

# Kelly Carranza

## Paying it Forward

Written by Bob Dye



“Apply yourself. Get all the education you can, but then, by God, do something. Don’t just stand there, make it happen.” Lee Iacocca

I am at times a cynic, bemoaning the new generations of young adults who seem to want everything handed to them, or those that have no concept on what we did and how we did and how we got to today, 250 years later. You know who I’m referring to; the worker who complains about having to return to working in the office, or my favorite, the young adult on the beach on July 4th, being interviewed by a national news outlet, and when asked who we went we fought in 1776, they answer, “Japan”.

The drive and grit I knew in my generation at times seems lost and dying with the aging boomers, a demographic I am all too familiar with. Respect and appreciation for those that sacrificed so much to protect our freedoms, and those who paved the pathways of education, industry, commerce and the arts, seems like a lost art, no pun intended.

Then there is Kelly Carranza; Engineer, Educator, Philanthropist, Mentor, Volunteer, Civic Leader, Fiancé, Parent, and Advocate for Women Empowerment. Purely my impression, but I think an accurate, perhaps even understated take on an amazing woman, and just like that, my faith in humanity is restored! Kelly began her career in MEP consulting as an electrical designer and eventually into MEP project management.



This involves working on a team, leading that team, and building trust and accountability so critical on whatever project she was tackling. But it is also critical that the team you lead feels supported, while also having the freedom and autonomy to execute on their assigned tasks, and this is where some leaders stumble. But from everything I have learned about Kelly, she provided her teams with the latitude and support to do their best work. Taking her experience and passion for education, Kelly eventually found her way into the ACE Mentorship Program of Austin and later became a board member for the Bastrop ISD Education Foundation. If I’m any judge on this, I would guess Kelly found just how impactful and magical, being a student mentor can be.



I learned this from my own experience when I mentored students from three different high schools as part of a business coalition that offered mentoring and education in the hospitality industry. If you've not tried it, you are really missing out.

"Foundation. Mentorship, communication, and thoughtful leadership translate seamlessly from the workplace into the community. Supporting students and expanding access to STEM pathways feels like a natural extension of both my career and my values" said Kelly. Asked what first inspired her for paying it forward, Kelly credits her father. "My passion for giving back started with my father. Growing up, I watched him dedicate his time to serving our community in countless ways—whether as a member and president of the San Felipe Lions Club, on the City of Del Rio Zoning Board, the San Felipe Del Rio CISD Board Committee, the Val Verde County Appraisal Board, or as a City Council member. He showed me that contributing to the community isn't something reserved for people with extra time or special titles; it's something you make room for because it matters. Seeing him lead, volunteer, and serve outside the normal 9-to-5 taught me that helping others is both possible and essential. His example instilled in me the belief that meaningful change begins, when we step up, get involved, and give back to the people and places that shaped us."



Kelly's legacy project is something that is near and dear to my heart, creating opportunities for young people. The importance of this cannot be overstated. "Helping students explore careers in architecture, construction, and engineering, helping them navigate their options, exploring new opportunities, potentially changing their stars, and seeing their transformation as they imagine a future heretofore unimaginable, is incredibly powerful."





And if this wasn't enough, Kelly sits on the Bastrop ISD Education Foundation where she continues to support students via grants and other resources, Not done yet. Previously, Kelly focused a lot of her energy on the Young Hispanic Professional Association of Austin., where she worked with young Latino professionals with programs that focused on leadership, connection and representation.

Still not done. "In the coming years, I'm excited to pursue projects that deepen my professional impact and expand my philanthropic reach. Since moving to Bastrop, Texas, I've been inspired by the community's genuine spirit of giving. It's a place where people show up for one another, and I'm looking forward to becoming even more involved and contributing to that momentum. I'm also committed to showing up fully—both as a leader and as a philanthropist—because I know my stepdaughters are watching. I want to set the same strong example for them that my father set for me: one rooted in purpose, generosity, and integrity" said Kelly.

"You get what you pay for". "Pay it forward" "Price is what you pay, Value is what you get." There are any number of euphemisms that can be applied here. Investing in youth is a vital, long-term endeavor. But you have to want it. It's not easy, but the long-term gain is almost impossible to measure, except you know that your efforts have created the substrate for the foundation on which the future of our country – these kids – are built upon. I have no doubt that Kelly's impact on these young students will stay with them, and if we are lucky will be passed on to the next generation.

