

WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS



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2024 Women in Business Winners: Sustaining Success

■ By SARA SHIRAZIAN

Last October, the Business Journal honored five business leaders from diverse industries at our annual **Women in Business Awards**.

The event recognized outstanding professional women who have made significant contributions to their organizations, their professions and the Orange County community. Their backgrounds and industries are varied: from the airport director of one of the busiest airports in the nation to the president and COO of the fifth largest OC-based restaurant

chain.

The Business Journal recently caught up with the five winners to see what's changed since 2024.

The 31st annual Women in Business Awards is scheduled for Oct. 15 at the **Irvine Marriott**. **Annette Walker**, president of **City of Hope Orange County**—twice recognized as one of the most influential leaders in U.S. healthcare by **Modern Healthcare**—is the keynote speaker.

Bios of this year's nominees for the upcoming event begin on page 66.

Charlene Reynolds: Still Directing JWA Traffic



John Wayne Airport Director Charlene Reynolds

■ By PARIMAL M. ROHIT

SANTA ANA — It's been close to a year since **Charlene Reynolds**, airport director of **John Wayne Airport**, was honored at the Business Journal's annual **Women in Business Awards**.

In the 10-plus months since then, rental car company **SIXT** opened its 50th location and **Clay Lacy Aviation** opened the **Orange County FBO** at John Wayne Airport.

The FBO, or fixed-base operator, was the largest private investment ever at John Wayne Airport.

Clay Lacy Aviation is also seeking a county bond for \$120 million to fund im-

provements at its FBO.

Then there's Dallas-based **JSX**. The public charter jet operator relocated its base of operations to the airport in May.

It's not just **SIXT**, **JSX** and the **FBO**—John Wayne Airport has many more changes in store, thanks to Reynolds' leadership.

John Wayne Airport has a five-year, \$700 million modernization plan that would bring updated terminals and taxiways.

The airport is also among nearly a dozen across the nation piloting a dedicated **TSA** lane for families who use the federal government's pre-check serv-

ices.

Airport staff said major airport news is on deck this week – see our online site and the Sept. 22 issue of the Business Journal for details.

Reynolds was recognized last October for overseeing Southern California's third busiest airport, shortly after reporting that 11.7 million passengers traveled on more than 300,000 flights flying in and out of Orange County's largest transportation hub.

The John Wayne Airport director was responsible for 174 employees and a \$530 million annual budget at the time of her recognition.

The 2025 Women in Business Awards will be held Oct. 15 at the **Irvine Marriott**. ■



Alicia Cox: Extends Her Surf City Beachfront Reign

■ By NANCY LUNA

HUNTINGTON BEACH — **Alicia Cox** took over the Bolsa Chica State Beach concessions when she was 35.

That contract was set to expire this year, forcing Cox to defend the mini-food empire she built from the ground up. This time the stakes were high: Bolsa had evolved from dilapidated food stands to a string of branded concepts that have become a destination among Orange County beachgoers and tourists.

Since taking over the concessions—upgrading the food from stale nachos to elevated sandwiches and wraps—the number of visitors at the food stands has grown 67% to 1.5 million annually.

As such, some 50 others wanted a piece of the action, bidding to take over what Cox had started.

"The competition was a lot more fierce this time," Cox, CEO and founder of **Prjkt Restaurant Group**, told the Business Journal.

She spent three months writing, revising and pitching her vision.

"It was like writing a book," she said, adding that she hardly left her home.

The work paid off. Cox, now 45, won the bid again. This time around, she's got 15 years to continue to put her stamp on the pristine strip of OC coastline.

"My whole career will be here, revitalizing this coast," she said.

Last year, Cox was awarded a **Women in Business Award** by the Business Journal for her years-long work improving the dining choices along the state beaches in Huntington Beach. In March, executive dining columnist **Christopher Trela** named her Restaurateur of the Year.

Cabo Meets Huntington Beach

While the accolades are humbling, Cox says her work at the beach is not done.

About six years ago, Cox bid to be the operator at the food stands along a three-mile stretch of Huntington Beach State Beach. Winning that bid, expanded her seaside operations in Surf City.

The venues, **Huntington Beach House**, **Sandbox Beach Essentials** and **Sahara Sandbar & Pizza** joined Cox's other concepts, **SeaLegs at the Beach**, **SeaSalt Beachside Burger**, **Beach City Provisions** and **Pacific Kitchen**.

This summer, Cox debuted two fresh concepts: **SeaSalt Honky Tonk**, a country-themed refresh of the former SeaSalt, and **PCH Tacos**, a rebrand of Pacific Kitchen. The latter—with a menu of tacos, burritos, enchiladas and tortas—"talks to my Latino customer," Cox said.

"My vibe is Cabo meets Huntington Beach," she said.

The Honky Tonk venue comes with high-energy programming of line-dancing lessons, live bands and a weekly appearance by the popular country band **Redneck Rodeo**.

"It is such a vibe," she said.

On the culinary side, Cox teamed up this year with the operators behind the **Michelin Bib Gourmand** venue **Heritage Barbecue** of San Juan Capistrano. The designation by the dining guide highlights restaurants that provide high-quality food at a good value.

The partnership brings the restaurant's chopped brisket, Santa Maria tri-tip, and ribs to SeaSalt—minus the lines and paired with ocean views.

"That's a really nice secret that if you want Heritage Barbecue, just go to Bolsa. You don't have to wait," she said.



Alicia Cox
CEO and Founder
Prjkt Restaurant Group

Up next is **California Fork & Spoon**. Slated to open in 2026, Cox's final concession stand at the beach is named after her recent cookbook, which showcases signature recipes from her dining establishments. The beachfront space will seat about 500 guests and will serve as a brunch spot and a special events venue for private parties and weddings.

Cox said she also wants to establish her own foundation aimed at mentoring female entrepreneurs in the male-dominated food and events industry. The nonprofit will offer motivational speakers, seed investing education and mindset training, she said.

"I really want to use my voice now to do good and give back," she said. ■

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Claudia Bonilla Keller: Hunger on the Rise in OC

■ By PETER J. BRENNAN

IRVINE — **Claudia Bonilla Keller** says the number of hungry people in Orange County has risen about 50,000 to 360,000, or one of every nine people.

The biggest reason is inflation affecting not only food but also housing, which leaves less money for the grocery store.

Even with hunger growing and a dip in federal funding, the **Second Harvest Food Bank**, where Keller serves as chief executive, is working to keep pace with a \$90 million budget, about the same as last year's.

"We have to become efficient, more innovative," Keller told the Business Journal.

"We're learning to be nimble and adjust to a new reality in many different ways and having this nonprofit be more like a business."

Some of those business-like methods in-

clude looking for new revenue streams, widening the number of supermarkets who supply food and making three-year plans instead of one-year plan.

"We don't run from a challenge, but it's not easy."

Goal: Go out of Business

Keller won a Business Journal **Women in Business Award** last year for her work helping to feed local children, seniors, working families, the unhoused and college students.

Keller joined Irvine-based **Second Harvest** as chief mission officer in 2020 and was named CEO in January 2022, helping to guide the nonprofit through the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

Second Harvest, which was founded in 1983, is headquartered on a 6.5-acre site in Irvine that includes a 108,000-square-foot



Claudia Bonilla Keller last year when receiving her Women in Business Award

distribution center and a fleet of trailers. It also has a nearby 40-acre farm where it harvests more than 7 million pounds annually.

Second Harvest works with 265 partners at 350 locations and relies on some 18,000 volunteers. It distributes nutritious food through a network of partners and pantries that include houses of worship, schools, after-school programs, universities, senior centers

and homeless shelters.

The food bank served 458,995 people per month in fiscal 2025, including 130,000 children and 101,000 senior citizens.

The financing comes from small monthly donations, philanthropic grants and private companies. About 15% of the nonprofit's revenue comes from the government, which earlier this year eliminated \$2 million for the food bank to purchase California produce.

While there is discussion in Washington D.C. about healthier diets, the way Second Harvest does business hasn't changed.

"We still get very good food," she said, adding that the federal government might even be expanding the commodities available to the nonprofit.

"We like to help individuals get to self-sufficiency. We don't want to depend on the government.

"Ultimately, we want to do less. Our goal is to go out of business." ■

Laureen Driscoll: Navigating Healthcare Challenges

■ By YUIKA YOSHIDA

ORANGE COUNTY — There's no shortage of challenges in healthcare right now, according to **Laureen Driscoll**.

As the chief executive of **Providence South Division**, Driscoll said they've been navigating the changing landscape including the recent passing of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which is projected to cut federal healthcare spending by \$1 trillion through 2034.

"We're all still trying to figure out what the cuts are going to mean and how to continue to deliver care in these communities," Driscoll told the Business Journal.

One way Providence has been doing so is through Co-Caring, a virtual nursing platform that allows nurses to communicate with patients through two-way audio and video telehealth technology.

Driscoll said the program has been "widely successful" in retention of nursing staff as hospitals collectively face a workforce short-

age.

"We're able to offer flexibility for nurses and have them stay in the workforce longer," she said.

Providence piloted the program in the inpatient setting and is now rolling it out in the emergency department, starting with its more rural hospitals in Humboldt.

\$712M South County Expansion for Mission Hospital

Driscoll won the Business Journal's **Women in Business Award** last year for overseeing all of Providence's 17 acute care hospitals in California, which employ more than 40,000 and generated \$9.2 billion in revenue in 2024.

She was named CEO of Providence South Division three years ago and led the restructuring of the nonprofit hospital system's south division into four service areas.

Today, Driscoll is managing a \$712 million, seven-year expansion of **Providence**



Laureen Driscoll
CEO
Providence South Division

Mission Hospital's South Orange County operations that was first announced in 2022.

The race for local hospitals to expand their footprint in OC has been driven in part by higher demand for inpatient beds.

"We've been under-bedded for a while, and hospitals didn't do a lot of expansion during COVID, so now we're seeing the backlog of the need coming to the forefront," she said.

Providence has been making steady progress. It opened an urgent care facility in San Clemente in June with another sched-

uled to open in Rancho Mission Viejo next year.

Providence is also building a new, 100-bed patient care tower on its Mission Viejo campus that's slated to open in 2030. The tower was funded in part by a \$50 million gift made in March by **Anthony "Tony" Moiso**, chairman of **Rancho Mission Viejo LLC**.

Personal Milestones

Driscoll said that she's entering a new phase in her personal life.

She recently spent time with her and one-and-a-half year old and three-and-a-half year old grandchildren who are learning how to swim.

Meanwhile, her youngest of three sons is getting married this week.

Another big milestone: Driscoll and her husband are planning their first international trip together in their 32 years of marriage.

She said they will be visiting Rome and Florence in Italy come this April.

"We're at a different phase in life and are exploring that new adventure," Driscoll said. ■

Maria Hollandsworth: The El Pollo Loco Brand Ambassador

■ By EMILY SANTIAGO-MOLINA

COSTA MESA — On the cusp of its 500th location, **El Pollo Loco** is trying to create "local love" for the restaurant brand as it opens more locations outside its core market of California.

"There's a lot of history and nostalgia with a brand, and we want to make sure that we keep El Pollo Loco in many people's minds," Chief Operating Officer **Maria Hollandsworth** told the Business Journal.

Store No. 500 will debut in Colorado Springs this year. The Costa Mesa company is also inching closer to a final version of the new restaurant prototype introduced last year.

The newer model is part of the company's recent turnaround efforts spearheaded by Chief Executive **Liz Williams**. When she joined the chain in 2024, Williams noticed that most El Pollo Loco restaurants had not been updated in "too many years."

"When you see a tower of the yellow, orange, red colors, that means that restaurant is either new or it's remodeled," Hollandsworth said.

El Pollo Loco is also celebrating 50 years since its founding and, in May, launched a brand redesign.

"It's exciting to see how the brand is strategically evolving without forgetting its roots," the COO said, adding that it takes time to modernize.

El Pollo Loco is also in the middle of relocating its headquarters from its longtime office on Harbor Boulevard to **The MET** office campus in Costa Mesa.

COO and Brand Ambassador

As the head of operations, Hollandsworth said measuring overall customer satisfaction is key. El Pollo Loco recently started working with software firm **Service Management Group** (SMG) to help collect feedback.

"This is really a true reflection of how the



Maria Hollandsworth
COO
El Pollo Loco

customer feels as well, in terms of whether they received their orders right, or if they received it in a friendly manner, in a way that they didn't have to wait that long, that was convenient for them," she said.

For internal growth, Hollandsworth said it's her role to be visible and accessible to the chain's 4,143 employees.

"But to me, the most important piece is being able to connect across all levels in my organization as a brand ambassador," she said.

Additional Accolades, Personal Programs

Hollandsworth was named an honoree at the Business Journal's **Women in Business Awards** in 2024.

Later in January, she was appointed to the Los Angeles branch board of the **Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco**. She was recently invited by **Tracy Morales**, vice president and senior relationship strategist, from **PNC Bank** to be part of a collective of local executive women for networking and support.

In April, the industry trade publication **Nation's Restaurant News** featured her on its "2025 Power List" of women in food service, along with Williams, Chief Legal Officer **Anne Jolley** and Chief Marketing Officer **Jill Adams**.

Additionally, a small group of local Filipino students reached out to Hollandsworth for mentorship after hearing about the recognition. She has since formed a program named **Darna**—after a superhero known as the "Wonder Woman of the Philippines" to meet with them and other young Filipino people seeking advice on how to navigate the corporate environment. ■

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thought leaders, offering associates new perspectives and actionable insights. Ingram Micro also values the importance of mentoring early-career professionals and helping them build confidence as they navigate their career journeys. One standout example of this investment is our partnership with Orange County nonprofit Girls Inc. Since 2018, we've hosted 51 externs at our Irvine campus with a high-impact externship program that introduces local high school students to careers in technology and business. Participants gain hands-on exposure to Ingram Micro's workplace and engage directly with our female leaders, an experience that often inspires long-term career aspirations in STEM. "Supporting and advancing the women at Ingram Micro is deeply personal to me—as a leader, a colleague, and someone who's witnessed the extraordinary impact women make every day. When we create space for women to lead, to be heard, and to grow, our entire organization becomes stronger. This is more than a business priority—it's about living our values and building a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to thrive," said Jennifer Anaya, Senior Vice President, Global Marketing. We take pride in the progress we've made and remain dedicated to cultivating an inclusive work environment where every associate is given the opportunity to reach their full potential.



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Mitigate or Protect Your Business From Online Denial-of-Service Attacks

Explore how denial-of-service (DoS) attacks can disrupt operations, damage reputations, and impact revenue while learning practical steps your business can take to mitigate risk and minimize damage.

In the dark world of cyberthreats, denial-of-service (DoS) incidents are becoming an increasingly common tactic. While you can't entirely prevent these incidents, there are important steps your firm can take now to minimize the impact they can have on its online operations.

What are Denial of Service attacks?

In DoS attacks, which deliberately target the traffic channels an organization uses in its normal operations, an adversary floods a server or network with a swarm of requests that overwhelm its processing capacity. All of the junk requests figuratively gum up the works, resulting in service being denied to real users of the system, whether customers or employees. When criminals send these requests from a broad network of bots or compromised devices, known as a botnet, it's called a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack.

DoS attacks have persistently been one of the most common cyberthreats; in 2024, they accounted for more than 50% of incidents, according to the 2025 Data Breach Investigations Report conducted by Verizon. DoS attacks were far more numerous than other common attack methods such as social engineering and system intrusions. While many DoS incidents result in only minor service disruptions, targeted attacks that impact an organization's networks or servers at peak hours can result in financial and reputational damage.

Ransom demands and unethical motives

DoS attacks don't require bad actors to gain access to any systems or proprietary information. As a result, criminals and bad actors find they're a cost-effective way to hamstring an organization's networks or applications. An attacker may demand a ransom in exchange for stopping an attack in progress or not launching one. They may also overwhelm an organization's public-facing websites and services for political purposes or even sow customer frustration and mistrust for competitive advantage.

However, in some cases, the DoS activity may be just one step in a more complex attack. "Historically, attackers have launched DoS and DDoS attacks during the day to maximize their impact on service or operations," says Chris Fant, vice president for cybersecurity at Fifth Third Bank. "But there's also the possibility that these attacks are a misdirection tactic. While an organization is dealing with the service interruption, the attacker could be taking other actions that could impact the organization in a more substantial way."

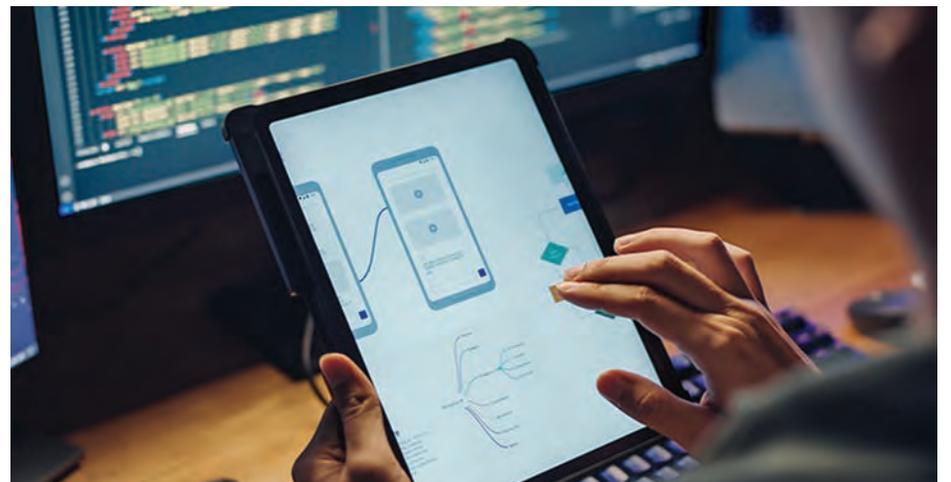
Is it a slowdown or DoS attack?

It can be difficult to identify a DoS attack because users can interpret it as a temporary service slowdown. "Depending on how your infrastructure is set up, it's not uncommon to experience slowdowns when a lot of legitimate customers are trying to utilize a service," says Stephen Salerno, senior director for cyber threat interdiction at Fifth Third. "The slowdown could also be evidence of a credential validation attack, in which an adversary automates high-volume login requests to validate credentials that will be used in future attacks."

The impact of DoS attack

DoS attacks can impact an organization's network layer, which controls the direction and destination of data, and its applications, such as email or web browsing functions. Typically, users will experience an attack in the form of slow application performance; an inability to access websites or download or open files; and sluggish performance of normal operations.

With opportunistic or unsophisticated attackers, these problems may be temporary and no more than a brief annoyance. But attackers with resources to flood an organization with high-volume, high-speed traffic at peak operation times can inflict more damage—and may demand payment from their victims.



How to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of DoS attacks

DoS attacks are comparatively simple and inexpensive attack methods, and there are few methods organizations can use to prevent a determined attacker from blasting their networks or applications with traffic. "Unless you have the resources to dramatically increase the volume of traffic you can manage, there is a certain amount of DoS risk you'll have to live with," says Fant.

Nonetheless, there are several steps you can take that might help you respond more effectively or avoid the most serious effects:

Invest in protections you can afford. Automated defenses such as web application firewalls and intrusion prevention systems can block or filter malicious traffic from your organization's most critical digital assets.

Make sure your operating systems are properly configured. Security controls require regular review and update by IT professionals—either your own in-house team if you have one or outside consultants if you don't. "When you're configuring operating systems and components like firewalls and routers, there are ways to limit the number of connections you allow and how long you hold each one," Salerno notes. Cybersecurity organizations such as the SANS Institute and the National Security Agency have hardening and configuration guides you can adapt for your firm.

Create a DoS response and/or business continuity strategy. Taking a "when, not if" approach to cyberthreats, including DoS attacks, is essential for any organization. Decision-makers and key personnel should create a plan that outlines roles and responsibilities in a worst-case DoS scenario, including one in which DoS is a diversionary tactic in a multipronged attack. The incident response team should regularly review the plan and update it as necessary.

Even the most powerful DoS attacks are difficult to sustain indefinitely. With preparation and the right tools, businesses can better weather the disruption and minimize long-term damage.

With decades of experience, Fifth Third is uniquely positioned to help safeguard your organization against evolving threats. Learn more from Aaron Olson, Fifth Third Bank's Orange County regional manager, at Aaron.Olson@53.com or 949-307-2454, or visit <https://www.53.com/commercial>.

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Exploring PNC's Treasury Platform

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How does PNC differentiate itself in the treasury management space, especially when it comes to supporting clients?

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What kinds of tools and support does PNC offer to help businesses manage their day-to-day payments and financial operations?

Every business has unique needs, and our platform is built to adapt. From customizing workflows and reporting to integrating with industry-specific systems, we help clients reduce manual processes, reconcile faster, and improve cash forecasting.

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Libby Bair is the regional sales executive for PNC's Treasury Management sales team in Orange County. Her team consults with clients and prospects to understand company goals and help to architect solutions by optimizing the way cash, investment, and financial risk are managed.



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The Value of Long-Term Banking Relationships

By Colin Craver, Wells Fargo Commercial Banking Orange County Market Executive



In July, the Ohio State's National Center for the Middle Market released its Mid-Year report, showing there were approximately 200,000 middle market companies nationwide in 2024. Of these, the average age is 30 years and the median is 23.

One key insight from those metrics: although the impact of day-to-day events is considerable on middle market firms, their strategic planning horizon is much longer than the peak or valley of any given day, week, month, or quarter.

In my experience as an Orange County banker, having served middle market businesses (ranging from \$25 million to \$2 billion in annual revenue) for 15 years, establishing a long-term relationship with a company is the ideal way to align financial advice and services with their nature.

However, to access this extended relationship value with a financial institution takes work from business leaders, in particular targeted research and communication to define their companies' vision.

Step One: Research banks that prioritize culture and long-term client relationships

From my insider's view, the ideal banking-client relationship is built on trust and understanding of the company's growth and financial goals. Getting there takes time – literally years. And that's much harder to accomplish at financial institutions that experience high turnover.

On top of that, changing banking relationship managers can be time consuming and unsettling. A banking relationship requires a long runway to educate the relationship manager on company goals, priorities, challenges, and history. While it's smart to periodically review direction and level of service with a financial partner, doing so too often can distract from maintaining focus on goals.

To avoid the disruptive costs of changing banking partners, and to reap the value that a longtime relationship brings, it benefits a company to find a bank that can accommodate its growth and financial goals with an array of services and products, while maintaining a culture that attracts and retains top banking talent.

The ideal relationship should give a company access not only to a strong collaborative partner, but to the bank's leadership and customized product and service partners who are familiar with a business's goals.

Step Two: Communicate to move from service provider to relationship advisor

March 2025 marks five years since the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic¹. With its onset, businesses found themselves immersed in rapid-fire transition, moving from in person meetings with both internal and external partners to primarily, if not solely, virtual communication tools.

After the pandemic, these modes, methods, and increased hours of service continued, but none was able to replace the value of in-person connection.

My view: Businesses should consider the value of periodic in-person meetings and collaborations with their banking partner. While virtual engagement may be easier to coordinate, face-to-face communication affords deeper understanding and relationship-building.

Step Three: Evaluate services to align with company vision

Determining company needs and evaluating efficiency can be hard in the best of times. Trying to anticipate future demands is exponentially harder. One pitfall many companies run into is determining their banking relationship value and criteria based only on the present day.

To develop successful, long-term banking relationships, middle market companies need to apply a futuristic lens, communicating the growth they hope to achieve and characteristics of the financial services partner that will help them get there.

Companies should review not only products, services, and access to industry/sector subject matter experts, but the banking relationship managers themselves. They should ask: Does this banking partner have the expertise and are they willing to invest the time to understand our business, industry, and vision, and are they committed to helping our company achieve its goals?

Step Four: Where the rubber meets the road

For many of the middle market companies I have worked with, the deepest banking relationships are forged during hard times. Relationships are easy when profits are up and targets are reached; it's when challenges arise, and creative solutions are needed, that value is tested. While every outcome is not a guaranteed triumph, by following these steps to choose and maintain valuable, long-term relationships with their banking partners, businesses can help strengthen their chances of success.

As a business, identifying that partner who will be there in good times and bad, who will communicate with a desire to understand the issues at hand, and who will invest their resources to help achieve company goals, can be the difference between surviving and thriving.

<https://www.dcd.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html>



Colin Craver

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PAUL NELSON, ESQ.

Paul Nelson is the founder of **Nelson Kirkman Family Law Attorneys**, a premier California firm specializing in high-net-worth divorces. **Certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization in Family Law**, Paul brings extensive courtroom experience and a deep command of California family law to every case. His strategic approach and relentless advocacy have earned him a reputation for securing exceptional results for business owners, entrepreneurs, and high-earning professionals navigating complex divorce proceedings.

Recognized among the legal elite, Paul holds the prestigious **AV Preeminent rating from Martindale-Hubbell**, boasts **twenty five-star ratings on Avvo**, and has been consistently

honored by **Super Lawyers**.

A thought leader in the legal community, Paul's insights have been featured in **Forbes**, **Fortune**, and the **Orange County Business Journal**. He is also the author of the **Amazon best-selling book, *The Dissolution Solution***, which provides a strategic roadmap for high-asset divorces.

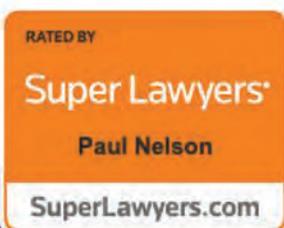
Paul is an active member of the **Orange County Bar Association**, the **State Bar of California**, and the **J. Reuben Clark Law Society**.

With a practice built on discretion, precision, and results, Paul ensures his clients emerge from their legal battles positioned for success—both personally and professionally.

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This Summer, the Jewelry Industry Has been Abuzz!

Who won the battle of the Engagement Wars?

Let me put that out there and ask the question. Who won the best engagement ring? Was it Lauren Sánchez, or Taylor Swift, or even Georgina Rodríguez? Everybody is talking about the big diamond wars! From my perspective, all the ladies won! Life must be fantastic as they all found love, and isn't that what jewelry is all about?

Most recently, I returned from New York on a high, having sourced a rare and beautiful 10-carat Joseph Asscher diamond cut around 1925, for a client of mine. And even though I was feeling good about the transaction, on the flight home, I kept thinking about shape, and I mean diamond shape. I had heard there is a new trend among younger women to prefer oval-shaped engagement rings over traditional round or cushion cuts. As for my client, she really liked the Asscher cut and had wanted it for over 20 years. She wanted the weight to be 10 carats, not massive like 25 or 30 carats. I do not know for sure, but it seems that Lauren and Geogina just wanted their rings to be "big"!

The truth is, most women dream of a large diamond, but they are often unaware that the diamond shape is the essence of a diamond's appearance. They do not know that diamond shapes are named to describe the silhouette of the girdle or the center line of the diamond, in the case of a round, oval, or pear



shape. As with my sale, the diamond shape name originated from the famous diamond cutter, Joseph Asscher.

However, engagement ring styles are evolving, and it is not just about carat weight; it is really about diamond shape. In the case of Lauren Sánchez and Georgina Rodríguez, they both wanted oval diamond rings. As with Taylor Swift, she wanted an "old mine elongated cushion cut diamond." As I mentioned earlier, Lauren and Georgina wanted their rings to be different, but they ended up with the same diamond shape.

And my point is, Royal American together with Royal Asscher Company are the only patented diamond cutting companies that can meet a client's desire to have a unique and beautiful Royal Asscher for up to six different diamond shapes; square emerald, round brilliant, cushion, pear, oval, and rectangular emerald cut, by adding 16 facets for the first five shapes and additional 22 facets for a total of 88, for a traditional rectangular emerald! Nobody in the jewelry industry can deliver a beautiful and exclusive diamond ring like this!

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Erin Burke | Partner, Jones Day Law Firm

Erin L. Burke is a partner at the law firm of Jones Day. She is a business litigator and trial lawyer, who focuses on representing multinational companies in high-stakes, complex litigation. Her clients span a variety of industries, including aviation, consumer goods, off-road vehicles, retailers, medical device and other healthcare entities, as well as consumer credit reporting. Erin represents clients in individual and class action litigation in both state and federal courts across the United States. Several of the cases she has tried have been recognized as “top defense verdicts” in California. She has also held a number of leadership positions at Jones Day and is currently the Partner-in-Charge of Jones Day’s Irvine Office. Erin is committed to giving back to the community. She is very active with Jones Day’s pro bono Laredo Project, where she serves immigrants by assisting them to understand the asylum process while upholding the rule of law. Erin is also a passionate advocate for children and families in crisis, and she currently serves as Olive Crest’s Board Chair.



Kristina Shahoian | Global Marketing Executive, Accenture, PLC

Kristina Shahoian has a robust background in marketing and strategic leadership, she currently serves as the Global AI Marketing Program Lead at Accenture. She holds an M.B.A from Thunderbird School of Global Management and a B.A. in Communications from San Diego State University. Kristina’s career is marked by her deep commitment to innovation and excellence in digital transformation, having spearheaded major initiatives across global markets. At Accenture, Kristina has been instrumental in leading cross-functional teams to drive growth and value in the AI sector, managing global events, and executing integrated marketing campaigns with measurable success. Kristina’s leadership extends beyond her professional achievements, she is committed to serving her community as an advocate for vulnerable populations, keeping children safe and eradicating human trafficking. She has seen firsthand the trauma caused to victims and the incredible impact of providing a nurturing healing environment to survivors.

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Women in Philanthropy

BY MARGITA LABHARD, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPIC STRATEGY
ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Since 1989, the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) has helped women bring their philanthropic visions to life, fueling their impact on the causes closest to their hearts.

Women are increasingly taking the reins of philanthropic leadership, reflecting a national trend led by philanthropists like Melinda Gates, Mackenzie Scott and Laurene Powell Jobs. In Orange County and across the country, women are embarking on charitable initiatives as the “Great Wealth Transfer” places them at the helm of their families’ economic and philanthropic legacies. These shifts are amplifying women’s voices across a wide spectrum of issues -- from expanding economic opportunity and advancing educational access to strengthening environmental stewardship, addressing homelessness, and supporting community mental health.

We’re proud to partner with the bold and visionary women of Orange County who’ve turned business success into transformational giving:

HOW BUSINESS SUCCESS FUELS PHILANTHROPY



SARA PALMER & LINDSAY PALMER
Former Co-Founders, StaffRehab
Co-Founders, Inclusive Learning Partners

As we were able to grow our company, StaffRehab, and started seeing financial success, it was a natural calling to start giving back to the communities we were serving. One of the things that was really meaningful was that we had a conversation with our entire team and we all voted on a panel of nonprofits focused on the autism community. Together, we

decided we were going to donate to Autism Speaks and to Vocational Visions. We have another sister named Laura, who works at Hope Builders. We’ve always been involved with Hope Builders, wanting to support her and the community that they serve.

When we sold StaffRehab, we decided to put a portion of the proceeds of the sale into a fund with OCCF. In 2021, our philanthropic advisor arranged meetings with a handful of nonprofits in the area to help us get a sense of where in the community we can get involved.

She helped set us up with a couple of programs that focus on the autism community, because that’s the community that we served when we had our first startup. We were particularly interested in getting involved in a food bank. And that’s how she connected us to South County Outreach.

OCCF was integral in helping us branch out and helping us identify good partners -- well-run organizations that are giving back in a meaningful way and helping support the communities that we operate in. Whether it’s a certain amount that you want to give on an annual basis, if there is a certain type of cause that you want to look into or if there’s a certain nonprofit or a program that you want them to vet, they provide all of the eyes and ears and all of the kind of financial aspects of looking into a company like that. They do all of that vetting for you.

HOW TO INVOLVE THE NEXT GENERATION IN PHILANTHROPY



JANIE TSAO
Former Co-Founder, Linksys
Vice President, Miven Venture Partners

With the help of consultants, our family foundation established three pillars of philanthropy: education, arts/culture, and wellness. We have three funds at OCCF, two of which are overseen by my two daughters-in-law, so they have the autonomy to support any organization that doesn’t fall exactly under those three family philanthropy pillars. We also

have a family fund. We three work very closely together to define what a grant should be, how well that would impact certain areas, the budget, the years of commitment we are going to have, the results we would like to see, the reports we want, how we measure our success, and how we continue that.

I’m very fortunate that my two daughters-in-law are very interested in philanthropy and are foundation trustees. They have the freedom and ownership and feel very empowered to use their funds to do the charity work that they want to do. Sometimes it’s hard for people to identify where to start giving. But if you have the means and are thinking of doing it, start working with community members and you will gradually see what touches you or that you need to build a whole ecosystem to support a cause. It’s very personal.

The Great Wealth Transfer by the Numbers

\$84 TRILLION

Estimated wealth to be transferred from Baby Boomers to younger generations over the next 20 years.

50%

of this wealth will be inherited by women.

\$11.9T

will likely go to charities.

Source: Cerulli Associates

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO GIVING



JULIE HILL
Former CEO, Costain Homes
Lyric, TPG

In a conversation with Richard Branson, I said, “Do you know what led you to do the things that you did?” He said, “Well, I would look at something like the airlines or trains or whatever the product was and find out what bothered me about it and what needed to be made better and fixed.” And that was his motivation to start a number of businesses.

People are told, “always do what you love.”

Somehow, to me, that’s a little weaker than “fix what bothers you.” I would say to young women interested in philanthropy, what bothers you? What’s happening in society that truly gets to you? Is it an inequity somewhere? Is it a lack of education or a lack of something else? And if it bothers you enough, that means that it’s deeper in your soul and it’s something for which you can do good by giving back to them. I’d start with that. It’s almost an entrepreneurial mindset of finding out.

I applied that business perspective in building the shelter and raising money for operations for Human Options. One of the things I heard was people didn’t want to give money to the domestic violence issue because women go back. And the fact is that they do go back and the reason is always economic because they can’t support themselves. In order to get around these objections, I found a professor at UCI and asked him to do a longitudinal study on the outcomes of some of the women who had gone through the shelter that we could track -- such as what things meant so much to them and why they were now living much more stable independent lives. The research that I had to raise money for gave me the tools to counter some of these objections. It was what was needed to make the link between disbelief and credibility -- and solve the problem.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

At the Orange County Community Foundation, we support women by getting to know their values and goals, from education on the full spectrum of giving solutions available, to introducing them to nonprofits that align with their philanthropic passions, to engaging their family and the next generations in giving. With nearly \$800 million in charitable assets and more than \$1.1 billion in cumulative grantmaking, OCCF is setting impact into motion, not just in Orange County, but beyond.

To learn more about OCCF, visit oc-cf.org.



Margita Labhard

Margita Labhard
Senior Director of Philanthropic Strategy

 **Orange County
Community Foundation**

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HUMAN OPTIONS

ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR A SURVIVOR.
THAT PERSON COULD BE YOU.

One Person Changed Everything: Jessica's Story

Jessica was a child when she witnessed her father's violence toward her mother. Even then, she knew: "This isn't right. I don't want this. This will never be me." As a teen, her father's drug use escalated. One day, her mother fled with Jessica and her sister to her aunt's house. That one person saw, believed, and connected her to Human Options. There, they found safe haven, crisis counseling, and support. It was the start of a new life. Today, Jessica is a mother of two, breaking the cycle and building a future filled with love.



Our Vision

We are committed to a future in which every person and family in Orange County experiences safe, healthy relationships and lives free from fear.

Relationship violence is everyone's concern. Its effects extend beyond the individuals directly involved, touching families, communities, and our society. Together, each person can help break the cycle of violence by recognizing the signs and taking action to help those in need of safety. One person can make a difference, and when we all come together, we can change our community and end the cycle for generations. This has been our guiding light for over 40 years.

Every year, Human Options answers over **5,000 calls for help** and serves over **10,000 individuals** through prevention education, housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and case management. Behind every number is a story like Jessica's. Orange County business leaders can be that one person who changes everything. Partner with Human Options today.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER
APRIL HERNANDEZ CASTILLO

As we shine the light on teens overcoming relationship violence, we're honored to welcome our keynote speaker, April Hernandez Castillo. She takes the audience behind the scenes to the most intimate parts of her life and uses her voice and humor to ignite, empower, and educate her audience.



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A COMMUNITY UNITED TO
END RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

HUMANITY  ACTION
HUMAN  OPTIONS

WHAT IS HUMANITY IN ACTION?

Humanity in Action is a bold collective movement of volunteers powered by Human Options that turns everyday acts into life-changing support for survivors of relationship violence. It invites individuals, families, businesses, and entire communities to use their own strengths to help build a safer Orange County through connectedness, talent, or influence.

HOW CAN MY COMPANY HELP MAKE OUR COMMUNITY SAFER FOR SURVIVORS?

- Host an In-Kind or Donation Drive
- Leverage Your Company's Match
- Host a Lunch & Learn
- Attend Our #ShineTheLight Vigils
- Adopt a Family for the Holidays
- Race or Volunteer at the OC Marathon



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From primary care to specialists

Prioritizing early detection with Providence's network

During a visit with a primary care provider (PCP), the patient noted some shortness of breath, not unusual as we age.

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Dr. Alomari replaced a faulty heart valve through a minimally invasive transcatheter aortic valve replacement, known as TAVR, and the patient is recovering.

"The primary care provider is that important connection between their patients and the specialists they might need," Dr. Alomari said. "Clearly, this patient's treatment is thanks to the PCP. If the PCP hadn't listened carefully and identified the murmur, the patient wouldn't have been referred."

At Providence, our network of doctors is a team that works together to ensure the best care as part of our commitment to keeping you healthy. We encourage our patients to get regular check-ups, bloodwork and health screenings so our doctors can detect disease in its earliest stage and make the necessary referrals before potentially serious conditions have a chance to develop.

Laura Leon, MD, is a Providence specialist in family medicine in Irvine, providing primary care to all ages. Dr. Leon is confident of the advanced care available to her patients through the Providence range of specialists.

"I wanted more of the personal patient-doctor experience of taking care of people over time," Dr. Leon said of her specialty. "It helps if you know your doctor and your doctor knows you."

Preventive care, key to good health

"Annual physicals are crucial to continued good health – and for identifying any serious health issues," she said.

These checkups help patients meet their personal goals by tracking weight, blood pressure, vaccinations, medications and other factors that are preventive that can indicate potential health issues – or mental health concerns.

"It's a moment in time to catch up on the patient's age and their stage in life," Dr. Leon said. "We talk about their history and decide are we stable or are we working on things? And we talk about what we should be doing now in preventive health."

