

THE INDISPENSABLES

2026

We had a flash of inspiration reading a story in the Wall Street Journal about a woman who was not in the C-Suite but was considered indispensable to her organization. We all have one or more. Someone who is the glue that holds it all together, the go-to person on projects, the spirit that makes the corporate culture special.

The Business Journal always recognizes founders, entrepreneurs, and C-Suites, but we thought it would be wonderful to recognize a group whose contributions too often go unacknowledged: the Indispensables.

The response was overwhelming. The caliber of organizations and the quality of nominees are reflective of the very best Orange County has to offer. In fact, the level of response was so great that we regrettably could not include every deserving nominee.

We're especially grateful to Chipotle, our diamond sponsor, for championing this section. A company doesn't earn a reputation for promoting from within and investing in its people by accident – it takes recognizing the indispensable people already on the team. Their support of this issue is a reflection of that same value.

It is truly an honor to celebrate these invaluable team members and have their exceptional efforts publicly recognized. The work they do and the difference they make are truly Indispensable.



DIAMOND SPONSOR

Richard Reisman
PUBLISHER

THE INDISPENSABLES



IMELDA ANDRES

PROJECT MANAGER, R&D
Taco Bell Corp.

Imelda Andres is an R&D Project Manager on Taco Bell's Food Innovation Team, where she manages headquarters' Test Kitchen operations and oversees food execution at some of Taco Bell's most ambitious and operationally complex brand experiences, including Live Más LIVE. Since joining Taco Bell in 2008 as a 16-year-old working the drive-thru, Imelda has worked her way from Team Member to General Manager and now supports the brand's Food Innovation Team. Her operations background provides a unique understanding of how menu items come to life in Taco Bell restaurants, making her a critical bridge between where iconic menu items are created—the Taco Bell Test Kitchen—and where they are served to millions of guests every day. Imelda has also played a key role in high-profile brand moments including Live Más LIVE, Laps of Luxury, Decades and franchisee events. She oversees large-scale food operations, serving hundreds of Taco Bell fans, media and celebrities. During Live Más LIVE 2026, she helped bring the event's ambitious culinary execution to life, overseeing service of 15 new food items and bespoke beverages while creatively leveraging food trucks as additional kitchen space to support the event's scale. Imelda is an indispensable team player known for her thoughtful decision-making and calm demeanor under pressure. Her impact is reflected not only through Taco Bell's Test Kitchen and big brand moments, but in the trust and collaboration she has brought to the Taco Bell brand.



JOSHUA ANGELL

PARALEGAL
Nelson Kirkman & Levanger Lawyers

Joshua Angell is an indispensable member of our firm whose growth and dedication have made a significant impact in a short time. In just one year, he advanced from an administrative assistant role into a paralegal position managing a substantial caseload—an achievement that reflects both his work ethic and capability. He approaches each case with care, organization, and a depth of understanding that exceeds expectations for his experience level. Joshua has earned the trust of both clients and attorneys. Clients consistently feel supported and reassured knowing their matters are in his hands, and he communicates with professionalism and clarity. His ability to stay on top of case details and anticipate next steps contributes to a smooth and efficient workflow. He routinely goes above and beyond to meet the needs of each case, often dedicating extra time and effort to ensure nothing is overlooked. His commitment is evident in the quality of his work and his willingness to take initiative when challenges arise. Attorneys rely on Joshua's insight, preparation, and foresight when making strategic decisions. His contributions help move cases forward effectively and strengthen the overall performance of the team. Joshua's reliability, growth, and dedication make him an essential and highly valued asset to our firm.



CRYSTAL ANSON

SR. OPERATION MANAGER
CBRE

Crystal Anson is truly indispensable to CBRE's Orange County operations, serving as both the operational backbone and cultural cornerstone of the organization. As a Senior Operations Manager, she is the central point of coordination for nearly every aspect of the business, from organizing high-impact events and managing hiring processes to onboarding new employees and leading a team of client service professionals. She also oversees operations across three offices in the area, bringing consistency, efficiency, and alignment at scale. Crystal is recognized as the go-to resource for both projects and people. Whether navigating operational challenges or supporting day-to-day needs, she consistently provides answers or proactively tracks them down, ensuring nothing falls through the cracks. Her ability to anticipate needs, solve problems quickly and keep teams aligned makes it essential for her to maintain seamless operations. Beyond logistics, Crystal plays a critical role in shaping the office culture. She mentors client service professionals, encourages collaboration and sets a standard of professionalism that directly reflects on CBRE's values. Crystal's impact is both visible and behind the scenes. She holds everything together, enabling teams to perform at their best while elevating the overall workplace experience. Simply put, she is the steady force and "unsung hero" who makes the Orange County offices exceptional.



ALLIE ASHDOWN

SENIOR MANAGER, MARKETING
Ingram Micro

Behind many of Ingram Micro's most successful programs is Allie Ashdown, a leader known for consistently going beyond the scope of her role to solve problems, strengthen operations, and create meaningful business impact. In addition to leading a high-performing events team, she now oversees major programs across the company's global Trust X Alliance Community, President's Club, vendor-funded event strategy, and broader marketing initiatives. These programs are complex and highly visible, playing an important role in strengthening relationships, supporting business growth, and elevating the company's brand. What makes Allie so essential is her rare ability to pair operational discipline with strategic partnership. She has strengthened financial accountability, lowered execution costs, introduced sharper ROI measurements, and standardized recruitment practices that have made event marketing more effective and more accountable. At the same time, she anticipates business needs early, aligns cross-functional and global stakeholders and brings forward thoughtful recommendations that help the organization move faster and make smarter decisions. Allie is known for her ability to elevate every team and initiative she touches. She has helped transform events from an execution function into a strategic business lever and has become a trusted partner across Sales, Vendor Management, and leadership.



JASON BARLOW

SENIOR MANAGER, ASSURANCE
Baker Tilly US LLP

Jason Barlow is an Assurance Senior Manager in Baker Tilly's Irvine, CA office whose leadership and commitment to excellence elevate those around him. He is recognized for his ability to inspire colleagues, drive meaningful change, and foster collaboration across teams. Jason has been a leading advocate for the firm's international workforce. He played a key role in developing strategies, feedback mechanisms, and best practices that drove integration and effectiveness of overseas teams. He strengthened operational efficiency while ensuring delivery of high-quality client service and a first-class employee experience worldwide. He collaborates with teams across the firm to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness, often introducing and teaching innovative technologies and emerging tools that enhance workflows and client outcomes. These contributions have helped Baker Tilly deliver more cost-effective and scalable solutions in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Jason is also deeply invested in building a connected office culture. As an active participant in the Irvine office's golf club, he creates opportunities for colleagues to develop meaningful relationships outside of work. His efforts have been especially impactful during the recent firm merger, helping bring people together and foster a sense of unity and belonging. Thanks to Jason's leadership, the Irvine office is a stronger, more cohesive team. Baker Tilly is fortunate to have him.

