

## What awaits future Comal County youth?

By Frank Dietz  
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These thoughts are prompted by an experience almost two decades ago. The prompting has remained with me and inspired discovery and learning curves and grown deeply rooted convictions about conservation and the fragile balances of the open, wild and natural about us in Comal County and the celebrated Texas Hill Country.

Relatively soon after we were learning our ways into our retirement haus and becoming cognizant of the challenges and gifts of the modest piece of pasture that a fence marked as our space, I got a special assignment. Our sons and their spouses were assisting Karen inside and I eagerly offered to have our very young grands join me for an outdoor adventure.

Closed-toe shoes, long trousers or jeans were the attire of the hiking adventure as we proceeded first to find walking sticks just beyond the yard fence. We lined those up for when we headed to a creek bed a little later, joined hands in a chain and headed into the woods. Grandpa began calling attention to most everything and cautioning that agarita leaves and prickly pear needs to be dodged. Great laughter arose when I was looking backward and knocked my hat off on a low branch which was clearing for all of theirs.

Then we began to note bones, discarded antlers, scars from earlier fires, varieties and differences in the trees and understory, little creatures under a fallen limb or rock when we flipped them and so much more. I introduced them to signs of how the rainwaters drained when they came furiously, noted indentations and two karst features which brought us to the subject of waters beneath us.

Some branches invited the older ones to climb up a bit, younger not so much. One of who was holding my hand looked up at me saying, "Grandpa Hub, I am listening so I can bring children on this walk when you are gone." Startling at first and then the innocence of appreciation welled up in me. So, what about those young dear ones' grands?

That most memorable experience fired my convictions. Indeed, Karen and her siblings are charting a good course in their determination to protect and pass on a family land legacy through conservation easement. In a much larger sense, what will the children yet to come find that we have provided and protected of our precious and fragile Comal with its rivers and springs, open spaces for exploration and discovery?

The surviving and ever-changing wild component of our piece of Texas is expressive of our Texas Hill Country heritage as well. I have been thinking that the wonderful African greeting when entering another village, "And, how are the children?" might be expanded to, "How are the children and your natural areas?" For this grandfather it is both principled and apt! Perhaps equally remarkable is the energy inspired by the question from my wonderful hiking group even twenty years hence.

You, too, can assist and provide lift and perspective to the efforts called forth in the call and cry of our youngest for those later generations. How we protect, preserve and conserve today mightily impacts their (and our more immediate) tomorrows. Those of us allied and networking in the effort can assure you of the joy and satisfactions that come in the struggle to make a quality natural future possible and more likely.

Yes, it costs in dollars and energy but oh, how it's worth it! Check out options at [comalconservation.org](http://comalconservation.org).

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