

Katy's Top Models

Written by Lacey Kupfer Wulf

Models don't just live in Milan, Paris, or New York. There are stunning and talented models who were raised or live right here in Katy.

Modeling is not an easy profession. It comes with harsh criticism, working long hours in uncomfortable clothing or weather, and demanding bosses. These five beautiful girls and women share how to look past the hard stuff and revel in the spotlight of being a top model.

Photography by Michael Helms



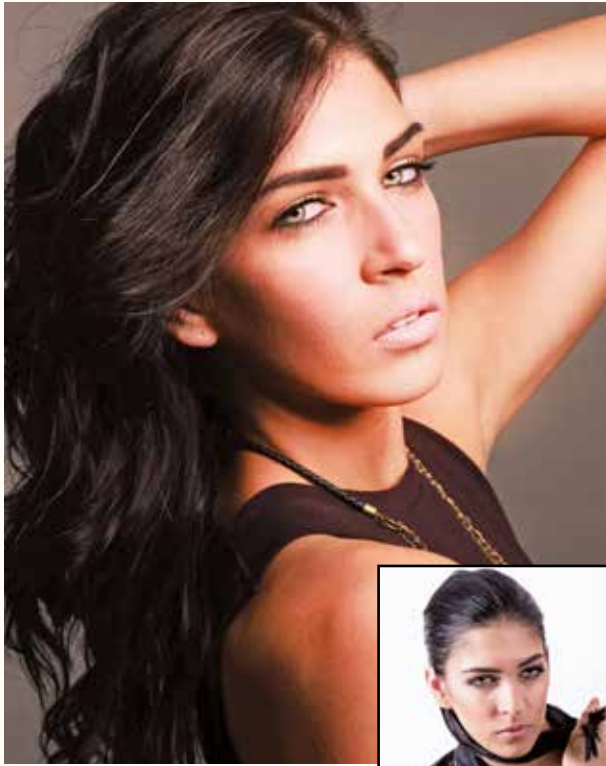
Legendary Model

Tatiana LaBello, formerly Tatiana Anderson, is a model with ambition. By age 9, she had over 150 trophies in modeling, beauty pageants, dance, pep squad, cheerleading, and baton twirling. She even taught aerobics classes in Katy at age 14. After graduating from Katy High School, LaBello became a professional cheerleader for three major sports teams: the NFL Denver Broncos, the NBA Houston Rockets, and the USFL Houston Gamblers; wrote a fitness book, and received many fitness pageant titles.

Her greatest claim to fame, however, is being the host of ESPN's top-rated fitness show *Kiana's Flex Appeal*. She also hosted a lifestyle show with Robin Leach on CBS and was interviewed on *extra*, *Inside Edition*, and appeared in episodes of *Friends*, *Baywatch*, and *She Spies*. Now, as a healthy lifestyle coach and owner of LaBello Lifestyle, she has relocated to Houston to be closer to family. She says, "True beauty comes from the inside. We need to work equally on the inside, mentally and spiritually, as much as the outside."

**Tatiana
LaBello**





On a Whim

When Amy Gonzales heard about a casting call for a local Houston magazine, *JMG Magazine*, she decided to try out. She says, "I was so nervous when I walked in and saw so many tall, beautiful girls who knew exactly what they were doing." Despite her lack of modeling experience, she was chosen and was shooting outdoors in 100-degree weather two weeks later. "It was quite the warm welcome to the industry!" she says.

Since that first experience, she has modeled for JCPenney, Paul Mitchell, Mary Kay, and local designers in Houston and Dallas. Gonzales says, "Every job is different which is so fun for me! It doesn't feel like work when you're having fun doing it."



Amy Gonzales

Defying Standards

Like many little girls, Brianna Key grew up with a dream to participate in pageants and be in magazines. Although she did some modeling as a child, her career really started at age 12 after appearing in ads for Wimpy's Hamburgers in downtown Houston, and participating in music video pilots for the Disney Channel. She is a former Texans Cheerleader and has won Miss USA titles like Miss Texas Continental and has modeled for Sierra Pacific Bridal and Cane Island.

In her work, Key has been told that she is too short or not good enough to be a model. "Once I step outside that room, I have to realize who I am and be proud of who I am. I can't control what I look like, but I've come pretty far. I have defied standards," she says. "I'm good enough for myself, and that's what matters." At age 25, she now owns her own business, Key Designs, and takes modeling opportunities as they arise.



Brianna Key



Born with a Talent

At 9 months old, Kyrie McAlpin danced on top of the table when her great-grandmother played music and acted out songs she listened to. She says, "I was born with that natural talent. I love modeling, acting, and dancing." After attending Drama Kids Camp and taking acting and modeling classes with the Neal Hamil agency, Kyrie's career has taken off. Her credentials include Academy Sports and Outdoors weekly ads, a Nationwide Insurance commercial, and a Macy's showcase.

Five-year-old Kyrie's mom, Kadene says, "Be yourself and get as much training as possible. You can never have enough." Although Kyrie occasionally travels for gigs, including to California to play a young Mary in a Mary J. Blige music video, she and her family live in Katy for the amazing schools.



Kyrie McAlpin

A Young Pro

Unlike most toddlers, who often fight standing still for pictures, 3-year-old Cami Valverde loves having her picture taken. Her mother Patty says, "She sees a camera, and she starts posing, and she loves to look at the pictures to see how they came out after we are done." Cami started modeling clothes and headbands for small clothing shops at just 9 months old.

Her pictures have been printed in magazines like *Semana News*, *Magnificent Magazine*, *Big City Kids*, and *Stylish Milk Magazine*. She is also on Instagram for brands like Cherokee, Munchkin, and Igloo Coolers. Patty says, "She is so free-spirited, so I think her poses are always fun and different with a little bit of sass." **KM**

LACEY KUPFER WULF is a wife, mother of twin toddler boys, and a freelance writer.



Photography by Tia Ray



Cami Valverde

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