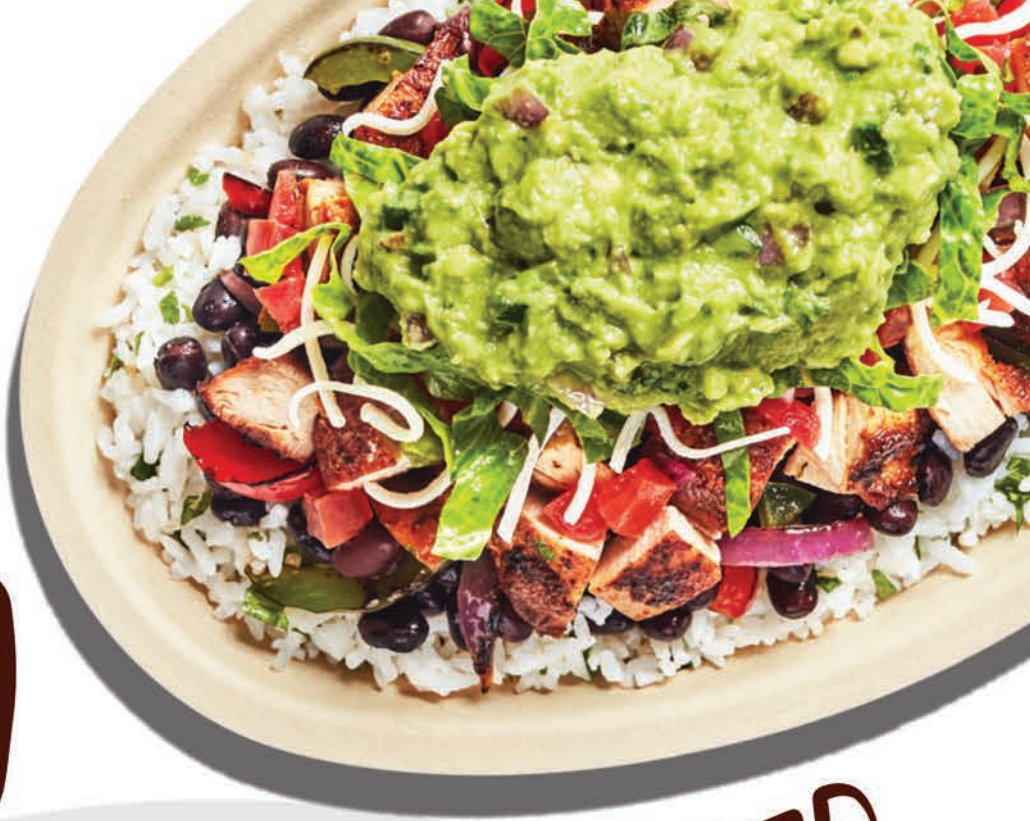


TIM BENNER

CHIEF MARKETING & STRATEGY OFFICER
Masimo

Tim Benner is the rare leader who combines strategic vision with operational execution. During one of the most transformative periods in Masimo's history, namely the company's \$9.9 billion acquisition by Danaher, Tim has served as a steady and trusted leader, guiding the organization through change while focused on growth, innovation, customers, and culture. Tim has helped align strategy, commercialization, innovation, and execution across Masimo. His ability to connect people, priorities, and business objectives has made invaluable. Tim has played a pivotal role in strengthening Masimo's commercial strategy, advancing product launches, supporting global expansion, and preparing for its next phase of growth. He is known as a collaborative leader who listens, challenges teams to think differently, and consistently brings people together around a common purpose. Under his leadership, Masimo provided patient monitoring to more than 200 million patients in 2025 while delivering more than \$1.5 billion in revenue, 9%+ revenue growth, and over 500 basis points of core margin expansion. What makes Tim truly indispensable is his ability to balance long-term strategy with daily execution. Whether shaping the future direction of the business or rolling up his sleeves to solve immediate challenges, he leads with integrity, humility, and a deep commitment to Masimo's mission. Simply put, Masimo is a stronger company now and in the future because of Tim Benner.

IT'S NOT *just* A
BOWL OR
BURRITO
it's FOIL WRAPPED, HAND-CRAFTED
MADE FRESH ^{EVERY} DAY,
RESPONSIBLY GROWN & RAISED,
GOOD FOR PLANET,
THE *good* for you
DELICIOUSNESS!



THE INDISPENSABLES



CHRIS BENNETT
PRESIDENT LABCO
Lab Holdings Inc LLC

It is a distinct privilege to recognize Chris Bennett, President of our Development company LABCO, Most Valuable Member. Our firm has always prioritized the recruitment of

individuals who demonstrate a rare cognitive equilibrium, those who possess a true balance of both the analytical and the creative mind. Chris embodies this ideal, seamlessly navigating the intersection of imaginative design and business logic. His tenure is marked by this dual capacity; he approaches every project with a sophisticated eye for aesthetics and creativity to make each project a special cultural place while maintaining an unwavering focus on operational viability. In a corporate landscape often defined by transient successes, Chris distinguishes himself through a steadfast, disciplined resilience approaching every strategic hurdle with tactical precision. He does not merely manage challenges; he confronts them with an uncompromising integrity and creativity that serves as the moral compass for his entire team. Beyond his individual efficacy, Chris possesses the rare ability to cultivate excellence in others. He views the workforce as a mosaic of individual talent, recognizing and leveraging the unique contributions of every staff member to foster a culture of mutual meritocracy. He remains a foundational pillar of this company for almost three decades, ensuring our authenticity, company doctrine and mission to balance "community, culture, commerce and consciousness."



JENNIFER BASSAGE BONFIL
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
The Wooden Floor

Having been with the organization for 20 years, Jennifer Bassage Bonfil is indispensable to The Wooden Floor because she brings our mission to life by helping to inspire and transform the

lives of young people through the power of dance and access to higher education. Dance is the center of student transformation at The Wooden Floor, and her leadership extends far beyond dance education and choreography; she influences the programming to ensure it fosters confidence, creativity, resilience, and growth through the entire student experience—always leading with a love for students and their potential. This year, Jennifer's impact was evident through several significant initiatives, including performances by The Wooden Floor students at Ignite Dance, Irvine Barclay Theatre's 35th Anniversary Celebration; The Wooden Floor's Driving Futures and our 43rd Annual Concert, Grounded Orbits. She led the artistic vision and execution of each event, collaborating across departments to create meaningful experiences for our students, staff, and supporters. Her ability to inspire young people, engage audiences, and imbue exceptional artistic excellence across all departments which strengthens The Wooden Floor's reputation as a national leader in creative youth development. Jennifer is also instrumental in the implementation of Dance Uplifts, our new after school offering, which expands our dance education and social-emotional wellness curriculum into 32 Title I schools throughout the Garden Grove Unified School District in 2026. Through her leadership, students develop as confident communicators, critical thinkers, and collaborators.



SUMER BOWLES
DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Orange County Business Journal

Some people make an organization successful through the work they do. Others make it successful because of who they are. Sumer Bowles does both. As Director of Advertising &

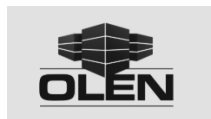
Marketing, Sumer is one of the Orange County Business Journal's trusted leaders. She has an exceptional ability to bridge departments, connecting advertising, production, events, circulation, marketing, and accounting into one collaborative team. She brings clarity to complexity, keeps operations aligned, and approaches every challenge with professionalism, grace, humor, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Sumer has helped a long-standing publication continue to evolve. She embraces innovation while honoring our tradition, modernizing processes, and helping position us for the future. She plays an instrumental role in the success of our Signature Events, bringing exceptional support and a willingness to help. She invests in her professional growth, exploring technologies, and industry trends, then bringing those ideas back to help our organization grow. She anticipates challenges before they become obstacles, finds thoughtful solutions, and generously shares her knowledge to help others succeed. Her integrity, humility, and unwavering dependability have earned the trust and admiration of colleagues across every department, making her an indispensable leader, partner, and friend. For more than a decade, Sumer has been a driving force behind the Orange County Business Journal's success. Her leadership has helped shape who we are as an organization. We are stronger because of her; not just because of what she does, but because of who she is. She is exceptionally deserving of this recognition.



KELSEY BREWER
VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Jamboree Housing Corporation

As Vice President of Business Development at Jamboree Housing Corporation (Jamboree), Kelsey Brewer serves as a critical bridge between strategy and execution,

advancing the partnerships, funding opportunities, and policy initiatives that make affordable and supportive housing possible throughout California. Kelsey is widely recognized as a trusted leader who brings together government agencies, elected officials, community partners, healthcare organizations, funders, and internal teams to move complex housing initiatives forward. Throughout her eight years at Jamboree, Kelsey has demonstrated a rare ability to solve complex financial gaps. Her track record includes securing critical funding that has helped advance hundreds of affordable homes. Her ability to build consensus, navigate funding and regulatory challenges, and foster productive relationships has been instrumental to Jamboree's continued growth and impact. What truly makes Kelsey indispensable is her unique combination of strategic vision, collaborative leadership, and unwavering commitment to Jamboree's mission. She has dedicated her career to advancing solutions that create housing stability for individuals and families while expanding access to affordable and supportive housing. Through her leadership, partnership-building, and ability to unite diverse groups around shared goals, Kelsey plays an essential role in ensuring Jamboree can continue delivering meaningful impact in the communities it serves.