That includes cholesterol and hypertension tests that can indicate heart health issues. Cancer screening tests such as mammograms for breast cancer, PAP smears for cervical cancer, colonoscopy or stool-based testing for colon cancer and lung cancer CT scans for certain at-risk patients are among the most important.

Your primary care physician will tell you when you need these screenings based on your risk, but generally:



Colonoscopy: The new recommendation is age 45, subsequent tests per doctor's direction.



Lung screening: If you smoke or otherwise are at high risk for lung cancer.



Mammogram: Guidelines vary, but Dr. Leon recommends annual screenings, starting at age 40.



PAP: Every three years, starting in young adulthood.



Prostate: Every two to three years starting at age 50. Discuss with your doctor after age 65.



Stavroula Otis, MD
Hematology, Medical Oncology

Providence offers a simple Multi-Cancer Early Detection (MCED) blood test that can identify signals for more than 50 types of cancers, including pancreatic and ovarian that often are advanced before patients experience symptoms.

Next-generation cancer detection

Not only is Providence partnering with the manufacturer of the first MCED, called Galleri, but it is driving a vast research program across the seven states we serve for those with a strong family history of cancer. An out-of-pocket prescription program, primarily for those with nongenetic cancer risks, is also available at Providence St. Joseph Hospital, Orange; Providence St. Jude Medical Center, Fullerton; and Providence Mission Hospital in Mission Viejo.

"We have found breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer and one patient who had both lung and kidney at the same time," said Ora Gordon, MD, a medical genetics expert and regional medical director for the Providence clinical genetics and genomics program in Southern California. "It's not by any means a replacement for regular screenings. It's another tool, particularly for patients with high risk of cancer."

Providence is focused on simplifying health visits from making that first appointment to checking test results and paying bills online. The Providence app guides users to same-day care, including in-person clinics and online visits through Providence ExpressCare Virtual.

It also features information on the latest developments in treatments for a range of conditions and other features. And it includes access to MyChart, where patients can interact with care team members and see their medications, test results, upcoming appointments, medical bills and follow-up notes from their providers.

"The primary care provider is that important connection between their patients and the specialists they might need."

– Ihab Alomari, MD, Cardiology

[ChooseProvidence.org](https://www.ChooseProvidence.org)

Trusted excellence. So Providence.



Stavroula Otis, MD
Hematology, Medical Oncology

This open enrollment, Choose Providence.

The most highly trained primary care physicians and specialists continue to choose Providence as their home. You should, too.

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Have You Heard of a Bank That's Grown 20x in a Decade?

Strategic, Private, and Purpose-Driven: The Story Behind Commercial Bank of California's Unprecedented Growth

In a region known for innovation, it takes something special to stand out. But that's exactly what Commercial Bank of California (CBC) has done—quietly, strategically, and with purpose.

Over the last decade or so, CBC has grown its assets more than 20 times, from just under \$185 million in 2013 to more than \$3.8 billion today. The story behind that growth isn't about chasing numbers—it's about building something that lasts.

"We think in decades, not quarters," says Ash Patel, CEO, President and Chairman of CBC. "That long-term mindset has allowed us to stay true to our values while building a bank that meets the evolving needs of California's business leaders."

So how did a privately held, values-driven bank pull off one of the most impressive growth trajectories in California banking?

Long-Term Vision, Built for Impact

When Ash Patel joined the bank in 2013, CBC was a modest-sized institution with strong roots in Southern California. What it didn't yet have was a bold roadmap for scale.

That changed quickly.

Rather than pursue growth for growth's sake, CBC adopted a clear, long-term approach: create a bank that didn't yet exist. That meant investing in people, service, technology, and community—all while keeping the bank private and nimble.

Being privately held allowed CBC to sidestep the short-term pressures that public banks often face. "We're not driven by quarterly earnings calls," Patel says. "We're driven by impact—on our clients, our communities, and the future of banking."

Growth That Serves a Greater Purpose

As CBC's service model evolved, something powerful happened: its purpose started resonating. Business owners, nonprofit leaders, and entrepreneurs weren't just looking for capital or a place to park their cash—they were looking for a banking partnership grounded in trust, expertise, and shared values.

That organic growth was amplified by strategic moves that aligned with CBC's philosophy of intentional expansion.

Key Milestones That Transformed CBC

2016: Acquiring National Bank of California (NCAL)

CBC doubled in size nearly overnight—growing from \$350 million to nearly \$778 million in assets with the acquisition of Brentwood-based NCAL. But more importantly, the NCAL merger brought additional leadership, customer relationships, and market presence that set the foundation for future growth.

2017 & 2021: Fintech Evolution Begins

Recognizing the future of finance would be shaped by technology, CBC acquired two leading ACH payment companies:

- VeriCheck (VCI) in 2017
- ACHWorks in 2021

These weren't traditional bank acquisitions. They didn't add assets to the balance sheet—they added infrastructure, recurring revenue, and a competitive edge. Today, CBC is one of the only banks in the country that owns and operates its own payments platforms, giving clients a tech-forward advantage of having all the payments rails available under one roof, backed by white-glove service.

2024: Expanding Statewide with Community Bank of the Bay (CBB)

The recent acquisition of Community Bank of the Bay added more than \$1 billion in assets and a stronghold in Northern California—expanding CBC's footprint while preserving a community-first ethos.

"We look for partners who believe what we believe," says Patel. "CBB was one of the few banks whose business purpose aligned with ours: client-first, community-centered, and mission-driven."

The Advantage of Staying Private

In an era when many banks are consolidating into faceless national giants, CBC's private ownership has become a defining advantage.

With no outside shareholders to satisfy, CBC can move quickly, invest boldly, and build intentionally.

That has allowed the bank to:

- Launch new verticals faster
- Make purpose-forward acquisitions
- Reinvest in team and client experience
- Double down on innovation—even during volatile markets

This autonomy has translated into deeper partnerships and more tailored solutions for businesses and organizations of all sizes.

Not Just a Bank—A Fintech Bank

Thanks to its fintech acquisitions, CBC has positioned itself at the intersection of banking and technology.

Through VCI and ACHWorks, the bank powers ACH payments for clients across the country—enabling everything from recurring tuition billing to commercial finance repayments to nonprofit donation processing.

"We've built a model where clients can bank with us and run payments through us," Patel explains. "It's more efficient, more secure, and puts them in control."

As the regulatory climate begins to loosen and technology accelerates, CBC is ready. Its hybrid DNA—as both a private bank and a fintech operator—means it can seize new opportunities faster and smarter than traditional institutions.

What 20x Really Means

While the numbers are impressive, CBC doesn't see its growth as a victory lap—it sees it as a responsibility. A

responsibility to lead, to serve, and to continue building a bank worthy of California's business leaders.

"20x growth isn't about us," Patel says. "It's about what we've been able to create for the people we serve. If our partners thrive, we thrive."

That mindset has made CBC more than a financial partner—it's made them a trusted collaborator in their clients' biggest ambitions.

Built for What's Next

The next chapter of banking will belong to those who can marry trust with technology. Those who can move fast without compromising values. Those who invest in long-term relationships, not short-term gains.

With its purpose-driven foundation, private structure, and fintech edge, CBC is built for that future.

If you haven't yet partnered with CBC, we invite you to take a look—what are you waiting for?

Discover what banking can be at www.cbcal.com.

No jargon. No shareholder profit chasing. Just purpose, performance, and partnership.

“We’re not driven by quarterly earnings calls. We’re driven by impact—on our clients, our communities, and the future of banking.”
— Ash Patel

Ash Patel is Chairman, President, and CEO of Commercial Bank of California. Since 2013, he has led the bank's transformation into a purpose-driven institution known for its fintech innovation, strong culture, and long-term vision. Patel's leadership is rooted in his "Life Wealth" philosophy—a belief that banking should create value beyond capital, enriching clients, employees, and communities alike. Under his guidance, CBC has been named one of Southern California's Best Places to Work four years running and has remained a stabilizing force during times of industry disruption. Patel is also the founder of the Siksha Foundation, which rebuilds schools for underserved children in India and Africa.





From Dreams to Reality: How Girl Scouts Are Leading Today

Across Orange County, Girl Scouts are stepping up as leaders—not someday, but right now. They’re mentoring younger students, launching service projects, advocating for causes they care about, and sparking change in their communities.

Through Girl Scouts, girls discover their passions, find their voice, and gain the courage, confidence, and character to lead. Whether it’s hands-on STEM exploration, outdoor adventures that build resilience, or creative outlets in the arts and entrepreneurship, Girl Scouts are learning skills that prepare them for life.

This transformation doesn’t happen by chance. It happens because of donors like you who believe in the power of girls. Your support ensures that 15,000 Girl Scouts in Orange County have access to the experiences that inspire them to dream bigger, do more, and make a real difference.

- STEM opportunities spark curiosity and open doors to future careers.
- Outdoor programs build teamwork, resilience, and a love of nature.
- Leadership pathways prepare girls to take action on issues they care about most.
- Creative outlets in the arts and entrepreneurship foster innovation, problem-solving, and essential people skills.

The result is real-world impact today—and a stronger, brighter tomorrow.

What Your Gift Creates

• Real Leaders in the Making

Girl Scouts of Orange County gives girls the tools to lead in their own lives and communities, addressing needs with purpose and compassion.

• Equity Through Access

Expanding reach into underrepresented areas ensures every girl, regardless of background, can benefit from Girl Scout programming.



• Critical Skills and Confidence

Through STEM expos, career panels, outdoor challenges, and creative arts programs, girls gain the skills and confidence to dream bigger.

• Connection, Community, and Growth

Whether they’re exploring nature at Camp Scherman or serving together to make the world a better place, Girl Scouts form unbreakable bonds and skills for life.

When we invest in girls, we change the world. Join the Promise Circle or 1912 Society today and be the force behind tomorrow’s innovators, advocates, and changemakers.

Learn more at www.girlscoutsoc.org/invest



Your promise helps Girl Scouts create a better world for all of us.

Girl Scouts of Orange County serves 15,000 girls and builds girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. When you donate to Girl Scouts, the largest girl-led nonprofit leadership program in the world, you champion girl ambition. Your important gift ensures girls will continue to discover their abilities and passions, find their voice and dream big for themselves, their communities, and, yes, our world.

Join the generous individuals supporting Girl Scouts of Orange County. Invest in girls. Change the world.

“If you’re looking to make a lasting difference, join me in supporting Girl Scouts of Orange County. As a Lifetime Member, I have seen the incredible, transformative impact Girl Scouts has on girl’s lives and I am proud to give to GSOC’s Promise Circle. It’s wonderful to see my investment supporting critically needed, life-changing programs in STEM, Entrepreneurship, the Arts, Outdoors, and Life Skills. Let’s empower the next generation of leaders together!”

- Christine Mueller,

Board Chair, Girl Scouts of Orange County Board of Directors



Join our Promise Circle of Giving at www.girlscoutsoc.org/promise



MASTRO'S OCEAN CLUB BRINGS ELEVATED DINING TO IRVINE SPECTRUM CENTER



Few names in dining carry the prestige of Mastro's. Known nationwide for uncompromising excellence, Mastro's has become the destination for unforgettable evenings. On September 26, that tradition continues with the opening of Mastro's Ocean Club at Irvine Spectrum Center — bringing a new level of indulgence, craftsmanship, and hospitality to the heart of Orange County.

For more than two decades, Mastro's has been synonymous with sophistication. Every restaurant delivers not just a meal, but a memorable moment, defined by dramatic presentation, flawless technique, and cuisine that sets the standard for elevated dining. With its newest location in Irvine, Mastro's deepens its roots in Orange County while offering guests a fresh opportunity to experience the brand's iconic flavors.

The Culinary Experience

At the heart of Mastro's is its acclaimed menu — a showcase of pristine seafood, USDA Prime steaks, and handcrafted cocktails. Each dish is prepared with meticulous care and presented with dramatic flair, creating an experience that engages all the senses.

Seafood lovers will discover towers of lobster, crab, oysters, and shrimp served on ice with striking presentation. Steak enthusiasts can indulge in expertly cooked cuts, from the signature bone-in filet to the famed 40-ounce tomahawk ribeye — a centerpiece that embodies both quality and spectacle.

To complement the cuisine, Mastro's bartenders craft cocktails that are as artful as they are delicious. From timeless martinis to seasonal innovations, each sip is designed to enhance the dining experience. Wine connoisseurs will also appreciate Mastro's award-winning list, recognized with the prestigious Wine Spectator Grand Award, featuring selections from around the world thoughtfully curated to pair with the menu.

And no evening at Mastro's is complete without the legendary Warm Butter Cake. This signature dessert, with its irresistible aroma and rich, buttery flavor, has earned nationwide acclaim and remains the perfect finale to an indulgent meal.

A Feast for the Eyes

While the restaurant itself promises a setting of elegance and energy, the true stars of the Mastro's experience are the dishes themselves. Each plate is designed with presentation in mind — from the glistening seafood towers that rise dramatically above the table to the careful sear on every cut of steak.

For many guests, the first impression of Mastro's comes through the food, and it is here that the brand's dedication to excellence is most clearly seen. Every ingredient is selected for its quality, every preparation executed with precision, and every dish plated to impress.

Unmatched Hospitality

Mastro's reputation is built not only on cuisine, but on hospitality that goes above and beyond. Guests can expect service that is intuitive, attentive, and designed to make every moment feel special. Whether dining for a milestone celebration, entertaining clients, or enjoying a weekend indulgence, every guest is treated like a VIP.

Perfect Timing for the Holidays

Opening just ahead of the holiday season, Mastro's Ocean Club Irvine will be the ultimate setting for festive gatherings. With customizable menus, exceptional cuisine, and an atmosphere designed for celebration, the restaurant offers businesses and families alike the perfect place to toast the season.

Looking forward, Mastro's will serve as a year-round destination for unforgettable dining — whether it's a casual indulgence, a romantic night out, or a once-in-a-lifetime celebration.

An Invitation to Indulge

As September 26 approaches, anticipation continues to build. For Orange County residents, professionals, and visitors alike, Mastro's Ocean Club offers more than dining — it delivers an experience where cuisine, service, and presentation combine to create something extraordinary.

Guests are invited to discover why Mastro's has become synonymous with elevated dining across the country, and why its newest location is destined to become Orange County's most talked-about destination.

About Mastro's Restaurants

Mastro's Restaurants is recognized nationwide for its collection of steakhouses and Ocean Clubs, each offering world-class cuisine, award-winning wine lists, and unparalleled service. With locations across the country, Mastro's is celebrated as the premier destination for elevated dining. Opening September 26 at Irvine Spectrum Center, Mastro's Ocean Club brings a new chapter of indulgence, hospitality, and culinary excellence to Orange County.

MASTRO'S OCEAN CLUB

772 Spectrum Center Drive, Irvine, CA 92618 | mastros.com | 949.341.0376



ORANGE COUNTY GRANTMAKERS

Philanthropy. Community.

**We are a community of funders united by a common goal:
to empower and connect Orange County through trust,
accountability, and shared understanding.**

Our Mission

Orange County Grantmakers unites philanthropy, nonprofits, and the public sector to spark bold collaboration and build a more equitable Orange County.

Our Vision

An Orange County where every community thrives and every person has the opportunity to flourish.

Thank you to our 2025 members:

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CalOptima
City of Hope Orange County
Cooper Housing Institute
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First Bank
First 5 Orange County
Flame Broiler Foundation
Golden State Foods Corporation

Hoag Hospital
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Orange County Community Foundation
Orange County Healthcare Agency
Orange County Soccer Club Foundation
Orange County United Way
Pacific Dental
Pacific Life Foundation
PIMCO Foundation
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Ronald M. Simon Family Foundation
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St. Joseph Fund
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Sun Family Foundation
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TGR Foundation
The California Endowment
The HealthCare Foundation for Orange County
Tsao Family Foundation
Uni Health Foundation
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Scan the QR code to learn how you can help build a more equitable OC.

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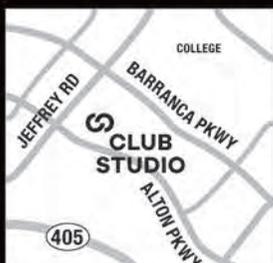


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Goodwill of Orange County Opens New Costa Mesa Store as Part of Bold Goal to Double Community Impact and Footprint

For more than 100 years, Goodwill of Orange County has been a bridge to opportunity—empowering individuals, transforming lives, and strengthening our community. In 2024, we proudly celebrated our centennial anniversary. Today, we continue and expand that legacy with the opening of our newest retail store and donation center in Costa Mesa, a vibrant extension of our mission to help people achieve independence through the power of work.



Goodwill OC Retail Store & Donation Center—NOW OPEN

LOCATION

2666 Harbor Blvd, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

HOURS

Retail Store

Monday–Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Donation Center

Monday–Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

This new store is more than a retail space—it's a community resource. Every donation dropped off and every item purchased directly supports Goodwill OC's employment social enterprise, which fuels our life-changing programs for individuals facing barriers to employment. From personalized coaching and job training to career placement and support services, our programs help people build confidence, develop skills, and secure meaningful careers.

The Costa Mesa Harbor Store is a tangible example of how Goodwill OC transforms retail into impact. It serves as a career training ground for Orange County residents,



a sustainability hub that diverts materials from waste streams, and a place where the community can come together to support inclusive economic growth.

Our mission is simple yet powerful

We help people achieve their goals through a journey of personal support, work experience, and career development. The new Costa Mesa store is the newest avenue to bring this mission to life—offering not just goods, but hope, opportunity, and a pathway to independence.

As we look ahead to our next century of service, we remain committed to building a caring and connected community where everyone has access to meaningful career opportunities. Whether you donate, shop, partner, or advocate, you're helping power a movement that transforms lives—one treasure at a time.

In 2024 alone, Goodwill OC:



SERVED

more than **37,000 individuals** through workforce development programs



PROVIDED

697,000 hours of personalized coaching



PLACED

1,200 individuals into meaningful employment



DIVERTED

more than **61 million pounds of materials** from the local waste stream



INVESTED

93¢ of every dollar directly into mission services



Join us in building a brighter future.

Learn more at ocgoodwill.org or contact communitydevelopment@ocgoodwill.org.



goodwill
orange county



give.
shop.
help.
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repeat.

Free yourself from clutter.
Give someone a job and a new opportunity.
And help save the planet. **That's a lot of good.**

DONATE

MARC PRIDMORE

INTERIORS

Marc Pridmore Interiors:
A Pillar of Luxury Design in Orange County

For more than 20 years, Marc Pridmore Interiors has been a cornerstone of Orange County's luxury design market. Founded by Marc Pridmore, the firm has grown into one of Southern California's most recognized names in high-end furnishings and interior design, serving homeowners, developers, and business leaders who expect the very best.

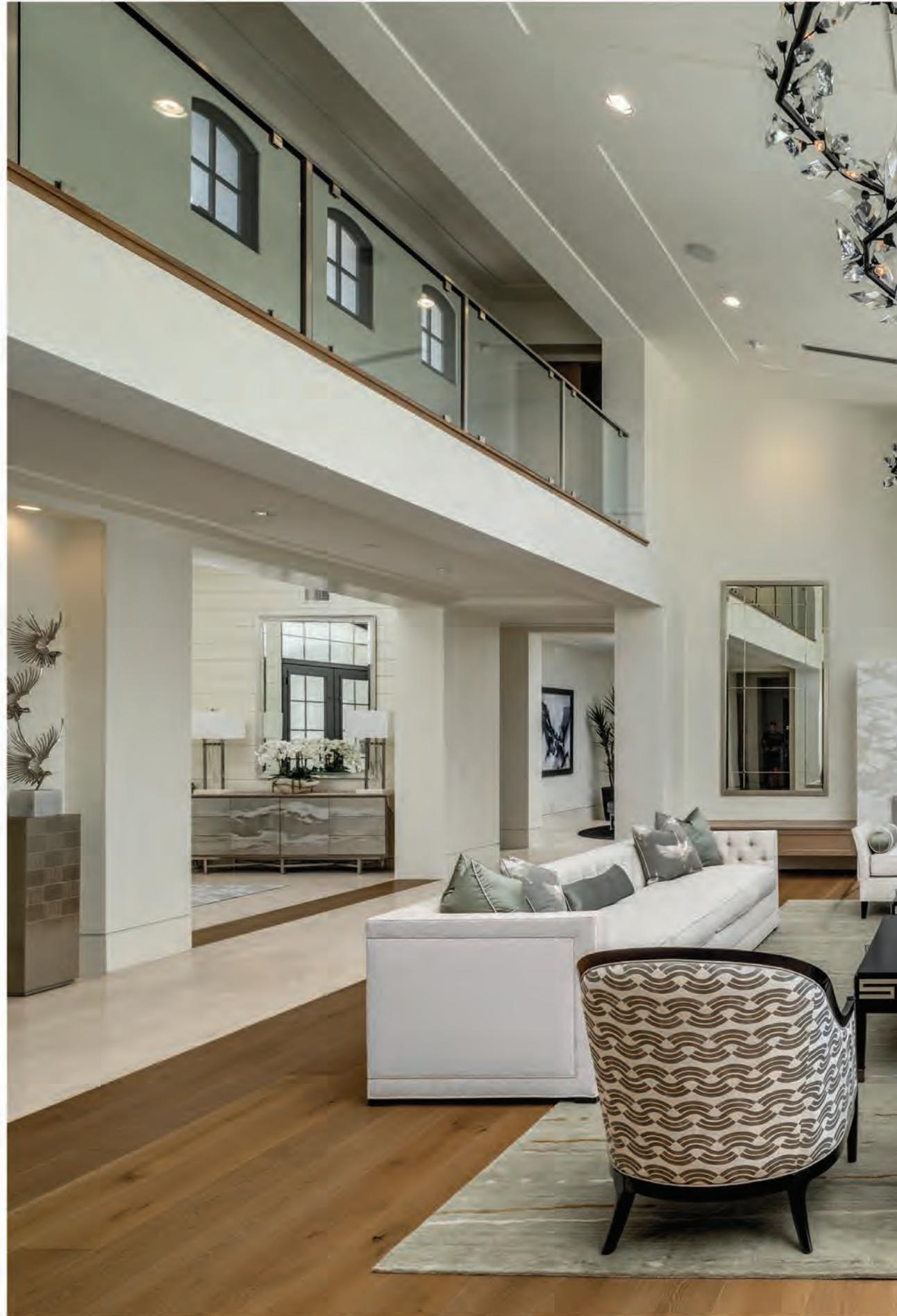
Its 30,000-square-foot showroom, now located at 3128 Red Hill Avenue in Costa Mesa, stands among the largest luxury furniture showrooms in the region. The expansive space showcases an unparalleled collection of fine furniture, accessories, and bespoke pieces sourced from prestigious brands such as Caracole, Marge Carson, Theodore Alexander, and select European collections. Each section of the showroom is curated to reflect distinctive lifestyles and inspire clients with fully realized design concepts.

Beyond showroom offerings, Marc Pridmore Interiors provides comprehensive design services, from residential and commercial space planning to custom upholstery, refinishing, window coverings, and full project management. The firm is also known for its property styling expertise, creating interiors that add measurable value while enhancing the living experience.

With a reputation built on consistency, craftsmanship, and vision, Marc Pridmore Interiors continues to elevate Orange County's profile as a destination for luxury living. Its team partners with clients across Southern California and beyond, delivering interiors that embody both refined aesthetics and long-term investment in quality.

For those seeking to experience the scale and artistry firsthand, the showroom welcomes visitors 7 days a week. Walk-ins welcome.

3128 Red Hill Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-540-6272
www.marcpridmoreinteriors.com



MP





Illumination Health + Home and the Women Who Lead, Serve, and Heal

At Illumination Health + Home, women shape our purpose—from the leaders, champions, and innovators within our organization to the clients whose courage and resilience inspire us daily.

Women experiencing homelessness face unique and often devastating challenges. Many are balancing the demands of raising children while navigating housing instability. Others are escaping domestic violence or recovering from trauma, often with little to no safety net in place. Too often, they are overlooked in a system that is not built to address their needs.

Illumination works to change that reality. In our Children and Families Program, 70% of the adults we serve are women, and they are often single-parent moms. These women are the primary users of our services.

We help women and their families stabilize by providing onsite client-centered, trauma-informed supportive services, delivering resources and interventions to meet them where they are. We provide the structure and continuity they need to move towards stability, permanent housing, and consistent participation in their care. When these women are supported and empowered to break the cycle of trauma, the impact ripples outward—opening the door to a brighter future for themselves and their children.

This critical work is carried forward by the women who form the backbone of Illumination's staff—58% of Illumination's staff and 68% of its leadership are women. From nurses and case managers to outreach teams and administrators, they lead with both expertise and empathy. They walk alongside our clients through some of life's most difficult transitions, ensuring that each person is treated with dignity and compassion. Through their dedication, they show that when women lift one another up, profound transformation becomes possible.

At the helm is CEO **Dr. Pooja Bhalla**, whose leadership has guided Illumination to



become one of Southern California's most successful homeless services organizations. As a 2025 OCBJ Women in Business Nominee, Dr. Bhalla is a passionate advocate for the women on her team, for those who work alongside us as community partners, and most important, for the women Illumination serves. She reminds us that behind every program statistic is a real person, a real story, and often, a woman reclaiming her strength.

As Illumination celebrates Dr. Bhalla on her nomination, we also celebrate the collective resilience of women—staff and clients alike—who are building stronger, healthier communities.

Because when women rise, entire communities rise with them.

 A decorative border with a repeating blue floral pattern surrounds the central text and images.

ILLUMINATION
HEALTH + HOME

THE 5TH ANNUAL

Women's

PHILANTHROPY LUNCHEON

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2025
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

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Enjoy an afternoon of inspiration, community,
and impact as we come together to support
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Learn more at illuminationhealthhome.org

FERRARIS & FORTUNES WHEN FAMILIES FRACTURE

The Many Layers of
High-Asset Divorce



By Paul Nelson, Esq



Divorces involving substantial assets are not just legal matters—they are complex financial undertakings that demand careful planning, rigorous documentation, and specialized expertise. While every divorce involves untangling lives, a high-asset case requires a deeper dive that goes far beyond dividing a home and a checking account.

Key Areas of Review

High-asset divorces call for meticulous review of the following:

- **Business Interests:** Ownership stakes, buy-sell agreements, goodwill, cash-flow analyses, and compensation structures often decide whether a company is sold, divided, or awarded to one spouse with offsetting assets.
- **Real Estate Holdings:** Primary residences, vacation homes, rentals, and commercial properties must be appraised, with attention to debt, depreciation, and tax consequences.
- **Delaware Statutory Trusts (DSTs):** Common in 1031 exchanges, DSTs require tracing contributions, distributions, and income allocations to determine community versus separate property and to arrive at credible valuations.
- **Retirement Accounts & Pensions:** 401(k)s, IRAs, defined benefit plans, restricted stock, RSUs, and options demand careful tracing and, when appropriate, QDROs or plan-specific division orders.
- **Investment Portfolios:** Brokerage accounts, private equity, venture capital, hedge funds, and cryptocurrency must be assessed for present value, liquidity, and risk.
- **Trusts & Inheritances:** Estate planning documents, schedules of gifts, and historical transfers often inform characterization and reimbursement claims.

The Role of Experts

A coordinated team is typically necessary:

- **Forensic Accountants:** Trace assets, model cash flow, and test valuations and lifestyle claims.
- **Business Valuation Experts:** Value closely held companies, partnerships, and professional practices.
- **Tax Advisors/CPAs:** Evaluate immediate and long-term tax impacts, basis issues, and sale timing.
- **Appraisers:** Determine market value for real estate, art, jewelry, vehicles, and other collectibles.
- **Retirement Plan Specialists:** Divide pensions, deferred compensation, and equity awards in compliance with plan rules.

These professionals must be reasonably compensated for the time, analysis, and testimony required; their work is essential, not optional.

Why Thorough Analysis Matters

The volume and complexity of records in high-asset cases mean a single overlooked detail can have outsized consequences. A disciplined process—collecting complete statements, reconciling transfers, tracing separate-property claims, and verifying assumptions—keeps negotiations and court proceedings grounded in reliable data. When appropriate, interim orders securing documents and preserving assets prevent prejudice and stabilize the process.

High-asset divorces demand both legal precision and financial sophistication. With an evidentiary record and qualified expert analysis, parties can reach outcomes that are accurate, durable, and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

NELSON  KIRKMAN

Family Law Attorneys & Advisors

When the stakes are highest

NelsonKirkman.com

LUGANO *celebrates*

WOMEN *IN* BUSINESS

Lugano celebrates the women shaping the future of business. Bold in leadership, sharp in vision, and intentional in their approach.

They do more than lead in their fields. They transform them. With clarity and purpose, these professionals build legacies that leave a lasting impact.

Their influence runs throughout Lugano, from the women who wear our pieces to those shaping the brand from within.



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Fighting for Children, in Court and in the Community

"There are always red flags—signs people dismiss or gut feelings they ignore," cautions Courtney Thom. She's talking about how difficult it is to identify sexual predators who prey on children. "Pedophiles don't share a common profile. In fact, they're often pillars of the community—a teacher, physician, coach, clergy member, or volunteer." Thom speaks from experience. As a partner at America's leading sexual abuse law firm, Manly, Stewart & Finaldi, she has built a career as a fierce advocate for children who have been sexually abused.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable: Youth in Foster Care at Risk

Today, Thom brings that expertise to Court Appointed Special Advocates of Orange County (CASA OC), where she serves on the board. CASA recruits and trains community volunteers to mentor and advocate for youth in foster care, providing stability, support, and friendship. "Pedophiles often target vulnerable children," she explains. "Kids in foster care are at greater risk because they often don't have a stable family unit or someone to protect them. They may not believe anyone is in their corner, and predators take advantage of that."



Courtney Thom

Thom first learned about CASA from her mom who was a lifelong educator and, after retirement, a CASA volunteer. Thom also encountered CASAs in the courtroom when she was working in the Orange County District Attorney's office. She says, "I'd see them in court, advocating for their youth. The CASAs were the one person, amongst all the paid professionals, who volunteered to be there for that child. I always found that to be so important for youth, who often feel unheard once they're in the system."

Thom's transition into civil law with Manly, Stewart & Finaldi allows her to go after the institutions where predatory behavior often occurs. She says, "When children are abused, it doesn't happen in a vacuum - there are almost always others who are turning a blind eye. Our law firm goes after the institutions that enabled the abuse; school districts, sports organizations, hospitals, and churches. I feel really good about this work because it can bring about institutional change."

"Sometimes the only way to enforce changes, like improved policies, procedures, and mandatory reporting, is through this type of litigation," Thom continues, "The other benefit of civil cases is the financial compensation it affords victims - to offer a new start or provide something to get that child back on track; counseling, a college education and all the necessary tools to live a full life."

CASA's Safeguards and the Power of Trust

To further strengthen CASA's many safeguards for keeping kids safe, Thom and her colleagues have led training for CASA staff on vetting and supervising volunteers and on supporting children who may disclose abuse. "Sometimes

CASA is the first adult a child feels they can trust," she says. "When kids begin to disclose abuse, it's like peeling an onion. If that first layer is received with care, they're more likely to keep sharing—and that can lead to real change." CASA Chief Program Officer Jenny Leon says, "Our job is to keep CASA youth safe, so they don't come to further harm. That's why we use rigorous background checks, provide ongoing supervision, and continually seek new ways to protect the children we serve."

Thom's advocacy extends beyond the courtroom. She has met with elected officials to fight for restoration of federal funding cuts to CASA, while also rallying community support at events like the annual CASA Celebration Gala and the Holiday Luncheon. "I look forward to the Celebration Gala every year," she says. "When I attended my first one, I laughed, cried, and felt every emotion—I left wanting to do whatever I could to help." That includes hosting tables for her colleagues to join her at CASA's events.

Her passion for this work is deeply personal. Growing up in Orange County, Thom had a happy childhood, but an early internship at the local DA's office opened her eyes to the reality of abuse in her own community. "I was shocked by the horrific cases this small team of deputy DAs was handling. I had no idea of the depths of depravity that so many children in our community are subject to. I went home crying after reading police reports and felt sick presenting closing arguments. But it lit a fire in me to stand up for these victims."

For 40 years, CASA OC has been doing just that—supporting children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned. Since its founding in 1985 by the Junior League, CASA OC has created hallmark events like the Celebration Gala, Holiday Luncheon, John's Picnic, and the Pinwheel Project; pioneered programs such as Family Finding (CASA Kinect) and Juvenile Justice advocacy. CASA also developed auxiliary groups like Friends of CASA, Kids for CASA, and affinity groups including Men of CASA, Comunidad, and Young Professionals. This year CASA will celebrate their 40th anniversary with an event to thank supporters, volunteers, and staff.

Thom emphasizes that CASA's impact is amplified by strong leadership, particularly from CEO Regan Dean Phillips. "Regan is an exceptional leader," Thom says. "She has a unique ability to bring the right people to the table, whether it's board members, community supporters, or staff. She sets a clear vision for CASA and ensures that every person involved feels empowered to contribute. As a board member, I've seen firsthand how respected she is by our supporters and how lucky we are to have her guiding the organization."

Outside of work, Thom prioritizes time with her husband and young children. To cope with the trauma she's exposed to in her work, she's learned to compartmentalize and finds peace in the ocean, often competing in long-distance swims. "The salt water is so healing," she says. "It gives me the strength to keep going—for my clients, for my kids, and for every child who needs someone in their corner."

To learn more about helping vulnerable youth in the foster care system hoping for a CASA match, please visit www.casaoc.org.



Manly, Stewart & Finaldi Colleagues at the 2024 Friends of CASA Holiday Luncheon

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Meet the Judges:



Tiffany Abrishami - Assistant Vice President, U.S. Bank

Tiffany Abrishami is an assistant vice president and commercial relationship manager at U.S. Bank, where she supports middle market corporations throughout Orange County. In her role, she delivers a comprehensive suite of commercial banking products and services tailored to meet the unique needs of clients across Southern California. Abrishami assumed her current position in June 2023, following six years of experience supporting the San Diego and Torrance Commercial Banking teams. Her banking career began at U.S. Bank 13 years ago, where she progressed from a teller to a client relationship consultant within the Consumer & Business Banking Group over a four-year period. Deeply committed to community engagement, Abrishami serves on the board of U.S. Bank's Orange County chapter of the Proud to Serve Business Resource Group, which supports military veterans and their families through year-round volunteer initiatives. She has also been an active supporter of the Working Wardrobes "Power Up for Success" event, helping veterans transition to civilian life. Abrishami holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration with a Specialization in Finance from American Intercontinental University.



Carissa Bechtolff - Executive Director, Business Development, City of Hope Orange County

Carissa Bechtolff, MBA, is a leader in the healthcare and hospital industry with a proven track record in strategy, business development and physician relations. In her current role, she serves as executive director of business development at City of Hope Orange County providing administrative leadership over the business development and physician relations activities to drive engagement and growth throughout the Orange County and Long Beach markets. She serves on several community Board of Directors, including Families Forward, Project Possible and the Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce (GICC). In 2019, she received the Top 40 Under 40 Award by GICC. Bechtolff earned her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration at California State University, Fullerton, and her Master's in Business Administration from University of California, Irvine in the Healthcare Executive MBA Program. In addition, she is also a certified LEAN Black Belt.



Julie Beckley - Senior Vice President - Business Development, Wells Fargo Commercial Banking

Julie Beckley is a tenured SVP - director of business development on the Southern California Commercial Banking team at Wells Fargo. She is responsible for the business development of new middle market relationships, targeting companies with sales in the range of \$25 million to \$5 billion in revenues with a focus on developing business in Orange County. Beckley's primary responsibilities include working closely with prospective clients to thoroughly understand their short- and long-term financial and strategic objectives and to provide appropriate thought leadership. Beckley provides an insightful understanding of the full range of credit and non-credit suite of products and services at Wells Fargo and her client centric approach is an asset to help meet the financial needs of OC companies across various industries. She has held multiple positions in her 35-year banking career, including over 23 years in the OC market.



Margita Blattner - Senior Director of Philanthropic Strategy, Orange County Community Foundation

Margita Blattner is a forward-thinking, strategic leader with over 20 years of experience in organizational growth, business development, digital transformation and philanthropy. Her achievements have spanned developing market strategies, developing new products and services, launching new business models and technologies, enhancing business value and services, diversifying revenue streams, increasing profitability, and improving internal business systems and operations for Fortune 500 businesses and non-profits. As sr. director of philanthropic strategy, Blattner partners with individuals, families, corporations, nonprofits, and the professional advisor community to craft strategies for amplified charitable giving in Orange County. She leads a development team who provide guidance on current and planned giving options, handling of illiquid assets such as real estate and private business holdings, and support the establishment of charitable funds for enduring philanthropic impact.



Katherine Collins - Vice President, Treasury Management Officer, PNC Bank

Katherine Collins is a treasury management officer for PNC Bank's Orange County and Inland Empire market. Collins consults for and manages a middle market and corporate banking portfolio, develops treasury proposals for current and prospective clients, conducts an annual assessment of client treasury needs and works with internal partners on client deposit strategies. Collins helps companies drive efficiency in their business by leveraging technology to address challenges faced in corporate treasury. She works with clients to understand their businesses at a micro level to identify ways to optimize working capital and mitigate risk in an ever-changing treasury landscape. Collins has nearly two decades of experience with a diversified background in retail banking, sales and operations across segments including commercial banking, business banking, life sciences, property management, retail, and auto finance. Collins leads PNC's local Women in Business program including engagement and support for women financial decision makers. Collins enjoys connecting with women-led businesses and accelerating women's financial equality as a Certified Women's Business Advocate. Collins is a graduate of California State University, Los Angeles where she received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and a minor in management. She resides locally with her husband and dog.



Victor Guerrero - President & Chief Operating Officer, Infinity Bank

Victor Guerrero has dedicated more than 35 years to serving the Los Angeles/Orange County communities in banking. Starting out as a teller at Bank of America in 1988, he's worked in many roles in the industry, from operations to sales, credit, and finance. Since 2018, Guerrero has been the founding executive at Infinity Bank, where he serves as president and chief operating officer, and previously served as the founding CFO of Orange County Business Bank. Guerrero finds his greatest joy in helping people achieve their dreams and goals as a banker, advisor, and partner. With 33 years of marriage and two adult sons, Guerrero's family keeps him humble and generally grounded, but never quiet!

