

Ray and Jamie Wolman Elementary School

Katy Independent School District

Both educators, Jamie and Ray Wolman met in the combined cafeteria that served Katy Junior High and Katy High School



Forever Educators

Wolman Elementary namesakes and career educators, Ray and Jamie Wolman, share why they are proud to be part of Katy ISD and continually invest in their campus and its students

Written by Lacey Kupfer Wulf | Photography by Candace Cook

Ray and Jamie Wolman have dedicated their lives to education in Katy ISD: Ray as a biology teacher and Jamie as a special needs teacher and school counselor. When the Wolmans were told that a school would be named after them, Ray says, "We felt very thankful and humbled to receive such a great honor." Jamie adds, "We are so proud to be a part of such a vibrant community and outstanding school district."

Early Beginnings

When he began teaching in 1969, Ray was the only biology teacher in the entire district. Back then, he needed to drive the school bus as well as teach. Some students were dropped off by riding farm tractors to the bus stops, even during rainstorms. Later, he organized nature and biology lessons for elementary, junior high, and high school levels at the Outdoor Learning Center (OLC).

From 1974 to 1980, Jamie taught special needs students. She says, "Those days when [the students] realized how easy learning a skill could be were so rewarding for all of us." Even though Jamie taught at Katy Junior High and Ray at Katy High School, they first met in a combined school cafeteria.

Outdoor Learning

In 1981, Katy ISD established the OLC on 34.5 acres of land west of Katy High School, where Ray provided biology and nature lessons outdoors. From 1981 through 2004, Ray divided his time between the OLC and Katy High School. Then, he became director of the OLC until 2011 when he retired, becoming the first person to serve Katy ISD for over 40 years.

At the OLC's nature trails, pond, science classroom and museum, history classroom and museum, barn, barnyard, and animal shelters, Ray exposed Katy ISD students to the world around them. He says, "Students can observe and study many biological concepts using native living specimens. Outdoor

learning provides many opportunities that would be impossible to duplicate in an indoor classroom."

Providing Guidance

After teaching special needs students for a total of 10 years, Jamie decided to pursue more education for herself. While teaching, Jamie also earned her master's degree in guidance and counseling in 1980 and served as a counselor in Katy ISD until she retired in 2007.

In counseling students, she says, "I enjoyed helping them plan their futures and how they could accomplish their goals. It was always such fun to talk with them about the path they wanted to pursue for high school and college."

But she didn't just talk about academics with students. Laura Beth Jackson, a former student, says, "Mrs. Wolman helped me process difficult situations at home so I could focus on all the opportunities junior high afforded me. Without her guidance, I would not have been able to focus on my grades while building such a strong foundation for leadership and community."

Serving on Campus

Although now retired, these dedicated educators are far from taking it easy. At every grade level, the Wolmans volunteer and teach students at Wolman Elementary. For example, they hatch chicken eggs with first graders, give bluebonnets to each second grader to plant and study its life cycle at home, and place hummingbird feeders and birdhouses

for migratory birds outside classroom windows.

Not only do the Wolmans give their time to the school, they also serve in Katy Area Retired Educators, Keep Katy Beautiful, and the Katy ISD Education Foundation.

Legacy for Students

In addition to their school and community volunteer work, the Wolmans keep in contact with many past students, who are now successful business men and women, physicians, dentists, attorneys, and school district and city leaders. Ray says, "Even our mail carrier is a former student." Their influence has now spanned generations as well. Ray adds, "It was a special experience to visit with a grandmother of one of our students at Wolman Elementary that had been a student in my biology class."

More than anything, the Wolmans hope all their students will learn that through desire, determination, and dedication, they can realize their dreams. Jamie adds, "I enjoy seeing my students' accomplishments and am always happy to help them succeed." KM

LACEY KUPFER WULF is a freelance writer and editor, wife, and mother of twin toddler boys. She appreciates all of the amazing teachers she had.



Wolman Elementary's school mascot is the Explorers