JEANETTE BULLINGTON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Olen Properties Corporation

More than 52 years ago, I (Igor Olenicoff) was Vice President of Operations for a prominent Orange County developer. When my son was born, I decided to leave that position because the extensive travel required

was taking me away from my family. At that pivotal moment, Jeanette Bullington, then my executive assistant, changed the course of my life. Rather than encouraging me to find another job, Jan urged me to start my own company. She expressed complete confidence that I could succeed and even told me that if I left, she would leave as well. She volunteered to work from her home, without compensation, to help get the new company started. Her belief in me provided the confidence and motivation I needed to launch what became Olen Properties, a substantial national real estate company. More than five decades later, Jan remains indispensable to our organization. She has held, supported, or helped train virtually every position in the company and possesses institutional knowledge that cannot be duplicated. With approximately 100 employees in Orange County and more than 400 nationwide, Jan seems to know everyone—their strengths, accomplishments, potential, and often important milestones in their personal lives. Jan has never sought recognition for her contributions. Instead, she has quietly dedicated herself to the success of Olen and the people who make up our company. Her work ethic, loyalty, wisdom, and commitment continue to help Olen grow and prosper. Few employees can say they helped build a company from its first day and remained instrumental to its success for more than 52 years. Jan can. If there is one word that best describes her, it is indispensable.



NICOLE CARIS
HEAD OF OPERATIONS
Spinnaker Investment Group

Nicole Caris is the operational backbone of Spinnaker Investment Group. As Head of Operations for the past four years, she has built the systems, processes, and client

relationships that keep the firm running at its best and her absence would be felt immediately and deeply. One of Nicole's most meaningful contributions has been the creation of a structured client onboarding process from the ground up. By designing a clear, guided workflow that walks clients through paperwork and every step of onboarding, she transformed what can often be a confusing and friction filled experience into a seamless introduction to Spinnaker. This process doesn't just benefit clients, it protects the firm by ensuring consistency, compliance, and professionalism at every touchpoint. Beyond the process itself, Nicole brings a warmth and professionalism to client interactions that is difficult to teach and impossible to replace. Her ability to make clients feel at ease during what is often a significant financial decision reflects the kind of emotional intelligence that elevates an organization's reputation. Clients don't just get through the paperwork they feel taken care of. Internally, Nicole has driven substantial operational efficiencies that have made the entire team more effective. Over four years, she has developed an institutional knowledge of how Spinnaker operates that no manual or procedure document can fully capture. She is the connective tissue between departments and clients.

Congratulations

Janette Bullington

We are incredibly proud of your dedication, and the positive impact you continue to make at Olen Properties. Your commitment to excellence, professionalism, and unwavering work ethic exemplify what it means to be truly indispensable. Thank you for your outstanding contributions and for helping make our organization stronger every day.



THE INDISPENSABLES

MATTHEWS™



KATIE CARPENTER
VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE
MATTHEWS™

In 2016, Katie Carpenter joined Matthews™ just one year after the firm opened its doors, bringing with her the vision and discipline to engineer a financial infrastructure built for national scale. That financial ingenuity now supports more than 1,000 agents and employees across 30 national offices, scaling alongside the firm at every stage of its growth. As the firm's first-ever Vice President of Finance, Katie owns the full scope of financial operations. She manages payroll and complex commission structures for the entire workforce, oversees corporate financial reporting, directs budget management, and leads the ongoing technology modernization that keeps the firm competitive at scale. Over the past year alone, she drove the rollout of a new ERP system alongside AP automation, a close management system, and an employee spend management platform, all of which reduced costs and strengthened fiscal controls across the organization. Katie's indispensability is rooted in foresight. The systems she designed were not built for the firm as it was then, but for the firm it was becoming. That forward-thinking discipline is a primary reason Matthews™ has been able to sustain its growth without ever outpacing its own infrastructure.



SHREE CARTER
CHIEF OF STAFF
Vanguard University

The face of indispensability at Vanguard University is Ms. Shree Carter who serves as Chief of Staff in the Office of the President. Shree is an alumna of Vanguard and has served for the past 26 years in positions of increasing responsibility and influence. Her agile mind and caring manner have cultivated the trust and respect of faculty, staff, and students alike. Having led our institutional strategic planning efforts for over a decade, Shree understands the needs and potential of university personnel and departments and works hard to see those needs met and potential unleashed. Further, with extensive training in human resources, she is a driving force in our pursuit of continuous improvement in organizational health. Her conflict management style maximizes the dignity of all. Shree is a quintessential team-player; committed to the success of those around her with little regard for personal recognition. She mentors students and coaches her colleagues toward professional excellence while maintaining work-life balance. Shree brings her A-game every day. Growing up in Wyoming, Shree is at home in the great outdoors. She brings the spirit of adventure and a wide range of gifts and talents to the workplace. Vanguard University is a better place because of Shree Carter.
— Dr. Michael J. Beals, President



LAURA CHAVEZ
SENIOR PROGRAM SUCCESS
COORDINATOR
Girls Inc. of Orange County

Laura Chavez is truly indispensable to Girls Inc. of Orange County because she embodies the organization's mission at every level. As a Girls Inc. alumna, Laura experienced firsthand the impact of our programs and now dedicates her career to ensuring the next generation of girls has access to those same opportunities. Her unique perspective allows her to build authentic relationships with participants, families, school partners, and colleagues, making her a trusted leader across the organization. Since joining Girls Inc. full-time in 2020, Laura has become a vital bridge between our programs, schools, caregivers, alumnae, and community partners. As Senior Program Success Coordinator, she leads high school programming across multiple school sites, oversees post-secondary initiatives including Project Accelerate and the Alumnae Association, and manages caregiver-focused programming that equips families with tools to support their children's growth and success. Laura's institutional knowledge is unmatched. Having participated in Girls Inc. programs throughout her childhood and adolescence, she understands the full continuum of support we provide and helps ensure our programs remain impactful and responsive to the needs of girls and young women. Her passion, leadership, and unwavering commitment to our mission make her an essential member of the Girls Inc. team and a driving force behind our continued success.



VALENTYNA CHEBANOVA
CHIEF OF STAFF
Tarsus Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Valentyna ("Val") Chebanova is one of Tarsus' most trusted strategic leaders through her astute combination of business acumen, intellectual rigor, and an exceptional ability to drive results. At just 30 years old, and in fewer than five years at Tarsus, Val progressed from Associate Director of Business Development to a trusted member of the executive leadership team as Chief of Staff. She has earned a level of influence and impact typically associated with far more seasoned executives—a reflection of both her capabilities and the trust she has built across the organization. Since joining Tarsus in 2021 as the first member of the Business Development team, Val has consistently taken on outsized responsibilities. She led the company's first in-license transaction as a public company, guiding the process from opportunity assessment and diligence through deal negotiation and execution. Her ability to quickly master complex scientific, commercial, financial, and operational considerations helped position Tarsus for future growth and demonstrated a rare ability to connect strategy with execution. Today, as Chief of Staff, Val serves as a strategic partner to the CEO and executive leadership team, co-leads Board communications and meeting preparation, and helps translate enterprise priorities into coordinated action across the organization.



CLAIRE CRADE
BRAND MARKETING MANAGER
Kei Concepts

Claire Crade has been with Kei Concepts for four years and has become one of the most dependable and impactful leaders on our team. As our Brand Marketing Manager, she leads a wide range of marketing initiatives across the company, but her value goes far beyond her title. Claire is the go-to person for so many projects because she is responsible, reliable, organized, and deeply committed to doing things well. She has a way of bringing people together across departments and keeping everyone aligned, which is critical in a fast-moving company like ours. In many ways, she is the glue that holds cross-functional projects together. What makes Claire especially indispensable is that she consistently raises the bar. She builds high standards not only for her own work, but also for the teams she works with. She is always willing to take on a challenge and never backs away from difficult assignments. No matter how many moving parts a project has, Claire approaches it with ownership, professionalism, and care. She represents the next generation at Kei Concepts: driven, thoughtful, solution-oriented, and passionate about the work. Her leadership and consistency have had a meaningful impact on our growth, our project execution, and the culture of accountability we continue to build.



