





Finlay Slaven, Ben Heintz, Karen Twist, Amber Slaven, Amy Richards, Beth Twist, Niall Slaven, Vanessa Heintz, Maddy Heintz, Sam Richards, and Ben Richards enjoy participating in the fellowship offered by the Expat Families Group

As a group they watched the royal wedding in Richards' decorated backyard with about 100 guests. And this past June, they commemorated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee by hosting their first formally organized event at Willow Fork Country Club. In addition to celebrating traditional British holidays like the Grand National horse race and Pancake Day (Shrove Tuesday), they also organize holiday parties. "Holidays like Thanksgiving and 4th of July can be quite lonely," says Richards. "You really notice the lack of family during Christmas."

### Acclimating to Katy

Fun and games aside, the group helps those who are new to the area get socially acclimated. For example, "understanding the health care system was a difficult part of the move," Richards, an ICU nurse who has been here for three years explains. "A few people have had babies over here," says Heintz. "And that can be hard because their families are far away, so we provide a pseudo-family."

Also in need of support are the expat children who didn't grow up being quite as involved with competitive school

activities like football or cheerleading. "There's a more positive environment here as far as encouragement and trying your hardest," says Heintz, "but as an outsider, it can be frustrating when it's difficult to get in on the action." Also, teenagers who would be considered adults capable of making their own decisions in the UK at 18, have to rely on their parents for more things in suburban America, so it can be especially challenging for them to settle in.

As for the wives, "a lot of us can't actually work here because we came over for our husbands' jobs," says Slaven. "We do a lot of volunteer work, so that is how we bring our skills into the community." As far as philanthropic work goes, the group finances the schooling for a family in Zimbabwe and is looking for a local charity that is in need of support. Heintz, from northern Wales, adds "we want to demonstrate that we wish to make a difference in Katy."

### The Best of Both Worlds

Though members of the group still miss British food, pubs, friends, and family, they love Katy's spacious homes, activities for children, and reasonably priced eateries. "The

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local amenities and swimming pools are a real treat for a British person," says Heintz. "Texans are very friendly," she says. "We've really been welcomed into the community." So rather than just celebrating all things foreign, the British and Expat Families Group celebrates the best of both worlds. KM

*JULIE ESTEP was born and raised in Katy, Texas.*



The Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton was celebrated in Katy with fun, food, and festivities



Group members often join together and participate in community events such as the 5K Rotary Run



## HOW TO JOIN UP

This is a family-oriented group suited to parents (married or single) with children of all ages and empty nesters. The fees are \$10 per family. Visit [meetup.com/British-and-Expat-Moms-of-Katy](http://meetup.com/British-and-Expat-Moms-of-Katy).