-the Woodlands. With marketing added to her resume, she met her future husband at Chamber of Commerce event.

## Cathy absolutely loved working in the community where she lived. The short commute allowed her more time to be involved in the many beginnings happening throughout The Woodlands. “I honestly cannot recall all of the many things we were allowed to do. Everyone was new, everyone was welcome, everyone was encouraged to take part in the creation of this community that was unfolding”.

## Cathy served on the GMVA, started and maintained the Yard of the month award to reward residents who took extra initiative in landscaping their homes. She could be counted on to volunteer or help with logistics for most of the new special events rolling out... Arbor Day, Farmers market, The Woodlands Flea Market, Bottom of the Lake festival, the Shell Houston open, to name just a few. She was a founding director on the Woodlands Fourth of July Committee board, on the United Way board, a trained volunteer at PACN, a founding director of the Woodlands Children’s Museum, and more.

## Cathy joined an exciting team in charge of conversions and acquisitions with Chase downtown. Before she retired at 39 to focus on their new family, Cathy managed the bank’s retirement accounts portfolio, small business banking and had just rolled out online banking. All the while, she continued her involvement back home.

## In 1992, she ran and won a seat on the Woodlands Community Association Board of Directors, the governing body of The Woodlands at that time.

## It was a momentous time to be on the board, for over the next two years the board rewrote all of the covenants for The Woodlands to reflect a significant change. In the two prior stages of George Mitchell’s ingenious master plan for The Woodlands, his development company had controlling representation on the board of directors. At the end of 1994, control of The Woodlands transitioned to the residents. More recently, when a vote to incorporate The Woodlands was added to the ballot two months before an election, Cathy stepped out of her comfort zone to quickly educate residents. In Cathy’s words, “George Mitchell’s beautiful plan for The Woodlands continues to make this a welcoming community to live and work. Since 1994, the residents have been and continue to be in control. That’s worth preserving, that’s definitely worth fighting to protect.”

## Jim Rapp

Jim Rapp was born in Houston, Texas but in September of 1972 they moved to Oak Ridge. Jim began 2nd grade at Lamar Elementary, the first and only elementary school in South County at that time.

Jim was a part of the first class to open Neal Knox Junior High, the junior high school that would feed into McCullough High School. It was there that football became his passion, and as a result, was selected as Team Captain his senior year. He received All District, All County, and All Greater Houston honors as an offensive lineman. During the ‘81-‘82 football season the Highlanders made history beating the Conroe Tigers for the very first time. The same team also won District for the first time that year and advanced to Bi-District playoffs. It was the beginning of a winning culture that continues under Coach Rapp’s leadership today.

Upon graduating, Jim received a football scholarship to Trinity Valley Community College. He was a two-year starter on the offensive line and received TJCFC All-Conference honors. They won 2 conference championships, along with the influence of his high school and collegiate coaches, he was set on the trajectory of becoming an Educator and Coach as his mission and profession.

Jim completed his degree as a Bearkat at Sam Houston State University. He returned to Conroe ISD to do his student teaching at McCullough and went on to accept a permanent position teaching and coaching at Knox. It was also at Knox that Jim met his future wife, Danielle Brasher. They have been married for thirty-three years and have a son, Tyler.

In 1996, The Woodlands High School opened its doors. Jim was promoted to coach the varsity offensive line – his passion. During his time as offensive line coach, he had over 30 offensive linemen move on to play college football. As his experience grew, he was promoted as Offensive Coordinator.

In 2018 he was promoted to Head Coach and Athletic Director of The Woodlands High School. While in this role, he has been nominated by The Greater Houston Football Coaches Association as Coach of the Year. He also received the honor of being named District Coach of the Year. The Highlanders have been nominated on several occasions for Good Sportsmanship recognition by the Greater Houston Football Coaches Association. The Woodlands High School has won the Lone Star Cup many times excelling above other large 6A schools across the state vying for the honor.

His faith and church community are at the top of his priority list, as well as volunteerism and character building with his players. His offensive linemen, The Wall, give up their time, strength and energy to Habitat for Humanity, and assist in cleaning up yards for the elderly and collecting food for Interfaith. He supports Young Life, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Fields of Faith, Cassidy Joined for Hope, V4CR-Vets For Child Rescue, and HOPE-The Will Herndon Research Fund.

Jim takes a great deal of pride in saying that he is from The Woodlands. He was raised here, immersed in its growth and has contributed to the development of the culture of this amazing area he calls home.