Meet the Judges:



Thomas Lowrey - Senior Relationship Manager, PNC Bank

Tom Lowrey is a senior relationship manager for PNC Corporate Banking. Lowrey is responsible for managing a book for corporate clients and driving new sales activity. He advises clients on solving complex problems in the areas of capital planning and structuring, investor relations, treasury operations, balance sheet and cash flow risk management, and liquidity/investments. Lowrey has over 20 years of banking experience.



Paul O'Mara - Senior Vice President, U.S. Bank

Paul O'Mara is a senior vice president at U.S. Bank managing a portfolio of middle market relationships in the Orange County Commercial Bank. He provides the bank's wide array of products and services to middle market clients in the Southern California Region. Prior to assuming his current role, O'Mara was managing director at Union Bank managing the Orange County Middle Market team. From July 2009 to October 2019, O'Mara was regional vice president at Wells Fargo Bank. O'Mara held a number of other positions at Wells Fargo over 20 years including divisional sales manager where he managed a team of business development officers covering the Midwest portion of the country. O'Mara spent 16 years at Continental Bank/Bank of America as a market executive for the middle market lending division in Chicago. O'Mara earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL. O'Mara is a member of the University of California-Irvine Chief Executive Roundtable. For the past five years, O'Mara has been a board member of the J.F. Shea Therapeutic Riding Center. Paul is a Board member of the Forum for Corporate Directors (FCD).



Melissa Pollard - Senior Vice President, Fifth Third Bank

Melissa Pollard is a senior vice president and senior relationship manager for Fifth Third Bank's commercial banking practice in Orange County where she brings 37 years of experience to her clients. She has been with Fifth Third for seven years where she is responsible for new business development and ongoing client management. She previously worked for Comerica Bank for 20 years and Bank of America for 10 years. She earned her BS and BA degrees from the University of Richmond in Virginia. An east coast native, Pollard has been married for 34 years with two grown children, and they have lived in Aliso Viejo for the past 27 years. She enjoys spending time with her family, traveling and other outdoor activities. Pollard is a longstanding director on the board of Association for Corporate Growth Orange County and their exclusive Women in Leadership banking sponsor since inception. She also serves on the Associates Board of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast's Women of Greatness Committee. In addition, she is an active member of Orange County United Way's Women United, Financial Executives International, Center for Business Growth, Executive Connections, and ProVisors.



Richard Reisman - Publisher, Orange County Business Journal

Richard Reisman is publisher of the Orange County Business Journal. Reisman joined the Business Journal in 1990. Since then, the publication's acceptance by the business community has been dramatic. Paid circulation and advertising volume has grown significantly, making it possibly the top Business Journal in the country. Prior to the business journal, Reisman was director of marketing for the Orange County edition of The Los Angeles Times. Earlier in his career, Reisman practiced law in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. While in private practice in Washington, Reisman served as special counsel to the House Ethics Committee. Reisman holds an MBA from UCLA, where he was awarded the R.C. Baker Foundation Fellowship, and a law degree from George Washington University, where he graduated with honors. Reisman is listed in "Who's Who in America" and has served on numerous boards.



Brenda Rose - Executive Director, Business Banking Market Manager, OC, JPMorgan Chase

Brenda Rose joined Chase for Business in 2009 and has led the Orange County Market since 2021. Her team of 70+ relationship managers offer treasury management solutions, access to capital and full-service financial guidance to business owners. Prior to Chase, Rose's background included commercial real estate lending, large corporate banking and wealth management experience. Active in the community, Rose has served on the Advisory Board of the Orange County Business Council and is an active member of the OC Market Leadership Team at Chase. Personally, Rose grew up in Los Angeles, has a BS in Business Administration from California State University, Northridge and an MBA from University of Southern California, both on full academic scholarships. She also has a graduate degree in banking from Pacific Coast Banking School in Seattle. Rose loves fitness, photography, scuba diving adventures and international travel with her family. She is a proud stepmom to four grown kids and a new grand baby.



Lisa Westhafer - Senior Vice President, Middle Market Banking, Fifth Third Bank

In her role as senior vice president, Lisa Westhafer leads the marketing efforts for Fifth Third Bank's Commercial Banking office in Orange County, focusing on serving clients in the market with revenues between \$20 million to \$500 million. Westhafer assists privately run companies with their financing, treasury management and capital market needs. Lisa has been in the financial services industry for over 25 years. Prior to entering into the banking field, she worked for both the Walt Disney Company and Arthur Andersen. A Southern California native, Westhafer is married, has a 10-year-old son, and lives with her family in Nellie Gail. She earned her degree in business from the University of Washington and holds a CPA designation (currently inactive) and is Series 7 and 24 licensed. When not working or spending time with her family, Westhafer enjoys traveling, scuba diving, interior design and cooking.

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Tiffany Aguinaldo, Director of Client & Business Development

Forge, Lake Forest

Tiffany Aguinaldo serves as director of client and business development at Forge, Orange County's No. 4 fastest-growing private company, where she manages high-profile accounts including Synchrony Bank, Allied Universal, and The Jessie Rees Foundation (NEGU). With more than 15 years of public relations expertise, she specializes in client relationship development, media relations, and strategic communications for major brands. Aguinaldo has been instrumental in driving Forge's recent growth through exceptional networking and strategic relationship-building. Her efforts directly contributed to securing a comprehensive year-long public relations campaign for Allied Universal and establishing valuable partnerships with Orange County agencies, significantly expanding Forge's market opportunities and regional reputation. Currently serving as 2025 president of the Orange County Public Relations Society of America (OCPRSA), one of the top 20 largest PRSA chapters nationally, Aguinaldo champions mentorship and professional development. She organizes innovative events and industry programming, bringing members together to connect and learn about current industry trends while fostering the next generation of PR professionals.



Taniya Ahmed, Owner

Sunbliss Café, Corona Del Mar

Taniya Ahmed is the visionary founder of Sunbliss Café, a fast-growing, women-owned specialty coffee and café brand with locations in Anaheim Hills and, most recently, in Corona del Mar. Rooted in her South Asian heritage and inspired by the belief that food is a love language, Ahmed created Sunbliss to offer not only award-winning Hawaiian coffee and house-made sauces and syrups, but also an uplifting, community-centered experience. Under her leadership, Sunbliss has earned national recognition, including ranking No. 6 on Yelp's Top 100 Places to Eat in the U.S. in 2023 and again in 2024, and being named Most Popular in SoCal by the L.A. Times. In a highly competitive industry known for razor-thin margins and high failure rates, Ahmed has defied the odds through smart brand-building, operational excellence, and genuine connection with her customers. Beyond business success, she donates a portion of profits to local charities and hosts community events, using her platform to make a difference both locally and globally.



Melissa Aills, Vice President of Supply Chain

Juice It Up!, Irvine

Melissa Aills serves as the vice president of supply chain at leading smoothie, raw juice, and superfruit bowl chain Juice It Up!, where she oversees profitability, cost structures, and the procurement of high-quality products. Throughout her two decades at Juice It Up!, Aills has spearheaded the development of the brand's supply chain department, establishing strong, valuable relationships with suppliers and ensuring the maintenance of low costs for franchise partners. Her proactive approach to contracting and sourcing has enabled the brand to consistently maintain competitive pricing and cost stability despite ongoing market fluctuations. When Aills arrived at Juice It Up! in 2003, the brand had fewer than 15 locations. Today, Juice It Up! has more than 100 locations open or in various stages of development in six states and is continuously sought by new and experienced franchisees looking to expand their portfolio with a proven smoothie, raw juice, and superfruit bowl franchise.



Jessica Aliotti, Wealth Management Advisor

Northwestern Mutual-Orange County, Irvine

Jessica Aliotti joined Northwestern Mutual as a financial advisor in 2014 and currently runs her practice in Orange County. She specializes in supporting sales executives, tech professionals, physicians, attorneys, and business owners, with tailored solutions that address their unique needs. Throughout her career, she has been recognized for her significant contributions to the financial industry. Forbes named her one of the top Best-In-State Financial Security Professionals in 2023 and 2024. In her first four years, she was consistently ranked as the No. 1 or No. 2 advisor in the Western Region. In the fiscal year 2021–2022, Aliotti achieved the Northwestern Mutual FORUM recognition, placing her in the top 5% of advisors nationwide. For the past 11 years, she has successfully managed a nationwide financial planning practice. As an expert in tax efficiency, risk mitigation, and wealth preservation, Aliotti is passionate about helping others realize their vision for a secure financial future.



Tiffany Alva, Director of Partnerships and Government Affairs

First 5 Orange County, Santa Ana

As the director of partnerships and government affairs at First 5 Orange County, Tiffany Alva plays a pivotal role in advancing the organization's vision by developing relationships with key stakeholders, providing First 5 OC with a platform to educate community leadership and build support for investments in early childhood systems of care. Prior to joining First 5 OC, Alva served as the early learning director at THINK Together and has extensive knowledge and expertise in program development and management. First 5 OC is a public agency dedicated to ensuring every child has the strongest possible start in life, focusing on early health, early learning, family and community engagement, and data and systems efficiency. First 5 OC is a trusted convener, collaborator, and champion for equity and impact, serving more than 2.4 million children and families since its founding in 1996. Recent funding accomplishments include \$9 million invested in prenatal-to-three programs, \$8 million to school readiness, and \$1.5 million for capacity building and community engagement—benefiting approximately 53,000 OC families and 45,000 children annually.



Valerie Amezcua, Mayor of Santa Ana

City of Santa Ana, Santa Ana

Mayor Valerie Amezcua is the first Latina elected Mayor of Santa Ana, the county seat and second-largest city in Orange County. A lifelong public servant, she spent more than 30 years in law enforcement with the Orange County Probation Department before transitioning to public office. As Mayor, she leads a city of over 310,000 residents with a \$700 million annual budget and more than 1,000 employees. Under her leadership, Santa Ana has experienced significant investment in youth services, public safety, and infrastructure. She has championed equitable development, expanded small business grant programs, and prioritized the revitalization of underserved neighborhoods. A former Santa Ana Unified School District Trustee, Mayor Amezcua brings a deep understanding of community needs to her work in civic leadership. Known for her collaborative style and steady resolve, she has helped stabilize City Hall and restore confidence in local government. Mayor Amezcua is a trailblazer whose commitment to inclusive leadership continues to shape the future of Santa Ana.



Tenny Amin, Co-Owner & Partner

TALG, Irvine

Tenny Amin, co-owner and partner at TALG, a premier multijurisdictional law firm celebrating its 20th anniversary, is a powerhouse in family law. With more than 25 years of expertise, Amin leads the division specializing in child custody, child support, spousal support, and high-asset marital estates. Her reputation for effective advocacy and extensive trial experience is complemented by an LLM in dispute resolution from Pepperdine School of Law and certification as a mediator. Beyond her legal achievements, Amin is deeply engaged in community service as president of the Las Vegas chapter of SOAR, providing vital support to orphaned children globally. She also plays an active role in professional circles, contributing to organizations like the National Association of Women Business Owners and bar associations across Orange County and Los Angeles. In her free time, Amin finds joy in running, marathon training, and yoga, cherishing family time with her husband and daughter. Her commitment to law, community, and personal wellness defines her dynamic presence both in and out of the courtroom.



Rebecca Anderson, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Rebecca Anderson has been a successful residential and luxury real estate agent in Orange County for nearly 15 years. Recently named one of Orange Coast Magazine's Top 100 Real Estate All-Stars and a 2024 RealTrends Top Agent in California, she combines a proven track record with a genuine passion for service. A long-time Port Streets resident and communications graduate from the University of San Diego, Anderson brings more than a decade of corporate experience at Delta Airlines into her real estate practice. Deeply committed to giving back, Anderson serves on the board of directors for Casa Teresa and has chaired their 2024 and 2025 fashion show fundraisers, raising more than \$750,000 for mothers in crisis. She also leads the Port Streets Community Blood Drive and has served as service chair for Young Women of Vision, where she and her daughter spent three summers on mission trips to El Salvador serving orphaned children. As a member of the Glass Slipper Guild, Anderson has helped establish a \$1 million endowment for CHOC's Neuroscience Institute. Her community focus also includes roles such as CDM Water Polo president and active support for Patrick's Purpose, the CDM Home Tour, and RAD Camp. Anderson was recently nominated to serve as a director for the Newport Beach Board of REALTORS®—another opportunity to lead with purpose and give back to the community she loves.



Jordan Anderson, Executive Director

JP Morgan Chase, Irvine

Jordan Anderson is a relationship executive at JP Morgan Chase in the Middle Market Commercial Banking and Specialized Industries group. She is focused on providing finance and banking solutions to middle-market sized companies located throughout Orange County, leads the firm's beauty and personal care industry focus in the OC market, and has managed the summer intern program for OC over the past couple of years. Anderson has been with the firm for more than six years and champions several programs and initiatives within the firm, most notably JP Morgan's Women on the Move which empowers the advancement of women with the mission to drive professional and personal development. She also represented the firm on a panel for the annual JP Morgan Day of Empowerment event, which brings the female business community in Orange, Riverside, and San Bernadino Counties together in the spirit of collaboration, growth, and mentorship. Anderson is highly active in the community; she participates on the associate board for Project Youth OCBF, a non-profit organization focused on keeping at-risk youth in school, healthy, and drug-free, through education counseling, mentoring, and family-strengthening.



Elizabeth Andrade, Executive Director

211OC, Irvine

Orange County United Way is committed to breaking barriers and improving lives through key initiatives—United for Student SuccessSM, United for Financial SecuritySM, and United to End HomelessnessSM. Additionally, they offer vital support via 2-1-1 Orange County (211OC), a key service that connects thousands of Orange County's most vulnerable residents with health and human service resources. In July 2023, Orange County United Way acquired 211OC and appointed Elizabeth Andrade as its executive director. Under her visionary leadership, 211OC has expanded its reach and impact in connecting individuals and families to critical





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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

social services and community-based programs, including where to find housing, food assistance, and other resources offered by local nonprofits and government agencies. Andrade bridges key partnerships with 75 organizations that improve access to services for individuals and families across the county. This coordination also provides a centralized location of forms and information to prevent individuals from needing to repeatedly retell their stories, to ultimately save time, reduce emotional strain, and improve results.

Corey Anthony, Real Estate Agent

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Corey Anthony is a Newport Beach real estate professional who believes buying and selling a home is one of the most important decisions one can make. Her personalized approach and ongoing communication with each client ensure every transaction in the home buying or selling process is efficient, thorough, and enjoyable. Boasting an extensive and highly successful background in sales, marketing, and customer satisfaction, Anthony has been selling and negotiating large, complex projects for more than 18 years. Anthony was awarded the President's Club honor seven times and was the top-performing sales executive at her Fortune 500 company three separate years. As a resident of Newport Beach's beloved Harbor View Homes—also known as the Port Streets—and a parent of three children in elementary school, Anthony understands firsthand the amazing lifestyle available to families in her community. When she's not working, Anthony enjoys spending time with her husband, Darren, and their children, Brooke, Ryan, and Elizabeth. Anthony's combined networks have provided clients exclusive and unmatched access to off market properties in this low inventory environment. As a part of Surterre Properties®, Anthony has access to strategic assistance and unique resources, including an award-winning in-house marketing team that offers optimal property exposure to an unmatched and growing network of buyers and sellers.



Kim Arial, Associate Principal, Building Measurement Services

Ware Malcomb, Irvine

Kim Arial serves as associate principal of Building Measurement Services (BMS) for Ware Malcomb, a full-service international design firm with more than 800 employees. The firm's BMS team collaborates with all 28 of the firm's offices to create accurate existing conditions, plans, and models using the latest laser capture technology. They work with landlords, asset management firms, property managers, and brokers to deliver floor plans with quick turnaround times. Arial joined Ware Malcomb in 2018 following the firm's acquisition of WorkSpace Plans, a building measurement services company that Arial co-founded and co-owned. Her leadership has been instrumental in scaling Ware Malcomb's BMS capabilities. In the past year alone, Arial and her team have scanned and supported more than 300 projects across the firm.



Kate Romano Armado, SVP, Business Development Officer

Enterprise Bank & Trust, San Juan Capistrano

As senior vice president, business development officer at Enterprise Bank & Trust, Kate Armado facilitates day-to-day bank operations related to sales, new business efforts, and her team's contributions to the bank's growth strategy. A California native, she is passionate about helping her community succeed and sees firsthand the tangible effect that financial success has on businesses and owners, along with their families and communities. During her time at Enterprise, Armado has played an integral role in expanding the bank's footprint in Orange County. Reflecting the bank's dedication to leading clients to a lifetime of financial success, she consistently demonstrates a commitment to the business community through hands-on client service and collaborative campaigns to generate new relationships. For her 2024 achievements, she received Enterprise's Sales Champion Award, which recognizes a single top-performing employee from the bank's entire footprint each year. Beyond her professional role, Armado actively contributes to the local community, dedicating time to organizations including March of Dimes, Festival of Children, the Pacific Marine Mammal Center, and Junior Achievement of Orange County & Inland Empire, among others.



Janice Arrigo, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

With over 35 years of experience and more than 600 homes sold throughout Orange County, Janice Arrigo—alongside the Arrigo Presson Group—offers exceptional expertise in coastal real estate. Her proven track record has made her a trusted advisor to repeat clients, prominent businesses, and charitable organizations handling high-value transactions. In addition to real estate sales, Arrigo serves as an expert witness in real estate matters. Arrigo's professional accolades include being ranked among top 1% of REALTORS® in the region and successfully closing more than \$300 million in sales since 2020. She has been repeatedly recognized as one of Orange Coast Magazine's Real Estate All-Stars and has been a multi-year nominee for the OCBJ Women in Business Award. Arrigo is deeply committed to her community, serving on advisory boards for several Orange County nonprofits and staying actively involved with the Hoag Hospital Foundation. She has been married for more than 35 years to Newport Beach native Steve Arrigo. They have two grown daughters and enjoy boating, family time, and the coastal lifestyle.



Stephanie Ascher, Vice President, Asset Management & Portfolio Operations

KBS Realty Advisers, Newport Beach

Stephanie Ascher serves as vice president of asset management and portfolio operations at KBS, one of the nation's largest owners and operators of premier commercial real estate. With \$45.5 billion in completed transactions and more than \$5.5 billion in assets under management, Ascher helps to optimize asset performance, uncover operational efficiencies, and drive long-term value. Ascher's career at KBS began 16 years ago as a receptionist in the Newport Beach office. Her rapid rise through the ranks—including

investment analyst, senior associate, assistant vice president, and now vice president of asset management and portfolio operations—is a testament to her talent, tenacity, and leadership. A respected leader within the firm, Ascher is known for building strong cross-functional partnerships and strengthening collaboration across asset management, property management, leasing, capital markets, and due diligence teams. Her deep institutional knowledge and approachable leadership style have made her an influential voice across the company. Ascher's career trajectory has inspired countless women at KBS, in the industry and throughout Orange County, setting a powerful example of growth, perseverance, and impact in commercial real estate.



Nathalie Barge, Owner

Pique-Nique, Anaheim

Nathalie Barge, founder of Pique-Nique and an expert cheesemonger and wine professional, brings her extensive culinary experience to the cheese and charcuterie bar she created one year ago in the heart of the Anaheim Packing House. She has honed her craft through years of global travel and formal education, developing an eye for unique, high-quality ingredients. Barge's dedication to showcasing small-batch producers shines through in Pique-Nique's thoughtfully curated menu, which features artisanal cheeses, charcuterie, and wine sourced from around the world—all paired in delightful, unexpected ways. Barge employs a small but dedicated group of cheesemongers that she personally educates and inspires to create a new generation of cheese professionals in Orange County. Barge holds a Wine & Spirit Education Trust Level 2 Award in Wine and is an active member of the American Cheese Society. While running her business as solo entrepreneur and mother, Barge still finds time to travel regularly to meet artisanal cheese and charcuterie producers in the United States and abroad. Whether you're a curious newcomer or a seasoned foodie, Pique-Nique promises a memorable experience curated by a woman whose passion for food and wine is as approachable as it is inspiring.



Koren Barrett, Naturopathic Doctor

Newport Integrative Health, Costa Mesa

Dr. Koren Barrett is a California-licensed naturopathic doctor. She received her medical education from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, where she also completed her residency in naturopathic family medicine. Dr. Barrett received her pre-medical education from the Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon. Dr. Barrett provides integrative medical care—a discipline that combines the best of both mainstream and natural therapies in one practice. She utilizes a variety of therapeutics including dietary and lifestyle counseling, herbal medicine, nutritional supplementation, and incorporating pharmaceutical prescriptions when needed. Dr. Barrett's philosophy is that given the proper conditions our bodies have an innate ability to heal. By removing what harms and adding what heals, patients can continually achieve better states of health. Safety and efficacy are Dr. Barrett's top priorities, and therapies with the lowest potential for side effects are always considered and recommended first. Dr. Barrett believes in finding the underlying cause rather than treating symptoms. When not practicing medicine, Dr. Barrett is running, climbing, jumping, and cuddling with her two sons, Gavin and Tyler, and husband, Charley.



Isabel Becerra, President & CEO

The Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers, Orange

Isabel Becerra has spent nearly three decades championing public health and advocating for vulnerable communities across the West Coast. Her career began in Seattle and brought her back to California, where she witnessed the persistent health disparities faced by marginalized communities—an experience that ignited a lifelong commitment to community health and addressing the systemic barriers to care. In 2000, she joined the Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers (Coalition OC) as the director of health policy and fund development. Over the years, she rose through the ranks to become chief operating officer, and ultimately, president and CEO. Throughout her career, Becerra has managed staff, provided strategic direction, and led various programs. She has also built strong relationships with key stakeholders, including health plans, the County Board of Supervisors, the Health Care Agency, funders, and academic partners. Through her leadership, Coalition OC continues to be a powerful advocate for health disparities and a vital force for systemic change across Orange County. Becerra's dedication and passion continue to drive efforts to improve healthcare access and equity for vulnerable communities in California.



Devon Belanger, Owner & Coach

Power Pulse EMS Personal Training, Costa Mesa

Devon Belanger is the dedicated owner and certified EMS coach at Power Pulse EMS Training in Costa Mesa. With extensive international experience as a fitness professional and personal trainer, she is passionate about leveraging the transformative power of EMS (electromuscular stimulation) to help individuals achieve remarkable fitness results. Belanger offers personalized and tailored programs, harnessing the unique benefits of EMS technology for efficient and effective workouts. Her commitment to client success is reflected in the five-star reviews and life-changing outcomes experienced by those she trains. Belanger is dedicated to bringing this innovative fitness solution to the Costa Mesa community.



Allycyn Bennett, Loan Officer

Sandstone Financial, Newport Beach

Allycyn Bennett, a proud UCLA graduate in political science and history, offers more than



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Contact

Aaron Olson

Orange County Region Manager

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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

33 years of mortgage expertise. Widely regarded as one of SoCal's top loan officers, she's licensed in 30 states and is nationally recognized for client-first service and industry excellence. With a powerhouse team and cutting-edge tech, Bennett delivers tailored solutions through more than 70 lending institutions. Her offerings span conventional, non-QM, FHA, VA, HELOCs, reverse, fixed, ARM, interest-only, and hybrid loans. She's closed more than \$90 million in a single year with a 99.3% success rate. Bennett's integrity, expertise, and clear guidance create lifelong partnerships built on results with everyone from first-time buyers to complex borrowers. She is a trusted partner for Orange County's entrepreneurs, executives, and real estate investors seeking strategic mortgage solutions.



Anna Bennett, Vice President of Business Development

FirstTeam®, Newport Beach

With a long and successful history in agent acquisition and organizational growth, Anna Bennett is instrumental in spearheading merger acquisitions and partnership opportunities with larger brokers for FirstTeam® while also leading her in-house recruiting teams to attract top talent. Leveraging cutting-edge technology and proprietary training programs, Bennett empowers FirstTeam®'s real estate professionals to revolutionize their approach and maximize results. With a career spanning Fortune 500 companies and fast-growing startups, Bennett has successfully recruited talent responsible for more than \$20 billion in market share, making significant contributions to organizational growth. Her experience at innovative companies like Zip Realty and Side Inc. has honed her expertise in PropTech and SaaS solutions, transforming traditional real estate practices. Bennett's background, encompassing both large-scale corporate environments and agile startups, gives her a unique perspective on the evolving needs of the real estate industry. FirstTeam® is a premier independent real estate brokerage in Southern California boasting a nearly 50-year legacy of excellence and market leadership. Since 1976, FirstTeam has earned the trust of over 250,000 homebuyers and sellers, with a staff of more than 2,300 employees.



Ilyana Benson, Founder & CEO

NeoSol Marketing, Orange

Ilyana Benson is the founder and CEO of NeoSol, an Orange County-based company and a nationally recognized marketing agency specializing in connecting CPG brands with U.S. Hispanic consumers. Since founding the company in 2005, she has led NeoSol from a grassroots startup to a trusted partner for nationally distributed brands. Under her leadership, the agency has executed successful, data-driven campaigns for clients such as Yakult, Goya, Electrolit, Topo Chico, and Avocados from Mexico, helping them grow shelf presence, market share, and brand loyalty across multicultural markets. Benson holds both a bachelor's in international business and a master's in business from Tecnológico de Monterrey, and is a graduate of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program. She also serves on the Board of Directors for YWCA Greater LA, where she advocates for women's equity and economic empowerment. Her leadership continues to define NeoSol's growth, impact, and reputation for cultural authenticity in the marketing industry.



Letitia Berbaum, Founder & Wealth Advisor

Blue Sands Wealth, Irvine

Letitia Berbaum founded Blue Sands Wealth to bring clarity and calm to life's biggest financial decisions. An advocate and ally for advancing women in business, Berbaum specializes in working with women building wealth independently, successful business owners planning their next chapter, and families navigating complex multigenerational planning. Attracting discerning clientele who desire more than investment management, Blue Sands Wealth through Berbaum's leadership supports clients as a strategic partner, empowering them to take confident action. At Blue Sands Wealth, every plan is built to reflect each client's unique goals, values, and future. Berbaum's expertise includes tax aware asset transfer strategies, succession planning, and helping clients design a lasting legacy. A Forbes Finance Council member, Berbaum also serves on the USA Volleyball Audit, Budget and Finance Committee, and the Brea Chamber of Commerce Women in Leadership Council. Recognized as a "Woman of Achievement" by Senator Bob Archuleta, Berbaum takes pride in mentoring the next generation of female leaders. Earning a reputation for thoughtful guidance, Blue Sands Wealth keeps each client's goals at the heart of every decision.



Pooja Bhalla, CEO

Illumination Health + Home, Santa Ana

Dr. Pooja Bhalla is the chief executive officer of Illumination Health + Home (formerly Illumination Foundation), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to disrupt the cycle of homelessness. Under her guidance, Illumination has become a recognized and innovative leader in healthcare and housing services for people experiencing homelessness. Illumination is ranked the 10th largest nonprofit in Orange County. As CEO, Dr. Bhalla has expanded the organization's health and home model to reach more people. In 2024, Illumination opened the nation's first recuperative care center tailored specifically for children of families experiencing homelessness. Advanced by Dr. Bhalla's unwavering dedication, this initiative is redefining compassionate healthcare and support for those who need it most. Dr. Bhalla's journey with Illumination began in 2017 as chief operating officer. She swiftly advanced to the newly created position of executive director of healthcare services in 2021, where she focused on health equity to elevate outcomes and diminish disparities. Her leadership and proven results led to her appointment as co-CEO in July 2022. In May 2023, she became CEO.



Kelly Blair, Chief Financial Officer

Mark IV Capital, Inc., Newport Beach

Kelly Blair is the chief financial officer at Mark IV Capital. She joined the firm in 2021, bringing more than 20 years of experience in strategic finance and accounting, with a focus on real estate and private equity. Her background spans various roles encompassing capital markets, corporate finance, accounting, and operations. Blair's previous positions include CFO at BKM Capital Partners, vice president at CIM group, CFO and treasurer at RAM Real Estate Capital, and vice president, capital markets at Walton Group of Companies, where she led efforts in investment structuring, financial reporting, and financial analytics. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in accounting and an MBA with concentrations in leadership and finance, both from Arizona State University.



Lynne Bolduc, Partner

FitzGerald Kreditor Bolduc Risbrough LLP, Irvine

Lynne Bolduc exemplifies excellence in corporate law and finance. Over the past three decades, she has structured and implemented billions of dollars' worth of business and financing transactions and has successfully represented clients in closing complex transactions across multiple industries. She specializes in crafting creative financing solutions for companies wanting to raise money, go public, sell, or acquire other companies. Bolduc's achievements include landmark securities transactions, expert witness services in cases with high-profile public figures, and impactful speaking engagements, advocacy, and publications—reflecting her unwavering dedication to her profession. Her numerous awards include being recognized as a Southern California Rising Star Attorney by Los Angeles Magazine and Southern California Super Lawyers three years in a row and being named an Orange County Visionary by the Los Angeles Times. Bolduc serves as a director on the Board of the National Investment Banking Association, a non-profit advocacy group for corporate finance, and founded The Women's Business Development Initiative over a dozen years ago which provides business opportunities to women, reflecting her support of her professional community.



Adrienne Brandes, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Discover the unparalleled expertise of Adrienne Brandes, a distinguished negotiator accredited by the prestigious Harvard Law School. This academic distinction is complemented by her master's degree in counseling psychology from Chapman University, equipping her with a unique ability to understand and meet the nuanced needs of her clients. As a seasoned professional in luxury real estate, Brandes combines her legal insight and psychological acumen to offer an exceptional, tailored experience, ensuring that every transaction reflects her clients' specific desires and aspirations. With an extraordinary annual sales record nearing \$50 million—achieved single-handedly, without a supporting team—Brandes' exceptional capabilities are clearly evident. She's not just an agent; she's a trusted advisor committed to delivering results with unmatched professionalism and dedication. By engaging with Brandes, you're securing her undivided attention and a level of service that exemplifies excellence. Whether embarking on a real estate journey to buy or sell, clients can entrust their experience to Brandes's Harvard-honed skills and proven track record for a truly elite outcome.



Christia Brockman, Partner

Sunday Brunch Agency, Huntington Beach

As partner and co-owner of Sunday Brunch Agency, Christia Brockman has spearheaded a revolution in marketing. Sunday Brunch Agency stands out as the first fully remote, female-owned marketing agency in Orange County, California, pioneering a flexible and dynamic work environment. Brockman's leadership has cultivated a culture of innovation and empowerment, attracting top marketing talent and high-profile clients. The agency's comprehensive services span design, strategy, branding, websites, social media, PR, media planning, consulting, and more, providing transformative results for independently owned companies and professionals. Sunday Brunch Agency thrives on challenging traditional marketing approaches, embracing change, and fostering creativity without limits. Under Brockman's guidance, the agency continues to push boundaries, delivering powerful and out-of-the-box marketing solutions that surpass clients' expectations.



Michelle Brouwer, Director of Programming

Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine

As the director of programming at Irvine Barclay Theatre, Michelle Brouwer influences every aspect of the guest experience while visiting the 750-seat performing arts venue. She interned with Irvine Barclay Theatre as a dance major at UC Irvine and joined the staff full time nearly eight years ago. Brouwer has held various roles with growing responsibility, including managing partnership and digital marketing, fundraising and development projects, artistic operations, special events, contract negotiations, managing budgets, expanding the performance schedule, and more. In her current role, she is responsible for curating and elevating the wide array of programming at Irvine Barclay Theatre, celebrating its 35th season this fall as one of Southern California's most notable entertainment venues. Brouwer's role has grown with the theatre, as visitor count and revenue have seen record numbers over the venue's history. As Irvine Barclay Theatre celebrates this milestone anniversary, Brouwer ensures its continued success through compelling programming and bringing top-tier artists to Orange County that are aligned with the vibrant, diverse, and growing community of Irvine and beyond.





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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Meredith Cagle, Chief Program Officer

Beyond Blindness, Santa Ana

As chief program officer, Meredith Cagle leads all programming at Beyond Blindness, serving nearly 500 children and young adults from birth to age 22. She has been instrumental in launching new initiatives, including the July 2025 rollout of Orange County Head Start in the agency's inclusive classrooms. Under her leadership, Beyond Blindness achieved a major milestone in its five-year strategic plan—reaching the goal of serving 2,680 children and family members by year three. Cagle's approach is grounded in a commitment to long-term sustainability. She has enhanced the organization's insurance billing systems, secured key grant funding, and fostered strategic partnerships to ensure programs remain impactful and self-sustaining. With a diverse background in government, grant-writing, nonprofit board service, and individual patient advocacy, Cagle brings a well-rounded perspective to tackling complex challenges and advancing family-centered solutions. She holds a Master of Public Health from UCLA and a Bachelor of Science in biological sciences from UC Irvine, where she began her journey with Beyond Blindness as a Delta Gamma volunteer.



Angela Caliger, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Born and raised in a small town in the Midwest, Angela Caliger brings a strong work ethic and an honest approach to every client. She immediately becomes a long-term partner with each one of her clients. Her repeat clients and consistent referrals speak to her ability to make each real estate experience about the individual rather than the transaction. After graduating from the University of Iowa, Caliger moved out to Newport Beach to begin opening offices for a start-up conference calling company that she helped turn into a global billion-dollar entity. This entrepreneurial nature and creative energy catapulted her immediate success in the real estate industry. Caliger's passion, energy, business acumen, and thirst for greatness continues to pay off. She owns homes in both Newport Beach and Palm Desert and has full coverage and impressive results in both coastal Orange County and the Coachella Valley. She has an unwavering commitment to excellence and surrounds herself with top-performing professionals both within and outside of her brokerage. For those looking to purchase, sell, or lease a home, Caliger gives 100% effort to make real estate dreams a reality.



Nancy Campbell, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Nancy Campbell is a distinguished leader in Orange County's luxury real estate market, known for her high-caliber service, expert negotiation skills, and exceptional client representation. Along with her husband, Mike, she is recognized for trend-setting marketing strategies that have set new standards globally in real estate advertising. As a top producer, Campbell has earned the trust of builders and developers who rely on her keen business instincts and proven ability to sell properties effectively. Campbell is available 24/7 to ensure her clients achieve their investment goals, offering personalized service tailored to each individual's needs. Her in-depth knowledge of Orange County's diverse lifestyle options—from beach living to urban penthouses—allows her to guide buyers toward the perfect property. As an agent with Surterre Properties®, Campbell leverages the firm's integrity and teamwork to provide an exceptional experience for every client. Her advice to homebuyers: "Present your home in the very best light possible for the buyer. First impressions can make all the difference." Campbell is dedicated to exceeding expectations and ensuring client success in every transaction.



Ronnie Cancellieri, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Ronnie Cancellieri is a distinguished agent in Orange County's luxury real estate market, known for her deep community connections and extensive social network, which consistently create opportunities for buyers and sellers. With a strong background in sales and marketing, Cancellieri excels in negotiating complex deals, achieving record sales in Corona del Mar and Balboa Island. Her organizational skills, dedication, and 15 years of experience set her apart in the competitive luxury market. As a resident of Corona del Mar, Cancellieri is deeply invested in her community and actively supports numerous charitable organizations focused on women and children in need, including New Directions for Women, Orange County Rescue Mission, and Orangewood Children and Family Center. Clients who choose Cancellieri as their real estate advisor benefit from sharp business acumen with a genuine commitment to achieving their goals. As a member of Surterre Properties®, Cancellieri is part of a team that ensures exceptional service and results for every client.



Camilla Caremoli, Co-Founder

CasaDamí, Newport Beach

Camilla Caremoli is the co-founder and creative force behind CasaDamí, a European-inspired café and wine bar located in Newport Beach. With a deep appreciation for hospitality and design, Caremoli played an instrumental role in shaping CasaDamí's aesthetic, guest experience, and culinary identity. The concept—which blends elevated all-day café culture with a refined, globally inspired wine program—opened to immediate acclaim, earning a Forbes feature and, most recently, receiving the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. Under Caremoli's leadership, CasaDamí has quickly grown into a neighborhood favorite and destination restaurant, expanding service to include brunch, Golden Hour, and dinner seven days a week. As a young entrepreneur in one of the industry's most demanding categories, she brings a rare combination of creativity, discipline, and vision to her work. Caremoli's background in food spans generations, with a



family legacy in hospitality that informs her approach today: warm, intentional, and built on the belief that every detail—no matter how small—shapes the guest experience.

Sarah Carr, Vice President, Project Executive

McCarthy Building Companies, Inc., Newport Beach

As vice president, project executive at McCarthy Building Companies, Inc., Sarah Carr is focused on building strong relationships with clients and industry partners in the Southern California education market. Carr brings more than two decades of field and operations experience to her role, having held a variety of positions including vice president of business development, vice president of operations, project manager, assistant project manager, senior project engineer, and project engineer. Over the course of her 30-year career at McCarthy, Carr has played a key role in more than \$2 billion of work in Southern California, most of that being in the education market sector.



Erika Carson, Co-Founder

Bear Flag Fish Company, Newport Beach

Erika Carson is the co-founder of Bear Flag Fish Co., a family-run venture rooted in community and coastal culture. What began with a close-knit team of family and friends has since grown into a beloved Orange County staple. With nearly 20 years in business, the restaurant is known for its fresh seafood and loyal following—often with lines out the door and around the block. Despite Bear Flag's growth and acclaim, Carson remains deeply involved in the day-to-day operations, all while balancing life as a devoted wife and mother. She is admired by her team and community for her leadership, warmth, and commitment to excellence. Beyond her own success, Carson's commitment to her career and the Newport Beach community is evident through her dedication to sustainability and active involvement in local initiatives, leaving a lasting impact on both her industry and hometown.



Brandy Casey, Founder & CEO

NuBella Med Spa, Irvine

Brandy Casey's experience as a registered nurse began with a focus on caring for cancer patients. After being employed by Hoag Hospital and Kaiser Permanente, she became certified in chemotherapy and in treating patients in the cardiac and neuro intensive care units. Since 2009, Casey simultaneously worked as an aesthetic nurse and is passionate about making people look and feel their best while embracing their natural beauty. In 2018, Casey founded NuBella Med Spa with a core focus of providing a talent development platform to empower students, nurses, and nurse practitioners within a positive outcome and patient-centric environment. As a woman entrepreneur she has built her business from the ground up and currently has four locations operating in two states—with plans to open several additional locations. Casey's goal for NuBella is to create a team of nurses that share her same core values and to support them as entrepreneurs.



