

Meg Salyer honored as “Urban Pioneer”

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Reflecting that she has become convinced “quality of life really does matter” to Oklahomans, MidCity leader Meg Salyer gratefully accepted designation as an “Urban Pioneer” during an awards luncheon at the Petroleum Club in downtown Oklahoma City.

Salyer is president of Accel Financial Staffing, with offices on Automobile Alley in the MidCity. Originally a resident of Long Island, Salyer graduated from Mt. Holyoke. She has lived in this area for 23 years and is married to Chris Salyer. She organized many of the initial efforts to revive Automobile Alley (Broadway Avenue) on the north side of downtown.

Speaking at the luncheon after receiving her honor, Salyer said she has seen a “paradigm shift” in the thinking



Urban Pioneer Meg Salyer with Susan Hogan, executive director of the Plaza District Association.

Photo By Patrick McGuigan

of citizens and leaders in Oklahoma City over the past 20 years. She pointed to the unsuccessful community effort to recruit a United Airlines maintenance center in the early 1990s, as feeding an understanding that community growth and development involved more than roads and infrastructure. Salyer said she had concluded, after years of work, "Quality of life is not a result of economic development, but vice versa. Good quality of life leads to economic

development."

Salyer's recognition as this year's "Urban Pioneer" came specifically for the work she has done since 1998 for the Plaza District Association, helping to revive one of Oklahoma City's oldest commercial districts. The association has been involved in dedication of the Thelma Gaylord Academy at Lyric Theatre, renovations of PhotoArt Studios, expansion of stores and

restaurants along N.W. 16th Street, and installation of new benches and other beautification projects in conjunction with the Gatewood Neighborhood.

Salyer praised the willingness of business leaders like Richard Tannebaum, Chip Fudge, Chuck Wiggin and others to "think outside the box" and ask "what if?" questions to bring new ideas to economic development. Salyer said, concluding her remarks, that she looked forward to working with others to "add to the vibrant fabric of our community."

Program highlights at the April 18 recognition for Salyer included classical guitar selections performed by Dario Alvarado, a student at Classen School of Advanced Studies, a traditional Chinese dance by Diana and Amy Chang, and an energetic dance interpretation of James Brown's "Super Bad," by Jake Hauton, a 5th grade student at Rosary School in the Gatewood Neighborhood.

Devery Youngblood, founding executive director of the Automobile Alley Main Street Program, gave welcoming remarks at the event. Susan

Hogan of the Plaza District Association presented the "Urban Pioneer" award to Salyer.

Many prominent MidCity leaders participated in the event honoring Salyer, including state Rep. Al McAffrey, City Council members Ann Simank, Sam Bowman and Pat Ryan, Federal Judge Jerome Holmes, Rand Elliott, Georgie Rasco and Ben Davis of the Neighborhood Alliance.

Gold sponsors for the 2007 Urban Pioneer Award included 611 Creative, Automobile Alley, Bank of Oklahoma, Chesapeake Energy, Historical Preservation, Inc., The Kerr Foundation, Meinders Foundation, MidFirst Bank, Midtown Redevelopment, OGE Energy and Union Bank.

Silver sponsors included The MidCity Advocate, American Fidelity, BancFirst, Elliott & Associates Architects, Gatewood Historic District, Oklahoma City University, PhotoArt Studios and Walgreens. Other sponsors were First National Bank, Jason George Interior Design, Mesta Park Neighborhood, Senior Law Resource Center, Struble Construction and Urban Works.



MidCity architect Rand Elliott (left) with Meg Salyer and Federal Judge Jerome Holmes at the awards ceremony at the downtown Petroleum Club.

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