

The Kerr County Lead.



Women of Distinction



Friday, June 19, 2026

Tucker Hall
St. Peter's Episcopal Church



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
of the
TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

When Everything Changed, Community United for Recovery

On July 4 at 9:48 a.m., while floodwaters were still rising, the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country created the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund to support immediate needs and long-term recovery. Donations arrived within hours from across the country—foundations, small businesses and residents stepping up however they could. It quickly became one of the largest and fastest philanthropic responses in Texas history.

The Fund is now helping Kerr County rebuild and heal.



rebuildkerr.org

Welcome to The Lead's first Women of Distinction Awards

The journey to tonight's first Women of Distinction Awards was circuitous, fraught with anxiety, criticisms and changes of direction. In the end, we are here tonight to honor 22 women individually and three groups, whose work is defined by the efforts of the women of those respective organizations.

Initially, we proposed honoring 15 women across multiple categories to highlight those who have gone above and beyond to serve our community. However, it was the suggestion of Maia Walther, who compiles The Lead's extensive events listings, to eliminate the categories because it was too hard to select women of distinction with that limitation. That was especially true of the nonprofit category.

Needless to say, we had a strong response — 70 women nominated from nearly 100 nominations. We also seemed to be missing a few that deserved recognition — leading to an expansion and inclusion of key groups who play a vital role in our community's health and recovery from the July 4 flood.

It was during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Hunt Community Center that I realized we needed more people engaged. The work of the Hunt Preservation Society's Community Allocation Committee and of the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country's Case Managers was fully explained during this presentation, and it was hard to deny that they should be honored.

This work is done almost exclusively by women.

In past editorials, The Lead praised the work of Peterson Hospice to provide comfort and care to those in their final days — another job that falls almost entirely on women. Even as we gather tonight for these awards, families continue to praise this essential work through their messages of gratitude in their loved ones' obituaries.

So, we've landed at 22 individuals and three groups, and we're holding this ceremony tonight knowing that there are countless other women we could have honored, but we do so with the comfort that we will have time to honor them in the future.

Finally, I wouldn't have been able to have held this event without the team of Jennifer Dean, Leslie Jones, Libbie Horton, Kelly Hagemeyer, Sarah Stone, Jill Robinson, Amy Goodyear, Maia Walther, Nissa Kendall, Stephanie Seefeldt, Laura Bernhard, Janelle Peralt, Emily Simpson, the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, Texas Hill Country Advisors, Guadalupe Bank, the team at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Pint and Plow Brewing Co., Meredith Margaret Wines and Kerrville Hills Winery.

Let's have some fun!

Louis Amestoy
Editor and Publisher, The Kerr County Lead.

Beer & wine sponsors





Tara Bushnoe

Upper Guadalupe River Authority

Bushnoe has served as general manager of the Upper Guadalupe River Authority for nearly 20 years, building a reputation as a steady and trusted leader committed to protecting the river and the communities that depend on it. In the aftermath of the July 4, 2025 flood, she took the lead in rapidly implementing improvements to the Guadalupe River warning system — work that has had a direct and lasting impact on public safety across Kerr County. Her ability to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts across multiple agencies while under intense public scrutiny reflected the resolve that defines her tenure. “Her ability to deliver meaningful results in record time reflects both her deep expertise and her tireless dedication,” one nominator wrote.



Mary Campana

Kerr County Habitat For Humanity

Bushnoe has served as general manager of the Upper Guadalupe River Authority for nearly 20 years, building a reputation as a steady and trusted leader committed to protecting the river and the communities that depend on it. In the aftermath of the July 4, 2025 flood, she took the lead in rapidly implementing improvements to the Guadalupe River warning system — work that has had a direct and lasting impact on public safety across Kerr County. Her ability to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts across multiple agencies while under intense public scrutiny reflected the resolve that defines her tenure. “Her ability to deliver meaningful results in record time reflects both her deep expertise and her tireless dedication,” one nominator wrote.



Julie Davis

Kerrville Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Davis has championed Kerrville tourism for more than 20 years through the Convention and Visitors Bureau, working to attract visitors and support local businesses with consistent energy and enthusiasm. After the July 4, 2025 flood upended the local tourism economy, she led the effort to create a recovery campaign that supported businesses in their time of need and reassured visitors about coming to Kerrville. Nominators said she tackles the work “with a smile despite constant criticism” and dedicates her time, heart, and expertise to the community’s cause. “As my boss I can say she brings the light every day,” one nominator wrote.



