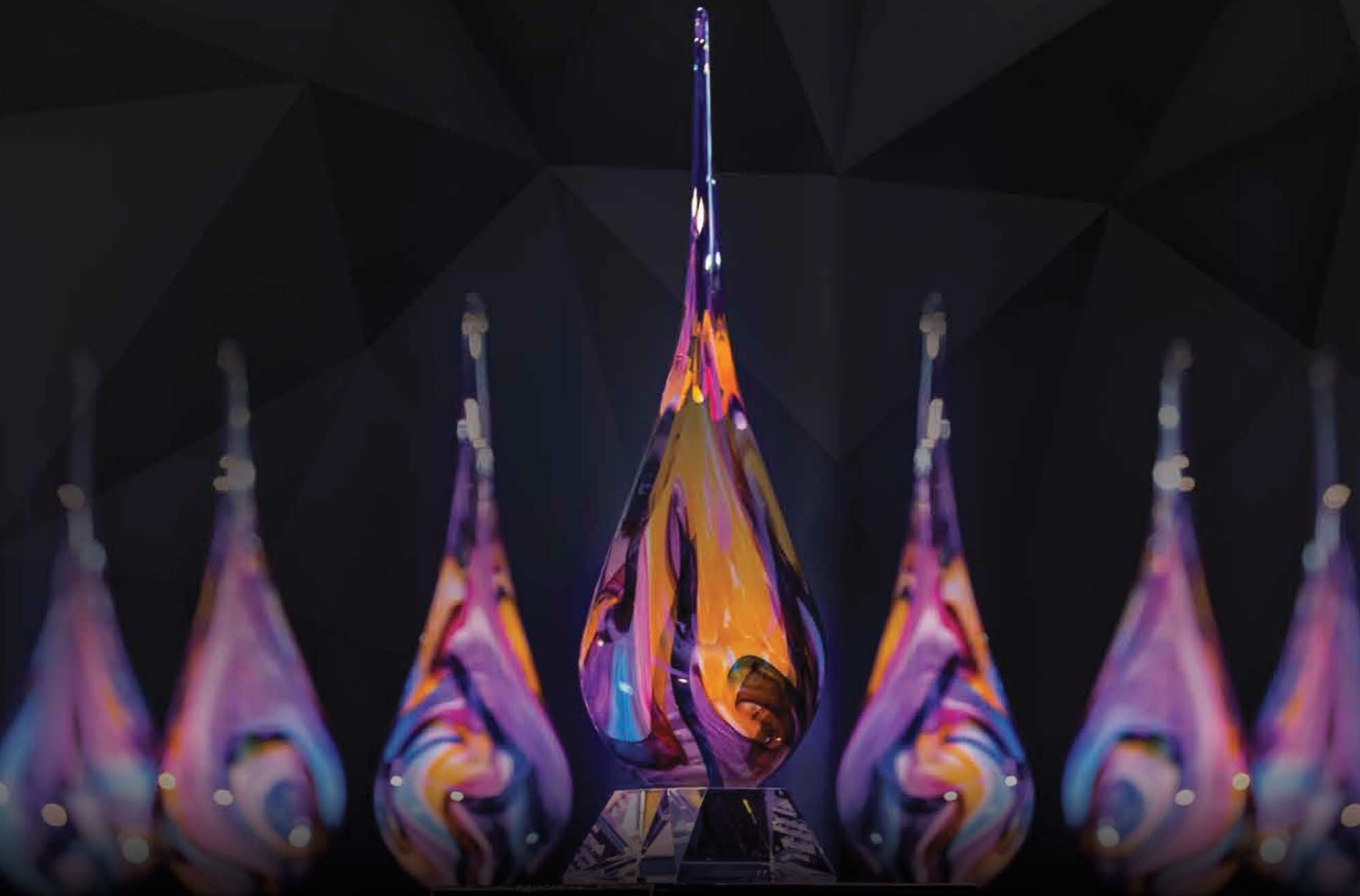


HOUSTON & GULF COAST REGION  
APRIL 4 | 2024

# ADMIN AWARDS<sup>®</sup>

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSION'S  
HIGHEST HONOR



NATIONAL PARTNERS

Southwest<sup>®</sup>  BEACON

# A LETTER FROM THE ADMIN AWARDS



The Admin Awards, serving the Houston & Gulf Coast Region, celebrated the amazing spirit, heart, and expertise of the region's most extraordinary Administrative Professionals on April 4th at the Royal Sonesta Houston Galleria Hotel.