## Jim Wendt

## In 1973, Jim was first exposed to The Woodlands when he entered a design contest at Rice University where he was studying for his Bachelor of Architecture. The contest involved designing a civic center for a project that was in the planning stages north of Houston called The Woodlands.

## In 1976, after earning his Master of Architecture, Jim Wendt was hired in the planning department of The Woodlands Development Company (TWDC). Jim felt privileged to be part of this team of 1970s-era idealistic planners, architects, and environmentalists, with ideas of how to carry out Mitchell’s vision for thousands of residents. Although they didn’t know it at the time, they were among the original TWDC visionaries who were creating a blueprint that would be emulated many times across the country and studied by architects and urbanists across the globe. Jim coined it “The Woodlands DNA”.

## Jim personally detailed the internal layout of each neighborhood and designed many of the parks himself. His reward….one of the final parks opened in The Woodlands was named in his honor, Wendtwoods Park.

## Jim’s volunteer service to the community spans over 30 years. He served on the Community Association Boards (WCA & TWA board) for a combined 16 years, and the Design Review Committee (DRC) for 15 years. Jim also serves on the Public Art Selection Committee for The Woodlands Arts Council. One of Jim’s earliest memories was being asked to find a site for the sculpture “Rise of the Midgard Serpent,” at the behest of Cynthia Woods Mitchell, as a focal point in the newly engineered Lake Woodlands in 1985. The setting for the sculpture was the first park he worked on, Southshore Park.

## A volunteer project near and dear to Jim’s heart is the design of a village at Angel Reach, a community of transitional homes for young adults that have aged out of the foster care system. The team is transforming a four-acre piece of property into 28 homes that will accommodate over 100 clients.

## Jim and his wife Susan have a blended family of five adult children and three grandchildren. When they married 21 years ago, Jim eagerly took on the job of helping Susan raise her three young grandsons who are now in their 20s. Jim and his family live in The Woodlands Village of Panther Creek.

## Nick Wolda

## Many of his colleagues will say, you can’t spell The Woodlands without a “w-o-l-d-a.”

## So, it seems destiny that Nick Wolda came to The Woodlands in 1999 after the start of his career where he represented companies in the medical, grocery, telecommunications and forestry fields.

## Starting November 16, 1999 with Town Center Improvement District, Nick has worked on project teams which included the development and launch of The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, the expansion of The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, and the developments of Market Street, Town Green Park and Waterway Square. He successfully launched The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau, an organization that promotes economic development through tourism and meetings. Today, he oversees the implementation of marketing and public relations programs to bring meetings and tourism dollars to The Woodlands. Nick has successfully generated articles on The Woodlands in media outlets such as USA Today, Travel + Leisure, Southern Living Magazine, Corporate & Incentive Travel, Golf Digest, Zagat’s and numerous radio and television programs. Prior to his current role, Nick directed the production of The Red, Hot & Blue Festival, The Ice Rink and Lighting of the Doves, among others, for 16 years. He was a founding member of The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival which is now ranked in the Top 10 of all arts festivals in the country. His marketing programs have won numerous awards from the International Festivals & Events Association, International Economic Development Council and several state-wide organizations.

## As a Christian believer, Nick has a strong passion in supporting mission groups and has been an active member of The Woodlands Methodist Church. He was on the founding team of the creation of The Loft at The Woodlands Methodist Church.

## Nick has a strong passion for youth sports, coaching several YMCA soccer teams, ORWALL baseball teams and SCFL football teams. He is widely known as “The Voice of The Woodlands” with The Woodlands Highlanders Football Radio Network, which broadcasts The Woodlands High School football games around the world.

## He has served two, three-year terms, on The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, as well as Education for Tomorrow’s Alliance, and the Cottage Green Homeowners Association.

## A graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University, Mr. Wolda began his career as a writer for The Lufkin Daily News and the Houston Chronicle. In his 38 years of marketing, Nick has provided sales, marketing, public relations and advertising guidance to a variety of corporations, companies, state associations and governmental entities.

## Nick is a resident of the Village of Alden Bridge and dad of two graduates of The Woodlands High school (Hylaree and Hudson,) “Bocci” for two grandchildren (Jubilee and Windsor) and caretaker of one mini Goldendoodle (Graham).

