Mike Farhat:
A Man About Town

Keeps Boutique:
Providing Foster Teens with Fashion, Friendship and Faith

Grace: Angels Among Us

Southlake and the Barnett Shale
On any given day, at the corner of Grand Avenue and Main St in Southlake you are likely to find Judge Mike Farhat holding court, so to speak. Here, in the morning sunshine, Mike takes his place at the corner coffee shop- directly across from the city’s crown jewel, Southlake Town Hall. From his “corner office” he dispenses advice, makes business deals and simultaneously greets friends and partners all while enjoying his day and his imported Ashton Fine Cigars. Today was like most others, we were fortunate enough to share a cup of coffee and some insight on Southlake, its businesses, families, and its future with Mr. Farhat, Southlake’s preeminent Man About Town.

A Man About Town-
Not just because he seems to be everywhere, but also because, everywhere you go in Southlake- you are bound to come across something Mike Farhat built, established, founded or funded. Mike Farhat is in fact, a true Man About Town. The Farhat family patriarch is a strong and multi faceted; husband, father, and business man who is as devoted to his family as he is to the city they have called home for almost a quarter century.

Originally hailing form Lebanon, Mike, wife Gale and his two daughters; Jennifer & Ashley moved to Southlake 23 years ago. Already an established businessman, Mike chose to settle in Southlake more for its vast open spaces than its early business potential- the space offered a safe environment for his horse loving daughters. His girls have since graduated Carroll High School yet he and Gale still enjoy Southlake- where they continue to reap the benefits of what the have sewn for so long.
The Father and Husband

Humble in his way, Mike gives much credit to his loving wife, “Gale has been a great partner of mine, the support I have from my wife and family led to my success. It is a very key element in my personal and professional life.”

A husband for over 30 years and a father three times over, to Jennifer, Ashley and his handsome grandson, Tyler, whom he adopted after the premature passing of his eldest daughter. Almost ten years ago, Jennifer, at the time a brand new mother, was accidentally killed while working for the family’s water sports business in Aruba. Mike and Gale soon thereafter adopted Tyler and now relish the opportunity to raise him as their own son. Tyler is a “handsome playful young boy” and a fountain of youth who “keeps them young” amidst the backdrop of what was not too long ago an empty nest.
Since originally moving to this small, sleepy city, Southlake has grown immensely into one of the most recognized and celebrated communities in Texas. Despite the city’s rampant growth, Mike still hasn’t forgotten why he originally settled in the tranquil city south of Lake Grapevine. In those early years, Southlake was a small community where everyone knew everyone else. A place where kids thought their parents were everywhere, but to Mike and Gale the reality was, “everyone in the community just looked out for one another, like they were family.”

As their third child makes his way through Carroll’s award winning school district, Gale and Mike continue to support each other as partners. In Gale’s words “Mike is a gracious, loving and honorable man.” Respectful as always, Mike adds, “Gale and I are a team in business and in life.” Witnessing their interactions during our time together proves they are absolutely best friends, ready to handle all that life puts before them.

**The Businessman**

Professionally, Mike is the Chief Executive Officer of Farhat Industries, a diversified business enterprise with arms that reach across the globe just as easily as they do across Tarrant County. At this time, 16 different companies fall under the Farhat Industries umbrella creating a near recession proof business model, insulated from the ups and downs of the financial markets. Farhat Industries makes its way in banking, convenience stores, restaurants, retail shops and real estate. With so many different ventures Mike deems, “I believe in being lucky not smart. When one of our ventures is down, others are up.”

Despite a long list of successful shops including; Starbucks, Magic Mike’s, Islands Fashions, Jack in the Box and The Wine Cellar- Farhat says, “My true passion is real estate.” He launched his real-estate developments locally with two “Magic Mikes” convenience stores which were a staple of our once scarcely developed town. Both locations made names for themselves while bettering the community. The original “Magic Mike’s” has since been paved over, succumbing to the westward sprawl that is highway 114, while the second location still stands at the corner of 1709 and Whites Chapel. For Mike and Gale, losing the original location was a small sacrifice in the name of continued development of the city they love.
With many of his businesses in Grapevine and Southlake, Mike continues to engage in the growth of the area, most recently, through a soon to be completed office building on North Carroll Avenue. Mike knows the future in Southlake is bright, that is why he has chosen to live and work here. He bestows a lot of praise on the current city officials saying, “I really think the leadership we have in place has set the tone and standards for future development in Southlake. Soon we will have a crowning jewel in the new DPS (Department of Public Safety) and the corridor of 114 will provide a high level of quality development opportunities that will surprise many over the next five years. “The growing business base will support our residential tax base and that is important for all of us who call Southlake home.”