Nancy Castenholz, Chief Operations Officer

Innovative Light Designs, Orange

As the 11th of 16 children growing up in a 1,000-square-foot-home, Castenholz was the first to attend college and begin a professional career as a business consultant. After a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Clerkship, Castenholz chose to work with companies of all sizes to not only expand their businesses but to build a signature, internal culture that rewards all peoples of varied backgrounds for their fine work and contributions. Recognizing staff at all levels is a key "ingredient" for the success of a company. Castenholz agrees with an anonymous quote: "The sign of true leadership is when a project is done, the people will say they did it themselves!" Castenholz joined Innovative Light Designs six years ago as their chief operations officer not only to elevate business stature and success in the marketplace but also to bring forth a culture of appreciation for all people. Since her arrival, the company has built out an additional division to their Holiday Lighting division that has won first place nationally twice for its design and installation of permanent outdoor landscape lighting, doubling the size of the business and its profits. The company has gained momentum in being known for providing elegance and beauty to all properties, in addition to safety and security. Just this year, Innovative Light Designs has also won another first-place national award for its Holiday Lighting Division. The company's success is definitely guided by all the greatest principles of good work, respect and integrity, while uplifting each other in day-to-day activities!



Rashmi Chaturvedi, Founder & President

Kaygen & UPTEMPO Careers, Irvine

Rashmi Chaturvedi is the co-founder and president of Kaygen, a global technology consulting and talent firm headquartered in Orange County, and the founder of UPTEMPO Careers, a fast-growing accelerator advancing women in STEM. Under her leadership, Kaygen achieved a 48% compound annual growth rate over five years, expanded into Asia-Pacific, and grew its workforce from 60 to more than 200 employees. The company partners with Fortune 500 clients to drive digital transformation through AI, cloud, data, and cybersecurity solutions. In 2024, Chaturvedi launched UPTEMPO Careers to close the STEM leadership gap by connecting companies with certified, job-ready women in data science, AI, and software engineering. UPTEMPO's model—StepUP, SkillUP, MatchUP—delivers mentorship, industry-aligned training, and direct access to talent, helping employers fast-track inclusive innovation. A former Disney executive with more than 25 years of experience, Chaturvedi has been recognized among the "Top 50 Women Leaders of Los Angeles" and "Top 25 Women-Owned Businesses in Orange County." Her mission: to build equity into the future of work—intentionally, inclusively, and boldly.





Together we win

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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Michelle Chien Krenzke, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Michelle Chien Krenzke is a real estate specialist known for her integrity, professionalism, and dedication to personalized service. An Irvine resident fluent in Mandarin and English, she treats her clients like family, always going the extra mile to meet their individual needs. Unlike agents who juggle large client lists, Krenzke focuses on providing exceptional care before, during, and after the real estate process, earning her countless repeat clients and lifelong friendships. Passionate about the real estate industry, Krenzke enjoys the opportunity to meet unique people daily. She takes great joy in helping clients find homes in Orange County's beautiful neighborhoods, particularly those near award-winning school districts.



Esther Cho, Partner-in-Charge, Southern California

Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP, Long Beach

Esther Cho is a partner at Stradley Ronon and serves on the firm's board of directors. As partner-in-charge of the Southern California office and co-chair of the Financial Services Litigation and Enforcement practice, she plays a key role in shaping the firm's strategy and culture. Stradley Ronon is a full-service law firm with more than 200 lawyers across nine offices nationwide. Cho led the launch of the Southern California office in April 2024, bringing with her a team of 10 lawyers and business professionals. She continues to drive the firm's West Coast expansion, building momentum while fostering a collaborative and inclusive workplace culture. With more than two decades of experience, Cho advises clients on complex securities, financial services, and employment disputes. She is a seasoned litigator who has represented leading financial services firms in hundreds of matters across courts and arbitration forums. Cho is known for her client-first mindset, creative litigation strategy, and success in high-stakes matters. Beyond her legal practice, Cho mentors women lawyers and creates pathways for diverse teams to lead and thrive.



Taylor Clarke, Owner & CEO

Amborella Organics, San Clemente

Taylor Clarke is the co-founder and CEO of Amborella Organics, a pioneering organic candy company transforming the confectionery industry with sustainable, plantable lollipops. Based in San Clemente, Amborella Organics blends natural ingredients with a mission-driven ethos—each lollipop stick contains heirloom seeds, encouraging consumers to plant and grow herbs or flowers after enjoying their treat. Under Clarke's leadership, the company has expanded from a grassroots startup into a nationally recognized brand, featured in outlets like Forbes, BuzzFeed, and The Today Show. Amborella products are now carried by major retailers and boutiques across the United States, with distribution channels steadily growing each year. With a lean but passionate team, Clarke has driven consistent year-over-year revenue growth while maintaining an unwavering commitment to sustainability, design, and social impact. Her vision has not only positioned Amborella Organics at the forefront of eco-conscious confections but also inspired a new generation of entrepreneurs to innovate with purpose.



Meghan Clem, Co-Founder & CEO

Intertwined Inc. & RAD Camp, Irvine

With more than 20 years of experience in hospitality, events, and marketing, Meghan Clem has redefined luxury hospitality through strategic vision and expert execution. As co-founder of Intertwined Inc., she leads large-scale corporate events, conferences, grand openings, retreats, and milestone celebrations with unmatched attention to detail and strong project management. Clem also specializes in social media strategy, nonprofit consulting, and digital branding, helping clients build powerful narratives and lasting audience connections. She began her career after earning a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of Southern California, working as an event planner and public information specialist for the city of Anaheim. Her ability to communicate clearly, lead teams, and deliver polished, impactful experiences has made her a trusted partner in the industry. In addition to Intertwined Inc., Clem co-founded RAD Camp, a nonprofit that provides inclusive, life-changing experiences for individuals with developmental disabilities. Her work blends purpose, creativity, and results.



Shiree Colton, Supervising Office Manager

Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs, Santa Ana

Since joining the Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs (AOCDS) in February 1994, Shiree Colton has proudly served in various roles, including secretary, executive project manager, executive assistant, and office manager. Over three decades, she has supported AOCDS leadership, coordinated major events, and championed causes that honor the law enforcement community. She oversees all AOCDS events, including the annual Member Appreciation Angels Game, the Christmas Party, and the Retirement Celebration. Colton works directly with the AOCDS president and executive director, attending all board meetings and contributing to key organizational initiatives. Family and service are at the heart of everything she does. She is married to a retired Orange County sheriff's deputy, and her family includes a son, a firefighter for the city of Orange, and a stepdaughter. Colton has met countless incredible people throughout her time at AOCDS and remains deeply committed to this journey in service to the AOCDS members and community.



Keelin Conant, Senior Solutions Advisor

Alvaka, Irvine

Keelin Conant is the senior solutions advisor and head of growth for managed services at Alvaka, a Southern California tech firm known for its 24/7 IT support, ransomware

restoration, and proactive network hardening solutions. With more than 25 years in the tech industry, Conant leads strategic growth efforts that are modernizing how organizations prevent breaches and protect their critical systems. Her leadership has helped expand Alvaka's managed services division, guiding clients to shift from reactive to proactive cybersecurity postures. She blends technical fluency with business strategy to deliver solutions that build trust and drive long-term value. Outside of her corporate role, Conant is the author of *The Tech Carnival* and founder of *CyberSoul*, a platform and podcast focused on human-centered cybersecurity leadership. A recognized voice in the industry and active Orange County community member, she was recently featured as a Woman of the Week by Women of the Channel for her innovation and leadership in tech.



Cyndi Court, CEO

TGR Foundation, Irvine

Cyndi Court is the CEO of Tiger Woods' education nonprofit, TGR Foundation. Headquartered in Irvine, California, TGR Foundation operates the flagship TGR Learning Lab in Anaheim, CA, serving more than 10,000 students from under-resourced communities annually through free programs designed to help them discover their passions, build transferable skills, and prepare for their futures. TGR Foundation has served more than 200,000 students in Orange County and beyond since opening the Learning Lab in 2006. Since joining the foundation in 2022, Court has led the organization in its mission to empower students to pursue their passions through education and growing its footprint and impact to reach more students from under-resourced communities. TGR Foundation opened its second Learning Lab in Philadelphia on April 1, 2025, and recently announced a new location in Augusta, Georgia, in partnership with Augusta National Golf Club. Its Los Angeles location is scheduled to open at Lulu's Place in early 2027. In 2026, the Foundation will celebrate 30 years of impact since its inception by Tiger Woods and his parents, Earl and Tida Woods.



Alice Cowell, Founder & CEO

ReFresh Talent Agency, Irvine

Alice Kim Cowell is the founder and CEO of ReFresh Talent Agency, a woman-and minority-owned boutique agency based in Irvine, California. Since launching the agency over a decade ago, Cowell has grown ReFresh Talent into a trusted partner for many of Orange County's most recognized brands, providing talent for print, commercial, and live event activations across industries such as beauty, wellness, technology, and consumer goods. ReFresh Talent represents a diverse roster of more than 100 independent models and talent. What sets the agency apart is its hyperlocal mission: to connect OC-based talent with OC-based companies, building authentic, community-rooted collaborations that reflect the region's creativity and diversity. Under Cowell's leadership, ReFresh Talent has expanded its presence throughout all of California while staying grounded in Orange County. She is especially proud of the agency's alignment with nonprofit organizations and women-centered initiatives—supporting projects that promote clean brands, elevate women, and bring heart, purpose, and representation to every partnership. Cowell continues to lead ReFresh Talent Agency with a deep commitment to community, inclusion, and creative excellence.



Kristin Daher, Founder & CEO

Powerhouse + Co., Orange

Since founding Powerhouse + Co. in 2015, Kristin Daher has advanced its standing as one of Orange County's premier agencies by highlighting innovation, thought leadership, and entrepreneurship. She continues to reimagine the firm's approach to PR and influencer and social media programs to tell powerful client stories. Daher has redefined what it means for Powerhouse + Co. to be sought for its industry expertise, recognizing the agency could accelerate client growth by leveraging generalist PR knowhow and wide-ranging communications proficiencies to engage with new clients in unique sectors, including technology, SAAS, and nonprofit. This shift yielded the most diverse client roster in company history, plus impressive revenue growth. Beyond growing the agency, Daher has fostered a transformative culture defined by creativity, development, and achievement. In many ways, she has molded Powerhouse in her own likeness. It's an upbeat, innovative, high-energy workplace where team meetings yield productivity and laughs, unique personalities are always welcome, and collaboration is ubiquitous. With Daher at the helm, Powerhouse + Co. is a dynamic organization that's greater and more impactful than the sum of its individual parts.



Roxana Davidoff, Founder & CEO

Big Purple Dot, Irvine

Roxana Davidoff is the founder and CEO of Big Purple Dot, an Orange County based software company that is redefining CRM and marketing automation for mortgage and real estate professionals nationwide. Since founding the company in 2012, Davidoff has grown Big Purple Dot into a leading technology solution, now serving thousands of users with advanced tools for lead management, video messaging, recruiting, and real-time market intelligence. Under her leadership, the company has maintained consistent growth and recently introduced groundbreaking tools like "Opportunities by BPD" and SMS/MMS group texting—delivering communication and collaboration features never before available in this space. Big Purple Dot currently employs approximately 25–30 professionals and generates estimated annual revenues of more than \$2.6 million. Davidoff was named a 2023 Woman of Influence by HousingWire for her visionary leadership in mortgage tech. Her commitment to innovation, empowerment, and operational excellence continues to shape the future of real estate marketing and automation tools.





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Wells Fargo is a proud sponsor of the Orange County Business Journal 2025 Women in Business Awards. We congratulate this year's nominees and salute their commitment to excellence.

Colin Craver

colin.craver@wellsfargo.com

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Carol DeNembo, CMO

Mountain Mike's Pizza, LLC, Irvine

Carol DeNembo is the chief marketing officer for Mountain Mike's Pizza, a leading family-style pizza chain known for its legendary crispy, curly pepperoni and Mountain-sized pizzas. When the brand was acquired in 2017, and operations moved from Northern California to Newport Beach, DeNembo was hired to round out the impressive leadership team. Today, she leads systemwide marketing initiatives and oversees new franchise development strategy, providing vision and direction as Mountain Mike's expands throughout the country. DeNembo delivers impactful initiatives that fuel and sustain brand growth. She deploys a modern marketing approach that keeps the legacy chain atop the highly competitive pizza segment. A seasoned marketing powerhouse, DeNembo drives Mountain Mike's brand visibility and awareness through professional sports partnerships, thoughtful menu innovation, and successful app and digital conversion strategies. Her marketing innovations have been vital in supporting Mountain Mike's as the brand grows nationwide.



Hema Dey, CEO & CTO

Iffel International Inc., Anaheim

Hema Dey is the founder and CEO of Iffel International, a strategic marketing firm specializing in AI-powered SEO, sales enablement, and international business development. Headquartered in Southern California, Iffel International serves mid-sized companies across the United States and globally in sectors such as healthcare, legal, technology, and manufacturing. Dey is the creator of the AI SEO2Sales™ methodology, a proprietary framework that links AI-driven search visibility with measurable revenue outcomes. She is a pioneer in optimizing company presence for large language model (LLM) platforms, including Google AI Mode, ChatGPT, and other AI-powered search technologies—a crucial edge in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape. Under her leadership, Iffel International has experienced consistent growth and recently launched an AI-powered business development call center to help clients scale lead generation and improve conversion. In 2013, Dey was honored as a World Class New Zealander for her work helping New Zealand tech companies succeed globally. Her purpose-driven mission is to grow businesses in ways that create jobs and help families thrive.



Elise Diaz, Wealth Management Advisor

Northwestern Mutual-Orange County, Irvine

Elise Diaz is a financial advisor with expertise in tax efficiency, risk management, retirement planning, investment strategy, and wealth preservation and distribution. Diaz works with clients across many different industries but specializes in working with breadwinning women, tech professionals, and women in sales or who own businesses. Diaz and her team work with clients in an end-to-end planning experience driven by the client's goals and desired financial outcomes. She sees financial empowerment as a key component of her work and helps clients, especially women, build confidence in their financial lives and futures, enabling them to stress less and live more.



Deborah Dickson, Managing Partner

Smith Dickson Certified Public Accountants, LLP, Irvine

From her beginnings as one of the few women working at the "Big 8" CPA firms, Deborah Dickson, CPA, CFE, CFF, MAFF, progressed to form Smith Dickson Certified Public Accountants, LLP in 1982. Dickson remains the only woman to found and manage a "Top Accounting Firm" in Orange County (ranked by the OCJB). In the process, Dickson has carved out a niche specialty, a forensic CPA litigation support practice, in a tough and competitive field. She has shaped this into one of the most well-known and highly respected forensic CPA and expert witness accounting teams in California. The firm works with leading national and boutique law firms, attesting to Smith Dickson's expertise and success in this field. Dickson has earned CFE (Certified Fraud Examiner), CFF (Certified in Financial Forensics and MAFF) designations, which are important qualifications for leaders in the forensics CPAs throughout the USA.



Samantha Dorey, Co-Founder & Partner

Everett Dorey LLP, Irvine

Samantha Dorey is a founding partner of Everett Dorey LLP, a full-service civil litigation firm that represents multinational corporations, public agencies and entities, and private clients in all aspects of litigation. Dorey specializes in complex civil litigation, with a focus on catastrophic injury, public entity defense, employment law, mass torts, and environmental law. She also provides strategic counsel on non-litigation matters, including the development of risk management protocols and procedures. As the co-founder of one of California's leading litigation firms and frequently retained as trial counsel in complex, high-stakes cases, Dorey has built a team of exceptionally skilled litigators. She has prioritized cultivating a diverse and inclusive firm culture, with an emphasis on empowering women in the legal profession. Beyond her litigation practice, Dorey has authored numerous articles, served on boards for the Public Law Center and Orange County Lavender Bar Association, and taught courses as an adjunct professor at Chapman University.



Tamara Dorman & Hanna Dorman Prokop, Co-Founders

BÄBEN, Laguna Beach

BÄBEN is a women's swimwear and lifestyle brand rooted in timeless style, meaningful details, and eclectic sensibility. Founded from a desire to live in freedom, BÄBEN designs versatile pieces that move effortlessly from the beach to the streets. With bikinis, board

shorts, and apparel that are both sporty and feminine, the brand celebrates women's strength, beauty, and individuality. Designed in Laguna Beach and made in Los Angeles, each collection is crafted with the softest, highest-quality recycled fabrics. BÄBEN swimwear is made from 100% GRS-certified recycled nylon, meeting OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100 and High Index certifications, and offering 50+ UV protection—sustainable, durable, and buttery soft. Founded in 2021 by mother-daughter duo Tamara Dorman and Hanna Dorman Prokop, BÄBEN reflects their shared vision of empowering women through design. Prokop earned her BFA in fashion design from Otis College of Art and Design and refined her craft in New York at luxury brands Coach and Ralph Lauren. Dorman, a USC graduate and longtime residential realtor, brings business expertise and perspective. Together, they infuse every collection with love, freedom, and strength.



Sarah Downing, Financial Advisor & Growth and Development Director

Northwestern Mutual, Irvine

Sarah Downing is a dynamic financial advisor and growth and development director at Northwestern Mutual, a nationally recognized financial services firm specializing in insurance, investment, and wealth management solutions. Since joining the company in 2021, Downing has made a significant impact—beginning as a financial representative and quickly advancing to field director before taking on her current leadership role in 2025. In her dual capacity, Downing leads business development and advisor training initiatives in the Orange County offices, playing a key role in the firm's regional expansion and talent acquisition strategy. She is passionate about developing new advisors, helping them build successful practices while delivering comprehensive financial planning solutions to clients. Her leadership has contributed to team growth, improved client engagement, and strengthened Northwestern Mutual's community presence. Known for her strategic mindset and mentorship-driven approach, Downing is a trusted leader committed to cultivating excellence and driving sustainable success within the financial services industry.



Christa Duggan, Co-Founder & COO

Stone Groove Stillhouse, Portola Coffee Roasters, Anaheim

Christa Duggan is a trailblazing entrepreneur and co-founder of some of Orange County's most celebrated beverage concepts—all while raising three children. Alongside her husband, Jeff, she launched Portola Coffee Roasters in 2011, bringing an unprecedented level of craft and transparency to the local coffee scene. The brand earned national recognition, including Roast Magazine's "Roaster of the Year" and Imbibe Magazine's "75 People to Watch." The duo went on to create Theorem by Portola, a forward-thinking coffee concept that blurred the line between barista and mixologist with innovations like barrel-aged coffee Old Fashioneds and liquid nitrogen affogatos. Today, Duggan is redefining the spirits industry with Stone Groove Stillhouse—the world's first audio stillhouse. Located in Anaheim's historic MAKE Building, it uses a proprietary Musically Mastered™ process that infuses spirits with genre-specific sonic energy, creating uniquely expressive flavor profiles. From Jazz Fusion Single Malts to Classic Rock Ryes, Duggan continues to lead with creativity, passion, and an unrelenting drive to push boundaries in craft beverage culture.



Kristle Duran, COO

Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast, Irvine

Kristle Duran is chief operations officer at Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast, where she oversees all direct service models, ensuring program quality, nurturing stakeholder relationships, and driving long-term growth. Since joining in 2013, she has aligned organizational development with execution strategies and played a pivotal leadership role in four major mergers. Under her guidance, the Club expanded from a single-serving nonprofit to an eight-city powerhouse serving more than 12,000 Orange County youth annually. Most recently, she orchestrated the merger of three separate Clubs spanning eight cities and a separate nonprofit organization, Youth Employment Services, which has doubled their impact in just two years and has equipped Orange County businesses across multiple sectors with job-ready talent. An executive MBA graduate from Chapman University, with a bachelor's in literary journalism from UCI, Duran also founded the "Women of Greatness" giving circle and its Brunch & Bubbly fundraiser in 2017, raising nearly \$500,000 to date and amplifying women philanthropists throughout the community.



Marina Dutton, General Manager

Irvine Marriott, Irvine

Marina Dutton serves as general manager of the Irvine Marriott, a premier corporate hotel and market leader in Orange County. With more than two decades of hospitality experience, Dutton is recognized for revitalizing hotel performance, inspiring high-performing teams, and driving strategic innovation. Prior to her current role, she held executive leadership positions at iconic properties including Balboa Bay Resort, Costa Mesa Marriott, and Hilton Santa Cruz, earning accolades such as "Best Hotel in Newport Beach" and HEI's "Hotel of the Year." Under Dutton's leadership, properties have achieved record profitability, guest satisfaction, and employee engagement. She is deeply involved in shaping the industry's future through her role on the board of directors for the California Hotel & Lodging Association (CHLA) and as a board member for Destination Irvine, promoting tourism and economic development. A passionate advocate for women in leadership, Dutton's career is marked by vision, grit, and a people-first approach that continues to elevate the Southern California hospitality landscape.



Congratulations, Caroline Pereira

2025 Women in Business Awards Nominee



Caroline A. Pereira, MBA, President, Hoag Hospital Foundation

Caroline, your leadership at the Hoag Hospital Foundation is driving philanthropy that transforms Hoag and supports advanced healthcare for our community.

We recognize all the trailblazing women honored this year for their vision and impact in our business community. Your dedication empowers us all.

hoag. Hospital
Foundation

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Alison Edwards, CEO

Groundswell, Santa Ana

In a year when diversity, equity, and inclusion have faced mounting political and cultural pushback, Alison Edwards' leadership at Groundswell has been a beacon of progress and purpose. As CEO of the organization formerly known as the OC Human Relations Council, Edwards continues to create pathways for honest dialogues and conversations, stronger communities, and deeper understanding across differences. Her work is essential to helping people move beyond division and build trust and empathy with one another—no matter the circumstance. Edwards has dedicated more than 25 years to the organization, serving in various roles from program director of the BRIDGES school-based program to deputy director before being named CEO in 2017. Within the last few years, she led the organization through a transformative rebrand to Groundswell, with the goal being to make its mission and services more accessible to a wider audience. This newly updated identity reflects the organization's continued evolution as it grows its programs, deepens its impact, and expands beyond Orange County.



Pamela Estes, CEO

Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach, Laguna Beach

Pamela Estes joined the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach team in 2001 and has led as CEO since 2008. Her mantra is "do whatever it takes to help kids thrive." She led the organization to exponential growth in impact and revenue. She built a team of 72 youth development professionals who now serve more than 4,000 kids. Estes is forward facing and leads authentically with transparency, empathy, humor, and humility. She is an avid advocate for the mental health and wellness of young people and the powerful ROI of building resilience and protective factors in youth. People know that they can trust her and count on her to find a way to make things happen. Her every decision is based on what sustains and propels the purpose of the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach, to promote the healthy social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of young people.



Jami Eidsvold, Founder & CEO

Smarty Social Media, Orange

Jami Eidsvold is the founder and CEO of Smarty Social Media, a social-first agency specializing in healthcare and medtech marketing. Since launching in 2013, she has grown Smarty from a solo consultancy into a 30-plus-person powerhouse serving leading brands like Invisalign, Allergan Aesthetics, and Treace Medical. Under her leadership, the agency has expanded its capabilities into performance marketing, influencer strategy, and training through its proprietary Social Academy program. In 2024, Smarty opened its new headquarters in Old Towne Orange, featuring The Social Space—a creative event and production facility designed to serve both clients and the broader creative community. Smarty's growth has been recognized nationally with multiple appearances on the Inc. 5000 list, including 206% revenue growth in 2024, and honors such as MM+M's Agency 100 "One to Watch" and Inc.'s Best in Business and Power Partner awards.



Jessica Estrada, CEO & Tax Practitioner

Spinnaker Tax Group, Newport Beach

Jessica Estrada is the CEO of Spinnaker Tax Group and a licensed U.S. tax practitioner with more than 20 years of professional experience in domestic and international tax strategy. A trusted advisor to individuals, entrepreneurs, and businesses, Estrada brings deep expertise, precision, and compassion to a field that often feels overwhelming to clients. Her career began at Deloitte Tax, where she earned her Enrolled Agent (EA) designation and built a foundation in high-level corporate and international tax consulting. Throughout her career, Estrada has provided comprehensive compliance and advisory services, specializing in IRS audits, tax notices, prior return examinations, and small business strategy. She is known for helping clients navigate complex tax matters with clarity and confidence, empowering them to make financially sound decisions. Estrada also has extensive experience managing global mobility programs for multinational companies, offering tax consulting and compliance support for expatriates, foreign nationals, and international business travelers. As CEO of Spinnaker Tax Group, Estrada leads with innovation, integrity, and a client-first mindset. She's equally committed to giving back. Estrada currently serves as treasurer of the Golden State Ballet Foundation and spent seven years volunteering in leadership roles on her children's school boards—serving as vice president and treasurer of both Marvin Elementary PTF and Lewis Middle School PTF. Estrada is a leader who balances technical excellence with community heart, making her a standout in Orange County's business and nonprofit sectors.



Mona Elkebir, VP Commercial Operations

Planet Innovation, Irvine

Mona Elkebir is a highly accomplished senior commercial executive in the medical device sector, leading the commercialization of world-first, groundbreaking medtech products. She has driven innovative corporate growth strategies through her work at Planet Innovation and, previously, at BIT Group. Elkebir managed the successful merger of her previous company BIT with a competitor, Planet Innovation, in 2022 that has subsequently doubled her business' size. Over her tenure at both BIT and Planet Innovation, Elkebir helped grow revenue from a modest \$1.5 million to nearly \$100 million by attracting companies to develop and manufacture their products in Irvine. This growth is underpinned by Elkebir's leadership in developing and commercializing life-saving medical technologies. One example of her achievements includes the commercialization of a medtech device used in ER facilities to diagnose life-threatening diseases. She later enabled the deployment of this product in developing nations to save newborns at risk due to disease. Elkebir is also an active supporter of the Orange County community, holding board positions with the National Charity League and being involved with the University of California, Irvine.



Kathy Fallon, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

With more than 25 years of experience, Kathy Fallon is a trusted and dependable real estate professional, consistently delivering exceptional results for her clients. Recognized as a top agent with Surterre Properties®, Fallon was honored as a Real Estate All-Star by Orange Coast magazine in 2021 and 2022. A Newport Beach resident for more than 35 years, Fallon possesses an in-depth knowledge of the city's neighborhoods—from the Balboa Peninsula to Newport Coast—with a focus on East Bluff and the Bluffs, where she resides. She leverages technology and local expertise to stay current on property values, ensuring her clients receive the best possible price for their homes. Fallon is dedicated to providing a personalized and enjoyable real estate experience. She works closely with her clients, assisting with everything from organizing garage sales to offering trusted referrals and staging advice. Her commitment to service and passion for the community make her an invaluable asset in the Newport Beach market.



Lauren Ellermeyer, Co-Founder & President

Beyond Fifteen Communications, Inc., Irvine

Lauren Ellermeyer is the co-founder and president of Beyond Fifteen Communications, a nationally recognized public relations and digital marketing agency known for exceeding expectations and delivering measurable impact. Under her leadership, the agency has grown from a bold startup into a powerhouse firm with team members across the United States and a client base spanning healthcare, technology, consumer goods, energy, education, and more. With a strategic vision rooted in results, Ellermeyer has redefined the traditional agency model—transforming Beyond Fifteen into a full-service partner that seamlessly integrates earned, owned, paid, and shared media. As client needs have evolved, she has led the firm's expansion into digital strategy, performance marketing and data-driven campaigns. Respected for her business acumen, eye for emerging talent, and ability to stay ahead of industry trends, Ellermeyer has cultivated a culture of innovation, accountability, and excellence. Her work continues to shape the communications landscape while driving growth for clients and opportunity for the agency's nationwide team.



Roula Fawaz, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Roula Fawaz is a top real estate professional in Orange County, with more than 1,200 properties sold in her 30-plus-year career. Known for her expertise and strong reputation, she consistently outperforms her peers. Fawaz's background as an English kindergarten teacher in Lebanon helped her develop the patience, knowledge, and negotiating skills that make her an exceptional agent. Her goal is to ensure smooth transactions where everyone feels like a winner. Fawaz's personable, caring approach has earned her the trust of clients and agents alike. She is passionate about finding the perfect home for her clients and loves making their dreams reality. A top producer in the Orange County area, Fawaz's advice for buyers and sellers is, "Hire an agent who is accomplished, honest, has a good reputation, and with whom you feel at ease."



Chelsey Elliott, Director, Innovations & Life Sciences

PDS Health, Irvine

Chelsey Elliott is the director of emerging technologies and life sciences at PDS Health, where she leads innovation across clinical operations, digital transformation, and life sciences. With more than a decade of experience, she specializes in bringing advanced technologies—such as AI, IoT, and diagnostic platforms—from concept to enterprise-scale deployment. Her leadership has modernized legacy systems, enabled novel screening programs, and strengthened cross-functional partnerships with R&D, regulatory, and commercial teams. Elliott's background spans product management, IT service delivery, and clinical program strategy, consistently driving measurable outcomes for both business and patient care. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and is recognized for her human-centered, results-driven approach to healthcare innovation. Her work has earned multiple honors, including the XP Platinum Award and OneOC's Spirit of Volunteerism.



Bia Fernandes, Vice President

CPAClub, Irvine

Bia Fernandes is a vice president at CPAClub, a trailblazing accounting and advisory company based in Southern California. Founded in 2022, CPAClub blends Big Four expertise with a modern subscription model, offering public and private companies and accounting firms flexible, high-impact solutions. With a rapidly growing member base and a bold people-first culture, CPAClub is redefining how accounting and advisory services are delivered and experienced. A proud Brazilian American, UC Santa Barbara alum, and former PwC professional, Fernandes oversees business development and the member experience at CPAClub. Fernandes is the driving force behind Club 22™, a new private community of accounting and finance executives that sparks honest conversations on leadership, innovation, and transformation.



Estella Ferrera, President & CEO

Oggi's Sports|Brewhouse|Pizza, San Clemente

Estella Ferrera is the president and CEO of Oggi's Pizza & Brewing Co. Born in Huntington



THE ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFFS IS PLEASED TO HONOR SHIREE COLTON FOR HER 31 YEARS WITH OUR ASSOCIATION. SHIREE'S BUSINESS LEADERSHIP, DEVOTION, AND STRONG ADVOCACY HAVE HELPED COUNTLESS LAW ENFORCEMENT PEACE OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.



**2025 WOMEN IN
BUSINESS NOMINEE**

Shiree Colton

CONGRATULATIONS!

**WE'RE ALL SO PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
AND YOUR NOMINATION AS A 2025 WOMEN IN
BUSINESS CANDIDATE.**

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Beach, Ferrera's family later opened a restaurant franchise in Del Mar, San Diego where she began working at age 13. After earning a business marketing degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, she began her career at Pacific Bell, earning President's Club honors her first year. In 2001, she joined the family business as director of marketing, leading its rebrand to Oggi's Pizza & Brewing Co. and forming key sports partnerships with teams like the Padres, Chargers, Ducks, Phoenix Coyotes, Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, and now Angels and Aztecs. While earning her MBA in entrepreneurship from San Diego State University through night classes, Ferrera helped grow the franchise to 16 locations with continuous updating of the Oggi's brand and launching a fast-casual Oggi's Pizza Express concept. During COVID, she successfully led efforts to support franchisees, keeping all 16 locations open and profitable. Following the passing of her father, best friend, and mentor in 2023, Ferrera assumed full leadership of the company. Now three years into her role as president and CEO, she is focused on renewed growth, with Oggi's poised to expand once again.



Maria Liberati Ferris, CEO

Beverly's Bakery, Fullerton

Maria Liberati Ferris has a rich family history of hard work and contributing to the American job market. Her Abruzzese Italian great-grandfather and grandfather traveled between Italy and the United States in the early 20th century to create opportunities for their family. In 1970, President Nixon signed an order allowing Ferris' mother to bring her young family to the U.S., and they immigrated that year. Despite language barriers, Ferris' family worked tirelessly to build their American Dream. She quickly became a vital asset, translating documents and negotiating lease contracts for apartment units her parents acquired through hard work and savings. This strong work ethic propelled her to earn a master's degree in international business. Fluent in three languages, Ferris traveled internationally for the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) before launching several businesses, including Abruzzo Imports and Bell'Aburzzo Pastificio. She has always integrated her Italian heritage with her entrepreneurial spirit to strengthen her community. In 2019, Ferris purchased Beverly's Bakery in Fullerton and restored it to its former glory as Orange County's premier wedding and dessert bakery. She also launched Maria's Italian Desserts to complement Beverly's offerings. Over the past six years, Ferris has revitalized Beverly's Bakery, launched Maria's Italian Desserts, and preserved an Orange County icon. She continues to provide jobs and delicious desserts to the community, embodying her belief that "Everyone remembers the cake."



Becky Firey, Executive Director

American Red Cross of Orange County, Santa Ana

For nearly 20 years, Becky Firey has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the mission of the American Red Cross—a humanitarian organization that shelters, feeds, and provides comfort to people affected by disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members, and their families. Since 2020, Firey has served as the executive director of the Orange County Chapter, where her leadership has been instrumental in advancing the organization's impact. Her Red Cross journey began in Biomedical Services, where she established vital partnerships for community blood drives in San Diego. She later ascended to the role of donor resources development training manager for Southern California. Prior to her current role as executive director, Firey served as district manager, launching the Aztecs for Life and Celebration of Heroes blood drives—the largest of their kind in California. Firey's strategic vision and passion for service have significantly advanced the Red Cross mission in Orange County and beyond.



Maureen Flanagan, Managing Director

JPMorgan, Newport Beach

As a co-founder of FGF Partners, Maureen Flanagan provides integrated planning, investing, and wealth strategies to individuals and families, helping them pursue their goals with greater confidence. She advises a broad range of women clients who hail from varied backgrounds. Many are business owners, executives, and professionals. Others have undergone a significant transition in their lives, such as the death of a loved one, a divorce, or an inheritance. To each of these relationships, Flanagan offers the knowledge she has refined over forty years, as well as an empathetic perspective that supports clients in weighing their options and pursuing informed decisions. Flanagan and her team of nine manage \$1.2 billion in assets.



Teressa Foglia, Founder

Teressa Foglia, Laguna Beach

An avid hat lover her entire life, Teressa Foglia took a hat-making course for fun while she was in Europe in the summer of 2016, and it led her to switch careers entirely. After strangers started asking to purchase hats right off her head, she knew she had something special. She designed her first collection in New York City in 2017 while simultaneously setting up shop in Sunset Park, opening the first Teressa Foglia creative studio in December 2017. Now, we are creating Big Hat Magic in our three experiential retail locations across California and Texas.



Nazy Fouladirad, President & COO

Tevora, Irvine

Nazy Fouladirad is president, COO, and co-founder of Tevora, a leading cybersecurity consulting firm headquartered in Irvine. Tevora helps enterprises secure their data and

achieve compliance through dedicated support to chief information security officers and other security and compliance leads. Under Fouladirad's leadership, the company has grown to serve more than 1,000 clients nationwide and continues to expand its influence. In 2023, Fouladirad co-founded a second company, MightyID, a breakthrough identity and access management (IAM) resilience platform that offers backup and recovery, migration, and failover capabilities for enterprise IAM systems. This innovative product is transforming companies' ability to protect their critical technical infrastructure from cyberattacks and unexpected downtime. Through Tevora and MightyID, Fouladirad contributes to a high-demand industry, which is critical to individual data privacy and national security.



Carrie Freitas, Founder & CEO

KTM Agency, Newport Beach

Carrie Freitas has established a reputation as the region's go-to consumer public relations pro, with more than 30 years of experience working with major brands including Nintendo, Pepsi, Ford, Pizza Hut, Quaker Oats, Target, Nestle, and more. After earning her stripes at multinational firms such as Edelman and Golin, she launched her own consultancy and is credited with introducing the application of PR to Orange County's luxury real estate market in 2000. She is the founder of KTM Agency and continues to be a driving force for the full-service marketing, PR, and creative agency that last year secured more than 815 media placements across top-tier publications and prime-time TV and generated more than 1.9 billion impressions for its clients. Freitas is also a powerful community advocate who leads workshops on branding and marketing for nonprofits and serves as a board member of the OC Press Club to support a thriving local news ecosystem.



Jennifer Friend, CEO

Project Hope Alliance, Costa Mesa

Jennifer Friend, J.D., is a champion for kids and families experiencing homelessness and a visionary, strategic business leader. Serving as CEO of Project Hope Alliance (PHA) is her passion, purpose, and calling. Friend became PHA's first CEO in 2013 after serving on the board of directors for many years and leaving her lucrative career as a trial attorney. At the time, PHA supported one school and 65 students experiencing homelessness. Under her leadership, PHA now serves 400 children and youth experiencing homelessness, as well as their immediate family members totaling 1,100 annually across three school districts and one charter school system in Orange County through its site-based model of care. The organization's revenue has increased by 270%, and the team has grown to 31 full-time staff members dedicated to ending the cycle of homelessness. Friend and PHA have built a nationally recognized model for ending the cycle of youth homelessness, achieving a high school graduation rate more than 30% above the national average and reducing the likelihood that these youth will experience homelessness as adults by 400%.



Lauren Gage, Founder & Financial Advisor

Selah Portfolios & Planning, Costa Mesa

Lauren Gage is the founder and lead financial advisor of Selah Portfolios & Planning, a thriving boutique financial planning firm based in Newport Beach. A devoted mother of four, Gage launched Selah in 2019 with a vision: to create a firm where individuals and families could receive deeply personalized, values-based financial guidance without confusion or pressure. Since its founding, Selah has grown steadily under Gage's leadership. The firm now manages more than \$25 million in client assets and serves a growing base of individuals, families, and small business owners throughout Southern California and beyond. Guided by clarity and lasting relationships, Selah helps clients plan for retirement, manage investments, and navigate tax, estate, and business transitions with confidence. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Gage is passionate about community impact. Selah is currently preparing a blood drive in partnership with the American Red Cross—reflecting Gage's belief that true success includes giving back. Through it all, she remains grounded in Selah's mission: to provide peace of mind for confidence—in life, in finances, and in the future.



Kelly Galligan, Equity Partner

Rutan & Tucker, LLP, Irvine

Kelly Lucinda Galligan is an equity partner at Rutan & Tucker, Orange County's largest full-service law firm. A leader in the firm's mergers and acquisitions practice, Galligan represents founder-led companies in transformative transactions ranging from \$5 million to \$500 million. She also serves as outside general counsel to private companies across industries including private equity, beauty, food and beverage, and manufacturing. Named one of the American Bar Association's "Top 40 On the Rise" Lawyers in America, Galligan is equally committed to community leadership. She has served as president of Project Youth OCBF, which supports at-risk youth in Orange County, and held leadership roles as president of both the Orange County Women Lawyers Association and its philanthropic foundation. Galligan currently chairs the Orange County Bar Association Charitable Fund Golf Tournament and serves on the board of the Newport Beach Foundation, which strengthens current and future civic leadership through education, research, and advocacy. Her work reflects a rare blend of professional excellence and meaningful community impact.