Amy **Dozier**

Kerrville Public Utility Board

Dozier serves as assistant general manager of the Kerrville Public Utility Board, bringing more than two decades of finance and public sector expertise to one of the community's most essential services. She joined KPUB in 2021 as director of finance — after previously serving as chief financial officer for the City of Kerrville — and was promoted to assistant general manager based on her strategic leadership and ability to navigate complex challenges. She has been instrumental in advancing KPUB's development of a utility-owned power generation facility designed to ensure long-term rate stability and energy reliability, a high-stakes project that nominators said she drove past numerous obstacles through sheer determination. Her contributions were recognized at the state level when she received the Texas Public Power Association's 2025 Distinguished Service Award. She also serves on the Kerrville Public School Foundation board and the Government Finance Officers Association of Texas.



Becky **Etzler**

Riverside Nature Center

Etzler has led the Riverside Nature Center as executive director for more than a decade, growing membership, programming, and community partnerships while establishing the center as a vital resource for Kerr County residents and visitors. Under her leadership, members and visitors each grew 21% between 2022 and 2024, programs grew 23%, and program participants increased 160%. When the July 4, 2025 flood left three feet of water in RNC's education buildings, she sent an email to her board at 2:15 p.m. that same day announcing she had already purchased cleaning supplies and was calling for volunteers. The fundraising campaign she launched brought in more than \$177,000 in flood relief donations, a \$300,000 grant from the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, and an estimated \$75,000 in in-kind labor and materials. The nature center reopened September 2, 2025 — ahead of schedule. "She has gotten dirty up to her armpits day after day," Schreiner University professor Chris Distell said at a post-flood panel.



Judy **Eychner**

Former Mayor of Kerrville

Eychner has spent 37 years as a Kerrville resident, and all 37 of them in active community service — a record that spans elected office, nonprofit leadership, and civic volunteerism across virtually every corner of local life. She served on the Kerrville City Council for four years and as mayor for two, from 2022 to 2024, and has contributed to the Kerrville Area Chamber of Commerce, Habitat for Humanity, the Kerrville Rotary Club, the Dietert Center, the Doyle Center, the Kerrville Public Utility Board, the Upper Guadalupe River Center, Schreiner University, Kerr Together Long Term Recovery, and many other organizations. "When one looks at everything wonderful and beneficial about our community," one nominator wrote, "the fingerprints of Judy Eychner are almost assuredly upon those organizations, events and services."



Kayte **Graham**

Kerr County River Foundation

Graham, co-owner of Central Provisions in Center Point, emerged as a community organizer in the wake of the July 4, 2025 flood, focusing her energy on rebuilding damaged parks in the Center Point area. Nominators praised her tireless work ethic and enthusiasm for her community. "If you want hard work and enthusiasm for the community," one nominator wrote, "you will find it with Kayte Graham."



Diane **Green**

Kerr County Abstract and Title Co.

Green first worked at Kerr Abstract and Title before purchasing the business, where she has now served as president for more than 50 years. Nominators praised her not only as a successful female business leader but for the culture of responsive, community-minded service she has built within the company. She is active in Rotary, hosts exchange students, and serves on several community boards. "Diane is always positive, maintaining a happy demeanor and can-do attitude," one nominator wrote, noting that she has created an environment that actively encourages community service from her entire staff.



Luci **Harmon**

Former Superintendent of Hunt ISD

Harmon is retiring as superintendent of Hunt ISD after leading the district through one of the most difficult periods in its history. When the July 4, 2025 flood struck, she cut short a family trip to Chicago and returned immediately to convert the school into a disaster center that housed numerous first responders in the days that followed. The district lost two students in the flood. Throughout the crisis and the recovery that followed, she worked hand-in-hand with principal Sarah Nichols, who will succeed her as superintendent. Under her leadership, Hunt ISD has maintained an A rating and continued to grow academically.



Kathleen **Hudson**

Schreiner University

Hudson retired from Schreiner University after a career as an English professor that nominators described as transformational for generations of students. She also founded the Texas Heritage Music Foundation and the annual Texas Heritage Living History Festival, channeling her passion for teaching into a broader cultural mission for the community and the region. "By following your passions you can make a major impact on what others will learn, know and discover," one nominator wrote, comparing her lifetime achievements to those of Florence Thornton Butt.