We agreed there is much to be had for large companies looking to grow in our city, but what about the hundreds of small businesses still trying to make their way? Like any entrepreneur who has made his way in business, Mike has a spot in his heart for those trying to pave their own trail to success. For the small business owners Mike shared his recipe for success, “Do your homework, understand the system, learn how to deal with bankers, write a good business plan and get the support of your spouse (you both have to be happy). Add hard work to all of these ingredients and you will have a beautiful business to enjoy.”

**A Man who gives back**

As the saying goes, “If you want something done, give it to a busy man (or woman).” That is exactly what the Texan State Republican Party has done for nearly two decades. When he is not focused on his many businesses, Mike is extremely active in local and state politics as the finance co-chair for the Texas state Republican Party and as a municipal judge for Tarrant County. Most recently he was named as the co-chairman of finance for presidential candidate John McCain not long after completing a judgeship for Tarrant County. In all instances, he feels honored to be able to give back to so many political and social causes. In fact in 2007, during his term as a municipal judge for Tarrant County. He gave back to his community not just in his
time, but also his salary as he waived all compensation back to the municipalities to which he served. He feels it is an honor and his duty to serve the community that gives him so much.

As is indicated with his service to his political party, Mike is also very committed to giving time and financial support to many philanthropic organizations throughout Southlake and surrounding communities.

Near and dear to his heart are the National Charity League, Summer Santa, GRACE and the Carroll Education Foundation. The very idea for the CEF came through Mike and his long-time friend, Judge Brad Bradley. Together in 1997, they co-founded the organization which now supports many extra-curricular activities for the youth of the city. Judge Bradley and Farhat met the expanding needs of the local school system eleven years ago by creating an endowment that could continually support CISD regardless of the generosity of a chosen few.

As seed money for the endowment, Farhat’s Magic Mike stores generously offered “three cents per gallon of gas” to be donated to the Carroll Education Foundation. Proceeds from that particular six month program became the financial backbone of the CEF which still generates much needed funding for the Carroll School District to this very day. Thanks to the foresight of Judges Bradley and Farhat, children in CISD schools have access to special programs in the arts, sciences and athletics that may have never become available.

In 2001, he also created the nonprofit organization called the Southlake Public Art Foundation devoted to providing the city with such public art projects as the Southlake Stampede. This particular 501c3 organization was recently donated to other civic and arts minded individuals like Mike and is now run as the Apex Arts League. As an active member of the board of directors, Mike continues to support the public arts for the community.

Mike has also added natural beauty to the city while ensuring that the development he loves does not completely overtake the community. To do so he donated approximately 37 acres of his Lake Grapevine land to the city. This area is now part of Bob Jones Park. It was his humble way to show his appreciation to the city for naming a city street, Farhat Drive, in his honor.

As an avid supporter of the city in so many ways there is no argument Mike Farhat has made an impact on the lives of Southlake residents. He and his family take a great pride in the city they live in and are committed to giving back to it.

**Mike’s take on Southlake and what the Future Holds.**

**Southlake Style: What makes Southlake special for you?**

Mike Farhat: It is the sense of community. The tranquility of the city prompted us to move here to raise our children in a safe environment. Also, the school district, it was good then and it is very good now. I am proud to say that both of my daughters graduated from Carroll High School.

**SS: What are the changes you have seen in the school district?**

MF: It has grown! When my Daughter Ashley graduated in 1999 there were only about 180 graduating students and this year there were over 600. It has grown very big and we have supported it since we moved here. With a top ranked academic program and one of the finest football programs in the country Southlake Carroll has proven to be all we hoped for when we chose to live here.

**SS: With so many trying to duplicate what we have here, it seems there have been few successes to the level that we have seen. What is it about Town Square that is so difficult to duplicate?**

MF: The community embraced the project. They support it and for that the Town Square enjoyed the progress and reputation of success. The developers, Cooper and Stebbins have worked very hard and have become a supportive part of this community. In return the community has really embraced this development.

**SS: The development of 114 and proximity to DFW how does this support or affect the future business opportunities for local businesses?**

MF: The growth is tremendous and with the entire infrastructure in place it does support new business. Look at Town Square now, you have people from overseas coming here to see what we have done and replicate the vision that our leaders have and all they have approved those years ago.
The Man

Through all of the hustle and bustle that is the life of a successful businessman, Mike is one who thrives on serenity. Whether he starts his day from his backyard oasis or his spot at the corner coffee shop, Mike enjoys quiet moments of solitude, mentally recharging to meet the challenges of the day that lies ahead.

To sum up the man, ask the woman who knows him best, his wife. Gale put it as well as anyone could when she said, “Mike takes care of everybody, that’s who he is.” These plain and general words speak volumes about the responsibilities that Mike voluntarily takes on, each and every day. Mike lives to love his family and provides that same sense of family to all he meets. Not only is he a man about town, He is also a man about business, but most of all a man about values and family.

Coach Rick Kolster is a certified business coach and Chief Coaching Officer of Peak Performance Development, a firm that works with companies and people to help them achieve better results and improve their lives both personally and professionally. Visit www.mypotentialplus.com