

An Update From Ms. Bacon

What it's like to be the mayor of Kaufman

By Samantha Barker

NOTE: This is the second part of a two-part article. The first part appeared last year when Ms. Paula Bacon was elected mayor of Kaufman.

Q: What is the difference between your life last year at this time and now?

A: Last year I was quite a bit more carefree, and the refrigerator was not empty like it is now! I was probably overly optimistic to think that it would not take every minute of everyday to do all I need to do. On the other hand, I enjoy learning new things and in that, I have been richly rewarded. There is still so much to learn 7 or 8 months later.

Q: What have you done since you became Mayor?

A: I have spent quite a bit of my energies working to reduce the city's bill for legal fees. When I took office I discovered that we were spending quite a bit and so, even though I hadn't planned it, that's been a big issue. After I was elected I found that the horse slaughter plant was not in compliance with city requirements quite a bit. I'm still working on that. There are health and sanitation laws, as well as laws regulating the use of our expensive sewer system that have to be obeyed. A huge question now in the courts is whether horse slaughter is legal. For a long time, we in this community were told they only killed horses that were old and sick, but that's not true. I am hoping the courts will make a decision that supports closing the horse slaughter plant.

I supported a study of Washington Street so that development there is compatible with existing homes and businesses; that way the liquor store, that is surrounded on 3 side by homes, that some people want to open would need to open where it would be next to more similar land uses, next to businesses.

Q: What do you see for the future of Kaufman?

A: The best thing that can happen for Kaufman's future is for people to get involved and learn about new ways to improve our community.

That, along with a cooperative energy, and people can make big improvements in the way Kaufman looks and in fun things to do in our community. I hope the future will include active neighborhood associations, murals on the square, people moving in and renovating some of the old but cool houses.

Of course, the McDonald's is coming, maybe in April. They have a Blockbuster Video with it. I hope to see a program where we don't kill stray dogs and cats but have a spay and neuter program so there aren't all these poor animals nobody wants or can take care of. There are some programs too, where people have foster homes till the pet can be adopted. There are just so many progressive things we could do if people would get involved and learn new

ways to solve old problems with fresh new ideas.

Q: Have you found that being Mayor has affected your personal life? How people treat you?

A: Personally, I don't have much time to myself, but people have been great—calling me, stopping me in the grocery store, writing letters – just overall encouraging me, which was especially good when the council reprimanded me. People keep telling to stick with it and do what is right. Twice my dad suffered aggravated assaults, but he keeps going to work and loving it. I'm like him, I guess, or a Timex watch: "Takes a licking and keeps on ticking." People treat me great and I'm trying to live up to their high expectations on behalf of Kaufman.

Q: What do you like best about being Mayor?

A: I like having interesting things to think about. And I like having the opportunity to work so directly to improve our small corner of the planet here in Kaufman. I think that keeps me going when it gets tough or I feel very tired. The best part is trying to make a difference, a good difference.

Q: What do you like least?

A: What I like least is the hard parts. Reading, researching, not having enough time to do it all, but feeling driven to do it right—it's pretty hard. Of course, once I've done the reading, researching, getting it right, I'm pretty happy to have done it.

Q: What big changes do you hope to achieve while Mayor?

A: The biggest change I hope to see is a new attitude that feeds and fuels the improvements we can all imagine for Kaufman. A 'can do', get involved attitude, get smart, be respectful and humane attitude—everything good could come from realizing, "What I do matters. I can make a difference."

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- Paula Bacon, KHS teacher and Mayor of Kaufman.