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Brenda **Hughes**

Former Kerrville City Councilmember

Hughes served six years on the Kerrville City Council, including four as mayor pro tem, building a record of steady leadership through some of the city's most challenging periods — including the COVID-19 pandemic, Winter Storm Uri, and the 2025 flood. She is the founder of Kerrville Pets Alive, which was instrumental in passing the bond for a new animal shelter and significantly reducing the county's euthanasia rate. She also served on the Kerr County Capital Improvement Planning Committee and has been involved with Hill Country CASA for approximately 15 years. She organizes Kerrville Market Days and is a graduate of the Kerrville Citizens Police Academy. Multiple nominators described her as someone who “walks the walk” and whose servant's heart defines every role she takes on.



Lt. Mary **Krebs**

Kerrville Police Department

Krebs has served the Kerrville Police Department for more than 20 years in roles spanning patrol officer, field training officer, patrol sergeant, community services sergeant, and her current position as Support Services Lieutenant — a role that encompasses oversight of communications, records, training and recruiting, community services, fleet and building management, the department's accreditation program, professional standards, and grant writing. During the July 4, 2025 flood response, she worked 12- to 16-hour days in the Emergency Operations Center as Logistics Chief and Deputy Chief of Logistics, ensuring every first responder in the field had the equipment and resources they needed. Beyond the department, she serves on the Harper ISD School Board and organizes the Jacob Krebs Memorial Youth Hunt. Police Chief Chris McCall submitted a formal letter of nomination, writing that Krebs “shows up quietly, consistently, and without seeking recognition, and our community is better because of her.”



Kim **Meisner**

City of Kerrville

Meisner, assistant city manager for the City of Kerrville, brings more than 28 years of public sector experience to a role that touches nearly every aspect of city operations. She joined the City of Kerrville in 2007 and has held a variety of leadership positions, earning a reputation for professionalism, integrity, and a deep commitment to the residents she serves. She holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Texas at Arlington and a bachelor's degree in human resource management from Columbia Southern University. Nominators praised her thoughtful approach, strong work ethic, and unwavering dedication to doing what is best for her community.



Theresa **Metcalf**

Kerr Economic Development Corp./Kerr Together

Metcalf has supported Kerrville's small businesses and economic growth for a decade, working through the Kerr Economic Development Corp. and Kerr Together to connect businesses and community members with resources and opportunities. After the July 4, 2025 flood, she immediately flew back to Kerr County, relocated her family, and spent her days sitting alongside community members to work through recovery resources and options. "She champions the Kerr County community pushing for more adequate answers, creative solutions, and holding organizations accountable," one nominator wrote.



Lucy **Pearson**

Kerrville Municipal Court

Pearson serves as municipal judge for the City of Kerrville and municipal prosecutor for the City of Fredericksburg, bringing a career of public service in both education and law to each role. She spent more than 20 years as a sixth-grade English and reading teacher before transitioning to law, and nominators said former students still stop her regularly to thank her for the impact she had. She helps run teen court in Kerrville and volunteers her time as a drug court defense attorney, a role that demands considerable hours each month. "She holds people's hands as they walk through the most difficult times of their lives, and she sees them there on the other side of it," one nominator wrote. "She does this with grace, love, and an incredible sense of humor."



Tammy **Prout**

Hill Country Community Journal

Prout is the publisher of the Hill Country Community Journal, the only woman-owned local news organization in the Kerrville area. She serves on the boards of several charitable organizations and has used the Journal as a consistent platform to celebrate local youth, champion community projects, and keep readers informed. After the July 4, 2025 flood, she committed herself and her publication to extensive community coverage during one of the most demanding periods in local media memory. "The July 4 flood brought a whole other level of commitment from our local media providers," one nominator wrote, "and as the only woman-owned, local news organization, I think she should be recognized for the amount of hours and sacrifice it took."



Bridget **Symm**

Hunt Preservation Society

Symm serves as executive director of the West Kerr Public School Foundation, which supports students and teachers across Ingram ISD, Hunt ISD, and Divide School, and as vice president of the Hunt ISD School Board. She is also a constant presence in Warrior athletics, leading the Ingram Tom Moore High School PTO and working to ensure student-athletes are supported and programs run smoothly. After the July 4 flood, she played a critical role in community recovery efforts across West Kerr County — from Mountain Home to Kerrville — helping mobilize students, volunteers, and resources for families, businesses, and camps. She currently serves on the Hunt Preservation Society Community Allocation Committee.



