

## “HOW A SPLENDID MEETING HAS LED TO ENGAGING TOGETHER!”

By Frank Dietz

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In a considerable convergence of mutual interest and commitment, Comal County Conservation Alliance met and engaged our 1<sup>st</sup> Executive Director, Ryan Keith Spencer. This passionate and well-trained conservationist brings a wealth of experiences and studies to build the future with willingly allied folks in our challenging, growing Hill Country County. Though I have served on numerous and varied search committees through quite a few decades, I cannot recall another experience when I felt ready to jump to my feet and shout “let’s do this now!” Bear with me as I tell you some of my delight and hopes for this mutually beneficial engagement of gifts and passion.

In shaping a position description and frightfully detailed list of expectations, we realized we really needed to find a dance partner willing to ascertain how to walk, reach, explore and pursue together in a manner that will produce effective outcomes. Ryan expressed his attraction to the position in seeing both “the NEED and the PEOPLE.” He lifts up the extraordinary Hill Country beauty and iconic natural resources. For those of us residents on this search journey, we listened intently and saw in Ryan’s journey of discovery and learning many pluses to bring to this relationship. While a student at Texas State he interned in a variety of capacities with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Perhaps of special surprise was an intern assignment as Park Ranger at Guadalupe River State Park and unique assignment after state acquisition on the Honey Creek Natural Area. Sometime you can ask him about that solo effort to get an area ready for public exploration. Fascinating, too, are tales about his work with the glass bottom boats so attractive to curious youngsters and adults. Impressively, Ryan has been a student of both the contexts of the natural wonders of Texas’ Hill Country and its many contours for discovery and exploration. He says he recognizes that though there are many ways in which the contiguous and regional counties have commonalities, both the particular natural phenomena of our Comal County and the people who keep coming to see and, in many instances, make a home here, shape a unique opportunity. His growing depth and breadth of wisdom along with rich experiences with people convince him that folks from many points of view are brought together cherishing and enhancing our remarkable natural resources. Rather than seeing what divides in our fractious times, as a passionate conservationist Ryan sees our rivers, springs and other natural resources as a common thread binding us together to find “best practices” enhancing what treasures we have here in Comal.

Ryan’s most recent task while pursuing his doctoral studies and research has been since 2018 with The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment. As a Search Committee and Board, CCCA took special note that his work included coordinating strategic planning and key development relationships and outreach. He has an uncanny familiarity with the sources for support for non-profits in our region and state. Needless to say, this facet of getting to know Ryan found very eager and welcome ears, eyes and responses.

Capable as Ryan is in coming to his new endeavor, he stresses that his experiences, interests, and training bring him to a team building of interested and willing folks intergenerationally to create a unique expression of conservation. It promises to serve as a model well into the future here in Comal County and for others to admire and emulate.

Go to [comalconservation.org](http://comalconservation.org) for a more thorough acquaintance with Ryan Keith Spencer, CCCA Executive Director.