

The House That Became a Home for So Many

Having grown up on a ranch in a small town, with wide-open spaces and plenty of room to explore, roam, play and simply be a kid, I desperately wanted to recreate that childhood for my children. I wanted them to have a place where they could run outside, climb, swim, fish, play, gather their friends and make the kind of memories that stay with you for a lifetime. I wanted a place that felt like a home, not just a house.

When I became pregnant with our third child, we knew our prior home was no longer a good fit for our growing family. We began looking for something bigger, but we weren't simply looking for more square footage, we were looking for a gathering place. Growing up, my family regularly opened our home for church gatherings, family reunions, and neighborhood get-togethers. I wanted that same spirit for our children. I wanted a home where we could welcome not only the people we called family, but also the people who became part of our community and our children's lives. We searched for nearly four years. We looked at property after property. We looked at acreage communities that offered beautiful land and plenty of room, but there was always something missing. We could find the land. We could find the space. But we couldn't find the sense of community we wanted our children to experience. **We were looking for what we jokingly called a “unicorn.”**

We wanted the feeling of growing up on a ranch, but we needed it to be near Houston. We wanted acreage and open space, but we also wanted neighbors who knew one another, children who could grow up together and a real sense of community. We wanted privacy without isolation. Then we found 2811 Hinkles Ferry in Texana Plantation. It was the unicorn!

Texana Plantation didn't feel like an acreage development where everyone simply happened to own an acreage lot. It had a genuine neighborhood feel, complete with an annual neighborhood-wide crawfish boil at the front lake. Families knew each other. Children played together. There was a sense of community that we hadn't found in the other acreage communities we had explored. And because it is a gated community, our children were able to experience the independence of riding their bikes around the neighborhood. They could go visit friends and have the freedom to explore the six different lakes around the neighborhood on their own while we knew they were in a safe, close-knit environment.

And yet, we were still *close to everything, yet away from it all*. That phrase captures what we have loved most about living here. We could enjoy the peace, privacy and space of an acreage property, while still being close to the restaurants, shopping, schools, churches, medical care, highways and everything else our family needed.

Then there was the house itself. We fell in love with the 2.34 acres and sunset views overlooking the lake, but we also fell in love with the way the home was built. The quality of the construction was immediately apparent. It felt substantial. It was thoughtfully designed, beautifully finished, and built to be lived in rather than simply looked at. The home has three beautiful en-suite bedrooms upstairs—one for each of our children—along with a downstairs guest room and a separate guest house where grandparents could come and stay with us. But what made the house extraordinary was the spaces in between. There is an upstairs workout

room and a flex room that was initially our homeschool room and later became our craft room. We were beginning a new chapter of educating our children when we moved to 2811 Hinkles Ferry, and the house seemed perfectly designed for it. There are dedicated spaces throughout the home where each child could work, learn, and concentrate.

The house grew and changed right alongside our family and became so much more than our family's home. It became the highlight of our lives. Every one of our children's birthdays was celebrated here. Grandparents, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews gathered here for Christmas, Thanksgiving and countless other special occasions. We hosted baseball teams, softball teams, volleyball teams, football gatherings and friends from all the activities that filled our children's lives. The house even developed its own little reputation in the neighborhood as “the house with the full-sized candy bars” at Halloween. Every year, trick-or-treaters knew that if they made their way to our house, they were in for something special. The circle drive made it especially fun for the neighborhood's golf-cart trick-or-treating tradition. There was something so joyful about watching children and families arrive by golf cart and knowing that our home had become one of those places kids looked forward to visiting every Halloween. **It was just another way the house was part of something bigger—a community.**

Sometimes, the home opened its doors when people simply needed a safe haven during a time of transition. During Hurricane Harvey, a family very dear to us lost their home to flooding. For a time, we were able to give that family, and their three young children, a place to stay in the guest house while they figured out what came next. We also welcomed a pastor and his wife into the guest house for several weeks as they transitioned back to the United States after serving as missionaries abroad. Those are some of the memories we treasure most. A house can be beautiful, but a home becomes special because of what happens inside it. And there has been so much life inside these walls.

For our children, 2811 Hinkles Ferry offered the childhood freedom we had spent years seeking for our family. They could swim in the pool, fish at the lake, take a kayak or canoe out on the lake, play on the expansive lawn, jump on the trampoline, kick a soccer ball around the backyard, or simply disappear outside for an afternoon of playing with the numerous pets—dogs, cats, rabbits, ducks, geese, fish—we raised over the years. And somehow, we could still keep an eye on them from the kitchen while preparing dinner and taking care of the everyday things that make a family run.

As they grew older, the house grew with them. The same spaces that once held toys, schoolwork and little-kid birthday parties became the setting for homecoming celebrations, prom festivities, football preseason gatherings, sleepovers and evenings filled with teenagers and their friends. **One of our favorite features has always been the way the media room and game room are positioned just off the kitchen.** It is one of the best family floorplans we have ever experienced. The kids have room to be kids. They can have their friends over, watch movies, play games and enjoy their own space, and Mom and Dad can still be right there. You can cook dinner, clean the kitchen, work at the island or simply go about your evening and still know what is happening. It gives children independence while allowing parents to remain present. That is what this home has always done so well. It brings people together while giving everyone room to spread out.

Over the years, 2811 Hinkles Ferry has been a place for celebrations, holidays, games, schoolwork, swimming, fishing, meals, laughter, friendship, faith, transition and even refuge. It has been a place where children grew up. Where grandparents were welcomed. Where friends became family. Where families who needed a little help found a safe place to stay. Where teams gathered. Where teenagers celebrated milestones. Where birthdays were celebrated year after year. Where Christmas mornings and Thanksgiving dinners became traditions. Where Halloween meant full-sized candy bars and golf-cart trick-or-treating. And where countless children and families were given a place to simply belong.

Looking back, we realize that we didn't just find a bigger house. We found a place with room to roam, where children could be children and ride their bikes and golf carts through the neighborhood, visit their friends and experience the independence that comes from having a little world of their own. A place where neighbors become friends, family can gather, and we could open our doors and share what we had with others. A place where we could have all of that while still being *close to everything, yet away from it all*. The number of children and families that 2811 Hinkles Ferry has allowed our family to welcome, love and bless has been one of the greatest gifts. We have loved this home deeply.

Texana Plantation gave our children the neighborhood experience we wanted for them, while 2811 Hinkles Ferry gave our family the space to live, gather, celebrate and serve others. Now, as our children grow into the next chapters of their lives, we know it is time for another family to write its story here. We hope that the next family who walks through these doors recognizes what we discovered years ago. That this isn't simply a beautiful property. It is a home with room for a family to grow, and perhaps, most importantly, **room to love people well**.

We were blessed to find our unicorn. We were blessed to find 2811 Hinkles Ferry. We hope the family who comes next will love it as deeply as we have!

With love,

The family that found their unicorn