Carla Gatz, Senior Vice President of People & Culture

Action Property Management, Irvine

Action Property Management is the largest privately-owned homeowner association

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Stabilize families with critically-ill children by helping them battle bankruptcy, homelessness, hunger, and depression - so they can concentrate on fighting for their child's life.



CHANGE LIVES. Join 360° Miracle, a Miracles for Kids growing network of compassionate women working together to make a difference for the families of critically-ill children.

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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

management company in the west. They provide management services to homeowner associations ranging from master planned single and multi-family communities, luxury high-rise, mid-rise, new development, and hotel residential. Founded in 1984 and headquartered in Irvine, California, Action serves more than 350 communities throughout the state of California, and they have recently expanded into Texas, with plans to expand into other states as well. Their size enables them to match or exceed all the resources of the biggest, national companies while retaining the agility and flexibility of a local company. Their mission is to help people love where they live, and it propels everything they do as a company. Their deep commitment to customer service, employee development and to developing unique solutions to challenging problems has enabled them to grow at more than three times the industry average.



Meghan Glaspy, Managing Partner - Orange County

RMO LLP, Costa Mesa

Joining trust and estate litigation firm RMO LLP in 2021, Meghan Glaspy showed her leadership qualities from the outset and was tapped to lead the firm's Orange County office. Glaspy was named managing partner of RMO LLP's Orange County office, making her the first female partner in the firm's history. In her role, Glaspy has continued to raise her and the firm's profile both in Orange County and greater Southern California legal communities. Glaspy's practice is focused solely on handling contested trust, probate, and conservatorship matters. Representing beneficiaries, heirs, executors, trustees and fiduciaries, her clients are typically embroiled in inheritance disputes, trust contests, will contests, undue influence, and breach of fiduciary duty claims. Providing relief to those grieving the loss of a loved one or coming to the aid of a compromised individual, Glaspy manages family dysfunction while securing real-world results. Glaspy has also made significant contributions to the firm's practice through her leadership. Serving as managing partner of the Orange County office and as a part of the firm's practice management team, she leads the day-to-day operations of the office, leads and mentors a team of lawyers, paralegals, and support staff, handles and oversees casework, routinely appears in court, and heads the firm's business development efforts in the market.



Sue Grant, Founder & Volunteer CEO

The Literacy Project, Newport Beach

An impassioned visionary who has led a dynamic service-driven life, Sue Grant launched The Literacy Project in 2009. Setting out on a quest to eradicate illiteracy and empower underserved youth, the organization is a champion for educational advocacy, providing a comprehensive reading program at "no cost" to more than 11,000 students from low-income families in California and additional states. Committed to changing the narrative for youth who are struggling to master the basic skills of reading and writing through Grant's stewardship, The Literacy Project has secured more than \$6 million in funding. Their 30-hour program significantly improves children's reading abilities, with average skill improvements ranging from 76% to 129%. In addition, they have donated more than \$2 million dollars of reading games in support of 51,750 family members. This past year, The Literacy Project has doubled their operating budget, enabling them to add service in two new states, and more affordable housing communities and afterschool programs.



Anne Grey, President & CEO

Make-A-Wish Orange County and the Inland Empire, Irvine

Anne Grey is a trailblazing nonprofit leader who transforms vision into impact. In her first year as the new president and CEO of Make-A-Wish Orange County and the Inland Empire, the chapter increased revenue by 35%. Recognized for her visionary, mission-driven leadership, Grey has propelled the organization's growth through innovative fundraising strategies and powerful community partnerships. She leads a dedicated team of staff and volunteers committed to bringing hope and joy to children facing critical illnesses. Her team recently achieved the milestone of granting more than 8,400 life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses, setting new standards for innovation and compassion. Named one of the Orange County Register's Most Influential People in 2020, Grey's leadership is defined by bold ideas, meaningful partnerships, and a relentless drive to empower communities. A graduate of the University of San Diego and Pepperdine University Graziadio School of Business, she continues to inspire others to lead with purpose and create a legacy of impact.



Ivy Ha, Co-CEO

Kei Concepts, Huntington Beach

As co-CEO of Kei Concepts, Ivy Ha plays an instrumental role in leading one of Orange County's most forward-thinking and culturally dynamic restaurant groups. Headquartered in Little Saigon, Kei Concepts is recognized for its boundary-pushing culinary concepts, including SÚP Noodle Bar, VOX Kitchen, NEP Café, KIN Izakaya, INI Ristorante, and ROL Hand Roll Bar. Under Ha's leadership, the group has grown to more than 900 employees and continues to expand with both neighborhood favorites and destination-driven dining experiences. Her strategic mindset, commitment to community, and deep cultural insight have helped shape Kei Concepts into more than just a hospitality brand—it's a cultural platform where storytelling, innovation, and food intersect. Ha is passionate about empowering young talent, championing women in leadership, and fostering meaningful connections through hospitality. With an eye on both business growth and social impact, she continues to drive Kei's mission of bridging communities through the universal language of food.



Holly Hagler, President & CEO

Meals on Wheels Orange County, Anaheim

Holly Hagler is the president and CEO of Meals on Wheels Orange County, the largest nonprofit provider of nutrition and supportive services for at-risk older adults. Under her leadership, the organization serves nearly one million nutritious and medically tailored meals to more than 10,000 older adults each year. For more than 13 years, Hagler has been a passionate and visionary leader, advancing the organization's mission to nourish the wellness, purpose, and dignity of older adults, while addressing the root causes of hunger, isolation, and health disparities. She championed the launch of CHOICE, a program that gives clients more flexibility by offering culturally inclusive and health-specific meals tailored to individual dietary needs. As the number of older adults in Orange County continues to rise, Hagler has led the charge to meet the evolving needs of this community. She has expanded access to services such as home-delivered meals, Lunch Cafés, Adult Day Services, and Friendly Visitor programs. Her leadership continues to raise awareness of older adult hunger and loneliness at the local, state, and national levels.



Kaaren Hall, CEO

uDirect IRA Services LLC, Irvine

Kaaren Hall is the founder and CEO of uDirect IRA Services LLC, a leading provider of self-directed IRA accounts since 2009. With more than two decades of experience in real estate, mortgage lending, and property management—especially Self-Directed IRAs—Hall has empowered thousands to take control of their retirement funds and invest in alternative assets such as real estate, private lending, precious metals, and more. Her expertise in self-directed retirement accounts has made her a sought-after speaker, and she has been a featured panelist and presenter at industry-leading conferences, including BiggerPockets' BPCON22, 23, and 24. Hall is also the founder of OCREIA (Orange County Real Estate Investors Association), where she fosters a vibrant community of real estate investors through education and networking since 2012. Adding to her accolades, Hall is the author of the newly published *Self-Directed IRA Investing: A BiggerPockets Guide*, the definitive resource for investors looking to unlock the power of self-directed IRAs to build wealth. Published by BiggerPockets Publishing, this comprehensive guide combines actionable insights, real-world examples, and Hall's extensive industry knowledge to help investors confidently navigate the world of self-directed retirement accounts. Beyond her professional achievements, Hall's entrepreneurial journey has enabled her to support meaningful charitable giving and inspire others to take control of their financial futures. She also serves on the board of directors for The Council on Aging Southern California and the board for RITA (the Retirement Industry Trust Association), where she continues to advocate for transparency and education in the retirement industry.



Rebecca Hall, President & CEO

Idea Hall, Costa Mesa

Celebrating 22 years in business, Idea Hall continues to thrive as a nationally recognized, certified woman-owned creative communications agency rooted in Orange County. Under the visionary leadership of founder and CEO Rebecca Hall, the agency brings together branding, PR, marketing, and advertising under one roof—with a mission to champion good in both the local and national landscape. From shaping the public face of Orange County's most notable real estate firms to addressing pressing community issues like mental health and workforce development, Idea Hall delivers impact with purpose. Hall's commitment to culture and innovation has also made Idea Hall a magnet for top talent, cultivating a team-first environment where people and purpose lead. A trailblazer among female entrepreneurs in OC, Hall attributes her longevity to bold thinking, relationship-building, and always staying one step ahead.



Vicky Hammond, Managing Principal

Coreland Companies, Tustin

Vicky Hammond serves as managing principal at Tustin-based Coreland Companies, one of California's largest private commercial real estate service companies specializing in the leasing and property management of more than 12 million square feet of properties. In her role, she is the leading voice at the 35-year-old firm, directing more than 40 professionals and guiding company operations, client services, and corporate expansion. Coreland Companies' consistent performance under Hammond's leadership has led to continual year-to-year growth—more than doubling the company's portfolio size and revenue over the last decade. Coreland provides leasing and management services to institutional and private clients for varied retail destinations including grocery-anchored, neighborhood centers, main street retail, and power centers. Over the years, Hammond has also actively served the industry through volunteer roles with ICSC, the leading member organization for the retail commercial real estate industry. She has been recognized among GlobeSt.com's annual Retail Influencers and Women of Influence, Bisnow's Southern California Women Leading Real Estate, and the Los Angeles Times' Orange County CRE Visionaries.



Jane Haninger Martin, Director of Litigation and Risk

Trumark Homes, Newport Beach

Jane Haninger Martin brings more than 20 years of homebuilding industry experience in construction defect litigation, claims oversight, and legal operations to her role as director of litigation and risk at Trumark Homes. Based in Newport Beach, she is responsible for managing litigation and claims for all five of the company's divisions, including Southern California, Northern California, Central California, Colorado, and Icon Lending. Since joining the company in 2021, she has established and implemented litigation, insurance, safety, and records retention management





Creating a Generation of Financially *Fearless* Women

WISE equips women and girls with the tools and confidence to build lasting financial security. For more than 25 years, this Orange County-based nonprofit has helped females of all ages and backgrounds through mission-driven education. Our WISE Voices podcasts offer financial insights for every life stage, while webinars and workshops feature rock stars in finance who break down complex topics into actionable steps. Our Tearing Down the Pink Wall series connects university students with leaders in finance, inspiring future careers. All of our services are offered at no cost to the community. Help us expand our mission! Visit www.wiseinvestors.org to find out more.



UCI



Girl Scouts



Girls Inc.



Victoria Collins
Impact Award



Our Impact 2024 - 25

30

EVENTS

60

GUEST
SPEAKERS

150+

VOLUNTEERS

5000

VOLUNTEERS
HOURS

100K

NETWORK
REACH

2000+

WORKSHOP
PARTICIPANTS

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

systems, which have resulted in increased efficiency, proactivity, and safety, and improved documentation processes and compliance companywide. Her responsibilities also include leadership of key initiatives beyond traditional risk management, such as launching the company's first dedicated safety role and reinforcing a culture of proactive risk prevention. By spearheading the use of systems that create efficiencies and enable transparency, she has enhanced company security and communication amongst executives and team members who are now informed in real time about critical operational matters. Haninger Martin is an exemplary leader at Trumark Homes and contributes to its continued success.

Debbie Hansen-Bosse, Founder & CEO

The Flora May Foundation, San Clemente

Debbie Hansen-Bosse is the founder and CEO of The Flora May Foundation, a nonprofit based in Orange County that supports parents of struggling adolescents and empowers underserved women reentering the workforce through its award-winning program, Working Women Winning (WWW). Under Hansen-Bosse's leadership, the organization now serves 472 families annually, providing free services such as therapy, crisis intervention, parent support groups, and workforce training. Over the past eight years, The Flora May Foundation has evolved from a grassroots initiative into a respected multi-county operation with a team of 12 staff and interns. Notable accomplishments include the launch of its first commercial PSA on broadcast network in 2025, and countless personal awards from local and state agencies for thought leadership, community contributions, and leadership. Hansen-Bosse was named a 2025 Woman of Distinction by Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley, and a finalist for the 2025 Women of the Year by Assemblywoman Laurie Davies, further solidifying her impact and legacy in Orange County's nonprofit and business communities.



Lesley Harper, Associate Vice President & Client Leader

CannonDesign, Irvine

Lesley Harper has served for more than five years as an associate vice president and client leader at CannonDesign. She has managed a handful of influential projects such as the Gregory Bateson Building renovation—a historic office building that set the standard for sustainable design in the 1970s. Harper and her team completed the upgrade of the building, transforming it into a modern, LEED Platinum workplace. Harper is also managing the VA Spinal Cord Injury Community Living Center in San Diego and the Riverside University Health System, a public-private partnership project that will provide new emergency care, a medical office building, and a behavioral health hospital. Outside of her daily duties, Harper is an advisory board member to Open Hand Studio, CannonDesign's public interest design arm that partners with nonprofits to create a global impact. She was part of a team that restructured and reimaged what Open Hand Studio could accomplish. She now helps oversee future projects accepted within the program.



Theresa Henry, Founder & CEO

Quality Health Partners, Santa Ana

Theresa Henry is the founder and CEO of Quality Health Partners (QHP), a leading healthcare services organization dedicated to improving outcomes through preventive care and quality performance. Launched in 2019, QHP has quickly grown under Henry's leadership to serve hundreds of thousands of patients across California. The company partners with medical groups, health plans, and IPAs to deliver in-home assessments, Annual Wellness Visits, Well-Child visits, and mobile mammography services—designed to close care gaps and raise Star Ratings. With a team of more than 150 clinical and administrative professionals, QHP has built a reputation for innovation, agility, and culturally competent care. Notable milestones include launching a fleet of mobile health units, expanding into Central and Northern California.



Michelle Hensley, CEO

Nifty Package Co. Inc., Orange

Michelle Hensley has turned the art of gift-giving into a purpose-driven business. The idea for her business, Nifty Package Co., arrived when she needed it most. Her journey, from losing her husband to cancer to creating a heartfelt gifting business, has inspired many and provided an outlet to use her talents to spread joy. Hensley's diverse expertise lends itself to many worthy topics. Her journey blends business discipline with an understanding of the human spirit, making her a trusted voice in the field of gift-giving and building personal connections. What started as a purpose-filled endeavor in 2015 at the age of 51 blossomed into a poignant side-hustle success story—one gift at a time. Now, a full-fledged career, she curates gourmet gift baskets and provides luxury gift wrapping services that impresses even the most distinguished clientele and recipients! When Too-Faced Cosmetics called and asked for a large-scale gift-wrapping design, she was off and running! Nifty Package Co. offers luxury and corporate gifts and mobile gift wrapping services. Hensley's gift-wrapping clientele includes names like Warner Bros., Discovery, Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, Justin Bieber, Hailey Bieber, Meta, Van Cleef & Arpels, Mont Blanc, Hugo Boss, Versace, and Coach, and even the current White House administration as well as numerous homes and companies. Hensley revisited her earlier skills in the gifting industry, rekindling the entrepreneurial spirit that would allow her to run a business her way while raising kids. As a single parent, she provided for her family and expanded her horizons. She used her background in business and counseling (she has master's degrees in both) to evolve into a self-made professional. Her years as a counselor for those dealing with addiction and grief tapped into her superpowers of caring and support for others, which has manifested in a company that puts the passion for giving at the forefront.



Phoebe Hertz, Development Officer

Northwestern Mutual-Orange County, Irvine

Phoebe Hertz sits as the current development officer at Northwestern Mutual Orange County, where she serves as a driving force behind advisor development and business growth in Southern California. Known for her strategic insight and people-first leadership, Hertz plays a critical role in building and mentoring top-performing financial advisors and teams across Orange County. With a strong foundation in sales psychology, Hertz helps advisors and professional team members not only master technical skills but also understand client behavior, decision-making, and emotional drivers—accelerating both client trust and business growth. Hertz's efforts have contributed to the firm's local expansion, with her team surpassing recruitment and development goals for six consecutive years. Hertz's impact extends beyond metrics; she fosters a culture of empowerment, emotional intelligence, and long-term career vision. She has cultivated key community partnerships and positioned the Orange County office as a premier destination for purpose-driven professionals. Her work continues to shape the future of advisory services—blending psychological insight, strategic development, and a passion for helping others succeed.



Tracey Hill, CEO

Child Creativity Lab, Santa Ana

Tracey Hill is a dynamic leader with more than 20 years of experience as a marketing executive in the entertainment industry and a proven track record in nonprofit leadership. Since 2020, she has served as chief executive officer of Child Creativity Lab, a Santa Ana-based nonprofit dedicated to hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education for children. Under Hill's leadership, the organization has experienced transformative growth—tripling its annual budget, expanding staff from three to nine full-time employees, and increasing its reach from 5,000 to more than 25,000 children annually. Her ability to build strategic partnerships has led to collaborations with companies like Edwards Lifesciences, Southern California Edison, and Genesis Motor America, co-developing STEAM kits that connect classroom learning with real-world applications. She also led a major expansion of the board of directors, attracting leaders from top Orange County companies. In 2024, she was honored as Santa Ana's Outstanding Small NonProfit Businessperson of the Year for her visionary leadership and community impact.



Madelynn Hirneise, CEO

Families Forward, Irvine

Madelynn Hirneise is the chief executive officer of Families Forward, an organization that provides vital safety-net services to families experiencing homelessness in Orange County. For more than 40 years, Families Forward has helped families achieve lasting stability through housing and personalized supportive services, improving the lives of nearly 16,000 people in 2024. Under her leadership, the organization has evolved to meet the unique needs and challenges families have recently faced. This includes securing funding from CalOptima Health and the City of Tustin to build a brand-new affordable housing complex, as well as becoming the service provider for Orange's Valencia Garden community. Hirneise has been with Families Forward for more than a decade, starting as a housing resource specialist and later serving senior director before becoming CEO. Guided by compassion, innovative thinking, and a sharp strategic focus on prevention, Hirneise strives to see a world where every family has a home and the opportunity to thrive.



Amanda Ho, Co-Owner & CEO

Great Maple Restaurants, Irvine

Amanda Ho is the co-owner and CEO of Great Maple Restaurants, where she oversees brand development, operations, and growth strategy for the beloved modern American eatery. She holds dual degrees from Bryn Mawr College and Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts and brings well-rounded experience in both front- and back-of-house roles across freestanding restaurants and luxury hotels. In addition to her leadership at Great Maple, Ho has served as director of management recruitment for Brad Metzger Restaurant Solutions and as a client advisor at KitchenSync (formerly Vine Solutions), where she supported hospitality operators through financial challenges during the pandemic. Ho's passion for the restaurant industry began with her love of sports, where she learned the power of teamwork, competition, and leadership. Those values continue to shape her approach as a "coach" and builder of strong restaurant teams. She lives in Los Angeles with her chef husband, their sous-chef-in-training baby girl, budding food critic stepson, and outspoken pescatarian cat.



Poppy Holguin, Owner

Jan's Health Bar, Huntington Beach

In 2010, Poppy Holguin purchased the original Jan's Health Bar in Huntington Beach, a local institution founded in 1972. Since then, she has transformed the beloved eatery into a thriving fast casual brand with eight locations across Southern California. With a background in business and marketing, Holguin has led the company through steady, intentional growth—most recently expanding the brand outside of Orange County with openings in Long Beach and San Diego. Jan's Health Bar, known for its fresh, approachable menu of sandwiches, salads, and smoothies, continues to cultivate a loyal following rooted in wellness, community, and consistency. Holguin oversaw a major renovation of the flagship location, led the brand through its 50th anniversary in 2022, and continues to shape Jan's as a legacy brand for the modern health-conscious consumer. Her leadership has positioned Jan's Health Bar for long-term success, with a focus on thoughtful expansion and a commitment to balanced, feel-good nutrition.



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2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Anne Hoover, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Anne Hoover, a lifelong resident of Newport Beach, Corona del Mar, and Laguna Beach, offers unparalleled knowledge of local neighborhoods, including Lido Isle, Bayshores, Emerald Bay, and more. Since 1990, she has been a trusted real estate advisor, providing clients with invaluable insights into each area's unique characteristics. Over three decades, Hoover has set record-breaking sales prices and is known for her full-time, hands-on approach to real estate. Hoover joined Surterre Properties® at its inception in 2006 and has built a reputation for personalized service. She oversees every aspect of each transaction, ensuring clients receive expert guidance throughout. With a team of designers, contractors, and marketers, Hoover optimizes each property's value, ensuring maximum exposure through innovative marketing strategies and Surterre's in-house resources. A graduate of the USC Marshall School of Business, Hoover has served as president of the Newport Beach Association of REALTORS® and is a recipient of REALTOR® of the Year. Her diverse background and dedication to excellence make her a trusted professional for complex transactions.



Vanessa Howard, COO

South County Outreach, Irvine

For 21 years, Vanessa Howard dedicated her life to teaching students in underserved districts. But the circumstances these families faced—from a lack of food on the table to barely making rent each month—began to overshadow her passion for education. A deep empathy for her students led Howard to nonprofit leadership and, eventually, to South County Outreach (SCO), an organization providing the kind of support she wished her classroom families had years ago. As chief operating officer, she develops wraparound services that go beyond emergency support, helping families build the skills and resources they need for long-term stability. In addition to overseeing core operational functions, Howard also has direct oversight of key program areas including education, homeless prevention, and case management. This integration allows for a more holistic, aligned approach to service delivery. By unifying operations and programs under one leadership role, she is building a more responsive, streamlined infrastructure that will help SCO scale sustainably and meet the growing needs of the community.



Lisa Hsiao, Partner

Musick, Peeler, & Garrett LLP, Costa Mesa

Lisa Hsiao is a partner at Musick Peeler. She is a seasoned trial lawyer whose practice focuses on transportation, product liability, premises liability, real estate, and employment law. Hsiao handles tort-based litigation with a focus on product liability, commercial disputes, and transportation-related matters. Her strategic approach has consistently led to favorable outcomes through early resolution via mediation, successful dispositive and pre-trial motions, or in the courtroom at both jury and bench trials. In addition to her litigation work, Hsiao plays a key role in the firm's 24-hour Accident Investigation Team, which ensures that clients receive immediate legal support following an accident. By working with the team to preserve critical information at the earliest possible stage, Hsiao helps position clients for a strong legal defense even before a lawsuit is filed, providing a proactive approach to high-stakes, time-sensitive matters where early intervention can significantly impact the case trajectory.



Jessica Huang, Founder & CEO

Restaurant Marketing, Orange

Jessica Huang is a restaurant marketing strategist and storyteller with a passion for helping brands connect meaningfully with their audiences. As the founder of Restaurant Marketing, she brings a unique blend of creativity, analytics, and industry insight to every partnership. Huang has worked with leading brands like Yogurtland, Wood Ranch, and The Halal Guys to shape compelling narratives and execute high-impact digital strategies that drive real results. With a background rooted in both branding and performance marketing, Huang understands how to balance long-term vision with day-to-day metrics. Her holistic approach spans brand development, social media, website design, and experiential marketing—all tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within the restaurant space. What sets Huang apart is her ability to translate data into strategy, turning insights into action. Whether launching a new concept or revitalizing an established brand, she's a trusted partner for restaurants looking to grow with purpose in a competitive, ever-changing market.



Jessica Hung, Co-Founder & CEO

Parasol Co., Irvine

Jessica Hung is the co-founder and CEO of Parasol Co., a design-forward diaper company rooted in health, transparency, and maternal care. A first-generation immigrant from Taiwan, Hung built Parasol from the ground up, transforming her personal experiences into a globally resonant brand that empowers modern parents. What began as a small direct-to-consumer startup has since expanded into national retail, with Parasol now carried in more than 700 Target stores and slated to reach over 1,000 locations by year-end. The company has tripled revenue in the past year, doubled its email subscriber list, and maintains a 70% repurchase rate—reflecting deep customer trust. As a mother and business leader, Hung has traveled to 26 countries sourcing top-tier materials and studying cultural caregiving practices, creating truly inclusive, high-performing products. Parasol has also expanded internationally, launching distribution in Taiwan, Vietnam, and China to meet growing global demand.



Rina Hunter, COO

Kahana Feld LLP, Irvine

Since joining the law firm Kahana Feld as chief operating officer in 2024, Rina Hunter has been instrumental in driving the firm's remarkable growth from a 50-person firm with 25 attorneys to an AMLAW and National Law Journal 500 law firm with more than 140 attorneys and approximately 260 total employees. Since her tenure with the firm, Kahana Feld has experienced significant growth in revenue and expanded its geographic footprint by opening an additional four offices as it continues to scale its platform and deepen its presence in key markets. She is instrumental in the strategic growth plan of the firm. Under her leadership, the firm has built a strong operational foundation, enabling scalable and sustainable expansion. Hunter has curated and leads a high-performing operations team that oversees critical functions including people operations, IT, accounting, legal operations, training & development, workplace experience, marketing, recruitment, information governance, conflicts, procurement and expense management, and the firm's paralegal team.



Meymuna Hussein-Cattan, Founder & CEO

Tiyya Foundation, La Palma

Meymuna Hussein-Cattan is a refugee, social entrepreneur, and changemaker whose work bridges cultural heritage with economic empowerment. Born in an Ethiopian refugee camp in Somalia, Hussein-Cattan resettled in the U.S. at age three, growing up with firsthand knowledge of the emotional and systemic challenges displaced families face. These experiences laid the foundation for a lifelong commitment to ensuring that others seeking safety and belonging are met with dignity and opportunity. As founder and CEO of the Tiyya Foundation, she has spent more than 14 years advancing the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and low-income immigrants—filling the critical gap left when government assistance ends. Her innovative leadership has helped Tiyya serve nearly 1,000 individuals annually through programs offering community, housing, employment, and professional reintegration. In 2020, Hussein-Cattan expanded her impact by launching Flavors from Afar, a three-time Michelin Bib Gourmand-recognized restaurant and social enterprise in Los Angeles. The idea emerged from Tiyya's own community—refugees with incredible culinary talent but limited opportunity. Today, Flavors from Afar partners with refugee chefs from countries like Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan to showcase their traditional cuisines while offering dignified employment and supporting Tiyya's mission. Hussein-Cattan is a 2024 L'Oréal Paris Woman of Worth, a 2022 Top 10 CNN Hero, and a Causeartist Social Entrepreneur to Watch. Her leadership is rooted in resilience, equity, and cultural pride—values that continue to shape her journey as both a nonprofit founder and purpose-driven business owner.



Mara James, Founder & CEO

Extraordinary Lives Foundation, Mission Viejo

Mara James is the founder and CEO of the Extraordinary Lives Foundation (ELF), established in 2015 to improve children's mental health and emotional wellness. Her passion for this mission stems from personal experiences navigating her own bipolar disorder diagnosis, along with raising a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD. Through psychiatry, therapy, and holistic healing, she transformed her life and is committed to helping others do the same. An accomplished author, Mara wrote *Unconditional: Mental Health Redefined* (2025), a powerful book that reimagines how we view and approach mental health. She also created Piggie Bear, a character who teaches children to understand and manage their emotions. Her first children's book, *The Power of Piggie Bear* (2021) received both the Reviewer's Choice Bronze Award and a Five-Star Reviews Award, followed by *Piggie Bear's Power of Happiness* (2022). Under her leadership, ELF is championing the initiative to designate September as Children's Emotional Wellness Month, raising awareness and encouraging communities to place children's mental and emotional well-being at the forefront.



Venus Jenkins, Co-Founder & CEO

Chargenet Stations, Long Beach

Prior to starting Chargenet Stations, Venus Jenkins led transmission and distribution data analytics teams at Southern California Edison (SCE), the second-largest utility in the United States. There, she developed a \$2 billion utility asset optimization strategy. She also led the largest fiber infrastructure deployment in Orange County (417 buildings and 60 miles buildout). She started Chargenet Stations to address the gap between EVs and EV charging infrastructure needs in low-income communities. Since its early inception in 2020, Jenkins has raised multiple rounds of investor capital and grown Chargenet into a multimillion-dollar infrastructure and software company. She is currently focused on scaling the company with an additional 15 sites buildout in Southern California. Jenkins holds a degree in chemical engineering from UC Santa Barbara and earned her MBA from MIT.



Ronnetta Johnson, CEO

Waymakers, Irvine

Ronnetta Johnson is a dedicated nonprofit professional, spending more than 35 years in nonprofit leadership roles. She joined the Orange County nonprofit Waymakers in 1995, holding several key positions in advance of her appointment to CEO in 2015. This fall marks her thirtieth year with the nonprofit. Johnson's dedicated leadership has led to the strengthening of Waymakers' role as Orange County's primary provider of crime victim services and serves as co-administrator of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF). With more than 50 years of service to the community, Waymakers provides crisis support, stabilization, and coping skills for children, young adults, and other vulnerable populations.



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Johnson's leadership has continued to build on the organization's historic roots as one of the first nonprofits in the region to shelter youth ages 11 to 25 and address critical community needs.

Meghana Joshi, Managing Principal

MG2, an affiliate of Colliers Engineering & Design, Irvine
Meghana Joshi, AIA, NOMA is managing principal of the Irvine office of global architecture and design firm MG2. A business leader and equity advocate shaping the built environment in Orange County, she leads a high-performing office focused on the retail and banking sectors. Under her leadership, the office has grown to 40 people, achieved 15% revenue growth, and rose to No. 18 on the Orange County Business Journal's Top Architecture Firms list. With more than 25 years of experience, Joshi's nationally recognized work includes a prestigious Gold Nugget Award. She founded the Women in Architecture and EDI+J Committees for AIA OC, where she now serves as chapter president. A breast cancer survivor, Joshi mentors through AIA and ULI's Urban Plan and serves on ULI OCIE's Product Council. Her commitment to advocacy has earned her the AIA California Presidential Citation, AIA OC Service Award, and CREW OC Service Provider Award.



Suzanne Justice, Founder & CEO

Blake Rian Consulting, Newport Beach
Suzanne Justice has 19 years of experience in the staffing and recruiting industry. She has partnered with hundreds of clients and candidates to ensure their job connection is The Right Fit. "I believe that a resume is only a blueprint of someone's experience," says Justice. She is a three-time Amazon best-selling business author. She sits on many nonprofit boards in Washington and California as she feels it is extremely important to give back to her communities. Justice is the NAWBO-OC president-elect for 2025-2026 and was a NAWBO-CA Woman Business Owner of the Year Nominee 2025-2026. We are a WBENC Certified Woman Owned business.



Hagan Kappler, Co-Founder & CEO

Daisy, Newport Beach
Hagan Kappler is the co-founder and CEO of Daisy, a national smart home technology installation company that provides clients with ongoing tech services. Daisy was founded in 2023, made its first acquisition in 2024, raised \$35 million in its first 12 months in venture funding, and is on track to achieve over \$100 million in run rate sales by the end of the year with more than 20 locations and 300 employees across the country. Kappler started her career in investment banking at Goldman Sachs, went to business school,



and then joined McKinsey and Company. She was recruited to go to Starbucks to launch Blonde Roast before moving back to the east coast to work for United Technologies and Ingersoll Rand on their strategy and M&A teams. Kappler led Merry Maids and ServiceMaster Clean and sold ServiceMaster Brands to Roark Capital in October 2020. Following her time at ServiceMaster, she joined Threshold Brands as CEO, a franchise home services company backed by PE firm Riverside. Kappler has a BA in history from Williams College and an MBA from the Darden School at the University of Virginia. She now lives in Newport Beach, CA in an increasingly connected (but decreasingly frustrating, thanks to Daisy) home with her husband and four kids.

Kateryna Karasyk, Founder & Women Entrepreneur

Elephant Signage & Display, Int, Mission Viejo
Kateryna Karasyk is the founder of Elephant Signage & Display, Intl., a full-service visual branding and signage company based in Mission Viejo, California. Originally established in Ukraine in 1995 and relaunched in the U.S. in 2017, the firm provides design, fabrication, permitting, and installation services for commercial signage projects across Southern California. With a nimble team and more than 300 completed projects, the company serves clients in real estate, retail, healthcare, and corporate sectors. Under Karasyk's leadership, the company has expanded into energy-efficient LED displays and end-to-end project management. In 2019, she also launched Laguna Beach Cleaning Service, which has since gained a strong presence in high-end residential and vacation rental markets. Karasyk currently serves as marketing & communications chair of the Mission Viejo Chamber of Commerce and has been featured in Shoutout SoCal, IAW Spotlight, and Faces of Mission Viejo for her leadership, resilience, and community impact.



Dee Cohen Katz, Managing Partner

Walsworth LLP, Irvine
Dee Cohen Katz joined Walsworth in 1995 as an associate attorney and was appointed managing partner in 2019. She currently oversees the firm's operations in Orange County, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco, and has played a key role in shaping the firm into what it is today—a fast-growing, majority women-owned law firm that has thrived with the changing times. In addition, she has seized every opportunity to promote diversity in her community and within the firm. Under her leadership, Walsworth received the Advancement of Women Award from the Orange County Women Lawyers Association, grew into the largest California-based law firm member of the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF), is celebrating a decade as a certified WBE law firm, and has been consistently recognized within the legal community for its diversity, and breadth and depth of experience.



Celebrating

JANE HANINGER MARTIN
DIRECTOR OF RISK MANAGEMENT AND LITIGATION
TRUMARK HOMES

NAMED A TOP WOMAN IN BUSINESS
BY THE ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

Congratulations Jane!
From all of us at Trumark Homes



2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Laura Khouri, President & COO

Western National Property Management, Irvine

Laura Khouri is a transformative leader in commercial real estate, known for pairing operational excellence with deep empathy and vision. As president and COO of Western National Property Management (WNPM), she leads one of the largest multifamily portfolios in the Western U.S. of more than 23,000 units across California and Nevada, representing more than \$8.8 billion in assets. Over her four-decade tenure, Khouri has helped shape WNPM into a best-in-class operator defined by its people-first culture, proprietary management tools, and long-term value creation. She oversees a 750-plus person team and has championed industry-leading training programs that drive both employee growth and asset performance. During the pandemic, Khouri spearheaded \$7 million in rental assistance, launched a zero-interest loan program for employees, and retained nearly 100% of staff. Even amid recent economic headwinds, WNPM has grown to expand its portfolio by 10% with major new assignments and continuing to earn recognition for its award-winning communities. Khouri's leadership is defined by resilience, impact, and compassion—qualities that make her a standout Woman in Business.



accessibility. Dr. LaFrenierre has led key academic initiatives, ranging from cultural-competency curriculum development to multi-site TMS research, and earned awards including two consecutive Resident Excellence Awards and a SAMHSA Minority Fellowship.

Lara Langford, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Lara Langford specializes in luxury Orange County real estate and is dedicated to exceeding her clients' expectations. Born and raised in Newport Beach, Langford has expert knowledge of local communities and works tirelessly to meet her clients' needs. Known for her strong negotiating skills, business acumen, and integrity, she builds trust and confidence with both buyers and sellers. An active member of the Newport Beach and Corona del Mar communities, Langford stays informed on trends and opportunities to better serve her clients. She graduated from the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business with a focus in Real Estate and holds both her California Salesperson and Broker Licenses. As a member of Langford Group, she is committed to providing the personalized real estate service her clients deserve, ensuring a smooth and successful process from start to finish.



Robin King, Corporate Relations Director

The Shea Center, San Juan Capistrano

Robin King brings more than 25 years of experience in business development, marketing, and sales to The Shea Center. A seasoned executive, she blends her success in the for-profit sector with a passion for social impact, leveraging her expertise in cause marketing and sponsorship to strengthen corporate partnerships. At The Shea Center, she works alongside her high performing development team collaborating with board members, volunteers, and corporate partners across the Southern California region. Previously, King generated more than \$25 million in revenue in the broadcast industry. She was a top-performing sales executive working for ABC and Disney in San Francisco and at Katz Communications in Los Angeles. She led national advertising campaigns for major brands including American Airlines, PepsiCo, P&G, Wells Fargo, The San Francisco 49ers, and The San Jose Sharks. Driven by purpose and a high level of emotional intelligence, King prioritizes connection, inclusivity, and authenticity in every partnership. Her ability to build strategic relationships and unify stakeholders is grounded in her belief that success should serve a greater good. This guiding principle brought King to The Shea Center, where she continues to lead with purpose and vision.



Jan Langford, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Jan Langford is a distinguished Newport Beach resident and real estate professional with a proven track record in the coastal and view property market. A nationally recognized REALTOR®, Langford combines her deep passion for real estate with a keen understanding of her clients' unique needs and values. With a reputation for delivering exceptional service to the luxury market's discerning clientele, Langford is known for her expertise in navigating complex transactions. Her background as an award-winning banking and lending professional for more than 20 years adds a unique advantage to her real estate practice. Langford's experience in financial products and underwriting guidelines, honed during her tenure in wholesale banking, enhances her ability to provide strategic insight and value to both buyers and sellers. This financial acumen, combined with her exceptional service, ensures that Langford consistently exceeds expectations in every transaction.



Sharon Klein, Partner & Co-Chair

Blank Rome LLP, Irvine

Sharon Klein is a partner at Blank Rome and co-Chair of its privacy, security, and data protection practice. With more than 35 years of experience, she advises businesses on data privacy, cybersecurity, and complex technology transactions. Klein is certified by the International Association of Privacy Professionals and has a strong background in negotiating technology and cloud agreements. She is actively involved in organizations like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services task force and the Electronic Healthcare Network Accreditation Commission. Her previous role as associate general counsel at Siemens Medical Solutions USA honed her skills in healthcare regulations, including HIPAA and HITECH. Blank Rome was founded in 1946 by two lawyers and has grown into an Am Law 100 firm with more than 750 attorneys in 16 offices across the U.S. and internationally. The firm is committed to its clients and communities, continually seeking opportunities amid change.



Gina Lara, Partner

Smith Dickson Certified Public Accountants, LLP, Irvine

Gina Lara is a partner specializing in trust and estates in tax and forensic accounting for a "Top Accounting Firm" in Orange County (as ranked by the OCBJ). She holds an MBA, is a CFP, EA, and a member of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners and CalCPA.



Sara Legrand, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Sara Legrand grew up in a family deeply rooted in Southern California's luxury real estate industry, gaining early exposure to the business. After earning a bachelor's degree in communications from Arizona State University, she returned to Newport Beach to pursue her passion for real estate. Legrand worked alongside top agents, providing marketing and administrative support while sharpening her understanding of the industry and local market. Now with Surterre Properties, Legrand is well-positioned to deliver exceptional service and results for her clients. Surterre's award-winning in-house marketing studio gives her access to unique marketing strategies and collateral to help clients sell properties quickly and for top dollar. With Surterre's team-oriented culture and network of the industry's best agents, Legrand offers unmatched opportunities for buyers and sellers alike.



