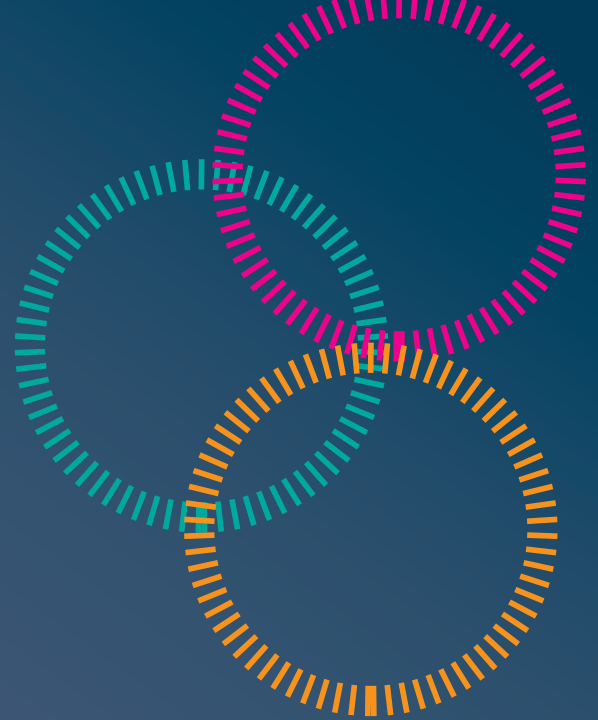


All the Right Moves



Why do people choose to relocate to Dallas-Fort Worth, and why are they happy here? We asked and heard a number of enthusiastic explanations, from DFW's weather to its work/life balance. But one stood out for its simplicity: 'We are living our best life in Texas.'

Moving is universally recognized as one of life's most stressful events. From picking a moving company to managing your to-dos to whipping your new home into shape, the list of tasks to accomplish at times can seem never-ending.

But for people who have recently opted to relocate to North Texas, the move was well worth the hassles. They're thrilled with the Dallas region's sense of community and connectedness, its growth mindset, and a better work-life balance.

For them, there's no doubt Dallas-Fort Worth was the right move, at the right time.

Consider entrepreneur John Lauer, for example. In 2020, Lauer and his wife and their three children—then ages 15, 12, and 9—were living in Seattle, where he'd sold his company and begun to consider what was next.

"My wife and I sat down and said, 'OK, we can move anywhere in the country,'" Lauer says. "We just looked at the map and we're like, 'OK, the world's our oyster!' We were sort of considering Florida, Tennessee, and, of course, Texas."

The Lauers, both natives of Michigan, also thought of returning to the Great Lakes State. But in the final analysis, Texas proved to be the most attractive option to them.

"To me, Texas has one of the best brands of all the states," Lauer says. "There's the historical brand of Texas as cowboy country, which I just adore. And then I think, more recently, Texas has a brand of future growth."

He remembers seeing a commercial in which Gov. Greg Abbott said that Texas is "open for business." That resonated with him. But did it also mean he'd find a

startup culture to tap into?

"I started to find events like Venture Dallas, which was amazing," he says. "And then Capital Factory hosts different events. I was at one recently at the Google Building in Addison, and that was incredible. The number of startups at that event—I had no idea there would be so many. So, yes, there is a huge startup industry here."

And a growth mindset as well.

"I think that slogan, 'Things are bigger in Texas,' is part of it," Lauer says. "People just want to keep building and expanding. I love that."

The Lauers ended up on 54 acres in Argyle, in Denton County. They like the balance of country life there—complete with a bee colony—without the need to sacrifice big-city amenities.

In the three years they've lived in North Texas, one of the most "Texas things" they've done was visit the 18,000-plus-acre Ox Ranch in Uvalde.

"We had a blast," Lauer says. "You get to shoot guns and drive around in a World War II tank."

As a self-described family of meat-eaters, the Lauers also say they're in hog

heaven with Texas' culinary choices.