CRISTINA CUNNINGHAM
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR
Smarty Social

Cristina Cunningham has been an indispensable part of Smarty Social for more than five and a half years, helping shape the agency's growth while consistently delivering excellence for both clients and colleagues. As an Account Director, she serves as a trusted advisor, strategic partner, and steady leader in one of the most demanding areas of the business. What makes Cristina truly essential is her ability to balance client partnership, strategic thinking, and flawless execution. She manages complex healthcare and medical technology accounts where precision, responsiveness, and compliance are critical. Clients trust her because she understands their business challenges, anticipates needs before they arise, and consistently delivers solutions that move initiatives forward. Internally, Cristina has earned a reputation as Smarty's go-to problem solver. When a project is especially complex, a client challenge arises, or a team needs additional support, she is often the first person people call. She consistently steps in with a positive attitude, strategic perspective, and willingness to help, regardless of whether the issue falls within her direct responsibilities. Her ability to navigate ambiguity, solve problems, and support both clients and colleagues has made her a trusted leader and a critical contributor to the agency's success. Simply put, Smarty Social would not be the same without Cristina. Her leadership, dedication, and ability to consistently deliver results make her an essential part of our agency's continued success.

CRISPIMAGING's

Eric Monroe is INDISPENSABLE!



Eric has been a driving force within the company, not only because of his extraordinary design talent and deep industry expertise, but also because of the leadership, integrity, and character he demonstrates every day. Eric joined Crisp Imaging during our early years, already highly respected in the print industry for his unmatched color-matching capabilities and design knowledge. From the beginning, he played a critical role in establishing Crisp as the trusted leader in color for the architectural and design community. Beyond his own expertise, Eric successfully built and mentored a team of top-tier talent, creating a department known for its unparalleled skill and professionalism.

As Crisp Imaging has expanded its services and capabilities, Eric has continued to evolve alongside the company. Today, he leads a talented team of designers who consistently transform customer concepts into exceptional finished products. His unique ability to interpret a client's vision, combined with his extensive knowledge of print materials and production techniques, ensures that every project is executed at the highest level.



Equally important is Eric's impact as a mentor and role model. He has dedicated years of service to leading our annual Super Bowl Sunday event for more than 500 Marines and veterans at the American Legion, demonstrating his commitment to community and country. Within Crisp Imaging, Eric is deeply invested in developing the next generation of leaders, generously sharing his knowledge and mentoring high-potential employees as they grow into greater responsibility and leadership roles.

Eric is respected by everyone who works with him and valued not only as a leader, but also as a trusted friend and colleague. He is truly an indispensable asset to Crisp Imaging, and we are incredibly fortunate to have him on our team.

Congratulations on your award, Eric!



THE INDISPENSABLES



MEHUL DALIA
DIRECTOR, SALES & SUPPLY
CHAIN FINANCE
Chipotle

Mehul Dalia is indispensable to Chipotle because he combines strategic thinking, financial expertise, and cross-functional leadership to help drive better business decisions across the organization. As Director of Sales and Supply Chain Finance, Mehul plays a critical role in translating complex data into actionable insights that support growth, operational excellence, and long-term value creation. Since joining Chipotle in 2018, Mehul has consistently earned greater responsibility through his ability to solve complex problems, build strong partnerships, and deliver meaningful results. He is known as a trusted advisor who helps leaders navigate important decisions by providing clear analysis, sound judgment, and practical solutions. His collaborative leadership style, institutional knowledge, and unwavering commitment to Chipotle's success make him a truly indispensable member of the organization.



JAIME DAMACIO
MISSION SERVICES DATA &
SYSTEMS ANALYST
Goodwill of Orange County

Jaime Damacio is the kind of professional whose impact is felt every day, often quietly and without much glamour or flash. But the truth is, much of Goodwill of Orange County's community impact depends on the steady, behind-the-scenes work he does every day. As an indispensable member of Goodwill of Orange County's Mission Services team, he helps turn our mission of empowering people to achieve their goals into a lived reality. He is often one of the first people participants meet, guiding individuals—many facing significant barriers—through onboarding, payroll, and essential administrative processes with patience, dignity, and compassion. In those first moments, Jaime helps create not just a smooth start, but a sense of welcome, stability, and trust. Beyond participant support, Jaime strengthens every section of the Mission Services Division through his work on monthly billing, partnering with accounts payable and accounts receivable to ensure accuracy across multiple funding sources. He also plays a critical role in compliance, helping update policies, align participant services and handbooks, monitor systems, and support our nationally recognized rehabilitation accreditation. With more than 20 years of service across donated goods, retail, and Mission Services, Jaime brings institutional knowledge, humility, and dedication to everything he does. He is dependable, deeply respected, and always willing to do whatever is needed to help Goodwill OC succeed.



RITA DESJARDINS
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE
DEAN ARGYROS COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
Chapman University

Rita Desjardins serves as the Executive Assistant to the Dean at Chapman University's Argyros College of Business and Economics and is truly indispensable. Rita will shortly be working with her 4th Dean at Argyros College. Beyond the usual responsibilities of an Executive Assistant, Rita handles facilities management and human resources, coordinates tech support, provides faculty services, manages events and conferences, aids in public relations, develops the College's culture, serves as Ambassador to parents and business partners, and is an indispensable advisor to the Dean. She is the first stop in Argyros College for anyone with a question, problem, or in need of help. Most importantly, she is the heart and soul of the College. More than the range of roles she assumes are the relationships she develops with university partners in every unit on campus. Through these relationships, Rita can get things done that no one else can. The care, concern, and humor she brings to each encounter brings dignity to every individual. In doing so, she embodies the Argyros College mission of helping to create a freer, more prosperous, and more gracious world. It is no exaggeration to say Rita Desjardins is truly indispensable.



GIANG DO
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
INTELLIGENCE
Westcliff University

Some professionals contribute through expertise. A select few become indispensable because they elevate the performance of everyone around them. Giang Do is one of those rare individuals. For more than eight years, Giang has been a driving force behind Westcliff University's growth, operational excellence, and strategic decision-making. As Director of Business Intelligence, she transforms complex information into meaningful insight that enables leaders across the institution to make smarter, faster, and more informed decisions. Yet her impact extends far beyond data. Giang is the person colleagues turn to when priorities compete, challenges become complex, or critical initiatives require alignment across teams. She has a remarkable ability to connect people, translate competing perspectives into practical solutions, and create momentum where others see obstacles. Her influence can be felt across nearly every area of the university. Equally remarkable is the impact she has on culture. Giang has twice been voted Staff of the Year by her peers—a reflection not only of her excellence, but of the respect and trust she has earned throughout the organization. She leads through collaboration rather than authority and consistently creates an environment where people feel supported and empowered. What makes Giang indispensable is her unique ability to unite data, strategy, and people—turning vision into execution and helping Westcliff continuously move forward.



MELISSA DOWLER
VICE PRESIDENT RETAIL MARKET
MANAGER-WEST COAST
Enterprise Bank & Trust

Melissa Dowler is indispensable to Enterprise Bank & Trust because she consistently drives results while developing talent, strengthening culture, and protecting the organization. As a Regional Retail Manager, she serves as a trusted partner to both frontline employees and senior leadership, helping translate strategy into action while maintaining a focus on customer experience and operational excellence. Melissa is known for identifying challenges before they become larger issues and developing practical solutions that drive results. Her extensive banking and fraud prevention experience has helped protect both clients and the bank from significant financial losses, including contributing to the prevention of more than \$1.4 million in potential losses over the past year. Passionate about developing others, Melissa mentors employees at all levels and fosters an inclusive environment where team members feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow. She also champions community involvement, inspiring more than 40 associates to participate in volunteer initiatives that strengthen local communities and team connections. In addition, she serves on the board of the Women's Connection employee resource group, helping encourage and inspire women throughout the organization. Her ability to develop people, mitigate risk, and unite teams around a common purpose makes her an essential contributor to Enterprise Bank & Trust's success.