Karen Kroeter, Lxury Global Travel Agency

Travelmation, Huntington Beach

Karen Kroeter, a luxury global travel agent with Travelmation, specializes in crafting unforgettable vacations tailored to her clients' needs. She meticulously plans travel for individuals, couples, families, and groups, both domestically and internationally. Her comprehensive services cover every detail, from securing optimal airfare to organizing ground transportation and exclusive excursions. Kroeter's dedication to exceptional service has earned her a reputation for creating dream vacations. Her partnerships with esteemed travel industry players like Marriott, Disney, Montage Hotels and Resorts, Four Seasons, and Bonvoy grant her clients access to some of the world's most luxurious accommodations and experiences. With an extensive network of contacts and a commitment to delivering cutting-edge travel plans, Kroeter is ready to redefine your travel experience and curate unparalleled adventures. She looks forward to being a part of your elite travel plans and showing you exclusive destinations. Let's create memories together!



Stephanie Leslie, Founder

Regal Court Reporting, Santa Ana

Stephanie Leslie co-founded Regal Court Reporting in 2007 and has earned a reputation as a fierce advocate for the court reporting industry. Dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the industry while mentoring new generations of court reporters, Leslie has used her voice to inspire, uplift, and lobby across the United States. She has been a featured guest speaker for the California Deposition Reporters Association, the National Court Reporters Association, and is now the immediate past president of the CalDRA. Additionally, she was a part of a groundbreaking presentation for the National Court Reporters Association where she advocated for voice writers to be included in the association and discussed the importance of clear access to justice in court proceedings. Regal Court Reporting remains one of the last 100% court reporter-owned, steno-only firms in California and has become an acquisition partner of choice for independently owned court reporting agencies that seek the alternative to corporation acquisition. Through Leslie's leadership, Regal is inspired to help other independently owned firms transition their legacy to live on through the stewardship of their firm.



Stefani LaFrenierre, Physician & CEO

Resiliency Mind+Body Medicine, Newport Beach

Dr. Stefani LaFrenierre is the founder and medical director of Resiliency Mind+Body Medicine, a physician-led integrative mental health practice based in Newport Beach, California. She is double board-certified in adult psychiatry and addiction medicine, with a background from UCLA (MD), San Mateo Behavioral Health residency, and a Harvard Refugee Trauma fellowship. Under her leadership, the clinic has grown to a multidisciplinary team of doctoral-level psychiatrists, physician associates, nurse practitioners, wellness specialists, and TMS technicians. Resiliency serves hundreds of patients annually and has expanded its offerings to include FDA-cleared Deep Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation for depression, anxiety, OCD, and PTSD, as well as Spravato®, functional medicine, IV therapies, weight-management programs, aesthetic services, and a line of physician-developed supplements. Since its founding, the practice has achieved regional recognition for integrative, whole-person psychiatry and secured in-network contracts with major insurers to improve



Nefertiti Long, COO

Alta Loma Enterprises, Cardenas Three, Rancho Cucamonga

Nefertiti Long is the chief operating officer of Alta Loma Enterprises, a private real estate investment company in Rancho Cucamonga, California. She has more than 25 years' experience in business with a focus on the areas of accounting and finance. Her experience is across many industries including food, real estate, and technology. Prior to joining Alta Loma Enterprises, she was the vice president of finance of Cardenas Markets, a midsize grocery chain serving the Inland Empire with its corporate office in Ontario,



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California. Before obtaining executive level, she held various positions in accounting and finance throughout her career including controller, assistant controller, accounting manager, senior accountant, staff accountant, and financial analyst. Business affiliations include membership in FEI and Cal CPA. Long has a passion for giving back and being involved in her community. To that end, she serves on several boards in leadership roles including her role as president of the Alliance of Black Women Accountants.

Catherine Lowe, Owner, Editor

The Scout Guide, Corona del Mar

Catherine Lowe is the editor and owner of The Scout Guide Newport Beach, a locally produced lifestyle publication she launched in 2022 as part of the nationally recognized The Scout Guide franchise. With more than three volumes published, her guide spotlights Newport Beach's independent retailers, artisans, and entrepreneurs—fostering community pride and economic growth. Under Lowe's leadership, the Newport edition has steadily grown in circulation and influence, becoming a go-to resource for both residents and visitors seeking curated experiences in the region. Beyond her editorial work, Lowe is deeply engaged in community and philanthropic efforts, including supporting the Orangewood Foundation through business partnerships and board service. She combines strategic vision with strong communication skills. Her upbeat, entrepreneurial approach strengthens both her brand and the platform for local businesses.



Meghan MacRae, Advancement Associate

With My Own Two Hands Foundation, Laguna Beach

With My Own Two Hands Foundation (WMO2H) is a 501(c)3 organization headquartered in Laguna Beach, California, creating sustainable, clean water and agriculture solutions in East Africa to generate socio-economic opportunities and a more equitable world. Founded in 2011, WMO2H has provided 181,408 people with clean water access and sustainable food sources across 72 communities. In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, WMO2H developed a complete WASH program in 2020 to empower communities with curriculum and education on handwashing, hygiene and sanitation, and waterborne disease prevention and care. In 2023, WMO2H elevated their commitment to climate by launching a new regenerative agriculture program with a dedicated focus on soil health, biodiversity, and carbon drawdown. In the past three years, the organization has achieved an average annual budget growth of 27%, surpassing their 12% annual target. WMO2H is on track to reach their five-year vision of raising more than \$5 million and reaching over 500,000 lives by 2029.



Laura Marcum, Executive Director

Project Youth OC, Santa Ana

Laura Marcum is a trailblazing nonprofit leader whose 16-year career has been defined by visionary leadership, innovation, and a deep commitment to empowering youth. As executive director of Project Youth OC (PYOC), she is guiding the organization through a bold new chapter of strategic growth, expanding its impact through innovative partnerships with schools, community organizations, and civic leaders. Each year, PYOC provides life-changing diversion, prevention, and career readiness programs to more than 1,500 youth, while supporting families with culturally responsive, wraparound services. The first Latina to lead PYOC and the granddaughter of migrant farmworkers, Marcum brings authenticity, resilience, and a fierce dedication to breaking down barriers so every young person has the opportunity to thrive. Her leadership has sharpened PYOC's prevention-first approach and positioned the organization as a trusted catalyst for community change across Orange County. She continues to champion bold, upstream solutions that transform lives and build stronger, more equitable communities.



Kate Marr, Executive Director

Community Legal Aid SoCal, Santa Ana

Kate Marr has devoted her 25-year career to working in legal aid, first as staff attorney assisting survivors of domestic violence and other violent crimes, then as managing attorney, and since 2017 as executive director of Community Legal Aid SoCal (CLA SoCal). Marr led CLA SoCal through a major rebrand and a restructuring process to create specialized substantive legal units. From this process, a pro bono program and case management program were established to provide more extensive, holistic services to clients. Currently, she is developing a legal services coordinated entry system (JustOC) in collaboration with other legal aid organizations—Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California, Elder Law & Disability Rights Center, Public Law Center, and Veterans Legal Institute—to develop a single point of entry for legal services in Orange County. This coordinated entry system would give partners the capacity to embed county-wide legal services intake and triage within CLA SoCal's established system and enable them to better address inequities in access to legal services for low-income communities in Orange County.



Jeni Maus, Owner

Found Rental Co., Fullerton

Found Rental Co., established in 2010 by Joel and Jeni Maus, is a leader in the high-end event rental industry, known for its creativity and innovation. Starting with just 89 vintage items, the company has grown to a multi-million-dollar enterprise with over 30,000 unique pieces, operating out of more than 100,000 square feet of warehouse space across Southern and Northern California. Employing 185 team members, Found Rental Co. specializes in delivering unforgettable event experiences, catering to weddings, social gatherings, and corporate events with design-forward rentals. The company has shown impressive financial growth, with



revenues increasing from \$15 million in 2022 to a projected \$25 million in 2025. Notable milestones include the implementation of RFID technology for inventory tracking and the launch of "lookbooks" to enhance customer engagement. Found Rental Co. is expanding its geographic reach, planning new showrooms in key markets like Santa Barbara and Dallas. Committed to a family-oriented culture and community support, Found Rental Co. actively engages in philanthropy and disaster relief efforts, reflecting its dedication to excellence and growth.

Katherine Annuschat McCaig, Counsel

Snell & Wilmer, Costa Mesa

Katy Annuschat McCaig is a corporate and securities attorney at Snell & Wilmer, a full-service law firm with more than 500 attorneys across 17 locations. Based in the firm's Orange County office, McCaig advises companies at every stage of growth on complex transactional matters, including mergers and acquisitions, venture capital financings, securities offerings, joint ventures, and corporate governance. Her clients range from emerging startups to multinational corporations in industries such as technology, healthcare, advertising, pharmaceuticals, and cannabis. McCaig has guided clients through numerous high-stakes transactions, including the recent sale of an Orange County-based tubing systems manufacturer to a strategic buyer, and the cross-border acquisition of a communications technology company with operations in Latin America and Spain by a multinational audiovisual technology firm. She also plays a key role in representing private equity-backed companies and structuring strategic investments. Committed to pro bono work, McCaig regularly provides legal support to immigrants and nonprofit organizations. Her thoughtful counsel, transactional fluency, and client-centered approach have made her a trusted advisor in a fast-evolving business landscape.



Kristen McCarthy, Assurance Market Managing Principal, Southern California

BDO USA, P.C., Costa Mesa

Kristen McCarthy's accounting career spans more than 35 years, most of which have been spent at BDO USA, providing assurance services to public, privately-held, and nonprofit companies. She is currently the Southern California market managing principal for BDO's Assurance practice, leading close to 30 principals across Orange County, Los Angeles, and San Diego. McCarthy is responsible for guiding a blend of high-performing specialists to deliver exceptional service to clients in California's key industries of life sciences, healthcare, technology, real estate, manufacturing, and consumer retail. Since her appointment in 2022, the client service teams under her supervision have realized increases in profitability and productivity. McCarthy also reinforces the accommodating advantages of the BDO Flex workplace philosophy and strategic use of resources to ensure her teams are among the most efficient in the firm. McCarthy's operational and leadership excellence are matched by her passion for championing new generations of accounting professionals, especially within BDO. McCarthy was a founding member and national co-lead of BDO's Women's Inclusion Group and has personally mentored many rising stars across BDO nationwide.



Stacy McKellar, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

A Southern California native with extensive experience in residential real estate, Stacy McKellar has been a licensed agent since 2004. Throughout her career, she has earned a sterling reputation for her strong work ethic, exceptional client service, and unwavering commitment to helping buyers and sellers achieve their goals. McKellar's success is reflected in her loyal client base, built largely on referrals and repeat business—an undeniable testament to her consistent excellence. As a member of Surterre Properties®, McKellar combines her vast experience with the resources and advantages of a leading brokerage. Surterre's award-winning marketing studio, cutting-edge technology, and team-oriented culture empower McKellar to deliver unparalleled results and an exceptional client experience in every transaction. Whether buying or selling, clients can trust McKellar to provide expert guidance and personalized service every step of the way.



Meghan Medlin, Founder & CEO

Hub for Integration, Reentry & Employment, Orange

Meghan Medlin is the founder and CEO of two mission-driven organizations: Medlin Workforce & Reentry Solutions (MWRS), a consulting firm launched in 2019, and the Hub for Integration, Reentry & Employment (HIRE), a nonprofit founded in 2020. MWRS partners with government agencies, nonprofits, and employers to design impactful, sustainable workforce and reentry programs. HIRE directly serves more than 1,100 justice-involved individuals annually, providing job placement, mentorship, housing navigation, and wraparound support throughout Orange County. Under Medlin's leadership, both organizations have grown steadily in size and impact, with HIRE expanding (financially) 900% in one year—increasing both staff and programs. Together, both companies are now partnering with the County of Orange to open the region's first reentry workforce training facility, the Common Good, by 2028—an ambitious project expected to set a new standard for reentry innovation. Medlin has been recognized as an Orange County Visionary, Workforce Hero, and Woman of Distinction, and is known for her relentless commitment to equity, second chances, and long-term community transformation.



Shachi Mehra, Founder & Executive Chef

ADYA, Spice Girl Sauces, Santa Ana

Chef Shachi Mehra is an award-winning chef, restaurateur, and entrepreneur known for her bold, modern approach to Indian cuisine. She is the executive chef and partner of the acclaimed



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ADYA restaurant in Orange County and the founder of Spice Girl Sauces, a nationally available line of Indian-inspired sauces. A Food Network Chopped champion and frequent guest chef at Disney's Food & Wine Festival, Chef Mehra brings more than decades of culinary experience rooted in her Indian heritage and shaped by a lifelong passion for bold, globally inspired flavors. She currently serves as South Asian consulting chef for both The Fairmont Princess in Scottsdale, AZ, and The Regent in Santa Monica, CA, expanding her influence in luxury hospitality. Named one of Orange Coast's "Kickass Women" and a James Beard Legacy Advisor, Chef Mehra is a passionate advocate for mentorship, women in the culinary industry, and community causes in Orange County.

Sami Mitchell, Owner

BLSSD the Label, Corona del Mar

Sami Mitchell is the founder and CEO of BLSSD the Label, a customizable trucker hat and charm bar brand that has quickly emerged as a leader in Orange County's experiential retail scene. Founded in 2023, BLSSD went from an online start-up to opening its flagship store in Corona del Mar within a year, with a dedicated team of five employees. Known for its on-trend, customizable designs, including more than 2,000 patches, 600 charms, and 65 hat colors, BLSSD offers customers a highly personal fashion experience both in-store and at curated pop-up events. The brand's collaborations with national companies and its strong presence at high-profile events, from charity galas to corporate activations, have set it apart in both the fashion and events industries. Mitchell's entrepreneurial roots trace back to her college days at UC Santa Barbara, where she launched an eBay business as a sophomore. Today, she continues to grow BLSSD's reach while giving back, actively supporting causes like underprivileged youth, military families, and disaster relief, making philanthropy a core part of her business mission.



Ronit Molko, CEO

Alongside, Fullerton

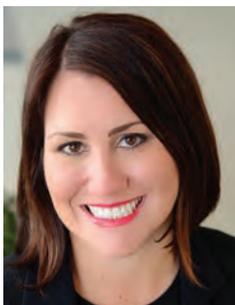
Dr. Ronit Molko is a visionary entrepreneur, clinical psychologist, and board-certified behavior analyst with decades of leadership in behavioral healthcare. She co-founded and led Autism Spectrum Therapies, a pioneering ABA platform, which she sold to LEARN Behavioral in 2014, later advising on its growth. For the last decade, she served as a senior advisor in M&A for private equity, focusing on behavioral health investments. Currently, Dr. Molko is CEO of Alongside, a leading Autism services provider in Southern California formed by merging four established ABA organizations. With more than 650 staff and 850-plus clients, Alongside is dedicated to delivering evidence-based care, professional development, and impactful outcomes. Appointed CEO in 2024, Dr. Molko is guiding the company through integration, infrastructure building, and strategic expansion. She is co-founder of the Autism Investor Summit and author of Autism Matters, reflecting her continued commitment to advancing autism services and promoting equity in the industry.



Annette Morgan, COO

City of Hope Orange County, Irvine

As chief operating officer of City of Hope Orange County, Annette Morgan leads initiatives that expand access to advanced cancer treatment and breakthrough research. Morgan plays a key role in bringing to life the vision of City of Hope's \$1.5 billion expansion into Orange County. She is directly involved in the planning, design, activation, and growth of City of Hope Orange County's cancer campus in Irvine—which includes Orange County's only cancer specialty hospital opening in 2025—and network of advanced cancer care. Morgan was instrumental in introducing several new clinical locations to City of Hope Orange County's network. Morgan has executive oversight of clinical operations, patient access, facilities, business development, project management, and performance improvement. She also helped secure a partnership with CalOptima, ensuring that about 800,000 people can access City of Hope's care. An Orange County native with deep ties to the community, Morgan is a sought-after speaker on national and local stages and serves on the board of directors of Orange County Business Council.



Sandra L. Morgan, PhD, RN, Professor; Director, Global Center for Women and Justice

Vanguard University, Costa Mesa

Where others see complex global issues, Dr. Sandra Morgan builds solutions. With more than two decades of leadership in anti-human trafficking, she combines academic rigor, grassroots action, and policy advocacy to drive real change—locally and globally. From the Orange County classroom, where she partners with the OC Department of Education to keep children safe, to Capitol Hill internationally, Dr. Morgan is shaping a safer, more just world. A Vanguard University professor and founding member of the OC Human Trafficking Task Force, Dr. Morgan co-chaired the Public-Private Partnership Advisory Council to End Human Trafficking by Presidential appointment. Her "Ending Human Trafficking" podcast has garnered listeners in 170 countries. She has presented in South America, Russia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East and partners with the State Department and U.S. embassies. Her leadership, research, publishing, and speaking have made her a globally respected advocate seeking to combat exploitation at all levels.



Martha Mosier, President

Pacific Sotheby's International Realty, Newport Beach

Martha Mosier is the resident of Pacific Sotheby's International Realty, where she leads the company with a focus on operational excellence, strategic growth, and legal oversight. A respected leader in the California real estate community, Mosier brings more than two decades of legal and executive experience to her role. Prior to joining Pacific Sotheby's International Realty, Mosier held several senior leadership roles within the real estate industry, including president and general counsel at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties, as well as senior vice president of its affiliated escrow companies,

Pickford Escrow and The Escrow Firm. Earlier in her career, she served as in-house litigation counsel for Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage (NRT) and clerked for the Attorney General of California at the Fourth District Court of Appeal in San Diego. Mosier has been a longtime advocate for integrity, innovation, and inclusivity in real estate. She has held leadership positions on multiple industry boards and committees, including the San Diego Association of Realtors Risk Management Committee, the Orange County Association of REALTORS® Risk Management Task Force, and the Strategic Defense Council and Legislative Council Committee for the California Association of REALTORS®. Mosier resides in Orange County, CA with her husband and four children. She enjoys spending time with her family and pets, traveling, skiing, hiking, and supporting charitable organizations that serve children in need and at-risk teens.



Katharyn Muniz, CEO

Orange County Conservation Corps, Anaheim

Katharyn Muniz has served as the CEO of the Orange County Conservation Corps (OCCC) for 14 years, leading the organization to provide vital workforce development and educational services to disadvantaged young adults in Orange County. Under her leadership, OCCC has secured more than \$73 million in contracts and grants, offering nearly 1.7 million hours of paid job training and \$19 million in wages to corpsmembers. The organization has contributed to environmental sustainability, recycling millions of pounds of materials, planting thousands of trees, and maintaining public spaces. During the COVID-19 crisis, Muniz quickly pivoted to provide emergency services, facilitating the distribution of more than 33 million pounds of food, supporting COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts, and helping thousands of residents. She also co-authored California Ocean Corps legislation to establish a workforce program along the state's coastlines and launched training initiatives for green stormwater infrastructure. Muniz's work has had a profound impact on both environmental and community health, creating opportunities for youth while addressing critical needs across Orange County.



Claire Na, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

A longtime Irvine resident with an MBA from UC Irvine, luxury real estate specialist Claire Na combines a proven sales track record with unparalleled local market expertise. She has successfully sold every listing she's ever handled, always prioritizing her clients' needs. Before real estate, Na gained valuable experience in commercial development, market research, branding, and business management at CARREFOUR, the world's second-largest retail company. Her expertise has helped build a strong referral network, and clients describe her as detail-oriented, responsive, and dedicated. Na is committed to achieving her clients' goals and offers 24/7 support to address any concerns. Her deep local knowledge, elite negotiation skills, and multilingual fluency in Korean, French, and English set her apart from competitors.



Rachel Nelson, CFO

CB Technologies Inc., Orange

As a proud, award-winning, small woman-owned business, CB Technologies, Inc. (CBT) has been guiding industrial enterprises for more than 25 years—evolving from traditional IT services into a leader in industrial technology. CBT specializes in helping organizations navigate the complexities of digital transformation with its signature "Digital Sherpa" approach, cutting through the noise and hype of emerging technologies to deliver real operational outcomes. Through innovations like vision AI, wearables, and industrial IoT, CBT empowers clients to adopt scalable, high-impact solutions that improve productivity, enhance worker safety, and generate measurable ROI. A standout success includes helping a Fortune 500 transportation company achieve more than \$10 million in annual savings through connected worker technologies. With deep industry expertise, trusted technology partnerships, and a strong commitment to results, CBT exemplifies the powerful role women-led businesses play in shaping the future of industry. As both a technology leader and a strategic advisor, CBT continues to drive innovation with clarity, purpose, and impact.



Eddy Nevarez, Managing Director

Marcus & Millichap, Encino

Eddy Nevarez is a nationally recognized hospitality investment broker and first vice president of Marcus & Millichap. She leads The Nevarez Group, a powerhouse in hotel investment sales across the U.S., with over \$500 million in closed transactions. With more than 20 years of real estate experience, Nevarez specializes in hotels, value-add redevelopment, and adaptive reuse opportunities, representing private clients, institutional investors, and developers. The Nevarez Group continues to see steady growth despite market volatility, expanding its portfolio of listings from boutique assets in Malibu to large-scale redevelopment opportunities such as the former Atlantic Club Casino Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In 2021, Nevarez became the first and only woman in Marcus & Millichap history to receive the Chairman's Circle of Excellence Award. She has been named a Woman of Influence by GlobeSt and one of Hotel Management's Most Influential Women in Hospitality. Known for her creative deal-making and client advocacy, Nevarez is a sought-after speaker and thought leader in the hospitality investment space.



Ginny Gallagher & Kate Nichols, Owner

Newport Knits, Newport Beach

Founded in December of 2022 by two USC graduates. They spotted a gap between bleacher and stylish quality fan sweaters for teams.



2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Cristol Barrett O'Loughlin, Founder & CEO

Raregivers™, Orange

Cristol Barrett O'Loughlin is the founder and CEO of Raregivers™, a groundbreaking nonprofit that supports the emotional, social, and mental health needs of rare disease caregivers, patients, and professionals. With a deep understanding of medical grief and resilience, O'Loughlin launched Raregivers (formerly ANGEL AID) after personal tragedy shaped her lifelong mission to bring relief to those facing chronic illness and caregiving burnout. Under her leadership, Raregivers has grown into a global network serving more than 80,000 families, supported by pharmaceutical leaders and technology partners like Microsoft and Google. O'Loughlin pioneered the Raregivers™ Emotional Journey Map, a trauma-informed resource now used by over 60 patient advocacy organizations. A former UCLA instructor and agency executive, she combines strategy with compassion to deliver scalable, sensory self-care solutions and bold advocacy for the rare disease community.



Analisa Olson, Director, Interior Architecture & Design

Ware Malcomb

Analisa Olson has cultivated a multifaceted career in architecture and design since 2003. As director of interior architecture & design at Ware Malcomb, she leads the interior architecture & design studio, overseeing projects and providing expertise across the Irvine and Inland Empire offices. Since joining the firm in 2021, Olson has held multiple leadership roles. Previously, as director of strategic accounts, she focused on building and supporting corporate relationships at national, regional, and local levels. In this role, she demonstrated her deep knowledge of interior architecture and strong business development acumen. Her seamless transition into her current role reflects both her strategic insight and passion for design leadership. Olson's strong understanding of Ware Malcomb's services, combined with her ability to foster client trust quickly, creates an elevated and efficient project experience. Her leadership continues to strengthen client partnerships and studio excellence.



Anoosheh Oskouian, President & CEO

Ship & Shore Environmental Inc., Signal Hill

Anoosheh Oskouian is a recognized leader in the climate technology sector and the president and CEO of Ship & Shore Environmental Inc., a global engineering firm specializing in air pollution abatement solutions. With more than two decades at the helm, she has transformed the company into a major force in sustainable manufacturing, pioneering the design and deployment of cutting-edge pollution control systems such as regenerative thermal oxidizers (RTOs), electric thermal oxidizers (ETOs), and energy recovery solutions across industries worldwide. A chemical engineer by training, Oskouian began her career working on high-impact industrial projects in petrochemicals, nuclear, and

chemical manufacturing. Her technical foundation, combined with strategic vision, has enabled her to scale clean air innovations globally, helping clients across sectors reduce volatile organic compounds (VOCs), comply with environmental regulations, and meet net-zero goals. Under her leadership, Ship & Shore Environmental has been recognized for its role in advancing cleantech, earning distinctions such as the Los Angeles Business Journal's Sustainability Award and inclusion in the U.S. EPA's Best Available Control Technology (BACT) efforts.



Ellen Pais, Executive Director

Pretend City Children's Museum, Irvine

Ellen Pais is the executive director of Pretend City Children's Museum, a nonprofit early childhood education hub serving families across Southern California. Since joining the organization in 2021, Pais has led Pretend City through a period of transformational growth, overseeing a post-pandemic recovery, expanding access to underserved families, and spearheading a multi-million-dollar capital campaign to build a permanent home in Irvine's Great Park. Under her leadership, Pretend City has more than doubled participation in its free programs and developmental screenings, established a Youth Leadership Board to mentor future civic leaders, and strengthened partnerships with school districts, health systems, and higher education institutions. Pais's inclusive leadership and legal background in educational equity have positioned Pretend City as a trusted resource for over two million guests since its founding. Her visionary work earned the museum the 2024 Nonprofit of the Year nomination by Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris. Pais is committed to a future where every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to thrive.



Taryn Palumbo, Executive Director

Orange County Grantmakers, Huntington Beach

As the first executive director of Orange County Grantmakers (OCG), Taryn Palumbo has transformed the organization into a regional leader in philanthropy and equity. Under her seven-year leadership, OCG has more than doubled its membership and budget, expanded annual programming from five events to more than 70, and become a fully independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Palumbo has spearheaded major initiatives including the release of the region's first OC Equity Profile, a high impact Get Out the Vote campaign, and the launch of OC Philanthropy Central, Orange County's first online funding database. In 2025, she partnered with USC to release an updated Equity Profile at a sold-out event and was featured by Forbes for her thought leadership on collaboration and civic engagement. With a background in



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Carla Gatza MBA, PHR
Senior Vice President of People & Culture

Congratulations to Carla Gatza on her nomination for the OCBJ Women in Business Awards!



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public policy, workforce development, and community relations, Palumbo has positioned OCG as a catalyst for change—uniting funders, nonprofits, and public sector leaders to build a more just and inclusive Orange County. She also serves on the OC Hunger Alliance Steering Committee, OC Forum Board, and is a former city commissioner.

Caroline Pereira, President

Hoag Hospital Foundation, Newport Beach

Caroline A. Pereira, MBA, is president of the Hoag Hospital Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Hoag. She joined Hoag in 2024 during a period of significant growth across Orange County. With more than 20 years of experience in health care philanthropy, she leads one of the nation's top-performing nonprofit organizations, raising more than \$100 million annually to support innovation, patient care, and community wellness. Prior to Hoag, she served at UC Irvine Health Affairs, helping to secure nearly \$1 billion in philanthropic support. Pereira also has international nonprofit experience from over a decade at the University of Toronto, where she ended her tenure working at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine. Her commitment to health care is deeply personal—her family's experience with cancer continues to inspire her mission-driven work. She earned an MBA from the University of Southern California and holds a BA in psychology from the University of Waterloo.



Laura Peters, Senior Account Executive

e360, Irvine

At e360, Laura Peters has dedicated more than 25 years to creating championship experiences in enterprise technology. Her journey has spanned the evolution of data centers to cloud transformation, always with one unchanging mission: turning client partnerships into lifetime success stories. She specializes in architecting comprehensive solutions across cloud infrastructure, AI, cybersecurity, and DevOps, with expertise in healthcare technology innovation. Her philosophy is simple: elite excellence isn't just a goal—it's a standard. Whether helping clients modernize infrastructure or guiding enterprises through digital transformations, she believes in creating partnerships built on trust, innovation, and unwavering commitment to success. As a board member of Orange County's Advancing Women in Technology, she is dedicated to expanding opportunities for women in tech and fostering the next generation of leaders. This commitment to development extends to her more than 20-year ambassadorship with Orangewood Children's Foundation, because she believes in building strong foundations for future success. Peters is also a founding member of "The Women of e360" initiative. Colleagues and clients often say her passion for making them the center of the universe is what sets her apart. She is known for anticipating challenges before they become problems and delivering solutions that drive real business impact. In her view, in technology as in life, the greatest achievements come from combining hard work with heart.



Laurie Peterson, CFO

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire, Santa Ana

Laurie Peterson is the chief financial officer of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire (BBBSOCIE), a \$12 million dollar youth mentoring nonprofit where she has proudly and passionately dedicated over 14 years. A CPA with more than 35 years of experience spanning public accounting, private industry as well as non-profit, Peterson oversees all financial operations, risk management, insurance, and compliance. Her work encompasses budgeting, forecasting, cash flow, audit and tax, financial reporting, investment oversight, and contract negotiations. She leads with a strong commitment to transparency, integrity, and accountability, continually seeking to streamline processes and improve accuracy. Under her financial leadership, BBBSOCIE's consolidated net assets have increased dramatically, from \$2.3 million in 2011 to over \$27 million today. Today, with 2,800 volunteers serving 4,000 youth annually, BBBSOCIE offers youth impactful social connections and guides them toward positive choices, academic success, and career opportunities.



Jill Petroff, Co-Founder & CEO

Sand + Fog, Seal Beach

Jill Petroff, co-founder of Sand+Fog Home, has led the brand to success with her pioneering spirit and commitment to quality. Established in 2017, Sand+Fog offers over 100 scents and is available in more than 6,000 stores worldwide. Based in Southern California, the brand emphasizes sustainability, with all candles free from parabens and sulfates. The brand is renowned for its innovative home fragrance products and elegant design with room to grow.



Tanya Petrossian, Founder & CEO

EndoCyclic Therapeutics.com, Irvine

Dr. Tanya Petrossian is the founder and CEO of EndoCyclic Therapeutics, pioneering the development of a breakthrough first-in-class, non-hormonal therapeutic and a non-invasive diagnostic for endometriosis. Endometriosis is one of the most overlooked diseases in women's health. Initially conceived as a concept on a PowerPoint slide in 2017, the company, under Dr. Petrossian's leadership, advanced to a clinical product that shows significant promise as the first curative solution for endometriosis, one of the most prevalent yet overlooked diseases in women's health. With a core team and a coordinated network of thousands across regulatory, manufacturing, toxicology, and clinical operations, EndoCyclic is positioned to pioneer and transform endometriosis care. The company has secured several patents and been awarded four NIH grants, including a rare perfect score of 10 for innovation and commercial viability. EndoCyclic's platform has expanded to include oncology applications, and the company is engaged in partnership discussions with



major pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Petrossian was selected as a representative at the Meeting of the Nobel Laureates and received a Certificate of Achievement for Contributions to Science from Congressman Jeff Miller.

Regan Dean Phillips, CEO

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Orange County, Orange

Regan Dean Phillips is the chief executive officer of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Orange County, a nonprofit serving youth in the foster care system. Phillips began her journey with CASA in 2001 as an intern with CASA-NYC while studying at Columbia, later working as a minor's counsel attorney in Orange County, where she often collaborated with CASA volunteers. Since becoming CASA OC's CEO in 2017, she has nearly doubled the organization's revenue from \$2.9 million to \$5.9 million and expanded its impact—growing the number of children served from 700 to nearly 1,300 annually. CASA OC now swears in 60% more volunteers each year, thanks to Phillips's strategic leadership and personal commitment to advocacy. Under her guidance, the organization has been recognized for workplace excellence and inclusive practices by the OC Register, OC Business Journal, Human Rights Campaign, and more. Phillips is admired not only for her results but for leading with humility, heart, and relentless drive to ensure every child has a voice in the courtroom and a caring adult by their side.



Sabrina Phillips, Owner & Contractor

Designing Women of Orange County, Laguna Niguel

Sabrina Phillips is the founder of Designing Women of Orange County, a full-service interior design and general contracting firm that has been serving Southern California since 1991. Originally launched as Designing Women, the company rebranded in 2012 to reflect its deep roots in the region and its identity as a 100% woman-owned business. With decades of experience in both design and construction, Phillips has built a trusted firm specializing in kitchen and bath remodels, full home renovations, custom closets, and window treatments. Her team supports a wide range of projects, from compact, functional spaces to luxury multimillion-dollar estates. Under her leadership, the firm has also completed notable commercial work, including for DoubleTree Hilton and the CBS Broadcast Center. Designing Women of Orange County continues to experience consistent growth, driven by referrals and repeat clients who value the firm's integrity and craftsmanship. Phillips remains active in NAWBO and NAWIC, championing the advancement of women in construction and design.



Gayle Polsky, MD, Director of Psychiatric Services

Mind Health Institute-Orange County, Newport Beach

Dr. Gayle Polsky is an outstanding member of our Orange County community—her dedication and focus to the youth and their mental health is phenomenal. She makes a huge difference in her patients' lives and in the practice. As mental health for youth is on the rise, it is absolutely paramount for us to recognize the heroes in this sector. Dr. Polsky is much deserving of this honor.



Bonni Pomush, CEO

Working Wardrobes, Santa Ana

Bonni Pomush is the chief executive officer of Working Wardrobes, a Santa-Ana based nonprofit that helps people overcome barriers to gainful employment. In its 35th year, the organization has served a record number of clients, providing supportive and workforce readiness services to more than 135,000 individuals. Pomush strives to create a collaborative and positive workplace culture, which has led to many awards for Working Wardrobes including being named a "Best Place to Work" by the Orange County Business Journal for several years. She is an accomplished executive with nearly 30 years of leadership experience in government and nonprofit work and has a proven track record of success. Her goals for the future of Working Wardrobes are to continue building upon its strengths, ultimately making the world better by helping one person at a time with a "hand up" rather than a "hand out" with the utmost dignity.



Laurin Ponce, Personal Trainer & Coach

Flourish with Laurin, Dana Point

Laurin Ponce is the founder and owner of Flourish with Laurin, a personal health and fitness transformation brand built on real experience, grit, and results. After losing 140 pounds and competing in the NPC Bikini division, Ponce turned her life's transformation into a mission: helping other women reclaim their power, health, and self-worth. Operating as a one-woman powerhouse, she delivers mindset-driven coaching, personalized fitness protocols, and sustainable lifestyle shifts for long-term success. Her social media presence has become a hub of truth, motivation, and strategy—reaching thousands who seek more than just aesthetic change. Flourish with Laurin has experienced rapid growth, fueled by client transformations, word-of-mouth referrals, and Laurin's raw, authentic voice. Her mission is simple but bold: to empower women to heal from the inside out—mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She values honesty, discipline, and self-respect, and stands as living proof that anyone can rebuild their life with the right guidance, support, and belief.



Tatyana Popkova, Chief Strategy Officer & Senior Vice President of Ambulatory

UCI Health, Orange

Tatyana Popkova is the chief strategy officer and senior vice president of ambulatory services at UCI Health, one of the largest academic health systems in California. In this unique and impactful role, she leads strategy formulation and execution, overseeing network growth and operations for the ambulatory division, and the marketing, communications, business development, and consumer digital strategy departments.

2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Popkova has led UCI Health in partnerships to expand access to care, finding ways to work together to offer the best care to the market is a cornerstone of the UCI Health strategy. Popkova has been instrumental in the growth of UCI Health from a single hospital in Orange to a five-hospital system following the acquisition of four community hospitals in Fountain Valley, Lakewood, Los Alamitos, and Placentia Linda, as well as their affiliated physicians and outpatient locations. Popkova continues to spearhead additional growth in December 2025, when UCI Health—Irvine, the nation's first all-electric acute care hospital, opens its doors. In 2026, the UCI Health Rehabilitation Hospital begins to serve the community, the result of a strategy-led joint venture.



Patty Presson, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

With more than 22 years of experience, Patty Presson is a trusted name in Orange County real estate. A 40-year resident of Newport Beach and graduate of UC Irvine, she brings a clear, strategic approach to each transaction—always keeping her clients' goals front and center. Presson is a founding partner of the Arrigo Presson Group, a top-producing team that has closed more than 600 homes and \$300 million in sales since 2020. She and her business partner, Janice Arrigo, consistently rank among the top 1% of REALTORS® locally and the top 1.5 percent nationwide. Their team has been recognized as Orange Coast Magazine Real Estate All-Stars for five consecutive years and has received multiple nominations for the Orange County Business Journal's Women in Business Award. Beyond real estate, Presson is active in the Newport Harbor High School Junior Mentor Program and supports several community causes. She and her husband, Greg, live on Lido Isle and have two grown children. She enjoys travel, time with friends, and the Southern California lifestyle she proudly helps others discover.



Nicole Quinlan, AVP. Resident Director Financial Advisor

Merrill Lynch, Laguna Niguel

Nicole Quinlan is a nationally recognized resident director at Merrill for her leadership of the Laguna Niguel office. She has a deep commitment as a financial advisor to help educate and empower women. Her financial advisory business is centered around planning and helping clients define the purpose of their wealth and how to maximize efficiencies through wealth transfer planning and tax minimization strategies. Quinlan holds the Certified Private Wealth Advisor® designation and is a Certified Financial Planner™ practitioner. She also holds the Certified Exit Planning Advisor designation to help business owners grow, sell, or transition their businesses.



Alaina Brinley Rajagopal, Co-Founder, Board Director & CMO

Esperto Medical, Irvine

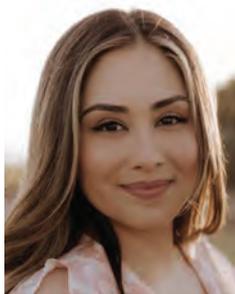
Dr. Alaina Rajagopal is a physician-scientist currently working on solving urgent medical needs pertaining to better diagnostic solutions to enable improved patient care in diverse medical environments. Her MD and PhD was obtained from the University of Texas Medical Branch and her PhD focused on public health, virology, and aerospace medicine while her clinical practice has focused on emergency, aerospace, and wilderness medicine as well as global health. She is board-certified in emergency medicine. Her work in austere environments is what inspired the technology she is developing at the California Institute of Technology and spun out in the startup company, Esperto Medical. She and her team invented a new method for noninvasive, continuous blood pressure measurement using ultrasound which holds significant promise for in-hospital and remote patient monitoring applications. In her spare time, Dr. Rajagopal enjoys climbing mountains, flying airplanes, acting, and spending time with family.



