Anonymous donors make $1.2 million investment in Houston Youth Symphony

Katy well represented with 76 students

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

On September 22 Houston Youth Symphony (HYS) announced two transformational anonymous gifts totaling $1.2 million, representing a powerful investment in music education and youth development throughout the Greater Houston community. With three Full Orchestras and two String Orchestras, HYS offers a comprehensive musical experience for young musicians of various skill levels between the ages of 7 and 19.

Out of the 430 HYS musicians, 76 reside in Katy.

The gifts include a landmark $1 million contribution to HYS to support long-term organizational sustainability and an additional $200,000 gift designated for the HYS Coda Music Program, a free after-school program which expands access to high-quality music education for students who may otherwise face barriers to participation.

"These remarkable gifts are a testament to the profound impact that HYS programs can have on the lives of young people," said Amy Chung, Executive Director of Houston Youth Symphony. "The generosity of these anonymous donors sends a clear message that investing in young musicians is investing in the future of our community."

Together, these contributions will strengthen financial aid awards, support artistic excellence, expand community outreach, and increase access to transformative music experiences for young people across the region, a spokesperson for the organization said.

"These donors understand that every financial aid dollar awarded, every lesson taught, every rehearsal attended, and every musical work performed creates opportunities that extend far beyond the concert stage," said Deborah Dunham, President of the HYS Board of Directors. "We are deeply, deeply grateful for their generosity and clarity of vision."

The donors chose to remain anonymous, placing the focus not on recognition, but on the students whose lives will be enriched through these investments. In doing so, they have created a quiet challenge: that the broader community might be moved by the same belief that music education is worth their investment.

As HYS celebrates its milestone 80th year, it invites alumni, parents, arts advocates, civic leaders, and philanthropic partners to build upon this momentum, look to the future, and support the continued growth of all HYS's programs.

With more than 100 musicians currently on financial aid, audition applications growing every year, and in-school music programs being cut across Houston, the need for sustained investment has never been greater. "These contributions create tremendous momentum, raising the ceiling for what HYS can do," said Amy Chung.

To learn more about supporting Houston Youth Symphony, visit www.houstonyouthsymphony.org.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BASKIN ROBBINS

Local Baskin Robbins franchisees Mark and Shannon Norman, in partnership with the Baskin-Robbins Joy in Childhood Foundation, present a $5,000 donation to the Monty Ballard YMCA at Cinco Ranch to support youth and family programs. The presentation took place on September 19 as the store at 1590 S. Mason in Katy celebrated its recent renovation.

Katy Baskin-Robbins® hosts Katy Flavor Fest to celebrate newly-renovated location

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Baskin-Robbins™, the world's largest chain of specialty ice cream shops, hosted Katy Flavor Fest on Sept. 19 at its newly remodeled shop at 1560 S. Mason Road, Suite B, in Katy. Guests were able enjoy 31-cent ice cream scoops and to spin the Baskin-Robbins prize wheel to win branded giveaways as they listened to music from an on-site DJ.

During the event, local franchisees Mark and Shannon Norman, in partnership with the Baskin-Robbins Joy in Childhood Foundation, presented a $5,000 donation to the Monty Ballard YMCA at Cinco Ranch. The donation will support programs that help young people build confidence, character and lifelong skills while strengthening local families through health, wellness and connection.

As locals to the Houston area, the Normans recently acquired the Katy Baskin-Robbins and have since reopened the shop with a new, refreshed look designed to enhance the guest experience. Including the Katy shop, the Normans own and operate six Baskin-Robbins locations throughout the greater Houston region.

Mark and Shannon Norman are continuing to expand Baskin-Robbins' presence in the broader Houston community with a renewed vision rooted in connection, family and a shared appreciation for the brand. After spending many years in corporate America, they were drawn to the opportunity to build something centered on joy, become more connected to the communities they serve and create a meaningful legacy for their family.

"We wanted to build a business around something that naturally brings people joy," said Baskin-Robbins franchisees Mark and Shannon Norman. "Baskin-Robbins is more than just ice cream. It is often part of birthdays, celebrations, family traditions and everyday moments of joy. We want our shops to be welcoming places where families can come together and make lasting memories."

