



# JOE KENDALL

**Texas River School**  
Founder 1992-Present

My first interest in the outdoors came when I lived in Detroit. We did not have a lot of access to outdoor activities in the city. When I was in Boy Scouts, I was introduced to camping and canoeing.

After many years in the restaurant industry, I moved to Austin in 1981. I had friends who lived on Lake Travis. I was really impressed by the beauty of the lake and I committed myself to improving my watercraft skills.

In 1985, I rented a house from Wayne Gronquist, who was one of the early members of the Save Barton Creek Association. I met Joe Riddell, another environmental advocate and avid white-water paddler. We went on Barton Creek. I was so impressed by the beauty of Barton Creek.

Around that time, I was introduced to the writings of Joseph Campbell, in particular, *The Power of the Myth*. Campbell talked about following your bliss, your highest high. I decided I wanted to try to do something.

I joined Adopt-a-River a river clean-up program. Eventually, I received \$30,000 to start the Adopt-the-Colorado River Foundation. We celebrated with a trip down the Colorado River. It was a 6-day event, ending with a concert featuring Steve Fromholtz. At a certain point the LCRA liked what we were doing so much that they took over the Adopt-the-Colorado River Foundation and renamed it the Colorado River Alliance.

In 1992 the LCRA gave me funding to start a new organization so we started the Chautauqua Foundation, it combined entertainment and education. I met singer Bill Oliver. We started at the Texas Rowing Dock and then renamed the organization the Texas River School.

We received a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife to get non-traditional constituents out on the river. We now take 600 kids on the river every year. We have taken over 13,000 kids canoeing. My goal is to re-create the AISD outdoor program with a canoe and camping program and I am still working on that after 28 years.

# JOE KENDALL CONT'D



During the early 1990s, when the environmentalists were trying to convince the City Council to pass stronger protections for Barton Creek we started taking elected officials out in canoes and kayaks. Wayne Gronquist had the idea that if we could just get the decision makers out on the creek then they would support protecting it. My part was the outfitting and provisioning. Joe Riddell would talk about the history and technical aspects. Bill Oliver was the entertainment. We would put in at Highway 71 and paddle down the 13 miles to Lost

Creek when the water was deep enough. On one memorable trip we took Council members Gus Garcia and Ronnie Reynolds out. That being one of our early trips, we had underestimated the amount of water in the creek. Councilmember Ronnie Reynolds and his son were big guys and their canoe ran aground more than a few times. Later he referred to that trip as, "the canoe trip from hell."

The trips were funded by the Save Barton Creek Association. George Cofer, Beverly Griffith, and Deborah Morin also pitched in. We thought if we could just get them out on the creek they would want to protect it.

**BARTON CREEK**  
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**TIME STREAM**