Amy Ramirez, Regional Program Manager, Service the Armed Forces & International Services

American Red Cross of Southern California, Santa Ana

Amy Ramirez serves as the regional program manager for the American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) and International Services (IS) in the Southern California Region. In this vital role, Ramirez helps lead efforts that uphold a 140-year legacy of supporting the humanitarian needs of the U.S. military community—through every phase of service, both at home and abroad. As part of the SAF team, she helps provide critical support to military families during deployments and emergencies, delivers care in military and veterans hospitals, facilitates emergency communications, and ensures continued assistance for veterans. Her journey with the American Red Cross began in 2017 as a volunteer—a testament to her deep commitment to service. Ramirez's dedication has earned her numerous accolades, including the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence and the title of Employee of the Year in 2024.



Meridith Randall, President

Golden West College, Huntington Beach

Meridith Randall is a results-driven leader with more than 30 years of experience in higher education. She has served as president of Golden West College since Spring of 2023, following three years as the college's Vice President of Instruction. Throughout her career, she has held key leadership roles across four community colleges, including Mendocino and Shasta Colleges, and began her journey in education as an English instructor at Palau Community College in 1993, eventually serving as Dean of Academic Affairs. President Randall spent more than 17 years as a chief instructional officer in



the California Community College system and is a two-time past president of the statewide CIO organization. She has also served as an accreditation liaison officer for six institutions and has participated in multiple state committees focused on dual enrollment, online education, and institutional effectiveness. Her statewide impact includes supporting career and technical education development and helping lead the California Virtual Campus and online course exchange. She holds degrees from Amherst College (B.A.), Cornell University (M.A.), and New York University School of Law (J.D.).

Johnna Randazzo, Account Manager

Keenan, San Clemente

Johnna Randazzo is an accomplished account executive at Keenan, consulting since March 2021 with California public sector and special district clients to design and optimize employee benefits strategies. She brings a strong academic foundation from the University of Redlands and excels in project management, strategic planning, business development, account management, and process improvement. In her role, she leads benefits programs for numerous special districts and municipalities, contributing to a benefits consulting practice that serves a broad roster of public-sector employers across California. Since joining Keenan, Randazzo has played a key part in expanding the firm's PACE program—an initiative that has grown to include charter schools in addition to traditional municipal clients—demonstrating both innovation and adaptability. With a track record of delivering tailored health-care benefit solutions and improving internal processes, she has supported sustained growth within Keenan's public-sector practice. Randazzo's work not only benefits her clients but also strengthens Keenan's reputation as a trusted, full-service insurance and consulting partner in Orange County and beyond.



Dawn Reese, CEO

The Wooden Floor, Santa Ana

Dawn S. Reese, CFRE is the chief executive officer of The Wooden Floor. She is a social innovator who leverages her unique blend of experience in business, technology, education, and the arts to propel young people forward. During Reese's nearly 16-year tenure, the organization's budget has grown from \$2.1 million to \$3.9 million, and she has led growth efforts to scale its impact, both locally and nationally. The Wooden Floor's mission is to inspire and transform the lives of young people through the power of dance and access to higher education. Since 2005, 100% of the students who graduate from The Wooden Floor immediately enroll in higher education.



Maria Reichel, Chief of Growth Strategy

Think Together, Santa Ana

Think Together first opened its doors in 1994 to the Shalimar community in Costa Mesa, California. Today, Think Together delivers nationally recognized expanded learning programs, along with early learning, after school, school support services, and leadership development for teachers and school administrators. Over the last five years, Think Together has tripled in revenue, enabling more students across California to be served by expanded learning and other school support programs that close the achievement gap in lower income communities. As of 2024, Think Together now serves more than 200,000 students throughout California, and has impacted over 2 million students since its inception.



Anna Ricardo, CFO

Merical LLC, Anaheim

Anna Ricardo serves as the chief financial officer for Merical LLC, bringing more than 30 years of experience in the pharmaceutical and supplement industries. She specializes in manufacturing finance, driving strategic oversight, and maximizing results and profitability for MeriCal. Since joining MeriCal, she has been instrumental in driving Top Line improvement by 26% YOY and improving bottom line flow through by 119%. She has keen insights and industry knowledge, resulting in granular analytics which in turn have created a focus and driven direct labor utilization and operational efficiencies. Prior to joining MeriCal, Ricardo held roles at International Vitamin Company, Gilead Sciences, and Abbott Laboratories, where she led both strategic and turnaround efforts, significantly increasing revenue and driving cost reductions. Ricardo holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance from California State University in Fullerton, CA. She is passionate about business partnership and being a strategic partner in a highly competitive manufacturing environment. Ricardo was also nominated for both the 2024 OCBJ Women in Business and 2025 OCBJ CFO of the Year. Outside of work, Ricardo enjoys boating, fishing, spending time with her family, and of course, supporting the Los Angeles Rams!



Manal Richa, Center Director

OCIE SBDC Network, Irvine

Manal Richa is a powerhouse in Orange County's entrepreneurial ecosystem, serving as director of the Cal State Fullerton Small Business Development Center (CSUF SBDC)—one of ten service centers in the OCIE SBDC Network. She leads a high-performing team of more than 30 experts providing no-cost consulting, training, and resources that have helped thousands of small businesses launch, grow, and scale. Richa also directs the OCIE SBDC Global Trade Center, where she spearheaded two transformative trade missions to South Korea and Vietnam, connecting local companies in Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties to international markets and new growth opportunities. Known for her strategic vision and collaborative leadership, she partners with cities, chambers, and regional agencies to ensure accelerated access to resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs. A successful entrepreneur



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herself, Richa founded The MarCom Network and BreakThrough Networking, Inc., helping companies amplify their visibility and build impactful connections. She holds a B.A. in communications from Cal State Fullerton and an MBA in organizational leadership from UMass Global, and resides in Irvine, California.

Maricela Rios-Faust, CEO

Human Options, Irvine

For nearly 45 years Human Options has remained committed to a future in which every person and family experience safe, healthy relationships and lives free from fear. Its' mission is to ignite social change by educating our community to recognize relationship violence as an issue that threatens everyone, advocating for those affected by abuse, extending a safe place for victims, and empowering survivors on their journey of healing. Human Options provides a full continuum of services to stop the violence, such as a 24-hour crisis hotline, emergency shelter, and transitional living programs, education, awareness and prevention presentations and trainings in the community, and low-/no-cost services, including counseling, legal advocacy, children's therapies, and empowerment classes offered at multiple locations throughout the county.



Shireen Rogers, Partner

Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP, Costa Mesa

Shireen Rogers is a partner at Musick Peeler and a member of the Business Litigation, Litigation, and Construction Practice Groups. She is a seasoned advocate who has represented clients in a wide range of dispute resolution forums, including jury trials, arbitrations, and mediations, consistently delivering successful results for her clients. Rogers' practice focuses on defending retail establishments in premises liability matters, while also representing corporations, trusts, landlords, tenants, and retailers in ADA accessibility claims. Rogers' experience spans product liability, personal injury related to construction defects, and employment litigation.



JoJo Romeo, Luxury Real estate Agent

Pacific Sotheby's Int. Real Estate, Newport Beach

From title agent to real estate agent, from Bravo TV star to business owner, JoJo Romeo has been driving nonstop growth since 2010. She works with investors with fix and flip opportunities, always achieving top sales in neighborhoods, constantly expanding home values in the area. She is a go getter, and things are not slowing down for her.



Jessica Roy, Chef-Owner

608 Dahlia, Corona del Mar

Executive chef and owner-operator Jessica Roy was born and raised in Orange County, California, and is the creative force behind 608 Dahlia, which opened in 2021. Celebrating fresh, California flavors, Chef Roy's cuisine is deeply influenced by her passion for gardening and cultivating healthy food. At 608 Dahlia, she provides a true garden-to-table experience, often hand-picking garnishes and herbs from her own garden. Committed to sustainability, she supports local purveyors and eco-conscious businesses, earning her restaurant a Level One Certified Green Restaurant status. With more than a decade of professional cooking experience, including work in a three Michelin star restaurant, and two national TV show cooking competition wins, Chef Roy shares her culinary passion with her community and beyond.



Teresa Saldivar, Owner

Teresa's Jewelers, Santa Ana

Teresa Saldivar, a pioneering figure in the jewelry industry, began her career by boosting sales at a Los Angeles jewelry store. In 1985, she became the first Latina to own a jewelry store nationwide, establishing Teresa's Jewelers, renowned for quality and personalized service. Her leadership extends statewide, having served as president of the California Jeweler's Association and on the board of Jewelers of America. Saldivar, a Santa Ana College graduate in nursing and gemology, also earned a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies from California State University Fullerton. Her community dedication is evident through her support of scholarship programs like the Hispanic Education Endowment Fund and mentoring first-generation students. As a founding member of the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the National Hispanic Business Women Association, she empowers Latina business owners. Her accolades include Small Business of the Year awards from local chambers of commerce. Saldivar's journey reflects resilience and a commitment to enriching Santa Ana.



Talia Samuels, Founder & President

Outshine PR, Newport Beach

Named one of the "Best PR Agencies in America" by Forbes, Outshine Public Relations specializes in restaurant, hospitality, and culinary public relations. Founded by Talia Samuels in 2015, her agency represents an all-star roster which has included James Beard Award-winning and Michelin-starred chefs, AAA Five Diamond-awarded properties, and new-to-market culinary brands. With deep roots in the hospitality industry, she has a passion for supporting hoteliers, restaurateurs, chefs, and food and beverage brands through her creative storytelling verticals. Recognized for her poise, tenacity, and integrity, Samuels is a force in her field. Her company, Outshine Public Relations, is a full-service agency providing public relations, social media management, photography, videography, and digital marketing.



Azul Sanchez, President & CEO

Comunidad Latina Federal Credit Union, Santa Ana

Azul Sanchez has more than 20 years of experience in the banking industry, starting as a teller and advancing to management roles. She has held positions such as assistant vice president of Branches and director of Branch Operations. Currently, she serves as the CEO and president of Comunidad Latina, a Santa Ana-based credit union founded with the support of 13 other credit unions to serve the local community. Under Sanchez's leadership, Comunidad Latina has grown exponentially and was recognized by the OC Business Journal. She has also won national and state awards for developing a financial education series tailored to her demographic. Sanchez is passionate about serving the community and has developed strong ties with organizations in both Orange County and LA County that share similar goals. As the first person in her family to graduate college, become a homeowner, and travel the world, Sanchez is dedicated to ensuring others have the opportunities that financial education has provided her.



Lucy Santana, CEO

Girls Inc. of Orange County, Santa Ana

Lucy Santana serves as chief executive officer of Girls Inc. of Orange County, the region's leading nonprofit dedicated to empowering girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Since stepping into the role in 2001, Santana has transformed the organization from serving 1,500 girls annually to more than 9,200, positioning it as one of the most impactful affiliates in the national Girls Inc. network. The organization provides year-round, research-based programming focused on STEM education, mental health, college and career readiness, and leadership development, reaching girls from kindergarten through college. A first-generation college graduate, Santana brings a deep commitment to equity and a bold vision for sustainable growth. She has forged long-standing partnerships with major corporations like Boeing, PIMCO, and Ingram Micro, and co-created Project Accelerate, a national initiative backed by Pivotal Ventures to support young women of color as they enter the workforce. With an unwavering belief in every girl's potential, Santana continues to drive systemic change and open doors for future generations.



Dessi Sarabosing, Founder & CEO

Grace Ventures LLC, Irvine

Dessi Sarabosing, CPA, MBA, is redefining what leadership looks like at the intersection of finance, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. A visionary strategist and multifaceted entrepreneur, she is on a mission to create pathways for women and underrepresented founders to build, scale, and lead with confidence. As founder and managing partner of Grace Ventures, Sarabosing accelerates purpose-driven companies in technology, wellness, and better-me industries. She also launched SheReigns, a groundbreaking platform and fund providing capital, strategy, and community to women entrepreneurs rewriting the rules of business. Through SheReigns, Sarabosing is breaking barriers, mobilizing resources, and fostering an ecosystem where women rise together. A former CFO who raised more than \$1 billion for high-growth companies, Sarabosing's expertise has earned her recognition as CFO of the Year and a place on the OC500 Most Influential List. Beyond finance, she co-founded Zesty Olives and PastaViva, and is authoring *Already Crowned*, a book inspiring resilience and reinvention. Sarabosing's work embodies impact with purpose—empowering leaders, transforming communities, and building legacies that endure.



Yassmin Sarmadi, Co-Owner

Knife Pleat, Costa Mesa

Restaurateur Yassmin Sarmadi is co-owner of Knife Pleat, an elegant and approachable French restaurant situated in the Penthouse of South Coast Plaza. If the kitchen is the heart of a restaurant, then Sarmadi is the soul... and people feel her warmth and elegance upon entering Knife Pleat, which feels like walking into her home. The refined architecture and interiors, which she created in collaboration with her architect, is decidedly understated, with a high fashion aesthetic and a soft palette. Knife Pleat opened its doors a few short months before the onset of the pandemic, and Sarmadi not only navigated through an unprecedented time for her industry but led Knife Pleat in earning a coveted Michelin Star, the ultimate standard of excellence in dining worldwide. This Michelin honor is not Sarmadi's first—she is regarded as a powerful force in Southern California's culinary scene, having earned a Michelin Bib Gourmand at her former iconic Los Angeles French bistro, Church & State.



Erica Seigred, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Erica Seigred is a seasoned property investor with extensive experience in the Orange County and Los Angeles real estate markets since 1985. Known for her in-depth market knowledge and exceptional business acumen, she provides clients with unmatched insight and expert representation. With more than three decades as a successful independent business owner, Seigred excels at negotiating favorable deals and identifying potential issues before they arise. Additionally, as an expert in interior design, she offers a unique artistic perspective that sets her apart from other agents. Seigred's well-rounded expertise positions her to navigate even the most complex real estate transactions, bringing her clients' objectives to fruition. Her unwavering passion for real estate and strong work ethic has earned her a reputation for providing a high level of personalized service. As a member of Surterre Properties®, Seigred benefits from the support of a brokerage that prioritizes client success, utilizing advanced technology, and an award-winning in-house advertising studio to ensure seamless and rewarding transactions. Seigred is also committed to giving back, supporting



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local philanthropic organizations such as Child Help, Make a Wish Foundation, and Habitat for Humanity.

Julia Self, Chief Growth Officer

UIS Technology Partners, Aliso Viejo

Julia Self is a people-first, mission-driven professional with more than 14 years of experience helping non-profits grow, thrive, and make a big impact. Self has worked in the nonprofit sector in development for much of her career and has recently started supporting organizations with their technology needs. As a technology leader at UIS Technology Partners, she empowers nonprofits and small to mid-sized businesses through tailored IT solutions. With more than 28 years in business, UIS has established itself as a trusted partner in managed IT services, cybersecurity, cloud solutions, and strategic IT planning. The company's dedicated team of 16 professionals supports more than 1,450 employees, ensuring that UIS is more than just another IT provider, UIS is an extension of their partners team. The company is known for its white-glove service model, offering personalized support and direct access to leadership. Recent milestones include a 5% team expansion and successful delivery of complex projects, such as transforming a former hotel into a 44-room homeless shelter for Samaritan House in the Bay Area and executing a rapid ransomware recovery for a nonprofit client. With an estimated annual revenue of \$2 million, UIS continues to provide mission-driven technology services, helping organizations align their IT infrastructure with long-term goals.



Mona Shah, Founder

Moxxe PR, Santa Ana

Mona Shah is the founder and driving force behind Moxxe PR, a boutique public relations and marketing firm based in Orange County, California. With more than two decades of experience, Shah has built a reputation as one of the region's most trusted voices in culinary and hospitality PR, representing many of Southern California's most acclaimed chefs and independent restaurants. Known for her hands-on, personal approach, Shah leads every client relationship with integrity, creativity, and strategic vision. She works exclusively with inspired, independent brands, helping them craft compelling narratives and gain meaningful media exposure. Under her guidance, Moxxe PR has elevated Michelin-lauded restaurants—including one of only two Michelin-Starred establishments in the county—and helped shape the success of countless culinary ventures. A passionate advocate for small business and authentic storytelling, Shah was recognized by Forbes as one of the "Next 1000," honoring her role in redefining modern entrepreneurship. She continues to be a sought-after publicist for those who value expertise, heart, and a deep understanding of the hospitality world.



Sona Shah, Founder & CEO

My Private Professor LLC, Irvine

Sona Shah is the founder and CEO of My Private Professor LLC, an impact-driven tutoring

company that provides vital academic support to thousands of students nationwide—while giving back with every hour of tutoring by offering free services to students experiencing homelessness. Through its B2B arm, My Private Professor partners with local and national businesses to offer personalized tutoring as a meaningful benefit to employees and their families. Its B2C arm supports families directly, helping school-aged children reach their full academic potential. In addition, the company operates a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the My Private Professor Foundation, which collaborates with schools and nonprofits to deliver free tutoring to students living in emergency shelters and transitional housing. Under Shah's leadership, My Private Professor has been recognized for its social impact with honors including the National Philanthropy Day Award for Outstanding Small Business Corporation, JPMorgan Chase's Community ICON Award for Small Business, and a nomination for EY's Entrepreneur of the Year.



Natalie Shaw, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Luxury real estate professional Natalie Shaw, a Newport Beach native, is deeply familiar with the local community and market dynamics. With years of experience, she has built a strong reputation as a trusted agent committed to delivering exceptional results. As a board member, former vice president, and current president of the Newport Beach Association of REALTORS®, Shaw's extensive network and dedication to staying on the cutting edge of industry trends benefit her clients greatly. Shaw tailors her approach to each transaction, recognizing that no two deals are alike. A skilled negotiator, she ensures that her clients' best interests are always at the forefront, whether they're buying a first home, an investment property, or selling a second residence. Outside of real estate, Shaw enjoys socializing with friends and family, volunteering with charitable organizations, cooking, working out, reading, and exploring interior design.



Jennifer Shaw, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

With more than 45 years of experience, Newport Beach native Jennifer Shaw is a trusted luxury real estate professional, known for transforming her clients' lives through successful real estate transactions. Her deep insider knowledge of Orange County, combined with her ability to navigate any economic climate, gives Shaw a distinct advantage over other agents. She excels in negotiating, marketing properties creatively, and ensuring stress-free, successful closings. Shaw's favorite part of her career is the meaningful, lasting connections she builds with clients and their families. As a skilled negotiator, she brings a personal touch to every deal, whether representing a buyer or seller. Outside of real estate, Shaw is dedicated to giving back to her community through various charitable organizations. She also enjoys



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spending time with her children, grandchildren, and friends, playing classical music on the piano, golfing, cooking, and traveling the world.

Dita Shemke, Founder & CEO

Boardvance, Santa Ana

Dita Shemke is the founder and CEO of Boardvance, a social impact enterprise based in Orange County that prepares qualified women for their first corporate board seat. Boardvance addresses a persistent gap in leadership pipelines: the one-to-five-year journey that women face before securing a board role. Launched in December 2024, the nonprofit offers a signature Navigator Mastermind program, along with accountability, support, mentorship, curated events, and corporate partnerships. As a volunteer-led initiative, Boardvance has gained traction quickly. It has launched Inside the Boardroom, a speaker series addressing relevant and timely issues specific to private corporate boards, widened its exclusive community, gained members, and is preparing to welcome its 2025 cohort in the Fall. It has attracted OneOC, PNC Bank and The Schalow Family Giving Fund as founding partners. Shemke also built a high-impact Launch Leadership Team and Board of Advisors. Her approach to leadership development—grounded in equity, excellence, and collaboration—is setting a new standard for board readiness.



Soheila Shirazi, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Soheila Shirazi is a highly experienced real estate professional who leverages her extensive knowledge to guide clients toward their goals. With a background in the mortgage industry, she offers a rare understanding of finance and loans, complementing her real estate expertise and an MBA from Pepperdine. A longtime Newport Coast resident, Shirazi has witnessed the fluctuations of the luxury market, providing her clients with valuable insight to make informed, long-term decisions. Shirazi is known for ensuring smooth, results-oriented transactions, whether simple or complex. Her dedication to outstanding service has earned her a loyal client base. Backed by Surterre Properties®, a premier full-service real estate firm, Shirazi benefits from a range of resources, including an award-winning design and advertising studio, as well as the collective expertise of more than 230 top agents. Committed to her community, Shirazi and her daughter actively support Working Wardrobes, empowering individuals in crisis to confidently re-enter the workforce.



Gretchen Shoemaker, Co-Owner

Georgia's Restaurants, Anaheim

Gretchen "Nana" Shoemaker is the heart and soul behind Georgia's Restaurant, where her legacy of love, resilience, and authentic Soul Food is served daily. A Philadelphia native, Shoemaker moved west with her late husband, George, to raise their family in Orange County. There, she began a thriving catering business rooted in family recipes and soulful flavors. After George's passing in the early 1990s, Shoemaker stepped away from the kitchen—until decades later, when her daughter Nika and son-in-law Marlon inspired her to transform those cherished recipes into a full-fledged restaurant. Georgia's, named in George's memory, opened in 2014 at the Anaheim Packing District, quickly earning acclaim for its heartfelt Southern cuisine. Now affectionately known as "Nana" by staff and guests alike, Shoemaker continues to guide the brand's culinary direction across its four Southern California locations. Her food philosophy is simple yet profound: "So long as there is love put into what you're cooking, anything can be soul food."



Nika Shoemaker-Machado, Co-Owner

Georgia's Restaurants, Anaheim

Nika Shoemaker-Machado is the visionary co-owner of Georgia's Restaurant, where she blends entrepreneurial drive with a deep reverence for family tradition. In 2014, alongside her husband Marlon, Shoemaker-Machado brought her mother Gretchen "Nana" Shoemaker's cherished soul food recipes to life by opening the first Georgia's location at the Anaheim Packing District. What began as a tribute to her father George—whose name, combined with letters from his daughters' names, inspired the restaurant's name—has grown into a beloved Southern California brand. Raised in Orange County by high school sweethearts who left Philadelphia in search of new beginnings, Shoemaker-Machado found inspiration in the flavors and values that filled her childhood home. Her leadership has helped define Georgia's as a beacon of soulful hospitality and authentic Southern cuisine. As Georgia's expands across Southern California, Shoemaker-Machado continues to honor her family's legacy while creating a space where guests experience comfort, community, and food made with love—guided always by the heart and story of her mother, Nana Gretchen.



Sarah Shores, Vice President of Administration

Outside the Lines Inc., Orange

Sarah Shores is a standout leader in commercial construction and a driving force behind the success of Outside the Lines, Inc. (OTL), a design-build firm specializing in water features, rockwork, and immersive themed environments. With more than a decade at OTL, Shores has redefined administrative operations, overhauling systems across finance, HR, and project delivery, while fostering a culture of innovation and accountability. Her leadership has been instrumental in achieving 89% business growth, even during economic turbulence. Serving clients nationwide, OTL has grown from a boutique firm into a trusted leader in specialty construction, known for delivering high-impact environments for resorts, municipalities, and entertainment venues. At the heart of this momentum is Shores's commitment to people, process, and purpose. In 2023, Shores was recognized as a Woman of Influence by GlobeSt., honoring her exceptional leadership and continued impact in the commercial real



estate and construction industries.

Monica Shukla-Belmontes, Interim Dean, Business and Professional Studies

UMass Global, Aliso Viejo

Monica Shukla-Belmontes is interim dean of UMass Global's School of Business and Professional Studies. Shukla-Belmontes also oversees the Competency Based Education bachelor's and master's degree programs at UMass that include STEM subjects allowing several thousands of adult learners to continue their higher education online at their own pace. During the pandemic and post-pandemic 2020-2024 this has assisted the lives of thousands of Orange County learners, their families, and employers of the CBE graduates. She is also an adjunct professor of mathematics at Chapman University. She received an Award at the 2022 Distinguished Education Awards Dinner hosted by the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. She was recognized by the Orange County Business Journal with an Outstanding Women in Business Nomination. She received a recognition from Congressman Lou Correa as an Orange County Woman of the Year Award. She is an Orange County Girl Scouts Gold Award winner and mentors young females interested in STEM careers. She influences Orange County a great deal through her community service and charity donations. She was selected by the Orange County Register as One of the 125 Most Influential People in 2023, and Shukla-Belmontes received an Award as 40 Under 40 from the Irvine Chamber of Commerce and Irvine Tech Group in 2023. She was recognized as a Woman of The Year for 2024 at the Women's Leadership Summit 2024 by the United Nations Association-USA Long Beach Chapter and the Global Peace Foundation March 17, 2024, and she was selected in March, 2024 as a Woman of Distinction at Chapman University.



Kimberly Smith, Vice President of Operations

Crawford Custom Homes, Costa Mesa

Kimberly Smith is the vice president of operations at Crawford Custom Homes, where she has been a pivotal leader for more than 35 years. In her role, she oversees corporate policy, operations, finances, and job site administration, ensuring the company performs with efficiency and excellence as Orange County's leading master luxury home builder. Smith's leadership and dedication extend beyond daily operations. She has been actively involved in community support initiatives, including Home Aide, Second Harvest Food Bank, RTwelve, Serving People in Need (SPIN), and currently sits on the Advisory Board for OCC Construction Technology Department. Smith is passionate about building strong marriages and families. She and her husband actively serve in the marriage ministry at Mariner's Church and mentor pre-marital couples through Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS). Additionally, Smith co-founded the Orange County Triathlon Club and has achieved the distinction of being a two-time Ironman triathlon finisher. Her extensive experience and commitment to excellence have made her a cornerstone of Crawford Custom Homes and a respected leader in the industry and the Orange County community.



Jessica Spaulding, President

The Spaulding Agency, Aliso Viejo

Since its launch in 2009, the Spaulding Agency, under the leadership of its founder/president Jessica Spaulding, has excelled in its representation of commercial real estate firms and public agencies helping to bring greater brand awareness to CRE leaders along with business investment and job creation for Southern California cities and counties. Her work spans significant creative campaigns as well as specific work in large scale productions and events, corporate brand videos, high profile and targeted media relations, as well as effective copywriting.



Brenda Springer, Founder & CEO

Reveille Inc., Costa Mesa

Brenda Springer, founder and CEO of Reveille, Inc., is a trailblazer making a difference. Since founding her agency in 2010, Springer has been a creative and strategic partner to top health care, sustainability, consumer, and nonprofit organizations delivering award-winning, innovative, and highly strategic solutions for clients. Reveille's largest clients lead in cancer care and renewable energy, with others including Orange County nonprofits solving challenging community issues such as poverty, food insecurity, domestic violence, human trafficking, workforce readiness, unhoused families, and racial equity and equality, among others. Springer uses her tremendous talents to identify and communicate the most compelling stories in a way that both raises awareness of the issues and encourages our community to get involved. Her work has been recognized by the American Advertising Federation and the Public Relations Society of America, with her agency receiving many accolades, including its prestigious "Best in Show" award multiple times.



Ardelle St. George, Managing Partner, President & CEO

St. George & Carnegie Nautilus Global Solutions LLC

Ardelle St. George established her corporate and intellectual property law firm, St. George & Carnegie and solutions and licensing company, Nautilus Global Solutions LLC, with a journey of travel and exploration, to bring innovation into the marketplace that will serve our global community—from protecting and licensing innovation and intellectual property, negotiating global multibillion dollar M&A deals, outsourcing, and other transactions. Representing nonprofit organizations, start-up companies, and globally traded public companies, St. George has been involved in the development and commercialization of life saving medical technology devices to reducing pollution and cleaning up our waterways and ocean on a global basis to addressing business and economic matters such as in international supply chain and transportation issues. She has utilized and applied advanced technology through



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her firm and business, in areas such as education, healthcare, retail, food industry, transportation, aerospace, entertainment, and media. St. George has solved significant challenges and has led important international initiatives.

Paula Steurer, Founder & President

Sterling Public Relations, Corona del Mar

A trusted authority among entrepreneurs and executives, Paula Steurer founded Sterling Public Relations in 2008. For nearly 18 years, Steurer's innovative vision, strategic approach, and forward-thinking philosophy have played a vital role in propelling the brands her firm represents into the spotlight. With a passion for building brand identities and her innate ability to connect, engage, and drive brands to the next level, Steurer's guidance has been behind some of the most dynamic PR campaigns in the Orange County market. The firm's publicity, branding, and marketing hybrid offers tailor-made services for highly targeted results for brands, companies, and leaders who desire real impact that is curated with intention. A thought-provoking public speaker, Steurer has been seen on stages across the country, sharing lessons learned and best practices with corporations including Mindbody, Vizio, Oracle, and the Health and Fitness Association. Passionate about giving back, Steurer is extensively involved with organizations including CASA of Orange County, The Drake Gives, The Literacy Project, Casa Youth Shelter, Sherman Library & Gardens, and Newport Harbor High School's Mentor Program.



Carly Stevenson, Executive Vice President of Property Management

Avanath Capital Management LLC, Irvine

With more than 20 years of experience in real estate, Carly Stevenson is a trailblazer and respected leader in the field of property management. As executive vice president of property management at Avanath Capital Management, a mid-sized private investment firm focused on affordable and workforce housing in underserved U.S. communities, she plays a pivotal role on the leadership team. A visionary in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Stevenson has become a powerful example for women rising through the ranks of commercial real estate. In just a few years with Avanath, she makes a lasting impact—most notably by bridging the gap between community teams and the corporate office to ensure consistent, high-quality property management across the firm's portfolio. Stevenson's efforts directly support Avanath's mission to holistically invest in its communities, driving meaningful, and long-term impact. Admired for her leadership, clarity of purpose, and commitment to elevating others, Stevenson is a true force in the industry and an inspiration to colleagues and future generations alike.



Eliisa Stowell, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Longtime Corona del Mar resident and luxury real estate specialist Eliisa Stowell's

reputation precedes her—she is known throughout Orange County as one of the most efficient, transparent, and trustworthy agents in the business. Although Stowell has amassed more than a half billion dollars in sales over her career, she explains that the true value of what she does day in and day out is in helping people realize their lifestyle goals, guiding them through what is arguably the most important financial decision of their lives, and forming genuine friendships and connections along the way. Stowell is passionate about the beautiful communities she serves, noting the architectural diversity, climate, beaches, and accessibility to outdoor activities among the things she loves most about Orange County. Her clients also gain valuable insight from her many years in the real estate world; she encourages buyers searching for a home to focus on the neighborhood and its amenities, demographics, and location, as well as to ask a lot of questions of their realtor to fully understand what each area will bring to the table. As she says, "You can always change a house, but you can't change the surrounding environment." A Finland native who was raised in Sweden, Stowell is trilingual. Outside of real estate and spending time with her children, Stowell's favorite activities are yoga, tennis, and cooking. She also enjoys traveling to her hometown in Sweden, all areas of Europe, and her second home in Mexico.



Autumn Strier, Co-Founder & CEO

Miracles for Kids, Irvine

Autumn Strier is the co-founder and CEO of Miracles for Kids, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that helps families with critically-ill children battle bankruptcy, homelessness, hunger, and depression so they can fight for their children's lives. Since launching the organization in 2004, Strier has grown it from a small employee giving program into a multimillion-dollar safety net, raising more than \$60 million to date. Headquartered in Orange County, Miracles for Kids now serves thousands of individuals across California and beyond, including patients in treatment at 10 top-ranked children's hospitals. Under her leadership, the organization provides financial aid, housing, wellness support, basic needs, and stability programs that reach as far north as Sonoma and east to Dallas. Strier serves as the architect of all programs and the organization's top fundraiser. A graduate of UC Santa Barbara and NYU, she brings more than two decades of public and nonprofit sector experience to her work, earning annual recognition as an OCBJ "Women in Business Honoree," one of OC Metro's "Top 40 Under 40," and a Riviera Magazine "2025 Power Player."



Victoria Strombom, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

With more than 39 years of experience in California coastal real estate, Victoria Strombom has become a trusted advisor for clients from Newport Beach to San Clemente, and inland to Mission Viejo and Coto de Caza. Known for her deep market knowledge, seamless



**Everett Dorey Awarded
2025 Advancement of Women Award
by Orange County Women Lawyers
Association**

Everett Dorey is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, cultivating a workplace culture where every employee feels valued, and empowering women to excel in the legal field. Our firm is comprised of 55% women attorneys, and 57% of leadership positions are held by women. Recognized annually by the Orange County Register, Orange County Business Journal, and Orange County Coalition for Diversity in the Law, Everett Dorey will continue to address challenges faced by women in law and champion meaningful change.

Samantha E. Dorey
Partner, Co-Founder



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transaction management, and commitment to client success, she specializes in a wide range of properties, from beachfront homes to investment properties. Strobom has a unique expertise in assisting medical professionals, attorneys, and those undergoing transitions such as corporate relocations, divorces, trust sales, and 1031 exchanges. Her calm demeanor and exceptional people skills, developed during her career as an ICU and Life Flight nurse, ensure a smooth and successful real estate experience for all involved.

Alyce Su, Director

Armored Wolf LLC, San Juan Capistrano

Dr. Alyce Su is director of Armored Wolf, Family Holdings, formed by John Brynjolfsson in 2008. The firm is based in Orange County, California. Prior to forming Armored Wolf, Brynjolfsson spent 19 years at PIMCO. Armored Wolf in 2015 has about \$250 million in assets under management (OCBJ):

<https://www.ocbj.com/uncategorized/irvine-hedge-fund-start-family-office/>. Armored Wolf in 2015 also returned client capital to become a family office (Bloomberg):

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-05/brynjolfsson-armored-wolf-to-shutter-become-family-office>. Su joined the family office with recommendation letters from Charlie Munger and George Soros. It showcased the family office's vision of building an institutional-quality team and staying at the leading edge of market trends. Su, with a PhD in physics and mathematics from the California Institute of Technology, first met Brynjolfsson at PIMCO in 1998, when she was hired into PIMCO as a financial engineer in the Portfolio Analytics Group. Su is a prominent investment manager with China, known for her extensive background in investment management and corporate finance, after a successful career with major firms like PIMCO, Goldman Sachs, UBS Group, and McKinsey.



Angelica Suarez, President

Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa

Dr. Angelica Loera Suarez serves as the president of Orange Coast College (OCC), one of Southern California's largest community colleges, which serves over 22,000 students across more than 130 academic and career certificate programs. Appointed in July 2019 as OCC's 11th president—and notably its first Latina leader—Dr. Suarez brings more than 30 years of experience in higher education administration. Under her leadership, OCC has achieved significant milestones, including a rise in student enrollment, the opening of the college's first on-campus housing complex, a state-of-the-art chemistry building, and the expansion of student equity and inclusion initiatives. In March 2024, Dr. Suarez became the first community college president to receive the prestigious NASPA National President's Award, honoring her commitment to fostering a "Culture of Care" and advancing student success. A first-generation college student and immigrant, Dr. Suarez holds a doctorate in educational leadership and is an active member of several statewide and regional boards, championing access, opportunity, and excellence in education.



Jin Sung, Founder & Executive Director

OASIS Center International, Santa Ana

Jin Sung is the founder and executive director of OASIS Center International, a nonprofit arts education and mentorship organization serving low-income youth across California. Since its founding in 2012, OASIS has reached over 30,000 students, including more than 4,500 annually in recent years, through partnerships with schools and community groups in Los Angeles, Orange, Contra Costa, and Fresno Counties. OASIS delivers its signature Art Leads® program, offering visual and performing arts instruction, mentorship, and leadership development, via a team of teaching artists, staff, and volunteers. Under Sung's leadership, OASIS has expanded to new school districts, launched the Epicenter Foundation in 2020 (a HUD-approved housing counseling agency), and forged corporate partnerships with companies like T-Mobile and Southern California Edison. Her vision bridges arts, education, and community empowerment, with recent milestones including a seven-figure annual budget, expanded arts programming, and recognition by Congressman Lou Correa as a "Woman of the Year" for community leadership. Sung continues to champion creativity, equity, and opportunity for underserved youth across California.



Mary-Christine (M.C.) Sungaila, Partner

Complex Appellate Litigation Group, Newport Beach

M.C. Sungaila has been the leader of the Orange County office of boutique law firm Complex Appellate Litigation Group for the last two and a half years, handling high-impact appellate cases across California and the rest of the country. Recently, Sungaila has been leveraging her appellate skills to help craft cutting-edge legal standards in the emergent field of space law. She is quickly becoming a recognized thought leader in this area as she completes her LLM in air and space law at the University of Mississippi. Outside of her legal practice, Sungaila is the creator and host of The Portia Project® podcast, which aims to inspire the next generation of women lawyers and leaders through storytelling. With more than 230 episodes featuring influential women, the podcast has earned consistent recognition from ALM and the Internet Marketing Association for its impact and innovation. The Portia Project® has been downloaded more than 75,000 times, placing it in the top 1 percent of podcasts and among FeedSpot's top Women in Law podcasts worldwide.



Rachel Svoboda, Founder & CEO

Sunday Brunch Agency, Huntington Beach

Rachel Svoboda is a serial entrepreneur, philanthropist, and single mother of two. She launched her first company, Sunday Brunch Agency in 2016, as the first fully remote,

female-owned marketing agency in Orange County. Today, Sunday Brunch continues to thrive with a full-time team and clients spanning Orange County, across the U.S., and around the globe. The agency proudly partners with independently owned brands, businesses, professionals, and even political figures—delivering strategic marketing that drives results and reflects shared values. Since launching Sunday Brunch, Svoboda has founded seven additional businesses, including a private investment firm, a premium bourbon brand, and an education platform that mentors emerging entrepreneurs. She was named a 2025 finalist for the Women Changing the World Awards and continues to champion innovation, ethical leadership, and economic empowerment for women. Svoboda is deeply committed to mentorship and philanthropy, using both her businesses and voice to support people and causes she believes in. Whether investing in people or brands, her passion for impact drives everything.



Sheila Swaroop, Partner

Knobbe Martens, Irvine

Sheila Swaroop, chair of Knobbe Martens' esteemed litigation practice, is an industry-lauded intellectual property litigator who has handled complex technology cases through trial and appeal for companies of all sizes for over two decades. Swaroop has played a leading role in a number of high-profile cases, including one of the most significant and widely covered patent litigation matters of late: a headline-grabbing patent infringement case on behalf of Masimo Corporation against Apple at the International Trade Commission that resulted in an import ban of infringing Apple Watches.

Throughout her career, she has been a strong advocate for women and other underrepresented groups in the legal industry in Orange County and across the IP space. Her distinguished career, marked by groundbreaking litigation victories and an unwavering commitment to mentorship and the Orange County community, makes her an outstanding candidate for the Orange County Business Journal's "Women in Business" awards.



