

MEMORIAL'S PREMIER PUBLICATION

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CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE CLASS OF 2022!

Ladies
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COMMUNITY ICON AWARD

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2022 marks our Third Annual Ladies of Memorial Community Icon Award Luncheon. This year's event will be held on May 6th at Hotel Zaza Memorial City. Over the next ten pages, you will meet this year's exceptional Memorial women who are doing extraordinary things. We are so very grateful for all their philanthropic efforts.

We would also like to thank our many sponsors for their encouragement and support of our annual event. We are grateful for them wanting to participate and their help to salute these remarkable ladies!

*By Lara Bell
Photography by: Hallie Keller*





Elizabeth Elder

Steel Magnolia Moms www.steelmagnoliamoms.com



Elizabeth Elder grew up in Memorial, the youngest of four children. She graduated MHS in 1999, then went to SMU where she joined Kappa Kappa Gamma. Junior year she transferred to Parsons School of Design and earned her BBA. She worked for a lifestyle e-zine, developing their advertising sales department, before moving to Dallas and working for D Magazine's newspaper division. In 2016, Elizabeth married her favorite NYC souvenir, James Elder. In 2008, they moved to Shreveport and in 2010 welcomed their daughter, Annabelle. Fourteen months later, their son, Blair joined the family. Soon their children showed signs of developmental delays, and their parenthood took a difficult detour. After years of inconclusive tests, the Elders received a diagnosis of Leigh Syndrome in 2015. With a known cause, Annabelle and Blair started a successful trial drug and the Elders were able to welcome their third child, Clark, with advanced IVF genetic testing.

Elizabeth started Steel Magnolia Moms (SMM) in 2016, and now serves as the Executive Director of the non-profit, creating supportive programming and leading fundraising initiatives such as the SMM Nuttycracker Market and Moxie Boxes. Elizabeth served as Captain of the SMM Ragnar Team, made up of 12 SMM who ran a 200-mile relay in 2019. Their success inspired Elizabeth to lead SMM as an official charity of the 2022 Chevron Houston Marathon. Team SMM raised the most funds out of 60 charities! Elizabeth credits SMM's passionate members and the incredibly supportive community for their growth and success. "We have the roots, and the sky's the limit for this beautiful magnolia to grow," Elizabeth said. "I want to reach and provide shelter from the storm to moms everywhere, and let them know they are not alone. Better yet, they are in the company of moms just like them, strong as steel."

Why have you chosen this charity? Steel Magnolia Moms became a beacon of hope for me when my children were young and I had a hard time relating to other moms with neurotypical children. It started as a small social group and is now a non-profit supporting over 1,300 women. Our mission is to positively support moms of children with special needs by sharing in the joys and challenges of raising our children. We do this by providing programs such as Magnolia Wellness; Head to Heart, which offers professional psychotherapy and support groups; and Happy Camper(s) which sends kids with disabilities to summer camps. We are helping to send nearly 30 kids to camp this year! We also host social events and workshops to give moms a chance to personally connect, take a break from their caregiving roles, and most importantly, have fun with other moms who "get it."

Tell us a little about yourself and family: I fell head over heels for my husband, James, the night I met him. I called my mom two days later and told her I was going to marry this boy I met in NYC! Eighteen years later, we now live in Bunker Hill and have created a beautiful life together with three children, Annabelle, Blair and Clark and our Golden Retrievers, Thompson and Magnolia. But even the best love stories have heartbreak. Our daughter, Annabelle, passed away in October due to complications of Leigh Syndrome. She inspired Steel Magnolia Moms, and I see her reflection in the love and light we share.

Tell us about some of your volunteer work: SMM is my baby. I've poured my heart and soul into it, but it has given so much more back to me. It's helped me find purpose and beauty in hardship. I'm also passionate about supporting People Against Leigh Syndrome (PALS) and chaired their gala in 2019.

Tell us something we may not know about you:

On 9/11, I watched the first plane fly (very, very low) over my head and into the World Trade Center. I can still see the hole from the airplane in the building before it blew. But that's a story for another day!