LINDSAY DURAN
CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER
Apriem Advisors

Lindsay Duran is truly indispensable to Apriem Advisors because she plays a vital role in nearly every aspect of our firm's success. Her responsibilities span client service, office management, and the operational work that supports our clients' financial lives behind the scenes. Lindsay is often the first point of contact for clients and consistently delivers the white glove service that defines our firm. She builds trusted relationships through her responsiveness, professionalism, and genuine care for the people we serve. Clients know they can rely on her and our advisors and staff do as well. In addition to managing the day-to-day operations of the office, Lindsay works closely with Charles Schwab and other custodial partners to handle account openings, transfers, maintenance requests, and countless administrative processes that are essential to delivering a seamless client experience. Her attention to detail, organization, and commitment to excellence help ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. What makes Lindsay especially valuable is her versatility. No task is too small and no challenge is too complex. Whether she is assisting a client, coordinating firm operations, resolving an issue, or supporting advisor initiatives, she approaches every responsibility with professionalism and care. Simply put, Lindsay is the person who keeps everything running smoothly. Her dedication, reliability, and unwavering commitment to both our clients and our team make her an essential part of Apriem.

Congratulations, Toral and Miriam.



At Kaiser Permanente, excellence is powered by extraordinary people—and Toral Patel and Miriam Volle embody that spirit every day.

Their exceptional talent, steadfast dedication, and inspiring leadership have made a profound impact across our organization. This recognition celebrates not only their individual achievements, but also Kaiser Permanente's commitment to fostering excellence, innovation, and meaningful service.

Thank you for the passion, expertise, and leadership you bring to Kaiser Permanente and the people we serve.



KAISER PERMANENTE®

THE INDISPENSABLES



DERRA LEE EDWARDS
VICE PRESIDENT, LEARNING
Montage International

For the last 23 years, Derra Lee Edwards has been the hospitality training and culture leader at Montage International. She has held roles at the company including Learning Director, Corporate Director of Learning, and currently, Vice President of Learning. She became especially known inside luxury hospitality for helping shape Montage's service culture from the beginning at Montage Laguna Beach. Her work focused on developing the company's mission, values, associate development, service standards, leadership coaching, and building the company's "passionately pursue excellence" culture. Some notable details about her background and influence: Worked in hotel operations before moving into learning and development, including experience with luxury hospitality brands; Helped establish Montage's "Director of Learning" philosophy across properties, where learning is embedded into guest experience and culture; Served on advisory boards connected to hospitality education programs; Frequently referenced by Montage leaders and associates as a key mentor in luxury service culture and employee engagement. One of her well-known philosophies from an early interview about Montage culture was that luxury service is less about scripted behavior and more about kindness, humility, responsibility, and genuine human connection. Montage International's culture was never built solely through brand standards or luxury design — it was shaped person by person, interaction by interaction.



TRISH EVANS
PROGRAM SERVICES DIRECTOR
The Shea Center for Therapeutic Riding

For over 25 years, Trish Evans has been an indispensable force behind The Shea Center's growth and impact. A Certified Physical Therapist Assistant who began as a direct care provider, she is now one of the organization's most trusted leaders, combining clinical expertise, operational excellence, technology leadership, and strategic vision. During her tenure, The Shea Center has grown from a \$500,000 nonprofit to an organization with more than \$8M in annual revenue and \$22M in assets. Client service hours have expanded from 2,000 per year to more than 17,000, serving over 1,400 individuals annually. Trish has been instrumental in building the systems, infrastructure, and processes that enabled this scale and impact. Notably, she led the implementation of Salesforce as the organization's enterprise-wide operating platform, integrating client services, volunteer management, horse care, fundraising, and financial operations. Her ability to translate complex needs into efficient, sustainable systems has strengthened nearly every aspect of performance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Trish stepped forward as Safety Manager, providing steady leadership that enabled The Shea Center to continue serving vulnerable clients while safeguarding staff, volunteers, and horses during an unprecedented crisis. Her humility, innovation, deep institutional knowledge, and relentless commitment to improvement have shaped The Shea Center's evolution and expanded its impact on thousands more lives.



KENTON FAUST
PAYROLL MANAGER
Goodwill of Orange County

For more than 25 years, Kenton Faust has been a cornerstone of Goodwill Industries of Orange County and an indispensable member of our organization. As Payroll Manager, Kenton is responsible for ensuring that approximately 1,600 employees are paid accurately and on time, every pay period. His dedication, consistency, and expertise have made payroll one of the most reliable and trusted functions within our organization. Kenton's responsibilities extend far beyond processing payroll. He possesses an exceptional understanding of payroll regulations, tax laws, compliance requirements, and reporting standards. Through his diligence and attention to detail, he helps protect the organization from costly errors while ensuring Goodwill remains compliant with an ever-changing regulatory environment. His expertise has been instrumental in maintaining the confidence of employees, management, and external stakeholders alike.



STEPHEN FINNEGAN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP
MANAGER
Automobile Club of Southern California

Steve Finnegan is indispensable to our company's success because he shapes the policies, partnerships, and public voice that protect our members and strengthen our long-term relevance. Over his 25-year career, he has become a trusted authority in transportation, traffic safety, and motorist advocacy, ensuring the organization is not only represented but influential in decisions affecting millions of drivers. Steve operates at the intersection of business and public policy. He has represented the organization at major regional and national forums, including key business coalitions and transportation initiatives, and currently serves on a federal advisory board exploring alternatives to the gas tax. Through these roles, he ensures the company's perspective helps shape the future of mobility and infrastructure. What sets Steve apart is his ability to turn advocacy into action. He has led impactful safety initiatives focused on roadside safety, distracted driving, and driver awareness, and efforts that directly support both members and frontline employees. His close partnership with operational teams ensures these initiatives are grounded in real-world needs, delivering meaningful results. Steve's influence extends far beyond policy. He strengthens the organization's credibility, expands its reach, and reinforces its leadership in safety and mobility. By connecting external insight with internal priorities, he positions the company for long-term success, making him truly indispensable.



KAREN FLANIGAN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Greenlaw Partners

When Greenlaw Partners set out to build one of the most respected commercial real estate platforms in the country, it needed more than talented dealmakers. It needed someone who could run the management and accounting engine in a Class A manner. Karen Flanigan has been that person for nearly two decades! As Executive Vice President, Karen oversees a managed portfolio exceeding 15 million rentable square feet, spanning office, industrial, medical office, and retail properties across the United States. She leads Greenlaw's Property Management, Property Accounting, Construction Management, and Corporate Operations teams, a combined force of more than 90 professionals, and is widely regarded as the operational force behind Greenlaw's growth and stability. Karen's path to leadership was built on a foundation of hands-on experience. Before joining Greenlaw in 2006, she honed her skills at some of Southern California's most prominent real estate firms, including Birtcher Real Estate Group and Irvine Company, bringing 30 years of industry experience to her role. Her influence extends well beyond Greenlaw's walls. Karen served as President of CREW Orange County in 2017 and President of BOMA Orange County in 2020 and remains active on the CREW OC Advisory Board. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Development with an emphasis on Education from California State University, Fullerton, a background that, perhaps not coincidentally, makes her a natural mentor and team builder.



SALVADOR GALVEZ
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
BDO USA, P.C.

Salvador Galvez, Orange County Office Administrator, is truly indispensable to our organization. He is the heartbeat of our office and a driving force behind the inclusive, welcoming culture that defines our workplace. Sal has an extraordinary ability to make everyone feel valued and at home from the moment they walk through our doors, fostering a strong sense of belonging across the entire organization. Beyond his day-to-day operational excellence, Sal plays a vital role in keeping our teams connected and engaged. He thoughtfully hosts and organizes monthly office events—ranging from festive lunches and specialty coffee carts to in-office wellness events that bring people together and strengthen our sense of community. These moments of connection, though often behind the scenes, have a lasting impact on morale and collaboration. Sal is the glue that holds our office together. Through seamless coordination, meticulous organization, and proactive problem-solving, he ensures the office operates efficiently and professionally. Whether supporting leadership initiatives or anticipating the needs of employees, Sal approaches every task with care, precision, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Above all, Sal leads with positivity, kindness, and approachability. His genuine smile and steady presence create an environment where people feel supported, motivated, and proud to be part of the team. The success of our Orange County office would not be possible without him.

