

Doug Klatt and daughters Vanessa and Elena, spread cheer through music to Katy's elderly



The Klatt Family Band

Local family spreads joy across Katy by sharing the gift of music

Written by Cherri Northcutt

When Doug and Wendy Klatt moved their family from Chicago to Texas two years ago, they had no idea that they would soon form a family band. Now, the Klatt's perform all over Katy and Houston at nursing homes and charitable events. It's a unique way they have found to give back to the community. "I never envisioned this for my family, it's been an amazing experience," Wendy says.

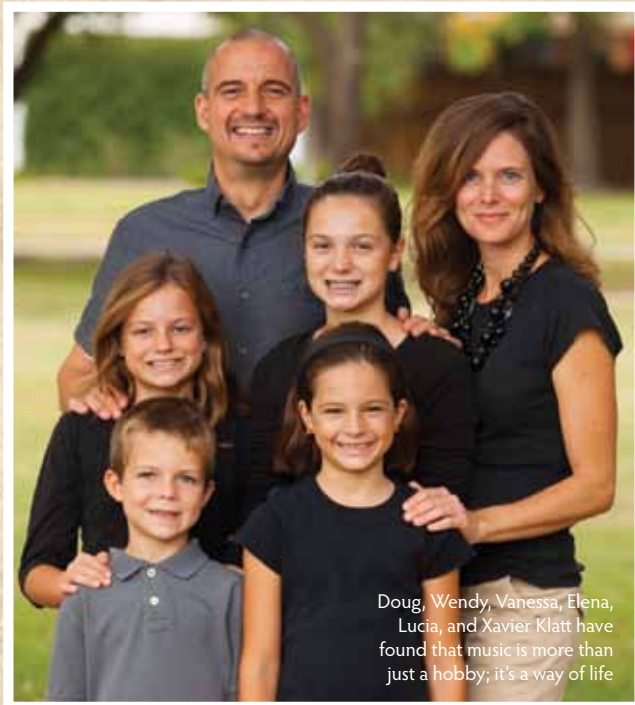
Music as a Way of Life

The Klatt Family band consists of Doug on guitar and their two oldest daughters, guitar player Vanessa age 12, and Elena age 10, on piano and violin. Both girls join their father in singing a variety of old favorites mixed with new original music. Doug also plays the guitarron, a Mexican folk instrument with a bass sound. For the Klatt's, music has always been a way of life. Doug Klatt, a Music Director at Western Academy in Houston, brought up their four children in a musical environment. "Since the kids were born I've been teaching them about instruments and singing," Doug shares. All of the Klatt children have studied violin at the Cinco Ranch Conservatory of Music, including Lucia, age 8 and 6-year-old Xavier.

Entertainment for Katy's Elderly

Wendy remembers the first time the group played together at an assisted living facility. "My grandmother was in a nursing home until she was 96," Wendy recalls, "She was a

very vibrant woman but I saw how quickly her spirits were declining." Wendy asked Doug and the girls to play for her. Several residents gathered to hear the music and the effect was immediate. "It was such a happy reaction," Wendy shares. "They loved the music and seeing the children."



Doug, Wendy, Vanessa, Elena, Lucia, and Xavier Klatt have found that music is more than just a hobby; it's a way of life

In Katy, the Klatts work with ARTreach, a non-profit arts education outreach program, as well as with the Katy Cultural & Arts Alliance. Through these charitable groups, the Klatt Family Band finds a variety of places to share their music, from retirement homes to art galleries.

"Part of our mission," Doug says, "is to bring a sense of joy and love to the people we play for." Each appearance includes familiar favorites like "Amazing Grace" or "When the Saints Go Marching In." "This is nice for Alzheimer patients," Doug explains. "They'll be tapping their feet and sometimes singing along."

A Heartfelt Melody

The Klatt Family Band also weaves in some newer original songs, in a folk/Americana style with melodic guitar harmonies. Doug's music has a positive hopeful message. "Music is something that can affect people on a deep spiritual level in a way that other things can't," Doug shares. "It has the power to move your soul."

Of all her father's songs, Elena's favorite is "Devil's Mirror." "I like the story, everyone was happy and the devil

wanted to ruin it and he broke a mirror," she says. The ballad, based on *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Anderson, is one of many pieces Doug has written that was inspired by children's stories. "Sometimes I take fairy tales and turn them into songs that carry a message," Doug says. His song "Princess" is a retelling of *Snow White*. Vanessa especially enjoys performing "Princess," "Crimson Sun," and "Mystery Road."

Staying Strong through Music

Being in the band has definitely brought the family closer together. Even the little ones get involved, visiting with the elderly before and after each performance. "Lucia and Xavier are good at working the crowd, it makes people smile," Wendy adds. Playing together has helped educate the Klatt children about working as a team. "It's good that they're learning how to give," Doug says, "sharing our music is the main gift that we can give to others."

Giving the Gift of Music

The Klatt's passion is to bring music and hope to the elderly. They have performed at several Katy area facilities including Autumn Grove Alzheimer's Care, Always Home Assisted Living, Sunrise Assisted Living Center, the Heritage Park Nursing Home, and Grace Care Center.

The Klatt Family Band has also found success playing venues such as the Bluebird Café in Nashville, Tennessee and at an

Easter Egg Hunt at the Jersey Barnyard in La Grange, Texas. The band has also enjoyed playing at several locations around Katy including the Salt & Pepper Restaurant, the Babaloo Art Gallery, and the Katy Jazz Festival KCAA art showing. What does the future hold for the Klatt's? "For now, the main thing is having a healthy family, serving the community, and creating as much beautiful music as we can," Doug says. **KM**



CHERRI NORTHCUTT works in Houston. She and her family have lived in Katy for more than twelve years.



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of the Klatts





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