

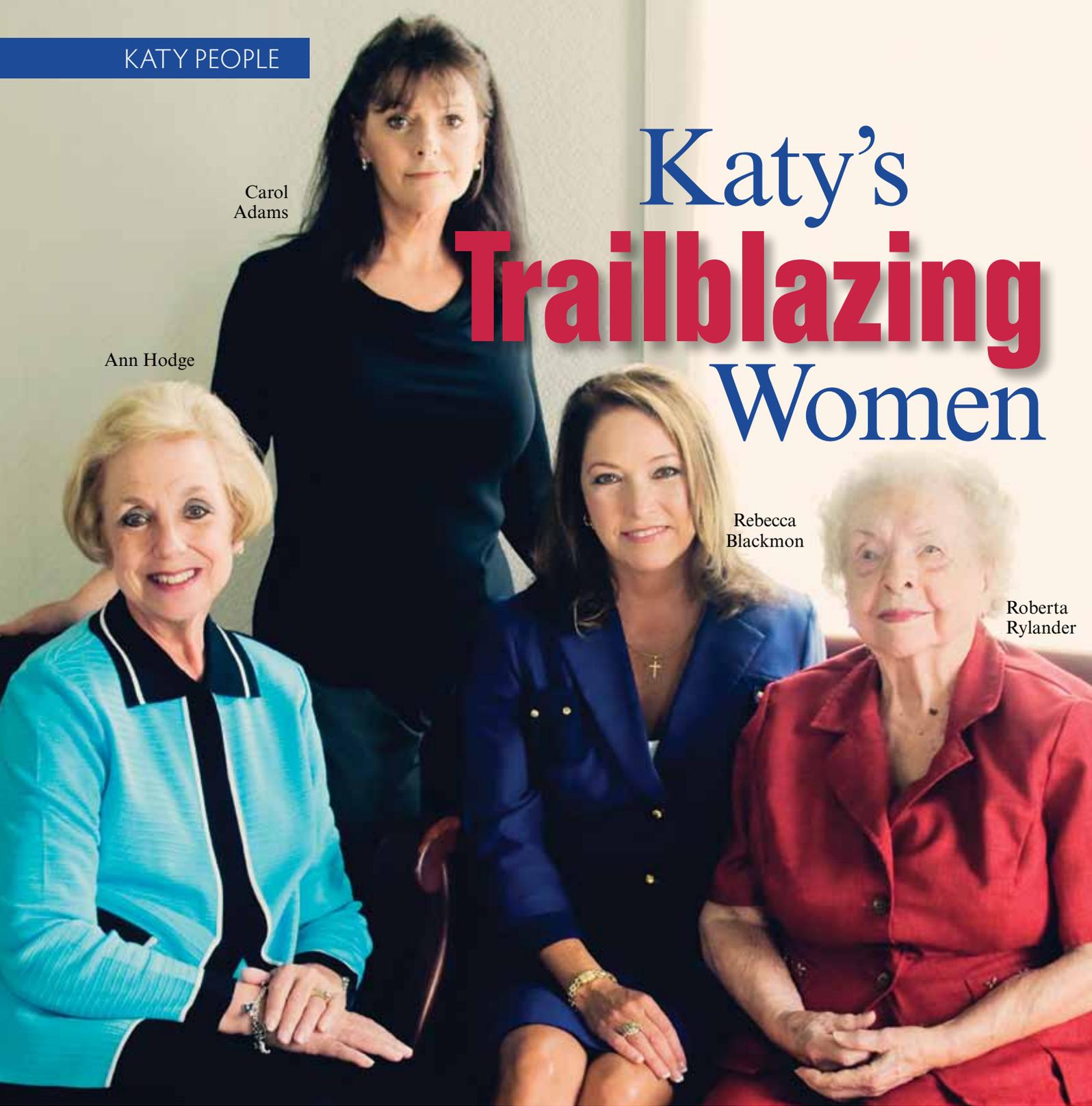
Carol
Adams

Ann Hodge

Rebecca
Blackmon

Roberta
Rylander

Katy's Trailblazing Women



Dedicated and passionate about Katy, these well-known women lead the way in helping to make our community a better place

Written by Natalie Cook Clark Photography by Marisa Hugonnett

Great communities are not just born; they are created out of hard work, passion, dedication, and perseverance. Many local women have devoted their lives to making Katy a better place for all of us to live. Most of them while raising families, working, volunteering, and so much more. Katy Magazine is proud to showcase a handful of the many extraordinary women who have helped shape and enrich this community we call home.