This year's program broke every record imaginable - from participating companies, to nominations, to event attendees - and that's a direct reflection of one thing; how much this region loves and appreciates its Administrative Professionals. And that love and appreciation was electric!

We saw companies rally around their Nominees in record numbers. From lip-syncing and dancing like their lives depended on it to showcasing the most imaginative displays of enthusiasm through 'Good as Gold' outfits and costumes, their dedication was undeniable.

And the team spirit? Remarkable! Companies went crazy showcasing their creativity in all kinds of amazing ways to show their Admins how

excited they were to be there in support and appreciation for all that they do to make their leaders and organizations successful.

Houston and Gulf Coast region - you brought the heat this year, and we thank you for kicking off our 2024 season in such an electrifying way!

And lastly, to every executive who took the time to nominate and show up - you are exactly what modern-day Administrative Professionals want and need in their careers as they continue to show up every day for you.

On behalf of the Admin Awards and the hundreds of Administrative Professionals in this year's program, we are incredibly grateful, and we thank you.

**Sunny Nunan**  
Founder & CEO

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**Stacy Williams**  
HP, Inc.

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# LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

At Robert Half, we know talent. And we know these extraordinary individuals are examples of incredible talent in action. Congratulations to all the Houston Admin Awards Nominees!

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**“NEXT TO EXCELLENCE  
IS THE APPRECIATION OF IT.”**

– William Thackeray

## COLLEEN BARRETT AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE

# WINNER



## WINNIFRED HURSTON

BOARD LIASON AND SENIOR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT  
TO THE CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN  
OF CARRIAGE SERVICES

Winnifred Hurston is a 37-year veteran of the Administrative Profession most recently as Board Liason and Senior Executive Assistant to the Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Carriage Services. With an extensive background as a Legal Secretary, Office Manager, and Executive Assistant, Winnie has shouldered many responsibilities, ranging from administrative support to managing financial affairs and intricate legal matters. She's successfully navigated the complexities of Carriage Services' decentralized structure, facilitating seamless communications between HQ and its 200 subsidiaries nationwide, significantly enhancing the company's operational efficiency. Winnie's commitment to excellence has earned high praise and her executive shared, Winnie is "the highest-level Executive Admin I've seen in my 35-years of experience across four publicly-held companies". She is counted on for her insightful perspectives and comprehensive knowledge of corporate affairs and has lived the Carriage Values for 17 years straight, every single day.

### FINALISTS



Eva Covarrubias  
Hess Corporation



Ruthie Freeman



Kristen Gutierrez  
Houston First



Jennifer Jackson  
TNTP

## COLLEEN BARRETT: SERVANT LEADER AND SUPERSTAR



When The Admin Awards was launched in 2012, we sat down with Colleen Barrett to ask her for her thoughts and experiences on the administrative profession. Her answers from that September interview, edited for brevity; are below:

### What did you like most about being a secretary?

I like to serve so you have to start there. I loved to solve problems. And I loved to give exemplary or positive customer service delivery on behalf of whomever I was working for. Life is all about relationships... you have an opportunity in the administrative group to form more relationships than probably any other position – even much higher up on that so-called ladder because you are very often that first point of contact with the outside world or the customer... life is just one big grassroots campaign as far as I'm concerned.

### What did you like the least?

I didn't like anything that was routine. I loved to master projects, but, for example, filing was only interesting to me because I loved to be able to find anything that anyone was looking for... I've never liked rote work. (But) there's some that goes in every job no matter what position you're in.

### What was the most challenging aspect of serving Herb Kelleher?

Being a nanny for 45 years for a man who has always thought he was 17 regardless of any year that was added to his

personal calendar! He was a great servant leader. He loved life and you almost couldn't be around him and not catch that love of life and love of people.