"It's been so much fun to explore the barbecue scene," Lauer says. "We've gone to every barbecue place we can possibly fit into the schedule."

Focus on the family

For businesswoman **Bhavna Kumar**, the road to Dallas began in Kuwait, where she was born. She was reared in Dubai and came to the United States for school.

Her professional life started in New York City. Then she moved to the West Coast and grew her career in the venture industry at Citi Ventures and Samsung NEXT.

An opportunity at Techstars, a startup accelerator, drew her back to New York, where she was living—newly married and pregnant—when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

"I remember going up and down subway stairs to doctor's appointments and I thought, this is not for me," Kumar says.

At the same time, her husband had been expressing the need for a more balanced life—one where it's possible to focus on the personal without giving up the professional entirely.

Kumar had family already living in the

John Lauer





Bhavna Kumar and family

“We said to each other, ‘Our baby will be surrounded by love, peace, and community and that is what we want for the next phase of our lives, rather than the commotion and density of New York City.’” —BHAVNA KUMAR



Dallas area, so it was natural to focus on North Texas.

In Dallas, she’ll be heading up the startup accelerator at the Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership at Southern Methodist University, which is set to launch this summer.

“Back then, I started looking at the numbers, going through Crunchbase and reading Dallas Innovates and seeing that this ecosystem has been evolving and growing all these years,” Kumar says.

She was also encouraged to see that Plug and Play, Startup Grind, and Techstars—big names she was familiar with—had made inroads in the region already.

Plus, she and her husband liked the idea of having a built-in support network with extended family. So, they packed up and moved, deciding to settle in Allen.

“We said to each other, ‘Our baby will be surrounded by love, peace, and community, and that is what we want for the next phase of our lives, rather than the commotion and density of New York City,’” Kumar says.

They traded bodegas on New York’s 42nd Street for places like District 121—a mixed-use development in the heart of McKinney, not far from their new home.

“My husband and I grab our pizza and wine and Avi has a little area to play in,” she says, referring to their child. “It’s just easy.”

‘Dallas was top of mind’

You’ll find many of the same sentiments expressed by **Adrian Butler**, the chief technology officer at Foot Locker, the footwear and apparel retailer.

“I always describe Dallas as a town because of the connectedness, the community,” Butler says. “It doesn’t feel as big as it is.”

When he moved here in 2023, it actually marked a return to a place he’d lived before.

His three children were all born in North Texas, Butler says. His youngest

was just 2 when they moved from Dallas in 2011 to live first in Minneapolis, then Los Angeles, then Des Moines, Iowa.

“As I thought about the place I wanted to settle in with my family, Dallas was top of mind for many reasons,” Butler says.

Returning to Dallas as CTO of Foot Locker was both an incredible opportunity and a reflection of the city’s evolution, he says.

“I think the idea that some people have—that Dallas is not the place to start and scale your career—is misplaced,” he says. “If you just look at the number of Fortune 500 companies—that’s tons of opportunity right there. And for Foot Locker, we knew that we wanted to plant a flag here.”

Butler says he likes the progressiveness of the city, as well as the fact that it makes the right investments in infrastructure and culture, and continues to attract both the companies that need talent and the people with the right skills to do the jobs.

Quality of life is a plus

Himani Parikh, executive director of regulatory affairs at Iovance Biotherapeutics Inc., found that her experience and background were a perfect fit for North Texas’ growing life science scene.