Carol Eckels Adams

City Council Member and Executive Director of the Katy Heritage Society

Carol Adams has always been passionate about giving back to the Katy community and currently serves as executive director of the Katy Heritage Society. As part of her service to the organization, she was instrumental in moving historic homes to create Katy Heritage Park. The project was not without controversy, but Adams stuck to what she believed to be best for Katy, and now the park is a wonderful and popular Katy destination.

Adams also suggested the ongoing All Aboard Katy project, which is sure to become a popular city attraction. The concept was developed as a way to unite Katy through public art placed around town and is similar to the Chicago Cows community art project which quickly attracted national attention. "I think that this will be a powerful association with Katy," Adams says.

She is a firm believer that anyone can make time in their schedule to contribute to their community. "We all have time," says Adams. She continues to see Katy as a community rich in history, promise, and hope for the future. As such, Adams strives to make a difference in Katy every day and encourages others to do the same on whatever level they can make time for. "Human energy and creativity are limitless," she shares. "My family might tell you that there have been sacrifices related to my passion to serve Katy, but we make those sacrifices as a family and they, too take pride in what I have done for our home, Katy."

Rebecca Blackmon

First Female in the Katy Rotary and Long-Time Banker

Rebecca Blackmon gets to help the people of Katy in both her professional career and her volunteer endeavors. In 1983, Blackmon began working in Katy as a lender and branch manager for a community bank, and has been serving as a local professional ever since. In her career, Blackmon is motivated to help and serve others. "I truly get satisfaction from being able to help someone out," she says. "Especially if that someone might otherwise fall between the cracks."

Perhaps the accomplishment Blackmon is most proud of is her volunteer work with the Katy Rotary Club. In 1989, the Supreme Court ruled that Rotary International must allow women to join, having previously excluded them from its membership. As a true trailblazer, Blackmon was one of the local chapter's first female members and has continued to serve with enthusiasm throughout the years. "I was truly honored and later was asked to serve as president," she says.

In both her professional and personal endeavors, Blackmon takes great pride in serving the people of Katy, helping to pave the way for the community's future leaders. "If I've helped one business start or expand in Katy, if I've helped one person buy, build, or improve their home here, or if I've helped one person send their child to college, then maybe I've made a difference," says Blackmon.

Human energy and creativity are limitless.

- Carol Adams



She currently serves as the executive director of the Katy Heritage Society, where she has helped relocate historic homes to Katy Heritage Park and helped implement the All Aboard Katy project. Married to Hill Adams for 30 years and mother of two.

I truly get satisfaction from being able to help someone out.

- Rebecca Blackmon



She currently serves as president of Tradition Bank's Katy branch and is a member of the Katy Rotary Club, where she has also served as president. Married to Louis Blackmon and the mother of three.

The community spirit of reaching out to the whole Katy community has not changed.

- Lynn Cardiff

She is a founding member of Katy Heritage Society and helped save and preserve the Katy Depot. A former executive director of the Katy Chamber of Commerce, she helped plan the first Katy Rice Harvest Festival. Married to Hal Victor Cardiff for 55 years and the mother of four.

Lynn Cardiff

Founder of the Katy Heritage Society, Volunteer, and Local Personality

From hosting a televised cooking show to making the Katy Rice Harvest Festival a local tradition, Lynn Cardiff has made her mark in Katy. When she first moved to the area in 1955, she quickly fell in love with the town. "It was a wonderful place to rear children and feel the sun on your face," she says. She became concerned for her community during the Katy Depot debate and one passionate project led to another, making Cardiff a lifetime supporter and volunteer for multiple local causes.

It was her passion to save the Katy Depot that led her to participate in helping create the Katy Heritage Society. Cardiff is the reason the caboose still sits on display at the Katy Depot today. As a proud Katyite and former executive director of the Katy Chamber of Commerce she also proved instrumental in planning the first Katy Rice Harvest Festival. Even though the festival has changed and grown throughout the years, she is happy to see the people have the same spirit of goodwill. "The community spirit of reaching out to the whole Katy community has not changed," says Cardiff.

Perhaps one of her most acclaimed accomplishments was hosting *Katy's Kitchen*, a televised cooking show where she brought in fellow Katyites to share their recipes for all to enjoy. While popular, the show went off the air when its young director followed another path based on the show's great success. Katy has been part of Cardiff's family for over 100 years, and she is quick to praise the town she so loves. "Of course I've seen changes, but Katy still has the same hometown feel," she says.