### And the best aspect?

It was truly feeling his egalitarian spirit and appreciating the fact that he valued my judgment and thinking as a team member.

### Did you ever think you would rise from Secretary to President and COO of Southwest Airlines?

Quite honestly it wasn't something I wanted, and I never wanted to be COO—and I made that very clear to the Board—that isn't my strength. My strength is customer service and people and everything that touches people, and, honestly, being President and COO wasn't my favorite position at Southwest...my favorite position was Executive Vice President-Customers. Customer to us means employees, passengers, and shareholders, so I could really touch everything. I could touch every department. And as President... I had to do a lot more external things... I did them... I can't say I hated them... (but) I like to get down and dirty and really roll up my sleeves.

### What advice do you have for Admins?

Love. Everybody. Just love. It's a word that corporate America doesn't use very much... always remember where you came from – so that you know how far you've come...I don't think most of us start out thinking we're going to be the President of the United States or the CEO of a company... and I think... be humble and appreciate what you get. To me psychic satisfaction is 10 times more important than pay or title.

**Be authentic. Be real. Remember who you are.**

## LOYALTY AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **KAREN FORE** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CHAIR AT UT MD ANDERSON, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MD ANDERSON

Karen Fore is a 45-year veteran of the Administrative Profession serving as Executive Assistant to the Chair at UT MD Anderson. Karen's tenure overseeing the resident and fellows' program for anesthesia services at Baylor College of Medicine exemplifies her unparalleled commitment to excellence. Her astute leadership and meticulous attention to detail have not only ensured the smooth operation of the program but have significantly contributed to the professional development of countless individuals within the medical field. For the past 8 years, Karen has served as an indispensable pillar of support in her role as an Executive Assistant. What truly sets Karen apart is her incredible commitment to shouldering responsibilities. She never shies away from a challenge no matter how demanding and her work ethic, reliability and ability to consistently exceed expectations exemplify true loyalty.



**Kimberly Duron**  
MD Anderson  
Cancer Center



**Cynthia Guerra**  
Harris Central  
Appraisal District



**Patricia Holub**  
HP, Inc.



**Karen Jones**  
ALSAC/ St. Jude



**Tanya Tillis**  
Texas Children's  
Hospital



**Toni Ward**  
HP, Inc.

## ABOVE THE CALL AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **KIM GRUNKEMEYER** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SVP, DAIKIN COMFORT TECHNOLOGIES

Kim Grunkemeyer is the Executive Assistant to the SVP, Manufacturing Operations and a staff consisting of 7 VP's and 4 directors at Daikin Comfort Technologies, who she has supported for nearly 5 years. To quote her Leader: "Kim Grunkemeyer cares for and collectively does more on behalf of her co-workers, community, and company than anyone else I have worked with in my nearly 40-year career. Her performance within the scope of her professional duties is only outshined by the compassionate and proactive efforts she puts toward helping anyone in need. Kim is exemplary and prolific in everything she does. She is a leader who helps make Daikin a great place to work and fulfil its mission of being the area's employer of choice! Kim has made the manufacturing team at Daikin exponentially better than it would be without her."



**Jenci Bice**  
Cotton  
Holdings, Inc



**Izzy De La Torre**  
Texas Children's  
Hospital



**Kara Hayes**  
Leading Educators



**Jennifer Jones**  
First Community  
Credit Union



**Crystal Pratts**  
UT MD Anderson  
Cancer Center



**Deborah Svatek-Logue**  
Texas Children's  
Hospital

## ACHIEVER AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **KESSLER KAPADIA** EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR TO THE CEO, DEVLIN GARBERS

Kessler Kapadia is the Executive Coordinator to the CEO of Devlin Garbers where she masterfully heads administration, supporting the Founder's engagements across four corporate boards, including Fortune 100 companies, and three non-profits as well as personal endeavors including home construction management. Of course! Kessler is described as not only extremely smart, but phenomenally industrious. She "takes charge in a way that others welcome". Her leader says, "I have worked for 40+ years, and have had the benefit of hiring and working with many excellent Admins. I can say with confidence that Kessler is among the best - if not the best." Kessler is also pursuing her Masters at Harvard, in Industrial Organization Psychology (and getting great grades by the way) as well as being a single Mother of two thriving girls. Oh, and in her spare time she competes nationally in Jui Jitsu competitions, winning Silver just a few weeks ago in Atlanta.