## Truluck’s The Woodlands

## Truluck’s is a premier dining destination, renowned for high-quality seafood, exceptional service, and steadfast dedication to sustainability. Since opening in 1992 in Houston, TX, Truluck’s has crafted unforgettable experiences, one memorable meal at a time for guests in our twelve locations across Florida, Texas, Illinois, and Washington D.C.

## Truluck's is deeply committed to serving the local communities surrounding each of its 12 locations. By partnering with community organizations, they actively participate in over 150 philanthropy projects and give-back programs. These initiatives range from donating time, products, and space to underwriting events, all with the goal of supporting causes that make a positive impact. The Truluck’s Woodlands team embodies these values, ensuring that every effort aligns with the greater good.

## Guided by a “Don’t Say No” philosophy, they continuously seek opportunities to give back through:

## Monthly volunteering at YES to YOUTH, including cooking dinners at the Bridgeway Shelter, participating in fundraising events, and serving on their gala committees.

## Mentoring future hospitality leaders from the University of Houston’s Conrad Hilton School and hosting etiquette courses for the National Association of Catering & Events (NACE).

## Supporting Interfaith of The Woodlands through food drives, event underwriting and volunteering at fundraisers.

## Engaging with Love Fosters Hope via annual galas, fundraisers, and volunteer efforts.

## Hosting and underwriting six charity breakfasts annually, where all proceeds go directly to local nonprofits.

## Actively participating in leadership and industry organizations, including NACE, WIPA, and Leadership Montgomery County.

## Providing culinary education to students at Caney Creek High School and supporting the HOPE Will Herndon Research Fund.

## Supporter of J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines in supporting their Touching Lives™ campaign to help eradicate breast cancer during breast cancer awareness month. This includes a $20 per bottle donation to National Breast Cancer Foundation for every bottle of J. Lohr Carol’s Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

## November will be the beginning of a partnership with Katz Coffee to support combat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with a donation of $1 of the proceeds from every French Press coffee and Espresso Martini to PTSD Foundation of America's Camp Hope, helping further the organization’s mission of supporting veterans and their families on their journey to healing.

## Through these and many other efforts, Truluck’s strives to create lasting, meaningful connections with the communities they serve, driven by the simple principle of doing unto others.

## The dedicated team in The Woodlands is comprised of Chris Davis, Operating Partner; Amber Scheer, CPCE, Senior Sales & Events Manager; Shane Flynn, Chef Partner; and Joe Wiley, General Manager.

## YES to YOUTH

## Founded in 1979, YES to YOUTH recently celebrated their 45th year of youth services in Montgomery County, Texas. Their mission is to strengthen the emotional and mental health development of youth and families by providing crisis intervention, counseling, and suicide prevention services. They provide a safe and nurturing home where abused, battered, sex-trafficked, homeless, and at-risk youth begin healing from the past and become empowered for the future. All of their services are provided at no cost to clients.

## YES to YOUTH programs have two distinct pathways to support the youth in our community: Youth and Family Services (YFS) and Shelter Services. The YFS path provides crisis intervention and counseling services to youth and families struggling with issues such as family or household conflict, stress, and behavioral concerns. Individual, family, and group counseling services are provided in person at their offices in Conroe, Magnolia, Splendora, The Woodlands, and virtually. YES to YOUTH partners with local school districts to provide counseling groups on school campuses. They also provide crisis support to families in their care, assisting them in meeting basic needs in the form of rental and utility assistance. Their goal is to prevent child abuse, neglect, self-harm, and involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare system through the development of positive coping skills. In 2023, their counseling program served 2,766 individuals.

## The Shelter Services path encompasses BridgeWay Home, a safe home for youth ages 10-17 removed from unsafe situations by Child Protective Services. As one of four licensed emergency youth shelters in the county, they fill a critical gap, serving residents from Montgomery County and neighboring counties. YES to YOUTH provides comprehensive care, coordinating physical, medical, and mental health services, stabilizing youth, and equipping them with healthy coping mechanisms for future success. In 2023, they served 71 residents at their BridgeWay home and had an average stay of 46 days in their care. YES to YOUTH is represented by CEO, Michele Kooken.

## About Interfaith of The Woodlands:

## Interfaith of The Woodlands is a non-profit social service agency providing numerous programs and services to meet the needs of The Woodlands and surrounding area. For more information on Interfaith’s programs and services, or to become a volunteer, please visit: woodlandsinterfaith.org or call 281-367-1230.