Suzanna Tashiro Choi, President

Tashiro Choi & Associates, Orange

Suzanna Tashiro Choi is a trailblazing entrepreneur, civic leader, and nationally award-winning multicultural strategist whose impact has shaped the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Orange County and beyond. As the founder and CEO of Tashiro Choi & Associates, an award-winning public affairs and community engagement firm, Choi built one of the first agencies in the nation dedicated to serving as a voice for multicultural communities. For more than three decades, she has advised Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and public institutions—guiding them in authentically engaging diverse communities and elevating equity as a strategic priority. Her firm's client roster includes the State of California, Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, the U.S. Federal Government, and leading healthcare institutions, nonprofits, and government entities. Under her leadership, the firm has experienced significant growth, expanding into infrastructure, water, healthcare, and sustainability sectors. Choi currently serves as president of the Asian Business Association of Orange County and sits on several boards focused on cross-cultural and economic development. Her honors include the U.S. Department of Commerce's Multicultural Advocate of the Year and the Irvine Chamber's Lifetime Achievement Award.



Alexandra Taylor, President, Publicist

ATeam Agency, Newport Beach

Alexandra Taylor is the founder and principal of ATeam Agency, a Newport Beach-based strategic communications firm redefining the modern publicity landscape. With over 17 years of experience, she is known for her innovative hybrid approach—combining community engagement with cutting-edge digital strategy to elevate brand visibility, business growth, and civic impact. A Newport Beach native and graduate of the University of Southern California, Taylor brings expertise in publicity, marketing, political consulting, and next-generation media. Under her leadership, ATeam has launched high-impact campaigns across industries including government, lifestyle, hospitality, philanthropy, and real estate. Her hyper-local insight, influential media reach, and strong strategic partnerships have made her a go-to advisor for growth-focused brands and public figures seeking authentic, purpose-driven visibility. Her diverse client roster includes Happy Dad Hard Seltzer, Newport Beach Mayor Joe Stapleton, the Full Send Network, Bingham's Bourbon, and the Newport Beach Tennis & Pickleball Club. Recognized as a modern brand architect, Taylor's work has been featured by Fox Business, The Daily Wire, and Breitbart News. She also serves on the board of the California Women's Leadership Association and supports philanthropic causes across Orange County.



Kara Taylor, CMO

ATTOM, Irvine

As chief marketing officer at ATTOM, Kara Taylor plays a central role in shaping the strategic direction and brand visibility of one of the nation's leading providers of comprehensive property data and real estate analytics. ATTOM powers real estate, mortgage, insurance, and government solutions with data on over 158 million U.S. properties, delivering insights across more than 9,000 data attributes. Under Taylor's leadership, the company has significantly expanded its marketing, content, and lead generation efforts—driving measurable growth in brand equity, client engagement, and data sales. She has championed SEO and digital strategies that have fueled organic traffic and positioned ATTOM as a go-to resource for trusted property data. Taylor has also been instrumental in M&A efforts, including the integration of Estatic, GeoData Plus, and Home Junction, while supporting the strategic divestiture of RealtyTrac. Her ability to lead cross-functional teams, embrace



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innovation, and align marketing with revenue goals has made her a key contributor to ATOM's ongoing expansion and industry leadership.

Mimi Taylor, Senior Vice President & CFO

Roth Staffing Companies, Orange

Mimi Taylor is the senior vice president and chief financial officer of Roth Staffing Companies, where she leads the strategic financial direction of the organization. She oversees key departments including accounting, finance, credit & collections, and payroll, ensuring operational excellence and alignment with the company's purpose—to make life better for coworkers, customers, ambassadors, and business partners. Taylor joined Roth Staffing in 2014, drawn by its award-winning workplace culture, after serving a decade as CFO of a major petroleum distribution company, where she was honored as Private Company CFO of the Year in 2007.

With more than 30 years of experience in accounting and finance in mid-large sized companies with multi-company/division enterprises, Taylor brings deep expertise across industries such as insurance, distribution, and manufacturing. Her strengths lie in strategic planning, capital management, operational efficiency, IT integration, mergers and acquisitions, and corporate tax. A proud graduate of the University of Notre Dame, Taylor holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and resides in Huntington Beach, California. She is the mother of three adult children.



Eloiza Tecson, President & Co-Founder

E20 Training, Costa Mesa

Eloiza Tecson is a strategic executive leader, advisor, and investor passionate about fostering healthier, sustainable lifestyles. Her career spans leadership roles in prominent health, wellness, and sports organizations, including Lindora Wellness (chief experience officer), Orangetheory Fitness (leading global operations and strategy to COO), Red Bull North America, ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and F45 Training, where she drove significant growth and impact. Currently, she co-founded and leads E20, a boutique wellness concept utilizing EMS technology for enhanced movement and recovery. Tecson is a pioneer in developing innovative health programs, designing growth strategies, establishing operational excellence, and implementing integrated client and team experiences. A sought-after speaker and consultant, she addresses health, wellness, equity, investment, and leadership. Beyond E20, Tecson champions women's and youth sports, leveraging her background as a former competitive athlete. She actively competes in endurance events, including ultramarathons and triathlons, currently training for a 100-mile ultramarathon, IRONMAN 70.3, and IRONMAN 140.6. Tecson holds an MBA and is pursuing a Doctorate in Business Administration, researching the role of emotional intelligence in organizational culture. Her achievements have earned recognition from Forbes 30 Under 30, NextGen Under 30, and the Los Angeles Business Journal's Women's Leadership Awards.



Sheila Teevans, Chief of Staff

South County Outreach, Irvine

With a career spanning both the corporate and nonprofit worlds, Sheila Teevans combines mission-driven leadership with strategic business expertise. Over the course of three decades, she has helped organizations forge powerful partnerships and drive sustainable growth. After launching her career in the private sector, she leveraged her professional background to create a lasting positive impact in her community as a nonprofit leader. Today she serves as the chief of staff for South County Outreach, an organization with a mission to prevent hunger and homelessness by helping people help themselves. In this role she has played an instrumental role in the nonprofit's expansion, including overseeing the opening of a second Upscale Resale thrift store and a new food market to support more vulnerable, low-income families during times of financial hardship.



Jennifer Thomas, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Jennifer Thomas is a top professional in Southern California's luxury real estate market, renowned for her exceptional work ethic and client-first approach. A USC Marshall School of Business graduate, Thomas leverages her award-winning expertise and innovative marketing strategies to deliver unparalleled results. Since 2016, Thomas and her team at The Thomas Group have been recognized as America's Best Real Estate Professionals by RealTrends, ranking them in the top 1 percent nationwide. They have also earned the Real Estate All-Stars title from Orange Coast Magazine for consistently achieving the highest sales in the county. Known for her integrity and dedication, Thomas builds lasting relationships with clients, resulting in a steady stream of repeat and referral business. Her impeccable sales techniques and tireless marketing efforts have made her a standout in the industry.



Desiree Thomas, COO

Be Well Orange County, Irvine

Desiree Thomas, R.N., M.S., M.B.A., is a transformative healthcare leader with more than 20 years of operational experience in complex, high-stakes environments. Since joining Be Well Orange County (BWOC) in 2024 as chief operating officer, she has led clinical operations across a 90-bed, 5-acre behavioral health campus in Orange, offering crisis stabilization, residential treatment, and substance use disorder programs and eight city-based mobile crisis response teams. Under her leadership, BWOC expanded to 130 employees at its peak, followed by a strategic right-sizing to align with long-term sustainability. The organization is now preparing to open a second 15-acre, 146-bed campus in Irvine. In 2024 alone, BWOC served over 28,000 Orange County residents. Thomas has driven a cultural transformation at BWOC, evolving it from a start-up to a structured enterprise with a redefined mission,

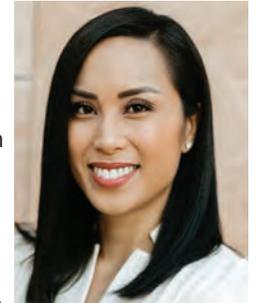


strategic direction, and digital innovation. Her leadership is marked by authenticity, compassion, and a commitment to excellence. Thomas' journey—from critical care nurse to executive—reflects resilience and purpose, making her a powerful advocate for behavioral health reform.

Anh Tran, Managing Partner

SageMint Wealth, Irvine

Anh Tran is the founder and managing partner of SageMint Wealth, a woman-and minority-led financial planning firm managing more than \$350 million in assets. Under Tran's leadership, SageMint has earned national recognition for its inclusive, values-based approach to wealth management. More than 75% of the firm's clients identify as women, and over 50 percent as LGBTQ+—a reflection of Tran's mission to make financial planning more accessible, empowering, and personal. She is ranked in the top 1 percent of advisors at LPL Financial and has been recognized by Forbes, CNBC, and AdvisorHub for her excellence in the field. Tran believes that wealth should be a tool for good, and she guides clients in aligning their investments with ESG principles and philanthropic goals. Her motto, "Live well, do good," defines not only SageMint's brand but her leadership philosophy. Through strategic advising, mentoring, and advocacy, Tran is redefining what financial success looks like—and for whom.



Xanthia Tran, Owner

OC Medical Aesthetic Spa, Westminster

OC Medical Aesthetic Spa has a large array of skin care services offered in Orange County with Xanthia Tran.



Terri Trinidad, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach

Terri Trinidad brings nearly 30 years of experience in Orange County's competitive luxury real estate market. Renowned for her ability to build personal connections with clients, she delivers exceptional, one-on-one service throughout every transaction. Trinidad's extensive career spans multiple financial cycles, providing her with valuable insights to guide both buyers and sellers. Her entrepreneurial background, having owned several small start-up businesses, further enhances her negotiation skills and ability to secure favorable deals for her clients. As part of Surterre Properties®, Trinidad benefits from an in-house advertising studio and a collaborative corporate culture, ensuring a seamless and rewarding client experience. Passionate about sustainability, Trinidad appreciates Surterre's commitment to eco-friendly practices, which align with her love for the natural beauty of Laguna Beach. In addition to her real estate work, Trinidad is



Congratulations to Marina Dutton, and all the extraordinary women nominated for their outstanding contributions to our community.



Since August 2024, Marina has led the Irvine Marriott. A seasoned hospitality leader, with over 20 years of hospitality expertise, Marina has a strong track record of transforming operations, boosting guest satisfaction, and inspiring high-performing teams. Under her leadership, Irvine Marriott thrives—both in performance and community impact. Marina and her team actively support a variety of local organizations, including Second Harvest Food Bank, Irvine Ranch Conservancy, and Children's Miracle Network. Outside of work, Marina loves spending time with family, exploring the great outdoors, and is a self-proclaimed foodie. Fun fact: Marina was born on Halloween and makes it a tradition to dress up as a different villain each year for fun!

IRVINE MARRIOTT
18000 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine, CA 92612 | 949.553.0100 | IrvineMarriott.com



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dedicated to giving back, supporting organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the Marine Mammal Center, and Meals on Wheels. She is also an active member of the Laguna Board of REALTORS®.

Thuy Turner, Co-President & COO

Healthcare Property Advisors (HPA), Brea

Thuy Turner is the co-founder of Healthcare Property Advisors (HPA), established in 2014, and recently launched Vital Capital Partners with partner Robert Lee. Based in Brea, California, the new investment platform focuses on tax-advantaged 1031 exchange programs in the RIA and broker-dealer space. With over two decades of experience in commercial real estate—primarily in the healthcare asset class—Turner is expanding into new capital channels to scale the business. HPA owns and operates a portfolio that includes medical office buildings, micro-hospitals, surgery centers, and other healthcare properties. Since its founding, HPA's executive team has acquired or advised on more than \$1 billion in healthcare property investments. Turner leads HPA Exchange's asset and property management and overall operations, while Lee serves as co-president and chief investment officer. Turner holds a bachelor's degree from UC Irvine and an MBA from Cal State Fullerton, with previous roles at Arden Realty, Equity Office, and Schnitzer Northwest. While the industry has come a long way, Turner notes CRE is still a male-dominated world, and the motivation to succeed is fierce. "I love always striving to show that we really can do this as females," she shared. Teamwork is also important. "Your supportive circle yields significant success in commercial real estate and in life." Finding the right mix of a strong mentor and support network early was challenging for Turner, but the process shaped who she is now as an industry leader. In addition to finding a great mentor, Turner's advice for other women who want to succeed in top roles in the industry is simple: Love what you do. Hard work, perseverance and a good, light attitude will get you plenty far in life. Have fun with it-truly.



Cherie Turner, Vice President of Marketing and Training

Western National Property Management, Irvine

Cherie Turner is vice president of marketing and training at Western National Property Management (WNPM), a premier leader in the multifamily housing industry. A 30-year multifamily veteran, Turner oversees marketing, training, and policy and procedure management—critical functions that have helped shape WNPM's reputation as an industry leader. Before joining Western National in 2011, she held leadership positions within her own marketing firm as well as with Irvine Company Apartments and Oakwood Worldwide. Over her 14-year tenure at WNPM, Turner has built highly respected professional development programs. From launching a companywide university and cultivating a talented team of training professionals, to spearheading mentorship and leadership initiatives, she has transformed learning into a strategic advantage. WNPM's robust training and associate development programs are recognized as some of the most respected and impactful in the multifamily industry. Among her marketing responsibilities, Turner leads brand and social media strategy for the WNPM portfolio and implemented and oversees the award-winning DucksLiving.com campaign—a first-of-its-kind sports partnership with the NHL's Anaheim Ducks hockey team, benefiting local causes. Turner is a visionary mentor who uplifts those around her. Her legacy is measured not just in results, but in the people and careers she has impacted.



Sherrie VanKoevering, Wealth Management Advisor

VanKoevering Wealth Management and Insurance Services, Irvine

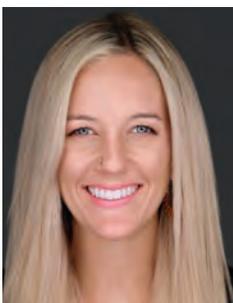
Sherrie VanKoevering is the founder and CEO of Van Koevering Wealth Management and Insurance Services, affiliated with Northwestern Mutual. She and her team provide comprehensive financial planning from professional beginnings to retirement, serving clients nationwide since 2007. VanKoevering has been named to Forbes' Top Financial Security Professionals List for five consecutive years. As a member of the Financial Educators Network and the Association of Financial Educators, she has educated tens of thousands on comprehensive financial planning and wealth management. In addition, VanKoevering was handpicked by the senior leadership team to serve as the growth and development director at Northwestern Mutual-Orange County. Beyond her commitment to her clients, she plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the company by mentoring the next generation of financial representatives. Her responsibilities as a GDD include scouting exceptional talent, guiding candidates through the selection process, and providing comprehensive development for new team members throughout their first five years. VanKoevering has earned numerous accolades, including Northwestern Mutual's Master Achievement Award, being the first female recipient in 160 years. Recognized as the top female advisor in the Central Region and now Western Region, she has been inducted into the company's elite Forum Group for nine consecutive years, distinguishing herself among the top 1 percent of Northwestern Mutual's financial professionals.



Kenzie Vath, Vice President of Strategic Innovation

Pacific Hospitality Group, Irvine

Kenzie Vath is the vice president of strategic innovation at Pacific Hospitality Group (PHG), where she drives transformative initiatives, spearheads property renovations, and oversees the development of innovative solutions to enhance guest experiences. Since joining PHG, Vath has held various leadership roles, including overseeing recruiting, food and beverage operations, retail curation, and brand development, each contributing to the company's growth and success. Under Vath's leadership, PHG has successfully implemented cutting-edge strategies that have elevated the company's portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts. Her ability to blend creativity with operational excellence has been instrumental in shaping PHG's reputation as a leader in the hospitality industry. Vath is a



dedicated professional with a holistic approach to leadership, having earned her bachelor's in holistic health from Purdue Online and a coaching certification from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She is also a passionate advocate for philanthropy and empowering women in business.

Whitney Kumar & Kamryn Villegas, Owners

KW Court Reporting, Irvine

KW Court Reporting is a court reporter-owned firm based in Irvine, California, founded in 2013 by twin sisters Kamryn Villegas and Whitney Kumar. With a team of experienced stenographers and staff, the company has grown steadily, serving clients throughout Southern California and beyond. What began as a two-person operation has evolved into a respected court reporting agency recognized for its professionalism, reliability, and personal approach to client service. Today, KW delivers comprehensive deposition and courtroom services, including Realtime/live-note reporting, legal videography, keyword indexing, secure digital delivery, and cloud storage, backed by 24/7 online scheduling and last-minute booking capabilities. The firm is known for its quick turnaround times, transparent billing practices, and strict compliance with Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 16, § 2475 – Professional Standards of Practice. Their company works with the biggest law firms in Southern California and has covered many high-profile cases. Villegas & Kumar have been invited into the exclusive Forbes Business Council four years in a row. KW Court Reporting co-founder, Whitney Kumar, also serves as the official court reporter on Amazon Prime's, "Judy Justice," lending national visibility to the firm's credibility and expertise. In recent years, KW has expanded its footprint through strategic partnerships and technological innovation, positioning itself as a leader in modern, ethical court reporting.



Victoria Vu, Managing Partner

VF Developments LLC, Costa Mesa

Established in 2015, VF Developments LLC, a minority and female owned and run company, has acquired more than \$77 million in multifamily properties with a portfolio consisting of 40 properties and 272 units located in Los Angeles and Orange County. The portfolio building transformations are featured on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/vfdevelopments>. VF Developments strives to provide neighborhoods in gentrifying areas of Los Angeles and Orange County Class. A building design finishes at accessible and affordable market rents to future tenants. VF prides itself on the opportunity to create and provide modern living spaces to add value to its communities. With properties ranging from condominiums to multifamily residences in gentrifying areas throughout the greater Los Angeles area and Orange County. VF manages a multitude of processes including closing on unique, off market opportunities, syndication, interior and exterior renovations, and design using unique architecture and interior compositions transforming distressed properties into contemporary, market-ready homes and apartment communities. VF seeks value-add investment opportunities and creates significant value for clients and investors. VF Developments specialized in acquisitions, renovations, and multi-family management in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The company targets under-performing and mismanaged multifamily properties in gentrifying areas of these counties. VF completes significant renovations that modernize and transform dated properties into cutting edge, high quality, best in class living environments—ultimately creating substantial value enhancement for its investors. Videos of these stunning communities can be viewed here—<https://www.youtube.com/@vf-developments>.



Brenda Walters, Community Engagement & Programs Director

Innovative Housing Opportunities, Santa Ana

As community engagement & programs director for leading Orange County based affordable housing developer Innovative Housing Opportunities (IHO), Brenda Walters develops innovative and creative strategies to deliver programs and build strategic relationships that support the services provided to its affordable housing community residents. She develops strategic and beneficial partnerships with non-profit, corporate, and civic groups and recruits corporate and individual volunteers to support these programs and services. IHO has nine properties with a total of 672 affordable housing units under management in Southern California. IHO's mission is to enrich communities by providing high-quality affordable housing and services. IHO's vision is to ignite powerful change that increases economic resilience and improves the quality of life for the people and communities it serves. IHO's California development portfolio provides housing to seniors, families, foster youth, veterans, those living with mental illness, formerly homeless, developmentally disabled, and other special needs and mixed populations.



Katie Webb-Brundige, Co-Founder & CEO

Intertwined Inc. / RAD Camp, Irvine

Katie Webb-Brundige brings more than 18 years of entrepreneurial experience in hospitality, events, and design. As co-founder of Intertwined Inc., she leads the creation of elevated, multi-day experiences that combine high-end aesthetics with flawless execution. Her expertise in vendor coordination, production logistics, and custom event design has positioned her as a trusted leader in the industry, delivering weddings, galas, and nonprofit events on local, national, and international stages. Webb-Brundige is known for her ability to transform visions into unforgettable environments through detailed planning and creative storytelling. Her work is defined by precision, purpose, and a deep commitment to intentional design. She earned her degree in hospitality and tourism management with an emphasis in event management from San Diego State University. Webb-Brundige began her career producing events for Fortune 500 companies and later co-founded RAD Camp, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering individuals with developmental disabilities through joyful, inclusive experiences that celebrate every individual.



2025 Women in Business Award Nominees

Dr. Cynthia West, Associate Dean, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programs, and Clinical Associate Professor

Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics, Argyros College of Business and Economics, Chapman University, Orange



Dr. Cynthia West is the assistant dean of the Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics at Chapman University's Argyros College of Business and Economics. A visionary leader with deep roots in startup development and sales strategy, Dr. West brings decades of experience building ventures from the ground up and mentoring future business leaders. She joined Chapman in 2023, entering what she calls the "give-back era" of her career to help empower the next generation of entrepreneurs. The Leatherby Center, founded in 1995, is a driving force for entrepreneurial education and innovation in Orange County. It offers experiential learning, community events, and mentorship opportunities that nurture an entrepreneurial mindset both on campus and beyond. Under Dr. West's leadership, the Center is expanding its reach to include founders from underserved communities and creating new opportunities for inclusive economic development. In addition to her role at Chapman, Dr. West is a published author, consultant, and advocate for entrepreneurship as a pathway to equity, empowerment, and long-term economic resilience.

Allie Williamson, Financial Advisor

Northwestern Mutual - Orange County, Irvine



Allie Williamson began her Orange County based financial planning practice with Northwestern Mutual in 2014. Williamson specializes in serving driven couples, women navigating life transitions, and business owners, empowering them to achieve financial freedom through tailored strategies and personalized guidance. She has been recognized nationally as one of the fastest-growing practices within Northwestern Mutual, is a qualifying member of the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table, and recently achieved her Certified Financial Planner™ designation, further enhancing her expertise and dedication to providing top-tier financial advice. As a dynamic young female advisor thriving in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Williamson has passionately built her practice around advising and supporting women. Her commitment extends beyond her practice as she actively champions local initiatives focused on financial literacy and empowerment for young women, cementing her status as a transformative leader in the business community.

Anika Wilson, Financial Advisor

Spinnaker Investment Group, Newport Beach



Anika Wilson is a poised and purpose-driven financial advisor at Spinnaker Investment Group, where she leads with vision, integrity, and a deep commitment to client success. Since joining the firm in 2021, Wilson has been instrumental in expanding Spinnaker's client services, with a strong focus on helping women build, grow, and protect their wealth through personalized investment strategies and comprehensive financial planning. Wilson is the founder and lead advisor of Women & Wealth, a groundbreaking division within Spinnaker dedicated to empowering women with the financial tools and education necessary to take control of their financial futures. Her mission is to inspire confidence, foster independence, and create pathways for women to build generational wealth. A recognized advocate for financial literacy and women's empowerment, Wilson is a sought-after speaker at diverse industry and community events, including the 2025 Women's Financial Freedom Conference, Sheppard Mullin's Women's Law Group, and the Orange County Bar Association. Her ability to communicate complex financial concepts with clarity and heart has made her a trusted voice in the field. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Wilson is a passionate community leader. She serves on the boards of CHOC's Glass Slipper Guild—where she helped raise more than \$700,000 in 2024–2025 for autism and neurodevelopmental care—Community Legal Aid SoCal, and Project Youth OCBF. She is also a member of the Orange County Women Lawyers Association and an alumna of Newport Beach's Distinguished Citizen Program. Wilson exemplifies what it means to lead with both expertise and purpose. Through her work, she is not only transforming financial outcomes—she is transforming lives.

Diane Wittenberg, Partner

Haskell & White, Irvine



Diane Wittenberg, a partner of Haskell & White, one of Southern California's largest independently owned public accounting firms, brings more than 35 years of public accounting experience to her clients and the expertise to help them navigate a complex economic and regulatory environment. Providing value beyond meeting compliance requirements is a focus for each of her clients. Her leadership is integral to many vital initiatives for the firm, such as mentoring and training programs for young professionals pursuing a Certified Public Accountant license. She serves as a board member for the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) Orange County chapter and the Audit Committee chair for the Discovery Cube Orange County.

Liyuan Woo, CFO

Toca Football Inc, Costa Mesa



Liyuan Woo is a strategic and operational financial executive and board member. Woo has more than two decades of experience in creating and building infrastructure for innovation, growth, and global expansion. She is currently the audit committee chair and board member of Shawmut Design and Construction. She is the CFO of TOCA Football, an innovation-focused global category disruptor driving participation in soccer. Woo most recently served as the CFO of The Beauty Health Company (NASDAQ: SKIN). Prior to BeautyHealth, Woo was the COO and CFO of The VOID, a highly rated virtual reality company. Woo also served as CFO at

SharkNinja, a multi-billion global consumer electronics company. Previously, Woo served as Interim CFO of Gymboree Group during its multi-billion dollar restructuring process. She also served as the CFO of bebe stores, a publicly traded global fashion brand. Woo started her career at Deloitte in its M&A Transaction Services group, holding various senior positions. During her 13 years with Deloitte, she provided financial advisory services to public and private companies for M&A, IPOs and growth initiatives.

Kimberly Woods, Luxury Real Estate Professional

Surterre Properties, Newport Beach



Kimberly Woods is a seasoned California REALTOR® at Surterre Properties®, combining local expertise, real estate knowledge, and a deep appreciation for the meaning of home. She recognizes that a home is not just a place to live but a sanctuary, and she strives to exceed client expectations with every transaction. Passionate about Feng Shui, Woods offers a unique service, helping clients find spaces that align with their sense of balance and tranquility. Whether guiding first-time buyers or assisting in the search for a dream home, she ensures a seamless, enriching real estate experience. As a wife, mother, and homeowner, Woods understands the profound significance of home as a foundation for a harmonious life. Her client-first approach is reflected in her mantra: "Guiding clients through the complex currents of buying and selling to a destination of delightful experiences." Outside of real estate, Woods contributes to her community through volunteering with the CHOC Children's Hospital Glass Slipper Guild and serving on her children's elementary school foundation board. At Surterre Properties, Woods is a trusted partner in your real estate journey.

Sally Zesut, Senior Vice President

Avison Young, Irvine



Sally Zesut has established a distinguished career in the Commercial Real Estate industry, spanning more than 27 years. Her commitment to client service, grounded in honesty, communication, and care has earned her a reputation as a trusted advisor. Beyond her professional success, Zesut is a dedicated mentor, guiding those around her towards achieving successful real estate careers. Since joining Avison Young, Zesut has consistently demonstrated excellence, integrity, and a commitment to results. Over the past five years, she has led some of the most significant transactions across the firm. In recent years, Zesut has led some of Avison Young SoCal's most significant transactions, including a \$119.05 million lease in 2024 and a \$13 million dollar land sale, a \$55.4 million lease in 2023, and a \$45.8 million lease and sale of an industrial property in 2022. In 2025 Zesut was recognized for Avison Young's \$1Million Dollar Circle of Excellence as well as named to GlobeSt.com's 2025 Women of Influence list. This recognition is a testament to Zesut's remarkable contributions—not only to Avison Young, but to the commercial real estate industry as a whole. Her achievements reflect the strength, talent, and dedication that continue to distinguish our people as our most valuable asset.

PDS Health®
CONGRATULATES
CHELSEY ELLIOTT
2025 Women in Business Award Nominee

At PDS Health, we are redefining health care through dental-medical integration, supporting more than 1,000 practices nationwide with advanced, proven technologies and strategic business services.

We proudly celebrate **Chelsey Elliott, Director of Emerging Technologies and Life Sciences**, on her nomination for the 2025 Women in Business Award. Her leadership in emerging technologies is driving meaningful innovation and operational excellence, shaping a culture focused on collaboration, performance and better outcomes for providers and the patients they serve.

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The 31st Annual



Tiffany Aguinaldo / Forge Media Group
Taniya Ahmed / Sunbliss Cafe
Melissa Aills / Juice It Up!
Jessica Aliotti / Northwestern Mutual - Orange County
Tiffany Alva / First 5 Orange County
Valerie Amezcua / City of Santa Ana
Jordan Anderson / JP Morgan Chase
Rebecca Anderson / Surterre Properties
Elizabeth Andrade / 211 OC, a key service of Orange County United Way
Corey Anthony / Surterre Properties
Kim Arial / Ware Malcomb
Kate Armado / Enterprise Bank & Trust
Janice Arrigo / Surterre Properties
Stephanie Ascher / KBS Realty Advisers
Nathalie Barge / Pique-Nique
Koren Barrett / Newport Integrative Health
Isabel Becerra / The Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers
Devon Belanger / Power Pulse EMS Personal Training
Anna Bennett / FirstTeam®
Allycyn Bennett / Sandstone Financial
Ilyana Benson / NeoSol Marketing
Letitia Berbaum / Blue Sands Wealth
Pooja Bhalla / Illumination Foundation
Kelly Blair / Mark IV Capital, Inc.
Lynne Bolduc / FitzGerald Kreditor Bolduc Risbrough LLP
Adrienne Brandes / Surterre Properties
Christia Brockman / Sunday Brunch Agency
Michelle Brouwer / Irvine Barclay Theatre
Meredith Cagle / Beyond Blindness
Angela Caliger / Surterre Properties
Nancy Campbell / Surterre Properties
Ronnie Cancellieri / Surterre Properties
Camilla Caremoli / CasaDamí
Sarah Carr / McCarthy Building Co.
Erika Carson / Bear Flag Fish Company
Brandy Casey / NuBella Med Spa
Nancy Castenholz / Innovative Light Designs
Rashmi Chaturvedi / Kaygen and UPTempo Careers
Esther Cho / Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP
Suzanna Choi / Tashiro Choi & Associates
Taylor Clarke / Amborella Organics
Meghan Clem / Intertwined Inc. / RAD Camp

Shiree Colton / Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs
Keelin Conant / Alvaka
Cyndi Court / TGR Foundation
Alice Cowell / ReFresh Talent Agency
Kristin Daher / Powerhouse + Co.
Roxana Davidoff / Big Purple Dot
Carol DeNembo / Mountain Mike's Pizza, LLC
Hema Dey / Iffel International Inc.
Elise Diaz / Northwestern Mutual - Orange County
Deborah Dickson / Smith Dickson Certified Public Accountants, LLP
Samantha Dorey / Everett Dorey LLP
Tamara Dorman & Hanna Dorman Prokop / BÄBEN
Sarah Downing / Northwestern Mutual
Christa Duggan / Stone Groove Stillhouse, Portola Coffee Roasters
Kristle Duran / Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast
Marina Dutton / Irvine Marriott
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Carrie Freitas / KTM Agency
Jennifer Friend / Project Hope Alliance
Lauren Gage / Selah Portfolios & Planning
Ginny Gallagher & Kate Nichols / Newport Knits
Kelly Galligan / Rutan & Tucker, LLP
Carla Gatza / Action Property Management
Meghan Glaspy / RMO LLP

Sue Grant / The Literacy Project
Anne Grey / Make-A-Wish Orange County and the Inland Empire
Ivy Ha / KEI Concepts
Holly Hagler / Meals on Wheels Orange County
Kaaren Hall / uDirect IRA Services, LLC
Rebecca Hall / Idea Hall
Vicky Hammond / Coreland Companies
Debbie Hansen-Bosse / The Flora May Foundation
Lesley Harper / CannonDesign
Theresa Henry / Quality Health Partners
Michelle Hensley / Nifty Package Co.
Phoebe Hertz / Northwestern Mutual - Orange County
Tracey Hill / Child Creativity Lab
Madelynn Hirneise / Families Forward
Amanda Ho / Great Maple Restaurants
Poppy Holguin / Jan's Health Bar
Anne Hoover / Surterre Properties
Vanessa Howard / South County Outreach
Lisa Hsiao / Musick, Peeler, & Garrett LLP
Jessica Huang / Restaurant Marketing
Jessica Hung / Parasol Co.
Rina Hunter / Kahana Feld LLP
Meymuna Hussein-Cattan / Tiyya Foundation
Mara James / Extraordinary Lives Foundation
Venus Jenkins / Chargenet Stations
Ronnetta Johnson / Waymakers
Meghana Joshi / MG2, an affiliate of Colliers Engineering & Design
Suzanne Justice / Blake Rian Consulting
Hagan Kappler / Daisy
Kateryna Karasyk / Elephant Signage & Display, Int
Dee Katz / Walsworth LLP
Laura Khouri / Western National Property Management
Robin King / The Shea Center
Sharon Klein / Blank Rome LLP
Michelle Krenzke / Surterre Properties
Karen Kroeter / Travelmation
Kamryn Villegas & Whitney Kumar / KW Court Reporting
Stefani LaFreniere / Resiliency Mind+Body Medicine
Jan Langford / Surterre Properties
Lara Langford / Surterre Properties

LUNCHEON & AWARDS PROGRAM

October 15, 2025
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.



RESERVATION INFORMATION:

Tickets*: \$195/Table of Ten \$1,850
Please visit ocbj.com/events



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Annette M. Walker

President
City of Hope Orange County



*Tickets are non-refundable. Ticket price includes a one year subscription to the Orange County Business Journal (\$30 allocated to the subscription). New subscribers only. Current subscribers may gift the subscription to a colleague.

Congratulations 2025 Nominees

Gina Lara / Smith Dickson Certified Public Accountants, LLP
Sara Legrand / Surterre Properties
Stephanie Leslie / Regal Court Reporting
Nefertiti Long / Alta Loma Enterprises / Cardenas Three
Catherine Lowe / The Scout Guide
Meghan MacRae / With My Own Two Hands Foundation
Laura Marcum / Project Youth OC
Kate Marr / Community Legal Aid SoCal
Jane Martin / Trumark Homes
Jeni Maus / Found Rental Co.
Katherine McCaig / Snell & Wilmer LLP
Kristen McCarthy / BDO USA, LLP
Stacy McKellar / Surterre Properties
Meghan Medlin / Hub for Integration, Reentry & Employment (HIRE)
Shachi Mehra / ADYA/Spice Girl Sauces
Sami Mitchell / BLSSD the Label
Ronit Molko / Alongside
Annette Morgan / City of Hope Orange County
Martha Mosier / Pacific Sotheby's International Realty
Katharyn Muniz / Orange County Conservation Corps
Claire Na / Surterre Properties
Rachel Nelson / CB Technologies, Inc.
Eddy Nevarez / Marcus & Millichap
Cristol O'Loughlin / Raregivers™
Analisa Olson / Ware Malcomb
Anoosheh Oskouian / Ship & Shore Environmental, Inc.
Ellen Pais / Pretend City Children's Museum
Taryn Palumbo / Orange County Grantmakers
Caroline Pereira / Hoag Hospital Foundation
Laura Peters / e360
Laurie Peterson / Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire
Jill Petroff / Sand + Fog
Tanya Petrossian / EndoCyclic Therapeutics
Regan Dean Phillips / Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Orange County
Sabrina Phillips / Designing Women of Orange County

Gayle Polsky, MD / Mind Health Institute Orange County
Bonni Pomush / Working Wardrobes
Laurin Ponce / Flourish with Laurin
Tatyana Popkova / UCI Health
Patty Presson / Surterre Properties
Nicole Quinlan / Merrill Lynch
Alaina Brinley Rajagopal / Esperto Medical
Amy Ramirez / American Red Cross of Southern California
Meridith Randall / Golden West College
Johnna Randazzo / Keenan
Dawn S. Reese / The Wooden Floor
Maria Reichel / Think Together
Anna Ricardo / MeriCal, LLC
Manal Richa / OCIE SBDC Network
Maricela Rios-Faust / Human Options
Shireen Rogers / Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP
Jojo Romeo / Pacific Sothebys Int. Real Estate
Tenny Rostomian-Amin / TALG (The Amin Law Group)
Jessica Roy / 608 Dahlia
Teresa Saldivar / Teresa's Jewelers
Talia Samuels / Outshine Public Relations
Azul Sanchez / Comunidad Latina Federal Credit Union
Sandra L. Morgan PhD, RN / Vanguard University
Lucy Santana / Girls Inc. of Orange County
Dessi Sarabosing / Grace Ventures LLC
Yassmin Sarmadi / Knife Pleat
Erica Seigred / Surterre Properties
Julia Self / UIS Technology Partners
Mona Shah / Moxxe PR, Inc.
Sona Shah / My Private Professor LLC
Natalie Shaw / Surterre Properties
Jennifer Shaw / Surterre Properties
Dita Shemke / Boardvance
Soheila Shirazi / Surterre Properties
Gretchen Shoemaker / Georgia's Restaurant
Nika Shoemaker-Machado / Georgia's Restaurant
Sarah Shores / Outside the Lines, Inc.
Monica Shukla-Belmontes / UMass Global
Kimberly Smith / Crawford Custom Homes
Jessica Spaulding / The Spaulding Agency

Brenda Springer / Reveille, Inc.
Ardelle St. George / St. George & Carnegie Nautilus Global Solutions LLC
Paula Steurer / Sterling Public Relations
Carly Stevenson / Avanath Capital Management, LLC
Eliisa Stowell / Surterre Properties
Autumn Strier / Miracles for Kids
Victoria Strombom / Surterre Properties
Alyce Su / Armored Wolf LLC
Angelica Suarez / Orange Coast College
Jin Sung / OASIS Center International
Mary Christine (M.C.) Sungaila / Complex Appellate Litigation Group
Rachel Svoboda / Sunday Brunch Agency
Sheila Swaroop / Knobbe Martens
Mimi Taylor / Roth Staffing Companies
Alexandra Taylor / ATeam Agency
Kara Taylor / ATTOM
Eloiza Tecson / E20 Training Solutions
Sheila Teevans / South County Outreach
Desiree Thomas / Be Well Orange County
Jennifer Thomas / Surterre Properties
Anh Tran / SageMint Wealth
Xanthia Tran / OC Medical Aesthetic Spa
Terri Trinidad / Surterre Properties
Thuy Turner / Healthcare Property Advisors (HPA)
Cherie Turner / Western National Property Management
Sherrie VanKoevering / VanKoevering Wealth Management and Insurance Services
Mackenzie Vath / Pacific Hospitality Group
Victoria Vu / VF Developments LLC
Brenda Walters / Innovative Housing Opportunities
Katie Webb-Brundige / Intertwined Inc. / RAD Camp
Cynthia West / Chapman University: Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics
Allie Williamson / Northwestern Mutual-Orange County
Anika Wilson / Spinnaker Investment Group
Diane Wittenberg / Haskell & White
Liyuan Woo / Toca Football, Inc
Kimberley Woods / Surterre Properties
Sally Zesut / Avison Young

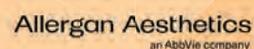
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