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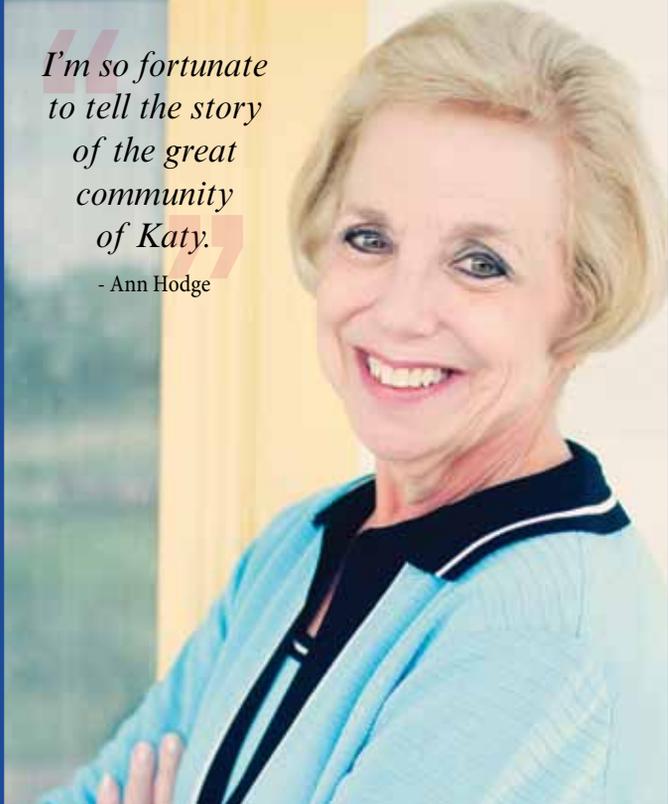


Kyle Lindner
Agent
430 S. Mason Rd. • Katy, Tx 77450
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I'm so fortunate to tell the story of the great community of Katy.

- Ann Hodge



She serves as president and CEO of the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce and also participates in numerous civic organizations across Katy and west Houston. Married to Bob Hodge and the mother of one son.

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Ann Hodge

President of the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce and Community Leader

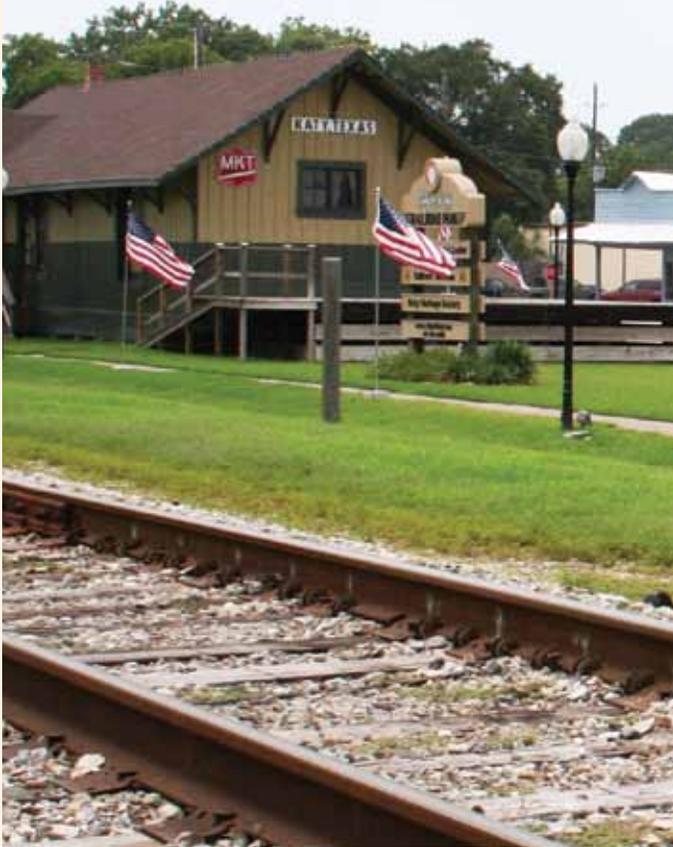
Thanks to dedicated citizens like Ann Hodge, Katy has proven over and over again what a wonderful community it is. It's this neighborly and inviting spirit that makes serving as president of the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce both a pleasure and honor for Hodge. "I'm so fortunate to tell the story of the great community of Katy," she says.

