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The ABC's of Work & Life

H is for Home and Honour



Katie Mehnert goes back to her roots for H.

Family photo: Katie's husband Mark, and her daughter Ally enjoy a little bit of home in Houston, Texas.

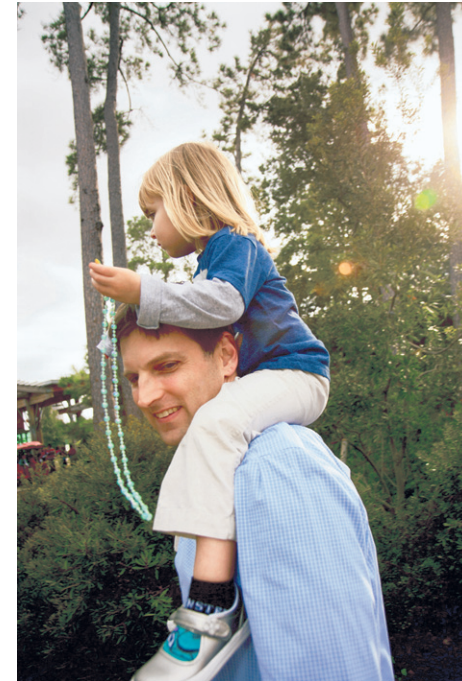


Photo: Katie Mehnert

This past spring, I joined 39 other civic and business leaders in the Houston region as a part of the Center for Houston's Future Leadership Forum. The Center works to solve my region's toughest problems by engaging diverse leaders, providing impactful research and defining actionable strategies. As a part of the forum, I spent two weekends locked up in a hotel, learning about Houston's rich past, and think-tanking about the region's promising future. Participants included educators, members of the media and business executives from a variety of industries and sectors; I was truly humbled to be selected to participate.

When I reflect on this experience, my mind thinks of two things: Honour and home. **H is for honour.**

What does honour mean for you? Honour comes in several ways. It can come in the physical form of an award, a plaque, a gift, and even money. *And then, other times, being honoured is something even greater.*

For me, honour comes when I'm asked to serve. It's that call you get that says, **"We need you!"**

We need your help... your ideas... your energy... your leadership.

That call came to 40 of us across all walks of life, and we each accepted the responsibility to be a part of something bigger than any of us.

So, I was honoured to be a part of a team tasked with taking a focused learning journey diving into one of five areas: healthcare, education, infrastructure, diversity and civic vitality. I served as the team leader on education, a critical focus area in developing our children, and ultimately, our workforce. More specifically, we

explored *why some parents are involved with their children's education and why some aren't*, while taking into consideration income level and ethnicity.

We approached the problem like anyone else would. We dove right in to solve it.

Except, the purpose of the learning journey **wasn't to solve anything – yet.** It was to learn. To go into the field, the place we call "home", and explore. To then come back and share what we learned with the others. It was about discovering the **#what4how.**

So, H is also for home.

Houston has been my home for 13 years. It's the second largest growing city in America, next to New York City. It's the most ethnically diverse city, having no clear ethnic majority amongst whites, blacks, Latinos and Asians (Source: 2010 census). The Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice

University, under the direction of Dr. Steven Klineberg, PhD, has been studying socioeconomics and demographics for 33 years.

In our presentation at the Forum, Klineberg said, "There's a fundamental irreversible transformation happening in the ethnic composition of Houston, Texas and America. We are the first nation to say we are a free people and we come from everywhere."

Likewise, our economy is going to rely on human resources, and intellectual capital will be necessary to compete in the 21st century. However, there is a great disparity among those who have academic opportunities and those who lack access.

"The Center for Houston's Future looks at the regions' needs and puts into action a plan and the resources to solve the problem. We are fortunate to have some of the best and brightest minds tackling our critical focus areas like

education, health and the environment," says Catherine Mosbacher, CEO and Executive Director.

Need I keep explaining why I was so honoured to be a part of this opportunity, to understand more, *so that I may shape and form what might become?*

So here I go.

I'm honoured to call Houston, **home... honoured** to be a part of a learning journey that's just beginning... **honoured** to be a part of the leadership that will help the region respond to the opportunities ahead. I'm **honoured** to take on the challenges of today to make my home a better place for tomorrow.

What does honour and home look like for you?

What are you doing to take your own learning journey, discovering the 'what' first, before even thinking about the 'how'? How are you shaping your

home? Your future? Your world? What opportunities are ahead? The call for you to serve is here and now. I cannot wait to hear about all the things you're doing to make your corner of this large, yet small world, a success.

Katie Mehnert (pictured) is a global talent development and change executive with 17 years of helping people and companies get curious, connect, share, grow and perform better. She has recently been appointed CEO of Pink Petro; www.pinkpetro.com, a platform to connect women and men in the energy industry and advance females in her industry. Prior to her latest venture, Katie was a Director with BP, joining after the Deepwater Horizon incident and worked in various leadership roles worldwide with Shell. She's a dynamic speaker and author having been featured in LinkedIn, CEO.com, Business Insider, and Yahoo. As a work-in-progress marathon runner, wife and working mom, you can follow her musings on balancing it all on her blog at www.katiemehnert.com, or email her at katie@katiemehnert.com