Leadership that Builds **Community.**

CONGRATULATIONS

PATRICIA GAUDIN

AN INDISPENSABLE
DISTINGUISHED
LEADER IN HR

At Avanath, great
communities begin with
great people.

Patricia's leadership **transformed
strategy into culture**,
strengthened teams across the
organization, and helped unite
the people behind the creation of
Brighthaven Communities.

Her impact reaches far beyond
HR, creating workplaces where
people thrive.

Congratulations on this well
deserved recognition.

Lifestyle Within Reach

avanath.com

avanath+ | **bright**haven

THE INDISPENSABLES





PATRICIA GAUDIN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
HUMAN RESOURCES
Avanath Capital Management & Brighthaven Communities

Patricia (Pat) Gaudin spearheads the people strategy powering two national affordable and workforce housing leaders headquartered in Irvine: Avanath Capital Management, an owner and operator of affordable and workforce housing, and Brighthaven Communities, the property management platform created by Avanath and BRIDGE Housing that operates more than 30,000 homes across 16 states nationwide. As Executive Vice President of Human Resources, Pat is indispensable in her ability to align people, systems, and culture through growth and complexity. She built the HR infrastructure to scale one of the country's largest affordable housing property management platforms, uniting two workforces, aligning systems and benefits, and ensuring day-one readiness for Brighthaven. Pat modernized human capital strategy through an integrated HR technology platform, strengthening talent acquisition and retention and expanding leadership development and training, so employees at every level are equipped to deliver on organizational goals. Through strategic leadership and operational excellence, Pat has helped maintain HR metrics that outperform industry standards, including lower-than-average time-to-fill rates and employee turnover. These results not only reflect an efficient hiring process but also a workplace culture that attracts and retains high-performing employees, with nearly 900 employees under her leadership. Today, Pat stewards the talent strategy that keeps both Avanath and Brighthaven recognized as best-in-class operators nationwide. Pat's leadership enables Avanath and Brighthaven to attract and retain top talent, maintain operational excellence, and deliver "Lifestyle Within Reach."





RAJNI GOLLINGS
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
Fisher Phillips LLP

Rajni Gollings is the definition of indispensable. She manages one of Fisher Phillips' largest offices along with their growing Virtual Office, supporting a high volume of attorneys and staff with consistency, professionalism, and sound judgment. What sets Rajni apart is her ability to anticipate issues before they arise and handle them in a way that keeps operations running smoothly. She reduces friction, solves complex, cross-functional problems, and allows attorneys and leadership to stay focused on their work. Bringing decades of law firm experience, she connects operations, finance, people, technology, and culture into one practical plan—consistently creating order, momentum, and trust. She is the person people call when something needs to get done the right way. Whether improving workflows, implementing better systems, managing change, or helping leadership make sound business decisions, Rajni's judgment stands out. She recently led a full office renovation and relocation with minimal disruption, maintaining productivity, morale, and continuity throughout. She also has a sharp instinct for where technology can remove friction, improve visibility, and make teams more efficient, always focused on practical outcomes. Rajni is also a culture carrier—present, approachable, collaborative, and solutions-oriented. She builds strong relationships across all levels of the office; people trust her, respect her, and want to work with her. She knows when to move quickly, when to slow a decision down, and when to bring the right voices into the room. Over the past year, she has navigated significant personal challenges while continuing to show up fully for her team without missing a beat, reflecting her resilience and deep commitment. Reliable, thoughtful, and aligned with the firm's goals, Rajni is a true leader and partner to leadership.





ALEX GONZALEZ
PROJECT MANAGER
TAIT & Associates, Inc.

Alex Gonzalez, PE, is an indispensable Civil Engineering Project Manager whose impact extends well beyond the scope of his role. Since joining our team in 2018, Alex has grown professionally within the firm and has consistently demonstrated the ability to balance operational execution with strategic foresight. He ensures projects are completed on time, within budget, and to the highest standard. Alex is known for his willingness to take on new challenges and his ability to approach complex assignments with confidence, discipline, and sound judgment. He brings a steady, solutions-oriented mindset to high-pressure situations and remains focused on achieving strong outcomes for clients and the communities. What truly sets Alex apart is his commitment to team success and professional development. He invests meaningful time in training younger engineers and helping them build both technical skills and professional judgment. He brings out the best in people by setting high expectations, providing thoughtful guidance, and creating an environment where others can grow. Alex leads by example with integrity, accountability, and professionalism, and he embodies the company's core values of kindness and an entrepreneurial spirit. His dedication to project delivery, team development, and continuous improvement makes him a trusted leader and a highly valued member of our company.





BETH GOODMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
STRATEGY ACTIVATION &
CHANGE MANAGEMENT
Rady Children's Health in Orange County

Beth Goodman is the kind of leader organizations rely on during their most complex and transformational moments. Over nearly two decades at CHOC and now across Rady Children's Health, she has earned a reputation as a trusted, highly effective leader who helps teams navigate change while keeping people aligned around a shared mission. As Executive Director of Strategy Activation & Change Management, Beth plays a critical role supporting enterprise-wide integration and transformation efforts following the merger of the parent companies of CHOC and Rady Children's Hospital San Diego. Her work spans strategy activation, organizational change management and cross-functional alignment during a significant period of evolution for the organization. Beth is often the go-to leader for complex initiatives because of her ability to connect strategy, operations and people in a way that builds trust and drives progress. What makes Beth truly indispensable is her ability to lead through complexity without losing the human side of the work. Beginning her career as a neonatology nurse, she brings credibility, empathy, and operational insight to every challenge. She is respected for her calm leadership style, strong work ethic, and ability to bring people together around solutions—always keeping the focus where it belongs: on improving the experience and future of children and families.





CARLA GUAJARDO
TEEN PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP
DIRECTOR & CEO OF GOLDEN
STATE DANCE FOUNDATION
South Coast Conservatory

Carla Guajardo is indispensable to South Coast Conservatory (SCC) because she exemplifies the organization's mission of developing exceptional dancers who are also confident, thoughtful, and well-rounded young artists. Since 1992, SCC has grown into one of Orange County's and the nation's largest performing arts schools, serving more than 1,000 students annually through two campuses and 13 studios offering ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, musical theatre, acrobatics, and aerial arts. SCC is committed to workforce development and creating sustainable careers for artists. As SCC's Teen Director, Carla guides students through critical stages of artistic and personal development, helping prepare them for college dance programs, professional careers, and lifelong engagement in the arts. With more than 15 years of experience as an educator, performer, choreographer, and researcher, she brings exceptional expertise and leadership to every aspect of her work. She holds an M.F.A. in Dance Performance and Choreography from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Carla also serves as CEO of SCC's nonprofit affiliate, Golden State Dance Foundation, which will be rebranded as the South Coast Conservatory Alliance. In partnership with SCC leadership and the foundation board, she is expanding performance, mentorship, and leadership opportunities while strengthening the Teacher Apprentice Program to cultivate future dance educators.





MAGGIE GUEVARA
PURCHASING DIRECTOR
ECOS

Maggie Guevara, Purchasing Director at ECOS, is truly an indispensable part of the company. She sits at the center of the business—every product, timeline, and customer commitment depends on the materials she manages. Sourcing raw materials for over 200 plant-powered cleaning products, Maggie and her team are advancing ECOS's strategic goals, helping the company remain competitive and innovative by sourcing the most sustainable materials and the greenest ingredients. The cost savings she creates translate into affordable green products that are accessible to all. For nearly 30 years, Maggie has been an exceptional leader, relied on not just for her expertise but for how she shows up every day: thoughtful, highly capable, and deeply committed to ECOS's mission to make safer products for people, pets, and the planet. She is constantly negotiating pricing and making critical inventory decisions, while reducing waste, avoiding shortages, and strengthening the business. Her problem-solving ability is one of her greatest strengths. During the pandemic, her forward-buying strategy meant ECOS had key materials on hand when demand surged. When shortages hit, she quickly secured alternatives, keeping production moving and deliveries on time. Maggie truly elevates how ECOS operates—bringing clarity, accountability, and consistently reliable solutions. The executive team trusts her, depends on her, and knows she'll consistently find a way to deliver results, no matter the challenge.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 OCBJ INDISPENSABLES!