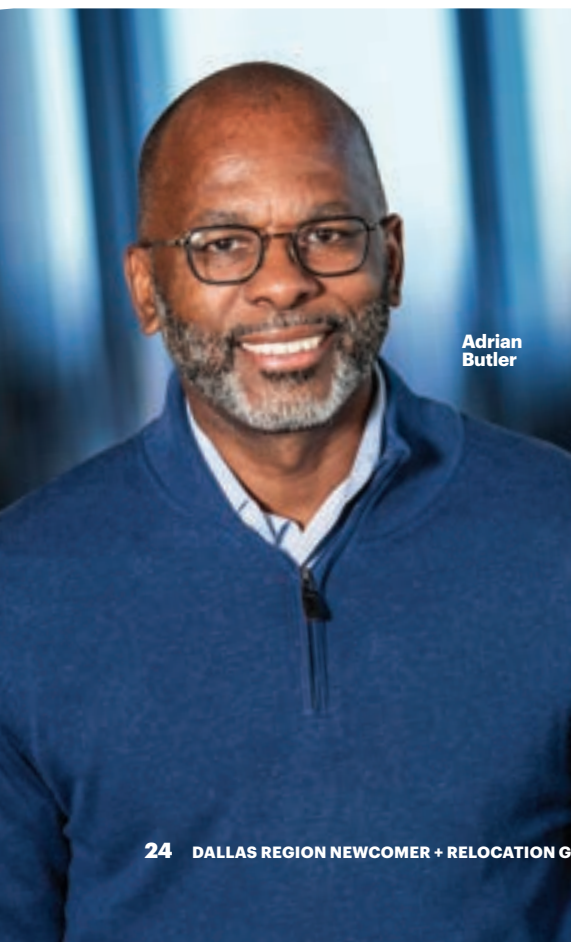
Living in Chicago, she’d had her eye on Dallas for more than 10 years, she says, citing the region’s weather, accessibility, and metropolitan feel.

During COVID, with remote work on the rise, Parikh seized her opportunity after finding a role that enabled her to relocate on her own terms.

Besides Chicago she’d also lived in California, and was ready for a change.

“Dallas stands out as a prime location due to its family-friendly atmosphere, economic advantages like no state income tax, strong support for entrepreneurs, and overall quality of life,” she says.

Parikh says these reasons make Dallas attractive for anyone considering making a move or enhancing their professional



Adrian Butler

lives. As a biotech entrepreneur, she also approves of efforts the state is making to bolster the life science industry.

“DFW is well-positioned to become a leading hub for life sciences—possibly due to venture capital funding and [National Institutes of Health] fundings in the last few years, along with the state’s focus to invest in higher education supporting research and development,” she says.

Plus, living in a place where you can get outside is the key to a great quality of life, she says. Though, she quickly learned that you often leave your house in the summer at your own peril!

“I love gardening, and other than July and August, I love spending my time in the backyard,” she says, laughing.

She also likes the strong Indian culture in North Texas and enjoys Bollywood classes for fitness and fun.

Rebuilding a network

Jaleed Ritchwood-Jordan—an educator and entertainer known professionally as **JaRich**—says his first impression of Dallas-Fort Worth was that he was “meant to be here.”

“It was almost immediate when I started as a sixth-grade literacy coach at the Eduardo Mata Montessori school,” he says. “My experience and expertise were welcomed by students and teachers.”

His route to the region began in New Jersey. As a teacher, he worked there with students who have autism and other differences. He also found a way to

help students who were “going without” in some way.

“You know, I’d see some kids come in all the time needing a haircut, needing a backpack,” he says. “I couldn’t help everyone all the time, but I wanted to do what I could.”

To maximize his efforts, he started a mentoring program in Newark called Boys to Men.

He got a chance to talk about his mission to make a difference in his community on TV’s “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” in 2022.

A short while later he got a call from someone in Dallas, asking if he would consider teaching in the Dallas Independent School District.

Inside just two weeks he’d made the move to Texas and started rebuilding his network, both at school and in performances at local clubs, like Snookie’s.

He says his circle of influence continues to grow.

In the short time he’s been here, he’s received a commendation from U.S. Rep. Colin Allred and a lifetime achievement award from the White House.

And he’ll tell you that he’s just getting started.

An accessible, diverse culture

Lauer, the transplant from Seattle, also was struck by how easy it’s been to rebuild his network in North Texas, due to people’s natural friendliness and their



Himani Parikh

desire to make connections.

“They were so kind—introducing me to people, who would introduce me to others,” he says. “And it was so fun to just keep grabbing coffee with different people. Like almost twice a week, I’m meeting somebody new for coffee.”

