



The Rock

■ By Mike Williams

Residing in the old Graham Train Station at Elm Street and Sixth Street is a place where high school students gather and hang out in a positive atmosphere. The Rock offers area high school youth a place for friendship and fellowship in a Christian environment outside of a church setting.

The idea of The Rock started around 1999 inside the halls of First United Methodist Church with a conversation between David Flynn and 16-year-old Justin Pitcock.

As other high school students pressed Flynn to find a way to make it happen, a committee was formed. The committee of parents sought to figure out what the idea would consist of and how to make it a reality. The group was eventually led to the old train station. At the time the building was the Depot Steakhouse and the owners were looking to sell and retire.

Work continued in January 2004. With donations rolling in from the Graham community, a charitable organization, The



Rock Inc. was formed. In mid-2005 the old train station purchase was complete. A grand opening was held in May 2006.

A spark came from a former Graham High School student who had returned and wanted to visit a place that meant a lot to her as a student. Ashley Hodges moved to Graham in April 2007. The Rock became a place where Hodges could form a new life in her new home.

“The last six weeks of school, I went back to Millsap every day,” Hodges said. “It was really important for me because I didn’t go to school here. And then school was out. You have summer and I didn’t know anybody. I just kind of went to The Rock with the one, maybe two girls that I hung out with. It was really important because my parents were pretty protective. I couldn’t go hang out at people’s houses that my parents didn’t know. And to be new, that’s kind of a hard thing

to meet everybody. When we went to The Rock, they knew that was a good place for me to go, and it was fine. And so we just hung out there.”

After graduating high school in 2009, Hodges did not return until 2019. With the shutdown and struggles to reopen, it took a renewed effort to bring The Rock back to what it once was.

In July 2021, a student advisory board was formed consisting of two members of each class at GHS. The board planned a fundraiser, workday, theme nights and other activities. Hodges said the board was mostly comprised of students who had never visited The Rock in the past or had not visited often before the shutdown.

Hodges said early enthusiasm from the advisory board helped get The Rock up and running upon its return.

“Honestly, getting a couple of those students who are on the now Student Advisory Board, when they walked into The Rock, they were ready to grab a hold and make it their place, which is exactly what we wanted them to do,” Hodges said.



The advisory board will continue to plan theme nights and the football season will usher in the Fifth Quarter, a football postgame activity for GHS students hosted by local churches and held at The Rock. Hodges said The Rock is open during the games for students who do not want to attend.

The Rock is open to all area high school students from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights at 300 Elm Street.

For more information, including how to donate to The Rock Inc., visit rockgraham.com.



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