

Written by JENNIFER COUNTER

Photography by Lisa Mangos



Katy's Newest Mayor Don Elder

Changing a City While Honoring the Integrity of a Great Small Town

'What a kind smile.' That was my first thought when I met the City of Katy's new Mayor, Don Elder. As I watched Lisa Mangos, one of Katy Magazine's photographers, snap photos of him, I found myself impressed with his sense of humor and his easygoing demeanor.

During our interview he made me feel right at home in his city office. With the same smile, he stated, "Please take a seat Jennifer. It's nice to meet you." Now, I have met politicians before and I have shared conversations with many businessmen but, something was different about this man- he has a genuineness that he wears on his sleeve and he carries in his walk. As he reclined casually in his chair, hands folded, he spoke with sincerity as he shared his love for Katy. "I have lived here since 1945. I was raised on a rice farm here... my wife went to school here; we sent our son to school here. This is a family deal for us."

Katy is a Village

As we sat at his round table and discussed his history with Katy, I sensed a great deal of pride in his words. "We have an excellent school system in Katy," Elder stated. "Our kids do quite well when they leave our schools and go to college. They are prepared for what lies ahead academically," he shared. I noted his term "our kids" and tied that to the old African Proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. I sensed that Elder shared in that philosophy too as he spoke of his passion for education. I learned that his business experience has been coupled by years of school involvement. He has sat

on the Katy School Board for two terms; the Harris County Board for 10 years, two of which he was the President of the Board that resided over 26 School Districts city wide. After completing his term on these various boards, he began giving some thought to running for local office. "I ran for City Council and was there for almost three terms before I ran for City Mayor," Elder said.

Local Roots

When asked why he has remained in Katy all these years, Elder responded enthusiastically, "I am close enough to reach the big

Community Involvement

- Served on the Katy ISD Board of Trustees for two terms.
- Elected to the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) County Board where he served for ten years, two terms as president.
- Recently resigned from the Katy City Council to run for Mayor.
- Serves on the Talent Committee of the Economic Development Board as well as the Governing Board of the EDC.
- Serves on the Development Board for Houston Community College (HCC).
- Has taught at Sam Houston State University and Hill College.



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RICE ROOTS Don Elder, Jr. was raised on a rice farm and ranch in Katy where his dad and two uncles farmed for over 33 years.



city, yet our family can still preserve our closeness to the community and friends we know by living in a smaller city. Katy gives us that." Elder also discusses the challenge of continued growth in the area. "There are many new residential and community developments ahead for Katy. There is talk of larger flagship stores coming to Katy Mills Mall and several larger hotels being built -

all of which will bring more job opportunities and continued growth for Katy," Elder comments. To some this may seem like a large challenge, but Elder seems to take it all in stride as he states, "We have some challenges to keep structured growth, no doubt about that, but change is good. These are good revenue sources that will benefit the community."

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Don Elder Fact Sheet

Born and Raised Katy, Texas.

Family Married to wife Ida Fay for 41 years. They have one grown son, Shane Elder.

Church The Elders are active members of the First United Methodist Church in the Heart of Katy.

College Sam Houston State University with a Bachelor's of Science and a Master's of Education.

Career Sales and Marketing for 30+ years in the Ready-Mix business. Currently owns Elder Consulting where he works with school and governmental entities.

Hobbies Hunting and fishing.

Elected Mayor May 12, 2007.

Term Expires 2009.

A Man with Many Hats

So, what does the Mayor do when he is not wearing his mayor hat? "My wife Ida Fay, our son, Shane and I enjoy hunting together and we are all big Texas A&M alumni," says Elder. We are on the Katy A&M Club, which assists in awarding scholarships to area Katy graduates and Shane, whom I am very proud of, is the Assistant Recruiter for Football Operations at Texas A&M University," Elder beamed.

The Mayor received his BA and Masters from Sam Houston State University where he majored in Agriculture/Biology and Animal Plant Science. He also worked in Sales and Marketing for 30 years. In discussing his path to City Hall, I note that his community involvement and lifestyle are intertwined. "My wife and I enjoy supporting the FFA - Sales and Rodeo Events," he shares. Elder is also a part of the Talent Search Committee for Economic Development, sits on the Board for Houston Community College, and enjoys working with kids on scholarship proposals. "Katy is a great city!" Elder exclaims. "We have the finest fire department, police force, and EMS Service in the surrounding areas. Katy is full of so many wonderful people that live and work here. I believe in Katy and I look forward to serving Katy in the time ahead as its Mayor." **KM**

Jennifer Counter is a Katy-based freelance writer and mother of daughter Lauren Alena.



Jess poses with pumpkins

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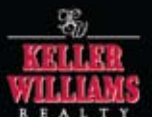


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