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LEADING WOMEN IN BUSINESS: **HOUSTON**

Stronger Structures, Stronger Communities

Windstorm engineer **Chandra Franklin Womack** of **Aran + Franklin Engineering Inc.** designs resilient, storm-resistant communities—one home at a time.



Of the 45,000 professional engineers in Texas, only 1% are windstorm certified. Chandra Franklin Womack is one of them. From South Texas to Southwest Florida and beyond, Womack and her team cover five states, including the 14 coastal counties of Texas, to rebuild what's been lost to severe storms and bolster new structures that will withstand Mother Nature's fury.

"It's hard to fully understand the importance of what we do until after a storm hits, but the work of preparing homes for storms is critical," says Womack, CEO of Aran + Franklin Engineering Inc., the company her family founded in 1998.

Whether elevating a home's foundation, adding renovations with updated windstorm codes, or engineering new homes from scratch, Aran + Franklin implements the latest windstorm code and technology to withstand hurricane conditions—and keep communities alive.

"When a devastating storm wipes out everything, you can repair the structures, but it's harder to rebuild the community," Womack says. "We're engineering structures today so people don't have to endure

devastation in the future."

Weathering the Storms

September 13, 2008, is a date burned into Womack's memory. It's the day Hurricane Ike pummeled Texas' Bolivar Peninsula, leaving it utterly unrecognizable. The last house standing, however, was engineered by Aran + Franklin.

"That house—now known as the Last House Standing—was proof the new engineering technology works," says Womack. "We've spent the last 12 years rebuilding structures on Bolivar Peninsula from Hurricane Ike. With these new engineering codes, if a storm headed there tomorrow, I would have the utmost confidence in the performance of the structures I've designed. I'm proud of the fact that in my lifetime, I won't worry about this resilient community being destroyed by a hurricane again."

Aran + Franklin also aided recovery efforts throughout Texas after Hurricane Harvey, engineering hundreds of home elevations in Houston's



Meyerland area and Brazoria and Galveston counties.

Leading the Future

Though grateful for her father's expert mentorship, Womack wasn't privy to female mentors in her formative engineering years. That's why she's passionate about empowering the next generation of women and men embarking in engineering fields, as well as serving on boards and committees that champion improved windstorm design and resilient construction.

"Education is one of the biggest ways we can impact our community, whether that's going into the schools and teaching kids about engineering or educating clients and contractors who build our designs, collectively protecting our communities," Womack says.

When Womack realized she

needed deeper training to take Aran + Franklin to the next level, she earned her Executive MBA from Texas A&M, graduating in May 2020. During her MBA program, she worked closely with exceptional female business leaders. Through this experience, Womack recognized the significance of the role she has played in both mentoring younger female engineers and setting a standard for them to reach in the industry.

"Engineering is a very male-dominated field, so I've worked hard to make sure men in this profession take me seriously—and they do. I might hold my measuring tape with manicured nails, but I know my stuff," Womack says.

"Everything we do is to give people peace of mind that when a storm comes through, their home and community are going to survive," she concludes.



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