Plus, he’s continually learning things—like, not all cowboy hats are the same.

“Now I have my work cowboy hat when I’m working the land, and then I have my dress cowboy hat that I wear to the school auction,” he says, smiling.

While understanding the nuances of Western wear can be a key to understanding the region, Parikh says it’s just one small piece of a thriving, accessible,



Jaleed Ritchwood-Jordan
A.K.A. JaRich

FEATURE

diverse culture.

“The myth about Texas that most people have is that it is countryside with cowboys and horses, and it lacks diversity,” she says. “When friends and family visit us, I see their jaws drop when they see the growth and development in the DFW area.”

New opportunities and unexpected experiences

It’s one thing to be drawn to a place like North Texas, but what compels someone to stay? A feeling of connectedness, the quality of life, or a sense that it reflects your values?

For Lauer, it’s the whole package.

“My wife and I are constantly saying to people, we are living our best life in Texas,” he says. “Even when I drive to work in the morning, people are walking and I’m waving ‘hi’ to them—and they’re waving back!”

As underscored by that everyday scene, the region exhibits both a welcoming nature and an openness to naturally balancing the personal and the professional.

Kumar agrees. She says she loved her time on the West Coast and in New York, but DFW is the best place to be now.

“I reached the next stage, maybe even in my career, where I really want to see more than anything how I can make my community better ... make the world better,” she says. “And when I got the opportunity of doing it at the student level, that was magical for me. These [SMU] students have these great ideas and burning desires.”

JaRich, who’s now at the Paul L. Dunbar elementary school, has stepped back from being a full-time teacher to working as a part-time substitute, so he has more time to devote to his music.

It’s his career as an entertainer that funds his nonprofit, Victim to Victor Outreach. He says he loves the opportunity Dallas has afforded him—not only to expand his network, but to build relationships with the extended family he knew of, but didn’t know well.

JaRich, Lauer, Kumar, Butler, and Parikh all agree that Dallas has afforded them—as it has many others—new opportunities and unexpected experiences they never could have imagined someplace else.



NEWCOMER POV

How does Dallas feed all the different parts of you?



Ahava Silkey-Jones—Vice provost, School of Creative Arts, Entertainment and Design, Dallas College

Moved from Minneapolis to North Oak Cliff in 2022

“I have been amazed at **how small Dallas feels** in terms of seeing people you know and feeling connected, while also having all the assets of a big city, which I love. I also thought I wouldn’t be able to walk anywhere, but there are some beautiful walkable areas in the city.”



Aamir Rajan—Director of Strategy & Innovation at INAA Restaurant

Moved from Chicago to Allen in 2020

“I’ve lived in some of the best cities in the world—Karachi, Dubai, Nairobi, and Chicago—so before coming to Dallas, we were worried that our social life might take a dip or that there wouldn’t be a strong **art and culture scene**. I’m happy to report that we were proven wrong on all fronts!”



Munira Sarfani—Family Nurse Practitioner at Catholic Charities of Dallas

Moved from Overland Park, Kansas, to Frisco in 2020

“It is commonly said that ‘Texas has its own language.’ On the contrary, Texas has a **multitude of diverse personalities and languages**. I have seen more culture commonalities between Texas and New York.”



Mark Brown—CEO, LE BOOK

Moved from NYC in 2020 to Flower Mound

“When I first moved here, we would drive around and simply explore anything within a 45-minute drive. As a consumer you absolutely want for nothing—**it is here at all levels**. My family is originally from Jamaica and one of my concerns was that I would not have easy access to my groceries. It is actually easier for me to get what I need as my local supermarket (less than a minute away) has a robust Jamaican section!”



Steven Schulman—

Partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Moved from Washington, D.C., to Lakewood Heights in 2021

“I love to be outside, and we spend a lot of time cycling, running, and in the pool. **Dallas is a very friendly big city**—everyone is very welcoming, with a good mix of lifers and newcomers.”

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