

First Ladies of Fort Bend

Meet the Women Who Stand by the Mayors of Fort Bend

Written by Crystal Rawls and Mary Hogan & Photography by Marisa Hugonnett and Suzi Issa



Fort Bend's first ladies, (back row, from left) Jane Owen, Gay Thompson, Evalyn Moore, (front row, from left) Doris Gurecky, and Rhonda Kuykendall

The age-old phrase that behind every great man, there's a great woman is definitely true when it comes to these first ladies of Fort Bend, who are the strength behind Fort Bend's hometown mayors. While their husbands take charge of the city, these women are the pillars, working behind the scenes to continually improve and support the communities they love.

Loving the Spirit of Sugar Land

While James Thompson is taking the helm as Sugar Land's mayor, his wife, Gay Thompson, is busy managing a mini-city – in the form of preschoolers – at Sugar Creek Baptist Church, which she has enjoyed doing for the past 27 years. "I'm extremely proud of the work and energy (James) puts into the city," she shares. "He's always been very involved. It's fun for me, because I get to attend wonderful events and meet wonderful people." She adds, "Everyone continues to work to make Sugar Land the great place it is."

Family is also an important part of the Thompson's life. Married since 1970, the two have three children, Michael, Tara, and Meredith, and they recently welcomed a granddaughter, Taylor, last October. "I love the community spirit," says Gay. "Even though we're a large city, we still have that hometown feel. It's the most wonderful place to raise our children."

Making a Difference in Missouri City

As Allen Owen juggles work as both Missouri City mayor and the market area district manager for Wells Fargo, Jane Owen, his wife of over 40 years, looks after the home front and works to give back to the community she loves. Jane currently serves as treasurer for the Women's Club of Missouri City and attends Bible study at Missouri City Methodist Church, but in the past, her main focus was volunteering in Fort Bend schools while rearing her three children.

Nowadays, Jane is thrilled to be "Granna" to her granddaughter, Ava Grace Owen. "I spent 25 years volunteering in the schools in Fort Bend . . . I was a homeroom mother, taught Sunday school, [helped with] Scouts for all three children, [and was a] team mom," she says. "I did a lot of volunteer work." Her devotion to Missouri City is evident. "I love Missouri City," Jane says. "Everything I need is right here."

Relating to the Richmond Community

Evalyn Moore is well-versed in the life of a mayor's wife. Her husband, Hilmar Moore has served a record 60 years as mayor of the City of Richmond - the longest recorded mayoral tenure in Texas. Married for 26 years, Evalyn has assisted Hilmar many times with campaigns by making phone calls and passing out flyers, among other duties she undoubtedly enjoys. "It's a whole lot of fun to have the opportunity to meet lots of people in the community," she shares. "I think it's wonderful, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Evalyn loves the close-knit community where her husband grew up. "It used to be a small town, where everybody knew everybody," she says. "That is no longer the case, but I still love it. It still has a small-town charm to it."

Taking an Active Role in Rosenberg

For Doris Gurecky, life as the wife of Rosenberg Mayor, Joe Gurecky, can sometimes get hectic, but she is passionate about taking an active role in community government. She enjoys being involved and staying informed on city affairs, encouraging others to do the same. "I tell everybody I come in contact with, they need to know what's going on in their city," she shares. "They need to be informed. People need to know what's happening."

She is truly a pillar of her community and loves the opportunity that involvement gives her to branch out and help others. "I love Rosenberg," Doris says. "I've met a lot of people I probably wouldn't have met." Growing up in Needville, she still remembers when

Rosenberg was the "big city." So, when Doris and Joe were married, they decided to move to Rosenberg. "We didn't want to live in the country," she says. Now, she works hard to balance her community involvement with caring for her family, all while working alongside Joe at Gurecky Manufacturing Service, Inc.

Finding Fulfilling Connections in Fulshear

Fort Bend's newest first lady, Rhonda Kuykendall, can definitely relate to the important community work her husband, Fulshear Mayor, Tommy Kuykendall, does every day. Before moving to Fulshear, she spent five years in Austin calling for reform in sexual abuse laws, eventually seeing her work lead to Jessica's Law, a bill providing stricter penalties for sex offenders.