Hodge takes pride in introducing new businesses and people to what they need in Katy. "The Chamber continues to grow in strategic fashion and develop relationships and resources with businesses," she shares.

Another big undertaking that Hodge is working on as the Chamber's president is working to preserve Katy's history. "Katy's 50-year anniversary is coming up, and the Chamber is working with city volunteers on a scrapbook," says Hodge. "We want to keep Katy's rich history alive."

One of the many things Hodge loves about Katy is how easy it is to find your niche and give back. "That is one of my favorite aspects of my job is when I can match an eager volunteer with the appropriate Katy organization," she says. Hodge believes that people need to find a way to get involved to maintain the quality of life that Katy has become accustomed to. "After growing up in other cities, I can honestly say that Katy is the best place to live!" she says.

Lynn Cardiff was passionate about saving and preserving the Katy Depot and helped create the Katy Heritage Society.



Despite controversy and opposition, Carol Adams was instrumental in preserving many historic homes by moving them to Katy Heritage Park. Roberta Wright Rylander donated her family's home and family-owned post office to the park.



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Roberta Wright Rylander

Katy Historian, Educator, and School Namesake

Through her many contributions to the community, Roberta Rylander has definitely made a name for herself in Katy. As the namesake of Katy ISD's Rylander Elementary School, she has a passion for education coupled with a love of giving back and serving her fellow Katyites.

Rylander is a Katy native through and through, having attended both elementary and high school here. She was part of the 29-member graduating class of 1936 at Katy High School and still to this day, her continual involvement with the KHS Alumni organization brings her much joy. "Every second Saturday in June, I attend the Katy High School Alumni meeting," she says. "It is so much fun to see young and energetic alumni, along with some of my friends from 1936."

After graduating from KHS, Rylander went on to the University of Texas to graduate with a degree in pharmacy. She was a year too young to take the state board exam, though, so she went into teaching. "I loved teaching science, since I had taken so many science classes during college," she shares.

Teaching became her passion and brought her back to Katy. Back in her hometown, she enjoyed numerous community involvement projects. One such project that she is still most proud of is donating her family home and family-owned post office to the Katy Heritage Society. "Now, my family's legacy is forever seen and enjoyed in historic Katy," says Rylander. "It makes me very proud."

Katy has always been Rylander's home, and with so many great friends and neighbors, she is proud to be able to make a difference in the lives of many. "This community means so much to me," she says. "The people that I grew up with are either still here or I'm able to see their families. I still love meeting all the wonderful people who call Katy home."



"I still love meeting all the wonderful people who call Katy home."

- Roberta Rylander

As a longtime Katy educator, she is the namesake for Rylander Elementary. She is also known as a Katy historian and donated her family's historic home and family-owned post office to the Katy Heritage Society. Married to the late Fred A. Rylander for 53 years and mother of two.

Leading the Way to Katy's Bright Future

These five trailblazing women continue to make their mark in Katy through their hard work, passion to serve, and dedication to creating a better tomorrow. Their leadership efforts have helped build a successful community, connecting neighbors and creating a lasting bond of friendship and goodwill. **KM**

NATALIE COOK CLARK loves being a freelance writer in her hometown of Katy. She lives with her wonderful husband, Stephen, beautiful baby girl, Angelina, and dog, Oscar.

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More **Trailblazing** *Katy Ladies*

We've profiled a small sample of the many trailblazing Katy women. Here are a few more that have made huge strides in making Katy a better place.

Odessa Kilpatrick PUNCHARD

Longtime Educator and School Namesake

Known for being the first African American principal in Katy ISD.

Sandy Faucett

CEO/Executive Director of Katy Christian Ministries

Organization provides financial assistance, and operates food pantries and a domestic abuse and sexual assault center.

Terri Bieber

Executive Director of ART Reach

Known for bringing art programs to at risk children and underserved communities.

Denise Owen

Executive Director of Breath of Life Children's Center

Known for providing affordable immunization and healthcare to the uninsured and underinsured.

Judith Snyder

President of the Katy ISD School Board

A dedicated Katy ISD volunteer who has served on the school board since 1996.

Kay Callender

Vice Chairman of Keep Katy Beautiful

Known for making Katy a better place.



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Katy Magazine's 2009 Cutest Kid Contest winner, Maddison Parker