Brenda **Thompson**

The Dietert Center

Thompson has served as executive director of the Dietert Center for eight years, leading a team of approximately 20 employees supported by nearly 300 volunteers in an organization that provides daily nutrition, medical equipment, dementia care programs, and vital community engagement for Kerrville's senior population. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she found ways to keep essential services safely accessible even while the building was temporarily closed. When the July 4, 2025 flood damaged the building, she coordinated a rapid response that had the Friendship Café reopened within four months and the full center operational by January 1, 2026. "She LOVES her job," one nominator wrote. "To make a real difference and to take the organization forward, you have to."



Charvy **Tork**

City of Kerrville

Tork has worked for the City of Kerrville for nearly two decades, earning a reputation as one of the hardest-working and most positive members of the team. Nominators said she works fully behind the scenes to keep city operations running, approaching every project with enthusiasm and reliability. "She lights up every room she walks into," one nominator wrote. "She runs circles around everyone keeping us going."



Lora **Walters**

Community Champion

Walters is recognized as one of the warmest and most welcoming people in Kerr County, known for her willingness to make new friends and her advocacy for those in need. She is a longtime champion for Williams Syndrome families and a consistent presence in community life.



Mindy **Wendele**

Kerrville Area Chamber of Commerce

Wendele is a lifelong Kerrville resident and Tivy graduate who has devoted herself to building up her hometown through work with Main Street, the Chamber of Commerce, and numerous other community efforts spanning many years. “When I think of what is good about Kerrville,” one nominator wrote, “the contributions made selflessly by Mindy are right up there, front and center.”



Jayne **Zirkel**

Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country

Zirkel has served as chief marketing officer of the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country since 2011, leading the communications and marketing efforts of an organization that serves nonprofits across ten counties. A Tivy graduate raising her family in Kerrville, she also drives the Sisterhood for Good fundraising initiative and serves on the Kerrville Public School Foundation board. After the July 4, 2025 flood, her role expanded dramatically as the Community Foundation became a central coordinator of recovery efforts and funding distribution. “She has a love for this community that is visible in her profession and volunteerism in too many organizations to count,” one nominator wrote.



Disaster Case Managers

Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country

These women have been the boots on the ground in Kerr County's flood recovery, working every day to help survivors navigate their way back home. Connecting families to housing, shelter, and recovery resources, they have taken on some of the most emotionally demanding and logistically complex work of the post-flood period — and done it with compassion and persistence.

Community Allocation Committee



Hunt Preservation Society

This group of dedicated women has been at the center of Hunt's rebuilding effort since the July 4, 2025 flood, coordinating resources, allocating support, and working to restore a community that lost more than almost anywhere else in Kerr County on that devastating night.

Women of Peterson Hospice

Peterson Health



The women of Peterson Hospice appear by name in obituary after obituary across Kerr County — a quiet but profound testament to the lasting impression they leave on families during some of life's most difficult moments. Their consistent dedication to compassionate end-of-life care makes them among the most quietly essential members of this community.

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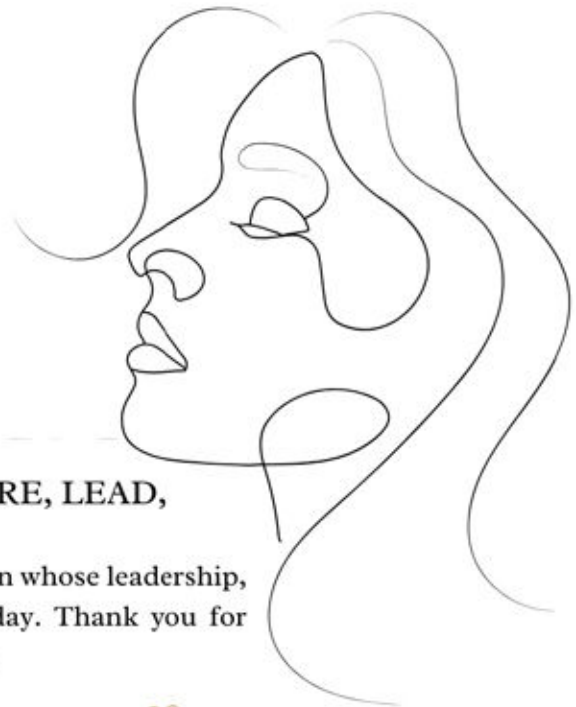
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