



# GREATER AUSTIN FOUNDATION FOR THE DEAF

[deaf.foundation](https://www.austindeaffoundation.com)

## Celebrating a Legacy: Dr. Kelly Haygood Stevens

This past Saturday, on the eve of the 2024 eclipse, the Austin community gathered to honor a visionary leader at the inaugural Legacy event hosted by the Greater Austin Foundation for the Deaf. This heartfelt tribute celebrated the life and impact of the late Dr. Kelly Haygood Stevens at the historic German Free School, a landmark lovingly restored by Dr. Stevens himself.

The evening was co-hosted by Paul Rutowski and Peggy Ann St. John of GAFD, with enriching narratives led by Christopher Markley, Director of the German Texan Heritage Society, and JT Koenig, whose father was instrumental in the property's deed transfer. Their stories highlighted Dr. Stevens' profound integration into his art, community, and heritage, complemented by a visual PowerPoint presentation of his life's work.

Guests enjoyed a spread of exquisite culinary creations by the Texas School for the Deaf Culinary Arts team, paired with cocktails from Rebecca Creek Distillery. The event also featured Sign Language interpreters, sponsored by Dovetail Communications Group, ensuring that everyone could partake in the celebration.

The program delved deep into personal stories from those who knew Dr. Stevens well. His "adopted niece" Sharon Hassell-Talbot shared enchanting childhood memories of the larger-than-life staircase in his home, while Rosemary McGaugh recounted her days caring for him in his later years. Butch Zein provided a poignant reflection on Dr. Stevens' influence on his journey as a gay individual, bridging generations with timeless lessons of character and resilience. Together, these stories painted a vivid picture of Dr. Stevens as a nurturing figure and a community pillar.

The evening concluded on a high note with an auction of Dr. Stevens' artwork, a tribute to his creative legacy and a successful fundraiser to continue his advocacy and community-building efforts.

Dr. Kelly Haygood Stevens, born in 1896, was a dedicated advocate for the Austin Deaf community and an accomplished artist whose oil paintings are celebrated worldwide. His foresight in preserving local heritage and his generous spirit have left an indelible mark on the community. The Legacy event not only commemorated his life but also underscored his ongoing influence, promising to inspire personal growth and community cohesion for years to come as it becomes an annual highlight for the Greater Austin Foundation for the Deaf.

To donate, <https://www.austindeaffoundation.com/the-legacy-club>

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