

# Meals for a Mission Challenge encourages ordering from local restaurants to support Mission Arlington

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Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams and former UTA president James Spaniolo and his wife Sue Spaniolo, made a \$5,000 joint donation to Mission Arlington as part of the mayor's Meals for a Mission Challenge.

The challenge kicked off Friday with Williams saying he would donate \$25 per response and up to \$2,500 total from people commenting photos of their takeout from Arlington restaurants on the city's Facebook post.

Amid COVID-19, the Arlington City Council amended the city's disaster declaration on March 18 and restricted restaurants to only provide delivery, takeout or drive-thru services, according to a previous *Shorthorn* article.

Williams figured the goal would be met, and since the challenge started there have been over 300 responses, he said.

"People are really generous here in Arlington," he said. "So, it's one that's near and dear to our stomach."

Williams said he was trying to figure out something the community could get behind and that could also help the city's restaurants. After seeing a variation of the challenge from another city, they decided to do it and donate the money to Mission Arlington, he said.

Mission Arlington is helping feed families during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so he wanted to give back to the organization, Williams said. It's been a positive impact on both Mission Arlington and the city's restaurants, he said.

"Our citizens just got really excited about it," Williams said.

Matching Williams' \$2,500 donation was James Spaniolo and his wife Sue Spaniolo.

"It's interesting how one act of kindness leads to another," Williams said.

James Spaniolo said he and Sue wanted to follow Williams' lead and help support the city's restaurants and give back to Mission Arlington since it's helping the community so much.

"It's an opportunity to help, and we all have different ways in which we can help one another during this crisis," James Spaniolo said.

Sue Spaniolo said Mission Arlington has helped a lot of people over the years, and the need has only grown with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It's less about what we've given and more about what we get by helping,” she said.

The response to Williams' campaign shows that Arlington is a strong community with a sense of commitment to helping one another, James Spaniolo said. He hopes more people will donate after seeing current contributions.

The community is generous and helps anyway they can, Sue Spaniolo said.

“Anytime there is a crisis or disaster, Arlington residents just step up,” she said.

Jim Burgin, Mission Arlington communications person, said Williams and the Spaniolos were trying to encourage people to support restaurants and the byproduct of that is helping people in need.

He said the community has been generous to Mission Arlington, and it didn't surprise him at all how many people responded to Williams' challenge. He said the organization is grateful for all the support.

Burgin said it would be great if people kept buying from restaurants and supporting each other.

“Hopefully it'll create a ripple effect that will keep helping our community,” he said.