



2008 Gusty Gal Award goes to Suzan Deison

by Beverly Denver

Suzan Deison, founder and president of the newly organized Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce is the recipient of the 2008 Gutsy Gal Award. She was nominated for this honor by her husband, attorney Joe Colangelo, and selected among other nominees by the staff of Houston Woman Magazine.

On the nomination form, Colangelo wrote, "How many people would have the guts to start a new chamber of commerce? Suzan did, while handling more challenges in life than most of us have in a lifetime, and she did it with grace and humility and with a caring heart."

Deison has served as president of both the North Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce and the Galleria Chamber of Commerce.

"I saw firsthand the commitment and passion she has for her community. She saw no barriers. She asked everyone and anyone to get involved, and to my knowledge, never took 'no' for an answer," said Colangelo. "A 'no' might be a temporary setback but, ultimately, she would get the sponsor or new member to join."

Colangelo continues, "When we met 11 years ago, Suzan was a single mom. Her daughter, Taylor, has cerebral palsy and cannot talk and has mental retardation. But, Suzan never complains. She faced cancer twice and won. She previously had melanoma, and five years ago she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Suzan took her radiation treatments after work when she served as president of the Galleria Chamber of Commerce, showing her commitment to her job, and I never heard her complain." Deison has two other children, Melanie and Grant, and seven grandchildren. She has one granddaughter with Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome and another with Down Syndrome. Colangelo commented, "I have never hear her say, Why my family?"

When Melanie was part of the evacuation from Louisiana due to Hurricane Katrina, Deison took in not only her daughter and her family (including four granddaughters) but also one of Melanie's friends and her family (including the friend's three children) because they had nowhere to go. Deison later helped her daughter and son-in-law and the friend's family find housing and open a restaurant in Conroe.

Earlier this year, Deison founded the Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce, showing once again her talent for and commitment to making things happen.

She started by recruiting a dedicated group of professionals (representing both small and big business) to serve as on the chamber's first board of directors.

The group's first luncheon, held in March, was a huge success. It featured former First Lady Barbara Bush as its keynote speaker and was attended by more than 300.

Since then the chamber has continued to flourish with a growing membership and an impressive program of work.