



PRESS RELEASE

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'KATY LIONS' ADD YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND EXPAND REACH TO BECOME 'WEST HOUSTON LIONS'

WEST HOUSTON RUGBY CLUB TO SET THE STANDARD FOR YOUTH AND SENIOR RUGBY

Houston, Texas, July 7th 2017 - Katy Lions Rugby Football Club are pleased to announce the expansion of their programs from senior-only level, to include competitive sides at the Mini, Youth, and High School levels.

Beginning in the autumn of 2017, a new club - **West Houston Rugby Club** - will represent the West side of Houston in rugby competitions, from Minis through High School.

The unified West Houston Rugby Club plans to share resources, including a wealth of rugby experience, to develop athletes and the spirit of the game beginning at an early age. Mirroring organizational arrangements in many of the premiere rugby nations, the club - whose teams will play under the name **West Houston Lions** - envisions opportunities for young players to compete in morning matches followed by competitions featuring their rugby-playing parents, retiring afterwards to their clubhouse for a combined social.

Katy Lions President, Hunter Nezat, said "We are thrilled with the opportunity to offer a full scope of development and competitive rugby. We've managed to assemble an experienced and highly motivated management team to direct this new program. The Lions are committed



to the enrichment of local rugby at all levels of play, and this growth is a massive step towards our tradition of legacy rugby."

In conjunction with this expansion, **West Houston Lions** of all ages will unite under the new name **West Houston Rugby Club**. According to Nezat, "Associating with the greater region of West Houston offers several advantages. We're casting a much larger net, so to speak, in both player recruitment and corporate partnerships. Thanks to the 99 Grand Parkway and I10 corridor, West Houston Rugby Club now offers the possibility for anyone to play rugby – from Sugarland to Cypress, and from Downtown to Brookshire."

"The Lions will retain their branding, colors, and 10+ year history in Texas rugby," said Nezat, who will become President of West Houston Rugby Club senior division.

The West Houston Lions announced their arrival in the youth rugby community at the Rugby Texas Annual General Meeting in Plano last month. Nigel Saunders, who has been involved in both local youth rugby and Katy Lions Men's player development since relocating to Houston in 2011, is spearheading the youth program.

Nigel comes with a strong rugby playing legacy. He played senior level rugby in the UK for all of his playing career, and internationally for 5 years in Asia and the Southern hemisphere. Since arriving in Houston, he has been working with the Katy Lions coaching staff to develop the squad. Involved in youth rugby for the past 2 years, Nigel has taken the role of President for the West Houston Rugby Club youth division.

About the coming together, Saunders said, "We are very excited about the joining of these two great clubs. We have recognized the potential benefits that a merger could provide and have entered into the process in a positive and constructive manner. The synergies and joint development strengths will bring great opportunity for rugby for those living in the West Houston area, and create a 'Community Club' for all who want to join the sport at any age. We have carefully selected experienced, key individuals from the two clubs to take on the responsibility of working together. It has quickly become clear that both clubs are committed to the continued development of grass-roots rugby for all, and that combining the two clubs will deliver a number of favorable advantages."

"We have strategically located and named the club to target areas that would benefit the most from a new youth club in Houston. Merging with the Katy Lions to form the **West Houston Rugby Club** will have nothing but benefits for our members new and old, and for rugby within Houston," Saunders explained.