**Monica Colson**  
Texas A&M  
University



**Gwen Duffy**  
Robert Half



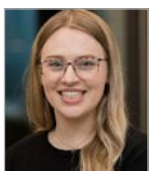
**Vanessa Mose**  
Texas Children's  
Hospital



**Jill Neal**  
Core Group  
Resources



**Judy Overton**  
UT MD Anderson  
Cancer Center



**Bailey Webb**  
UT MD Anderson  
Cancer Center

Congratulations to **Kristina Camarillo**  
on being a World-Class Senior  
Executive Assistant and an **Admin**  
**Award Nominee**

**TDECU** | YOUR CREDIT UNION



**ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE  
IN PUBLIC SERVICE**

**FINALISTS**

**WINNER**



**CARI BISHOP SMITH**  
DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS,  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY AT GALVESTON

Just over 12 years ago, Cari Bishop Smith entered the Texas A&M University system in Galveston as an entry level Administrative Professional. Within 10 months her meteoric rise began when she was hand-picked to serve the Chief Academic Officer. Today, Cari serves as the Director of Academic Affairs supporting the Executive Associate Vice President and Chief Academic Officer in addition to all Department Heads who rely on Cari's expertise to not only thrive in their roles but to survive. Her impact on the university's administrative structure has been transformative, particularly her centralization of faculty-related procedures which enhanced operational efficiency, setting a new standard with contributions that elevate the Campus, University and rise all the way to the state level. Her leader says, "Ms. Cari Bishop Smith absolutely ranks among the best of the best. She is quite simply and truly, phenomenal."



**Madelyn Hopper**  
Combined Arms



**Veronica Logan**  
Baylor College of  
Medicine / Texas  
Children's Hospital



**Ashley Lopez-Garza**  
Texas Children's  
Hospital



**Elda McKenzie**  
Harris County  
Sheriff's Office



**Shakera Pascal**  
EIG Management  
Company



**Brandi Wisniewski**  
Harris County  
Sheriff's Office



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**Eva Covarrubias**  
on being named a 2024  
Admin Awards Nominee



Your hard work, creativity and commitment  
to excellence are shining examples  
of the Hess Values in action!



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**Congratulations**

**to all the finalists!**

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*Combined Arms unites veterans and accountable service organizations, creating a living, breathing, and collaborative environment.*

**Congratulations to  
all of the HP  
Houston Nominees**



## LEADERSHIP AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **EVA COVARRUBIAS** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE VP OF GLOBAL EXPLORATION, HESS CORPORATION

Eva Covarrubias is the Executive Assistant to the VP of Global Exploration - Guyana & Suriname at Hess Corporation. Eva started her journey with Hess in 1995, nearly 30 years ago. She provides support for more than 65 people in the Hess organization and always does it with high energy, a positive attitude, and can-do spirit. Eva is known for her involvement in community engagement through the Hess Force and her dedication to safety and emergency preparedness as a floor safety warden and a member of the Emergency Response Team. Eva leads with empathy, fairness and a dose of motherly "edge" that make her so effective and loved by the entire organization. Her leadership is a blend of patience and persistence, ensuring her team and the Exploration Executive Team meet their deadlines efficiently. Her Leader says, "I couldn't think of a more deserving person for this award having worked with more than 20 Admins in my 35 year career Eva is at the very top!"



**Darlene Cabello**  
HP, Inc.



**Kristina Camarillo**  
TDECU



**Patricia Hon**  
UT MD Anderson  
Cancer Center



**Leilani McMurtrey**  
HP, Inc.

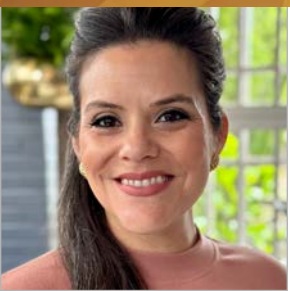


**Marc Semones**  
First Community  
Credit Union

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **ELIZABETH LEMEROND** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, REALTOR.COM

