



“I like the part about trying something new, even if it’s scary.”

—DONNY LEAVELL, AGE 11

Big Wins, Brave Words

Donny Leavell’s Journey to an International Essay Contest

The Merriman Park fifth grader is advancing through the Lions International Peace Essay Contest with a message inspired by teamwork, kindness, and courage.

AT JUST 11 YEARS OLD, Donny Leavell, a fifth grader at Merriman Park Elementary, is already learning an important lesson: sometimes the things that feel the hardest can lead to the biggest rewards.

Donny, whose favorite school subject is “recess” (of course!), loves wrestling, playing football, and video games. Writing hasn’t always come easily to him, but with encouragement from his teachers — and a willingness to try something new — he recently earned an impressive honor. Donny won both the **local and district-level Lions International Peace Essay Contest**, advancing his essay to the next levels of international competition.

This year’s theme, **“Together as One,”** struck a personal chord. Donny drew inspiration from his flag football team and the way teammates supported one another on and off the field. “It reminded me of how we all played well together,” he shared. His essay emphasizes teamwork, kindness, and the courage it takes to step outside your comfort zone — even when it feels scary.

Donny approached the writing process thoughtfully, brainstorming ideas and organizing his essay with a clear beginning, middle, and end. While he was nervous at first, reflecting on his football season made the experience meaningful — and even enjoyable. When he found out he had won, his reaction was simple and genuine: “Oh, cool!” followed by total surprise.

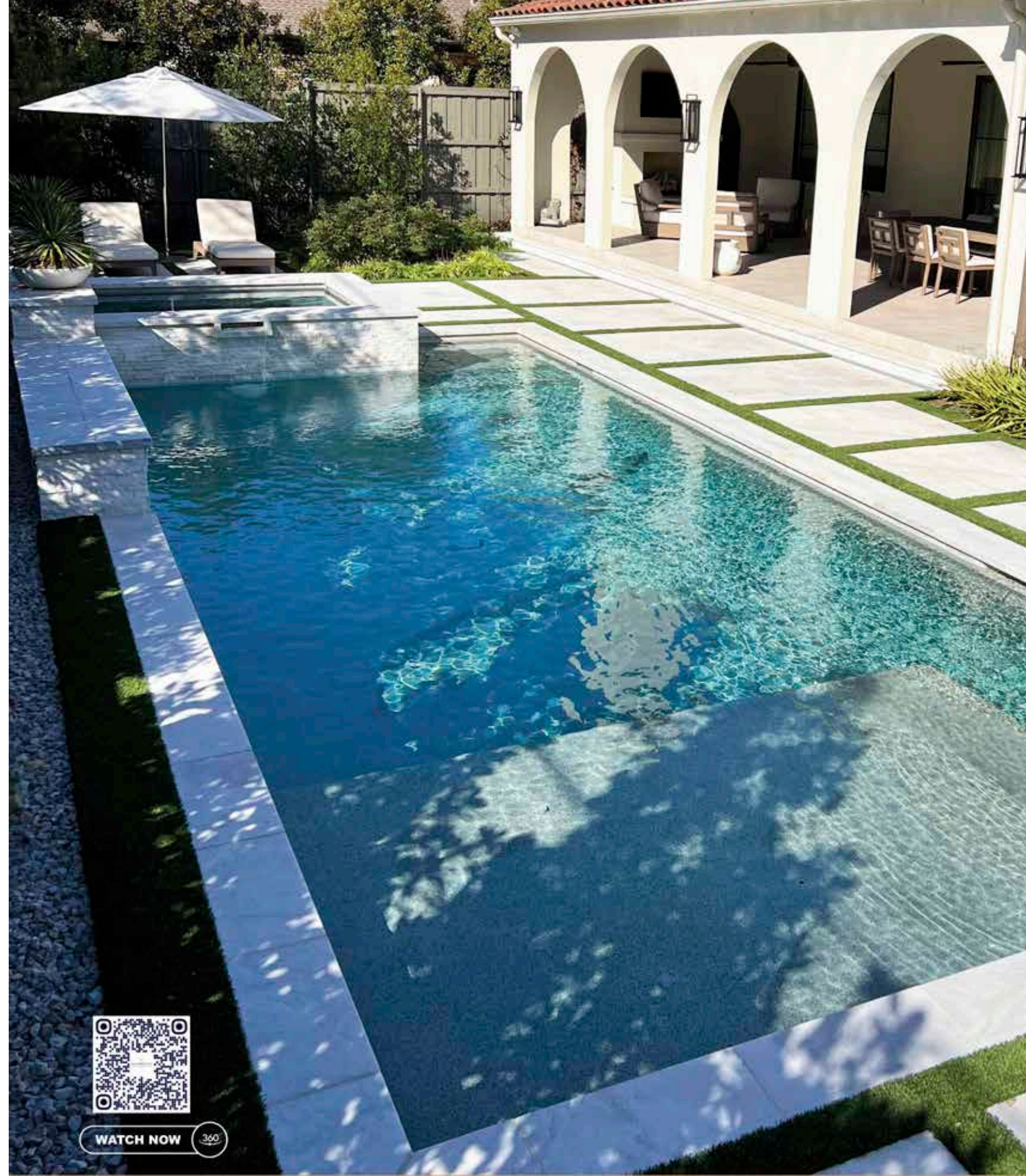
His mom says the achievement was especially meaningful for their family, as no one had ever entered an essay competition before. She credits Donny’s incredible teachers and the support of Merriman Park Elementary for helping him grow into the student he is today.

