

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fort Worthian turns tragedy into action with donation to make Trinity Trails safer

by [Ryan Thorpe](#)
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Jesca Arnold, co-founder of Safe + Happy Trails, donated safety equipment to the Tarrant Regional Water District during a July 16 meeting. (Camilo Diaz | Fort Worth Report)

It's been seven years since Jesca Arnold was attacked by a man on the Trinity Trails.

Shortly after the traumatic incident, which left her with critical injuries, city officials assured her that safety improvements were coming. She felt content with the response, and decided not to pursue further action.

Then, in March 2021, Arnold heard about another attack — this time in a Fort Worth park — that echoed her own experience.

Jesca Arnold and her father, Don Arnold, knew they had to do something to prevent more violence. Now, three years after starting their nonprofit organization Safe + Happy Trails, the pair have made their mark with a donation to the Tarrant Regional Water District.

The donation, valued at \$35,000, will allow the agency to test a smart pole, a device equipped with 24-hour surveillance, video, gunshot detection, emergency call buttons and tracking, Jesca Arnold said.

This 24-hour surveillance video will transmit to the Fort Worth Real Time Crime Center, which will allow potential victims to be tracked and receive help from police at a quicker rate. The poles will be the platform for testing of various security equipment, including cameras and elevated voice detection systems, according to the district.

The duo met with the Tarrant Regional Water District a year ago to discuss the possibility of installing the poles, citing their ability to improve community safety. The agency's board of directors agreed to accept the donation July 16.



Tarrant Regional Water District meeting held on July 16, 2024. (Camilo Diaz | Fort Worth Report)

“It’s very much in sync with what their mission is because they own the trails,” Don Arnold said. “They’re taking that ball and really running with it. The timing was perfect.”

Leah King, board president of the Tarrant Regional Water District, is looking forward to the installation of the poles and is grateful for the efforts of the Arnolds to keep their community safe.

“Sometimes out of the hardest things, something really valuable and important comes out,” King said during the meeting. “Thinking about others during a tragic situation is incredibly generous.”

The Tarrant Regional Water District is exploring adopting solar lights to improve visibility on the trails in the future, according to district documents.



Fort Worth's Trinity Trails system, pictured in May 2022, is maintained by the Tarrant Regional Water District. (Sandra Sadek | Fort Worth Report)

The Arnolds worked with [ClearWorld](#), a manufacturing company specializing in outdoor solar lights, to design the poles. The company donated some parts to assist the Arnolds in their efforts.

A \$50,000 grant from Fort Worth's Crime Control Prevention District, which helps fund organizations focused on reducing crime, also helped the Arnolds to create a product that could address concerns along the trails, including a lack of outdoor lighting for visitors.

The poles will do more than just protect people from attacks, Jesca Arnold said. If someone were to have a heart attack, the poles' technology would allow police to immediately track the person down and render aid.

While the poles were a tall task to design and implement, Jesca Arnold only wants one thing as a result.

“This sort of thing should not happen ever again,” she said, referencing attacks on the trails. “I just want people to feel safe.”

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