Goodwill of Orange County and ShopGoodwill.com proudly congratulate three exceptional leaders whose dedication, expertise, and commitment help drive our mission forward every day. Thank you for making an extraordinary impact on our organization, our team members, and the communities we serve.



Jaime Damacio

Human Services Data
& Systems Analyst

Jaime transforms data into meaningful insights that strengthen our workforce development programs, improve outcomes, and help maximize our community impact.



Kenton Faust

Payroll Manager

Kenton's precision, reliability, and commitment to excellence ensure our team members are supported, allowing the organization to operate smoothly and effectively.



Simon Park

ShopGoodwill.com
Product Director

Simon's innovative leadership helps shape the future of ShopGoodwill.com, creating exceptional experiences that expand Goodwill's reach and generate critical funding for our mission.

Congratulations, Jaime, Kenton and Simon! Your passion, expertise, and dedication make Goodwill OC's mission impact possible everyday.



goodwill
orange county



SHOP
GOODWILL.COM®

THE INDISPENSABLES



DIANE GUO
DIRECTOR, REGIONAL
BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Ware Malcomb

Diane Guo is indispensable to Ware Malcomb's success because she exemplifies the rare combination of operational expertise, leadership acumen, and genuine commitment to people development that drives organizational excellence. Her journey from the Irvine Healthcare Studio through Project Management to regional operations leadership demonstrates not only her versatility, but her deep understanding of every facet of our business from design execution to client delivery. Diane's ability to bridge the gap between strategy and execution makes her essential to our firm's day-to-day success. She doesn't just oversee operations, she actively partners with office and studio leaders to solve problems, remove obstacles, and ensure seamless project delivery across Southern California. Her hands-on training style has cultivated a principle of excellence throughout the region, developing talent at every level and ensuring continuity of our high standards. Diane's collaborative approach has transformed how teams work together across disciplines and locations. She understands that operational excellence isn't achieved through directives alone. She demonstrates how it requires building relationships, fostering trust, and empowering people to perform at their best. Diane's ability to consistently elevate business performance while maintaining strong client relationships makes her invaluable to both internal teams and external partners.



ALMA GUTIERREZ
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
TGR Foundation

Alma Gutierrez is indispensable at TGR Foundation, contributing significantly to its culture and Earl Woods Scholar Program success. As an Orange County native who has grown with the organization over the last 17 years, from a student to a volunteer and part-time program staff member of the TGR Learning Lab Anaheim to a full-time member of the national program staff, she's the living embodiment of its mission to empower students to pursue their passions through education. As Director of Programs, Alma supports mentoring, community service, and scholarship selection through the Earl Woods Scholar Program. Year after year, speeches and exit surveys of graduating seniors highlight her impact on their journeys as they navigated challenges of college life, from academics to mental health, relationships and more. The program holds a 98% graduation rate of its 200+ alumni network, with 94% achieving the milestone as the first in their families. Alma also works to ensure the success of 100+ current scholars through ongoing support from a dedicated mentor, annual workshops, career coaching and other wraparound services. In addition to serving the program network of more than 500 students, alumni, and mentors, Alma also oversees full-time staff and is a dependable source of support and mentorship as they advance in their careers. TGR Foundation would not be the same without Alma's foundational knowledge, experience, deep community connections and positive, uplifting energy.



MARITZA GUZMAN
PRODUCTION MANAGER
BioPhotas, Inc.

Maritza Guzman, Production Manager BioPhotas, Inc., Tustin At BioPhotas, few individuals have had a greater impact on our growth and culture than Maritza Guzman. As our Production Manager, Maritza has been a cornerstone of our organization for nearly seven years. During that time, she has helped transform our manufacturing and fulfillment operations while building a team culture defined by accountability, collaboration, and genuine care for others. Maritza is widely known for two qualities that make her truly exceptional: meticulous attention to detail and an unfailingly positive attitude. No challenge is too large, and no task is beneath her. On any given day, you can find Maritza overseeing production schedules, assisting with assembly, helping prepare shipments, or working side-by-side with her team to ensure customer orders are completed accurately and on time. Under Maritza's leadership, our production team has tripled in size, and our manufacturing capacity has increased more than fivefold to support BioPhotas' rapid growth. Yet what makes her truly indispensable is not just operational excellence—it is the way she makes every employee feel valued and important. Whether interacting with senior leadership or a newly hired team member, Maritza treats everyone with the same professionalism, responsiveness, and respect. Maritza's leadership, work ethic, and contagious enthusiasm are a major reason our employees enjoy coming to work each day and why BioPhotas continues to achieve record-breaking results.



BIANCA HERRERA
DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES
Working Wardrobes

Bianca Herrera is indispensable to Working Wardrobes because she leads the programs that turn our mission into meaningful impact. As Director of Client Services, she oversees workforce readiness, career development, and supportive service programs that help individuals overcome barriers to employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency. What makes Bianca exceptional is her ability to combine strategic leadership with deep compassion. Under her guidance, Working Wardrobes served more than 10,000 individuals in 2025—the largest reach in the organization's history. Her team delivered thousands of career coaching sessions, workforce readiness workshops, supportive services, and professional wardrobing experiences, helping job seekers gain the skills, confidence, and resources needed to secure employment. Bianca's impact extends beyond program management. She strengthens systems, improves service delivery, builds community partnerships, and develops innovative solutions that enhance the client experience. Whether supporting veterans, survivors of domestic violence, justice-impacted individuals, young adults, seniors, or those facing financial hardship, she ensures every client is treated with dignity and respect. Her journey with Working Wardrobes reflects her commitment to service. Bianca first joined as a volunteer after our devastating 2020 fire, stepping forward during one of the most challenging periods in our history. Today, she leads the very programs she once supported.



LISA O'NEILL HILL
DIRECTOR, EXTERNAL
COMMUNICATIONS
City of Hope Orange County

Lisa O'Neill Hill is one of those rare people whose influence is felt everywhere, even if many never realize she is the person behind it. While her name may not be in the spotlight, her impact on City of Hope Orange County has been extraordinary. Since joining us in 2019 as employee number seven, Lisa has helped shape the voice, reputation, and presence of our organization during one of the most transformative periods in our history. As we launched an ambitious \$1.5 billion expansion into Orange County, Lisa helped us build trust and connection within the community through authentic, meaningful storytelling. What makes Lisa exceptional is her ability to see extraordinary stories in ordinary people. She recognizes the humanity behind every interaction — the patient facing impossible odds, the physician quietly advancing breakthroughs, the employee whose compassion changes someone's experience in a difficult moment. She has a remarkable gift for bringing those stories forward in ways that are compelling, dignified, and deeply moving. Through her work, people do not simply learn about City of Hope — they feel connected to our mission.



THUYEN HO
VP OF PRODUCTION & SOURCING
Z Supply

It's hard to choose just one indispensable team member because there are so many amazing people who contribute to Z SUPPLY's success. But if I had to highlight one person who has truly helped shape who we are today, it would be Thuyen Ho, our VP of Production & Sourcing. Thuyen has been with Z SUPPLY for the past 12 years, and throughout that time, she has been one of the most dependable, hardworking, and dedicated people on our team. At Z SUPPLY, we always say, "Product is King," and none of what we do would be possible without our products being made and delivered on time. Thuyen and her team make that happen every single day. What makes Thuyen so special is not just her incredible expertise, with more than 30 years of experience in production and sourcing, but the way she leads with commitment, loyalty, and heart. She consistently goes above and beyond, working to support both our internal teams and our factory partners around the world. No matter the challenge, she shows up with professionalism, care, and an unwavering dedication to the business. Z SUPPLY would not be where it is today without Thuyen's leadership and work ethic. She has played an enormous role in building the strong reputation, quality, and reliability our customers have come to expect from us, and we're incredibly grateful to have her as part of the Z SUPPLY family.