Born with albinism, Donny has vision challenges that can’t be corrected with glasses or surgery. Thanks to years of vision therapy and adaptive technology in the classroom, he continues to thrive. His message to other kids? **“Just go for it.”** And that may be the most powerful lesson of all.



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PRECISION BY DESIGN

WHY SUMMERHILL POOLS • OUTDOOR LIVING IS THE BENCHMARK FOR DALLAS CRAFTSMANSHIP

PHOTO CREDIT: JIN KIM STUDIO

For East Dallas homeowners who possess a deep-seated love for the outdoors, the backyard is more than a mere plot of land; it is a primary venue for living and a sanctuary that reflects the unique character of our community. “At Summerhill Pools • Outdoor Living, we believe these spaces should feel like a natural, seamless extension of the home—architecturally beautiful, highly functional, and built to endure for generations,” says Michelle Reed. This philosophy began in 1989 when founder Mark McCaffrey established the company on a singular premise: construction done right. With a career dating back to 1978, Mark recognized early on that long-term value is born from the fundamentals of rigorous planning, superior materials, and disciplined execution.

Summerhill grew into a multi-generational, family-owned boutique

firm built on relationships. Michelle Reed, Mark’s daughter, joined in 1994, bringing a refined design perspective and a client-first approach rooted in being genuine and communicating clearly. Her husband David Reed added 30 years of pool construction expertise that strengthened the technical foundation of every project, reinforcing the kind of distinguished build quality that clients can feel in the finished product. In 2019, Matthew—Michelle’s brother—joined the crew. And in 2022, Lain, David and Michelle’s son, became an integral part of the operations team. That’s the “family” part in action: people who care deeply, stepping in to make sure the experience stays steady from start to finish.

What truly distinguishes a Summerhill project is an engineering-first approach designed to protect the homeowner’s investment. “We utilize our in-house landscape architect,

Bryce Bartlett to master complex site constraints and elevations before the first shovel hits the dirt,” says Michelle. This level of preparation ensures a smoother build with a defined project scope, protecting you from drastic changes in timeline or pricing. Their recent recognition in 2025 as the Business of the Year by the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce is a testament to this consistency. “We prioritize innovation that serves longevity, integrating high-efficiency systems and advanced 3D modeling to optimize how a family actually interacts with their environment,” says Michelle.

Ultimately, a Summerhill backyard is a lifestyle catalyst. Whether through new pool construction, meticulous remodeling, or the addition of outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, and putting greens, their firm specializes in the total transformation of your outdoor space.

That commitment continues long after the build; from the initial 3D design to weekly professional maintenance overseen by Carrie Busse, Summerhill Pools • Outdoor Living remains dedicated to the longevity of your investment. The firm doesn’t just build pools; they curate the backdrop for your family’s most cherished memories, ensuring every detail is as reliable and distinguis

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TO MEET THE TEAM
OR SCHEDULE YOUR
CONSULTATION.



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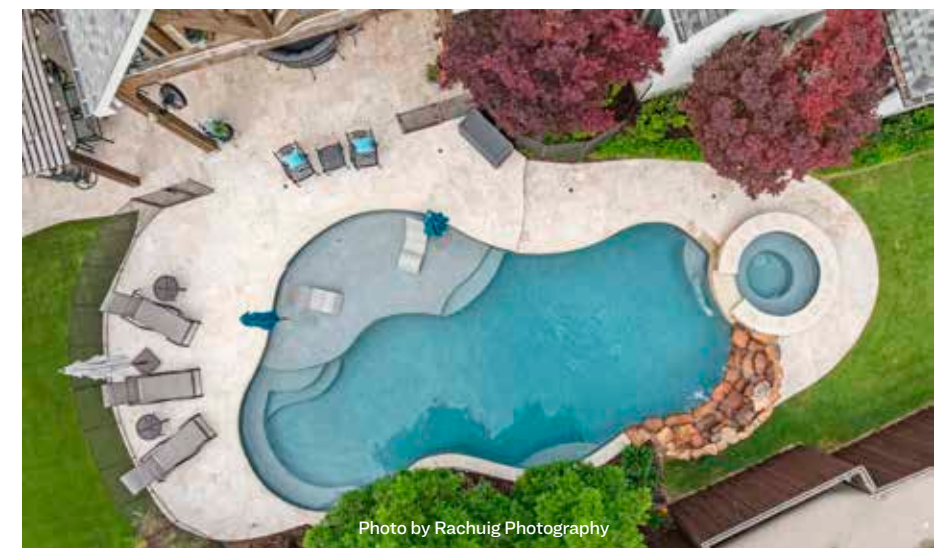


Photo by Rachuig Photography