



In April 2006, Mary Lou Hildreth was honored with the distinction of becoming Keystone Heights' first elected female Mayor. As a newcomer to the area – as well as to the political scene, she broke through barriers and, what many would consider, impossible odds to win the election – stunning many. However, from day one she hit the ground running and through her dedication, leadership and diligent efforts has gained the respect and friendship of both her supporters and initial detractors – including her opponents. This speaks volumes to the character of Mayor Hildreth. A short two years later in April of 2008, Hildreth was re-elected to the Mayor's seat opponent free.

Within a two and half year span, Mayor Hildreth, although an accomplished wife, mother and caretaker of her own mother, has taken the role of Mayor to new heights in a way not to be outdone anytime soon.

Mayor Hildreth, an Alumnus of the University of Florida, has yet to stop educating and involving herself in whatever it takes to keep

herself informed of the issues. She has completed the Leadership Clay program and constantly attends workshops, conferences and seminars to learn new ideas and share information with others.

As a council member Mayor Hildreth Chairs the Budget and Finance Committee and Community Redevelopment Agency. She is an active member of the Florida League of Cities and the Florida League of Mayors, serving on the League's Urban Council as well as the Legislative Committee. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Northeast Florida League of Cities, the Executive Committee for the Florida Urban Forestry Council, Secretary/Board Member for the Lake Area Ministries Building Fund, and Chairs the Board of Directors for the Keystone Heights High School Academy of Agriscience. She is a former member of the Clay County Tourism Development Council.

Assuming the Mayor's above involvements are not enough, her civic duties and involvements include, the Keystone Heights Woman's Club, Lake Area Kiwanis, Jaycees, Our Country Day Committee, University of Florida Alumni Association, UF/IFAS Master Gardener, International Host Parent and a proud and dedicated parishioner of St. William's Catholic Church.

Other areas of the Mayor's remarkable short tenure has been to secure Community Redevelopment funds in excess of \$70,000 that was due the city, but had not been received from the county. Mayor Hildreth revitalized the CRA and moved it forward, which has had a

positive community impact. Other dollars that are directly attributed to the Mayor are a \$19,000 grant from the Department of Forestry, a \$647,000 Safe Routes to Schools Project, a \$2,500 donation from the DuPont Corporation, a fire truck donation to the local volunteer fire department and the biggest thus far, a \$1,000,000 grant for the city owned airport.

The City of Keystone Heights has been selected by the Department of Community Affairs for the UF Pilot Program for Small Cities Building Capacity; this due in part to the Mayor's tenacity and perseverance. Lobbying the DCA is not new to the Mayor; she also obtained technical assistance from the DCA through the Small City CDBG Survey. Most importantly, she is very visible and makes every effort to represent the City of Keystone Heights in all venues from the board room of the County Commission to the legislative halls of Tallahassee. She is undaunted in constantly lobbying and promoting her community to its advantage. She does not take no for an answer easily when the welfare of the city is at stake.

The level of care she has for community is demonstrated in many ways. The amount of time she commits to the city is staggering compared to what has been the norm in the past – the work ethic and drive that she has is amazing. There are those that can testify that lunch is taken most often at her desk, while helping staff answer the city hall phones. More often than not, her car is the last one at City Hall and her e-mails go late into the evening. She is the most

accessible official – taking calls at home and on her cell - at all hours and days of the week. The phone starts ringing early and there is a constant flow of citizens in and out of her office. They know if they want something done or to voice their opinion she is there for them and will champion their cause to the best of her ability. She rises above the fray that often comes along with her position by always listening to both sides and making thoughtful, knowledgeable decisions – even if they may not be popular. This demonstrates her innate ability to see the bigger picture and determine the best outcome.

The National Guard installation in our area, Camp Blanding, has always been a great neighbor and benefactor, but due to the Mayor's active involvement and patriotism she has re-established a strong relationship. She attends and speaks at deployments, welcome home celebrations and many other ceremonies. The attention and appreciation they afford her shows that the respect is mutual. The Mayor has another connection to Camp Blanding, as a volunteer at the Florida Youth Challenge Academy. FLYCA has been designed to identify potential troubled youths and provide them the structure and education they need. The Mayor has a special heart for anybody in need, but especially the youth. It is with great pride that she mentors these students.

Fellow Councilman Bruce Harvin, relays this story about the Mayor. During recent forest fires in which smoke engulfed the city for days, the Mayor offered her home to a local teenager who was in

jeopardy of having to relocate and miss school and prom due to the health condition of her father which was exacerbated by the smoke. Mayor Hildreth, having never met this young student, nor her father, heard about their dire situation and was touched by their plight. Harvin stated, "That is her, that is what she does, and she would have done the same thing whether she was the Mayor or not."

Part of her special uniqueness is that she treats everybody equally. The council, staff, citizens, and all who come in contact with her are treated with the same respect. She does not hesitate to roll up her sleeves and work alongside them to help wherever and whenever she can.

She doesn't serve for the pay, the prestige or the power. Mayor Hildreth serves for the love of her community and the people that live here.

Because of all these reasons and so many more we believe that Mayor Mary Lou Hildreth would admirably and attentively represent the Florida League of Cities as the 2008 Mayor of the Year.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.