"I worked at the state capital for five years and got my fill of political life," she says. "It's a very difficult job."

Now, Rhonda enjoys her career as a photographer and offers her full support to Tommy, who was sworn into office on May 18. "When he comes home, it needs to be a place of rest."

An artist, advocate, and mother of two, Rhonda offers sage advice to other Fort Bend women supporting and strengthening their families. "If you stand on your moral compass and stick to what you believe, you can't go wrong," she says.

Being Extraordinary Every Day

These women are all very humble when being asked what it is like to be married to a prominent Fort Bend mayor. Community figures of their own accord, they support their mover and shaker while working, managing schedules, making time to get the family together, and maintaining their sense of self. They are truly an inspiration to all of Fort Bend's other first ladies nurturing their own families with love and support. **SLM**

CRYSTAL RAWLS is a technical and freelance writer who enjoys life in Fort Bend.

"Few are married to a prominent person, but everyone can be active in their community. Anyone can volunteer in one of the numerous organizations we have locally."

– Evalyn Moore



Doris Gurecky

Married for 52 years to Joe Gurecky, mayor of Rosenberg.

What are your children's names?

Pam and Tama.

What is the biggest challenge of being married to a prominent person?

The biggest challenge is juggling public life with private life and having to go places when you would rather be at home, [as well as] working your family life around meetings.

What is the biggest reward?

The biggest reward of being married to a prominent person is being able to meet many interesting people and making new friends throughout the city and county. Also, getting to see the progress that is being made in the city.



Rhonda Kuykendall

Married for 24 years to Thomas C. Kuykendall Jr., mayor of Fulshear.

What are your children's names?

Alyssa, 13, and Ty, 11.

What is the biggest challenge of being married to a prominent person?

As a former lobbyist, I have strong views on many issues. My biggest challenge is to always remember that my comments affect him. And I can't forget not being able to go to the corner store in hair curlers.

What is the biggest reward?

More than anything else, I am proud of my husband. He has a love for Fulshear. In his office, he has a sign above his door which reads, "Fulshear deserves the best," [and] Fulshear definitely has the best in him.



Evalyn Moore

Married for 26 years to Hilmar Moore, mayor of Richmond.

What are your children's names?

Our combined family includes three children, Hil Moore, Jack Moore, and Hope Bradberry, eight grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. One son, Philip, died tragically in a car accident at the age of 29.

What is the biggest challenge of being married to a prominent person?

People frequently will stop to visit with you when you are out in public and once in a while, they want to discuss a complaint or grievance. These are perfectly legitimate grievances, but you can't do anything to help them. You can only try your best to reassure them.

What is the biggest reward?

Having wonderful opportunities to serve the community in an indirect way. Few are married to a prominent person, but everyone can be active in their community. Anyone can volunteer in one of the numerous organizations we have locally. This will enrich their life in so many unimaginable ways. It's a fulfilling joy being part of the community – and Fort Bend County in particular.



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Jane Owen

Married for 43 years to Allen Owen, mayor of Missouri City.

What are your children's names?

Marcus, 39; Tim, 34, his wife, Brooke, and their daughter, Ava Grace; and Melissa, 25.

What is the biggest challenge of being married to a prominent person?

Going to many events, not only as wife to the mayor, but as wife to a district manager of Wells Fargo, [and a] lifetime vice president and director of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

What is the biggest reward?

Meeting new people.

"I love Missouri City. Everything I need is right here."

-Jane Owen



Gay Thompson

Married for 39 years to James Thompson, mayor of Sugar Land.

What are your children's names?

Michael, 34, and his wife, Kati; Tara, 30, her husband, Jason, and their daughter, Taylor; and Meredith, 26.

What is the biggest challenge of being married to a prominent person?

Life at times gets a little hectic and downtime is hard to find.

What is the biggest reward?

The biggest reward is getting to meet so many wonderful people who live in or visit our city. Another reward is having a husband who is dedicated to making - and keeping - our city a great place to live. The rewards far outweigh the challenges. People have been so gracious to us in all areas. It's very rewarding, as well as humbling in many instances.

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