The Baskin-Robbins location showcases a reimagined design with a fresh, modern look, creating a vibrant space where guests can celebrate the happiness ice cream brings to every moment, big or small. The 1,300-square-foot shop employs 10 crew members, seats 20 guests indoors and 25 outdoors, and is open daily from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

WATER DISTRICT NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

The HARRIS-WALLER COUNTIES MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT #5 will hold a public hearing on a proposed tax rate for the tax year 2026 on October 15, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at 3200 Southwest Freeway, Suite 2400, Houston, TX 77027. Your individual taxes may increase at a greater or lesser rate, or even decrease, depending on the tax rate that is adopted and on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property. The change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in the taxable value of all other property determines the distribution of the tax burden among all property owners.

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

FOR the proposal: Chelsea Taylor, Wes Simon, Sebastian Hernandez and Hannah Gay

AGAINST the proposal: None

PRESENT and not voting: None

ABSENT: Cailin Loyd

The following table compares taxes on an average residence homestead in this taxing unit last year to taxes proposed on the average residence homestead this year.

	Last Year	This Year
Total tax rate (per $100 of value)	$1.50000/$100 Adopted	$1.50000/$100 Proposed
Difference in rates per $100 of value	$ .00000/$100	
Percentage increase/decrease in rates (+/-)	.00%	
Average appraised residence homestead value	$ 394,858	$ 354,371
General homestead exemptions available (excluding 65 years of age or older or disabled person's exemptions)	$ 0	$ 0
Average residence homestead taxable value	$ 394,858	$ 354,371
Tax on average residence homestead	$ 5,922.87	$ 5,315.56
Annual increase/decrease in taxes if proposed tax rate is adopted (+/-) and percentage of increase (+/-)	$ -607.31 -10.25%	

NOTICE OF TAXPAYERS' RIGHT TO ELECTION TO REDUCE TAX RATE

If the district adopts a combined debt service, operation and maintenance, and contract tax rate that would result in the taxes on the average residence homestead increasing by more than eight percent, the qualified voters of the district by petition may require that an election be held to determine whether to reduce the operation and maintenance tax rate to the voter-approval tax rate under Section 49.23603, Water Code.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

WATER DISTRICT NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

The CORNERSTONES MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT will hold a public hearing on a proposed tax rate for the tax year 2026 on October 19, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at 805 Hidden Canyon Road, Katy, TX 77450. Your individual taxes may increase at a greater or lesser rate, or even decrease, depending on the tax rate that is adopted and on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property. The change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in the taxable value of all other property determines the distribution of the tax burden among all property owners.

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

FOR the proposal: Morgan Stagg, Michael Chittwood, Lionel A. Garza, Stephen Talecki and John Ferguson

AGAINST the proposal: None

PRESENT and not voting: None

ABSENT: None

The following table compares taxes on an average residence homestead in this taxing unit last year to taxes proposed on the average residence homestead this year.

	Last Year	This Year
Total tax rate (per $100 of value)	$0.23250/$100 Adopted	$0.23250/$100 Proposed
Difference in rates per $100 of value	$0.00000/$100	
Percentage increase/decrease in rates (+/-)	.00%	
Average appraised residence homestead value	$ 449,505	$ 450,631
General homestead exemptions available (excluding 65 years of age or older or disabled person's exemptions)	$ 89,901	$ 90,126
Average residence homestead taxable value	$ 359,604	$ 360,505
Tax on average residence homestead	$ 836.07	$ 838.17
Annual increase/decrease in taxes if proposed tax rate is adopted (+/-) and percentage of increase (+/-)	$ 2.10 .25%	

NOTICE OF VOTE ON TAX RATE

If the district adopts a combined debt service, operation and maintenance, and contract tax rate that would result in the taxes on the average residence homestead increasing by more than 3.5 percent, an election must be held to determine whether to approve the operation and maintenance tax rate under Section 49.23602, Water Code. An election is not required if the adopted tax rate is less than or equal to the voter-approval tax rate.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.