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FEATURED

## Vineyard community harvest event helps adoptive families

Chelsea Katz  
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Kerr Taylor, co-owner of Rowland Taylor Vineyards, loads a basket of Lenoir grapes onto the back of a utility task vehicle during the annual harvest event in Chappell Hill. Proceeds from this harvest will be donated to Pathways for Little Feet.

Cassie Stricker

Chelsea Katz

Rowland Taylor Vineyards in Washington County is aiming to bridge the gap between for-profit business and nonprofit work, as sales from its annual first Lenoir grape harvest support adoptive families.

Two dozen people arrived at the 500-acre farm in Chappell Hill in late July to hand-harvest 25 vines of Lenoir grapes, according to Angela Garcia, sales manager for the vineyard. The grapes were then sold to Haak Vineyards and Winery in Santa Fe, Texas, with the money going to the Pathways for Little Feet nonprofit, which was founded by Rowland Taylor owners and founders Kerr and Jill Taylor.

Pathways for Little Feet was established to provide financial assistance to families looking to adopt. The vineyard owners turned to adoption to start their family, Garcia said, and found how expensive the process is. They wondered how many people are willing to adopt but do not have the means to do so, she said.

In 1998, the Taylors successfully adopted a daughter, Christina, from Russia, and were then able to have two biological children.

The couple established Pathways for Little Feet in 2009, at first as a way to provide loans for families looking to adopt. The nonprofit provides no-interest loans, and then when the families pay back those loans the money funds the next family's loan. The nonprofit has helped 620 children become part of a family, Garcia said.

The work of Pathways expanded to include counseling and therapy scholarships after the Taylors recognized the ongoing need, Garcia said, noting that every adoption is brought on by loss or tragedy, and the Taylors saw the long-term effects of those experiences. The \$3,000 raised from the harvesting will fund three scholarships for adopted children and their families to attend counseling and therapy sessions.

The farm, which has five acres of vineyards and 200 head of cattle, is a result of Kerr Taylor turning his hobbies into a business, Garcia said, after his real estate company sold and he spent a year being retired.

In about four hours, she said, the group of Rowland Taylor friends and family members harvested a little more than 2 tons of grapes to raise \$3,000.

“You go down each aisle, and anywhere there’s a grape cluster, you cut it off,” Garcia said. “You do that down the whole row. We have 25 rows, and each one averages about 50 vines a row, so you’re cutting clusters from those vines and you’re putting them in the bins.”

With children and adults volunteering, she said, it is a time for friends and neighbors to meet and bond.

“Just kind of had a late morning, afternoon of fun, which was just sweet,” she said. “Just to get to do something outside and safe and be together — that was special, too.”

The nonprofit has also partnered with the Lifesong organization in Ukraine, helping to fund two farms that employ about 80 orphans who have aged out of the system as teenagers.

Garcia said it is exciting to grow grapes in Washington County, sell them to a winery in Santa Fe and make an impact in the Houston area where Pathways is based, as well as in other communities. She said they hope other businesses will be encouraged to help nonprofits or ministries.

“That’s just something Kerr and Jill are really passionate about, using the gifts and talents that they’ve been given, to work hard and glorify God in that sense and then be a blessing,” she said.

**Chelsea Katz**