Elizabeth Lemerond, affectionally called Biz, is the Executive Assistant to the Chief Revenue Officer of Realtor.com who leads a 500-person team with 8 direct reports. Biz serves the CRO as a strategic partner in such distinct ways he writes: "I have worked with numerous Executive Assistants over the past 30 years, but Biz has forever transformed the way I will work with an assistant going forward! Biz is an exceptionally effective thought partner and force multiplier, and she has raised my performance (and the performance of my whole team) to a whole new level." Biz is a master at motivating and cajoling teams through challenges and change. No one blinks an eye when she runs an SVP level meeting on her leader's behalf while he's traveling. People use many phrases to describe her - force multiplier, conductor, right hand - and our team created a new word, "Bizability", because if Biz has visibility to a project or an issue, they know that it will be managed and resolved.



**Jana Johnson**  
US Med-Equip



**Cortney Meza**  
Russell Reynolds  
Associates



**Kelly Olsakovsky**  
Halliburton



**Monica Schmidt**  
Ascend Performance  
Materials



**Kristen Turpen**  
First Community  
Credit Union

## SPIRIT AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNER



### **NIKKI MITCHELL** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO & CFO, OIL STATES INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Nikki Mitchell is the Executive Assistant to the CEO & CFO of Oil States International where she has worked for over 10 years. Her CEO says that "Nikki performs at a high level in so many areas...shows great initiative, communicates exceedingly well, has a positive mental attitude and is simply a pleasure to be around. She not only accepts new challenges but thrives on them. However, her individual contributions are not all that I love about Nikki. Her infectious smile, energy, and ability to plan and organize corporate events really adds to our Corporate Culture and our ultimate success." And Her CFO says, "What really sets her apart from others in the organization is her spirit and attitude of nothing is impossible and let's get it done right the first time." Niki has her hand and heart on the pulse of how to make her coworkers happy, serving as a model of the highest levels of professionalism, while including the warmth of personal care and consideration.



**Star Beyersdorfer**  
HP, Inc.



**Berit Casteel**  
Marsh McLennan  
Agency



**Felicia Dues**  
Cotton Holdings,  
Inc



**Bonnie Guidry**  
First Community  
Credit Union



**Cecilia Hoett**  
TNTP



**Francheska Lilly**  
Waste Management



**Congratulations Francheska Lilly  
on your nomination.**

**We're proud to have you on the WM team.**



## TEAM ACHIEVER AWARD

## FINALISTS

### WINNERS



### TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY (GALVESTON AND HOUSTON CAMPUSES)

JASMINE ALEJANDRE, EUNICE DAVIDIUK, CAROLYN MORENO, FELICIA ROYAL, AMANDA SHIREY

The HR Team at Texas A&M has adeptly navigated the distinct challenges of supporting the Institute of Biosciences and Technology and Engineering Medicine, a demanding 24/7 research environment, alongside their vital role in the university's pioneering 'physicianeer' program. In addition, their exceptional management of the Galveston campus' Summer Sea Program, a maritime academy with the unique feature of a floating classroom resulted in commendations from the ship operations staff who lauded the team's resilient and resourceful 'can do' mentality in overcoming the myriad of obstacles to ensure the program's success at sea. By harnessing their collective expertise for creative thinking, effective problem solving and dedication to excellence, Texas A&M's HR Admin Team triumphantly earns tonight's Achiever Award! Congratulations Eunice Davidiuk, Carolyn Moreno, Amanda Shirey, Jasmine Alejandre and Felicia Royal!



**Robert Half**  
Kara Balluck, Lisa Beck, Gwen Duffy

## GOOD AS GOLD

### BEST OUTFIT PRIZE DRAWING



TANYA TILLIS,  
TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
SPONSORED BY ROBERT HALF

## GOOD AS GOLD

### TEAM SPIRIT PRIZE



CORE GROUP RESOURCES  
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Congratulations Kim Grunkemeyer on being an Admin Awards nominee, the administrative profession's highest honor!

Thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Employees like Kim make our success possible! We believe in the unlimited potential of every individual and that the source of a company's competitiveness is its people. We support enthusiastic employees who take on challenges and develop their individual strengths!

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