



NEWS

## Texas Wild Rice Festival



Photo by: <http://www.texaswildricefestival.org/>

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A local festival that celebrates the San Marcos River hopes people will cast the seed of change to help this environmental movement grow.

The San Marcos River has brought a steady stream of people from diverse backgrounds with varied interests in the environment to San Marcos. There are those whose efforts are focused on this body of water, like Ashley Wright, who is working toward uniting the community through the Inaugural Texas Wild Rice Festival.

Wright, a former employee of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, remembered the epiphany she had as a glass bottom boat tour guide.

”If Poteet can have a strawberry festival, if Luling can have a watermelon thump, shouldn’t San Marcos have a celebration about its endangered species?”  
– Ashley Wright

But she realized that the majority of the San Marcos residents she knew had not been to the center and did not know much about the unique resource that runs through the city – their city.

A city that is home to the fountain darter, Comal Springs riffle beetle and dryopid beetle, Peck’s cave amphipod, San Marcos gambusia and salamander, as well as the Texas blind salamander and wild rice.

Out of the eight endangered species, the Texas wild rice stood out to the Texas State alumna because of its symbiotic relationship with the river and, in turn, humans.

Texas wild rice requires a steady current of water to stay alive and because of that there are limitations on how much water can be taken from the springs to ensure the plant’s survival, said Wright of her reasons why she is raising awareness and working to protect it.

The idea for the Inaugural Texas Wild Rice Festival was just a dream she had.

That is until December of 2012.

Wright said she began collaborating with friend and former Meadows Center co-worker Samantha Beasley on the festival, which aims to show what is possible when a community celebrates and educates.

San Marcans will still have the opportunity to make the free, educational festival their own by sponsoring a booth, donating to the online Indiegogo campaign and attending the event itself on April Eleventh and Twelfth at Sewell Park.

Much like Wright’s short hair, the City of San Marcos is in transition, being named the nation’s fastest growing city last year. That title continues to come with great responsibility.

”Because of the way our city’s growing so quickly and so rapidly we want to build a bridge to everybody to come together over water.”  
– Ashley Wright

She added that the more people know about the river the more likely they will be to make informed decisions about local development.

Wright has seen San Marcos change during the seven years she has called the city home. She goes with the flow

even when she's travelling – showing people she meets pictures of and discussing the San Marcos River; this body of water is her identity and the identity of the city and all of its inhabitants big and small.

It is this spirit of solidarity that has kept Wright on a path of environmental education. She is working with the San Marcos Arts Council and the San Marcos Nature Center to get the employees and students of San Marcos Independent School District involved with the Texas Wild Rice Festival.

“They're all about giving the children the power to make a decision and giving children the power to affect the future and especially since the children that live here are the next wave to come after us, I mean, it's good to plant the seed.”

– Ashley Wright

The Indiegogo campaign for the Texas Wild Rice Festival concludes this week. Learn more about the festival and other ways to become involved at:

<http://www.texaswildricefestival.org/>

Jordan Gass-Poore, KTSW News

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