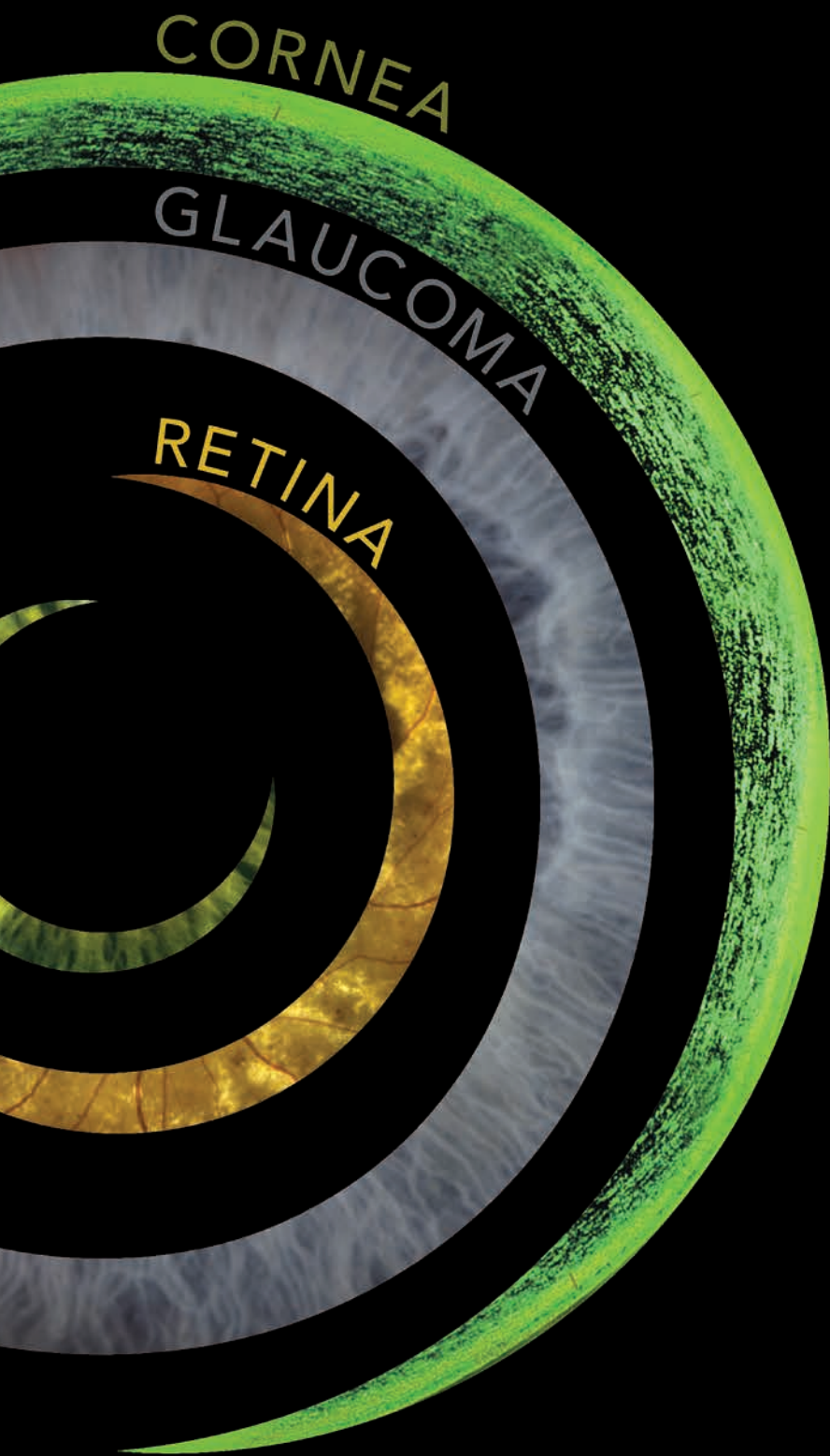
Glaukos proudly congratulates

Alma Toggenburger

for being recognized as a

2026

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL
"INDISPENSABLES" HONOREE



Alma is an indispensable force behind the culture and community impact that defines Glaukos. For more than a decade, she has gone far beyond the scope of her role, shaping the programs, relationships, and traditions that bring our values to life every day. Through her own initiative, she built and continues to grow our community outreach and volunteerism efforts, while also leading employee engagement and internal events that strengthen connection across the organization.

In the past year alone, Alma organized more than 35 volunteer events and coordinated the adoption of nearly 200 families globally during the holiday season. She doesn't just plan these efforts, she actively recruits, motivates, and participates alongside employees, ensuring strong engagement and meaningful outcomes. Many of the traditions and programs that define our culture today exist because of her vision and perseverance.

GLAUKOS
TRANSFORMING VISION

THE INDISPENSABLES



JENNIFER HUANG
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING,
COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
Sunstone Management

Jennifer Huang has become one of the key community builders behind Sunstone's growing influence throughout Orange County and Southern California's innovation ecosystem. What makes Jennifer indispensable is her unique ability to bridge public-private educational partners (P3) together. She brings entrepreneurs, universities, nonprofits, and public officials into the same conversations and initiatives, creating opportunities that would not otherwise exist. Jennifer helped establish Sunstone as a trusted regional platform for innovation, entrepreneurship, economic development, and community engagement. Earlier this year, she led the inaugural Irvine Tech Day in collaboration with Irvine City Councilmembers and the UC Irvine ANTreprenueur Center, bringing together dozens of community partners as well as hundreds of innovators and investors at Irvine City Hall to celebrate the City of Innovation. For three years running, she has led strategic marketing campaigns and community outreach for Sunstone's annual charitable Irvine Dream Run, increasing runner signups by over 240% and securing hundreds of thousands in sponsorships and donations to the Sunstone Community Fund, the company's nonprofit arm. Jennifer represents the next generation of Orange County leaders. Through her exceptional work, Jennifer is helping shape a more successful Sunstone and a more innovative, collaborative, and dynamic future for our community.



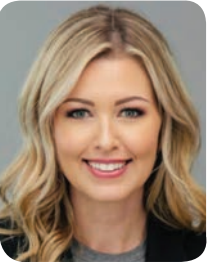
HANNA IBRAHIM
AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGER
Families Forward

As Affordable Housing Manager, Hanna Ibrahim oversees programming and supportive services for more than 140 formerly unhoused families living in affordable housing communities owned by and/or supported by Families Forward throughout Orange County. She leads the team responsible for helping families maintain housing stability, strengthen financial well-being, and build a path toward long-term self-sufficiency. What makes Hanna indispensable is her ability to pair strategic leadership with hands-on action. She has helped lead major housing initiatives, developed financial literacy and savings programs, trained staff, and strengthened services that support families across multiple communities. Hanna is also the driving force behind Families Forward's Child Enrichment Program. She creates immersive experiences that help children learn, explore and build confidence, often using donated or repurposed materials to stretch resources as far as possible. In recent months, she transformed cardboard boxes into a children's farmer's market complete with donated produce, helped children create and operate a restaurant where they cooked meals for their parents, and organized activities ranging from STEM projects to talent shows. "Hanna has a remarkable ability to create lasting impact for families, children and our entire organization," said Lauren Hahn, Housing Development Director. "Some people manage programs; Hanna creates opportunities that change the trajectory of lives."



MIN JUNG (MJ) KIM
CONTROLLER
MeriCal, LLC

MJ Kim is an indispensable team member not because she is the only person that can do her job but because she consistently creates value, builds trust, and makes the team stronger. MJ delivers high-quality work, meets commitments, and is a critical resource during critical deadlines. Her reliable execution is unblemished as in the 10 plus years that I have known her and had the privilege of working with her at two different companies, she has never missed a deadline. MJ has deep expertise in all Accounting and Treasury matters, she maintains a problem-solving mindset, has a deep understanding of the business, the role and interplay of the FP&A function and is the model of integrity and accountability. MJ keeps others informed, simplifies complexity, and therefore makes it easier for teams to collaborate. She handles change well and steps into challenges when needed. This was most recently exemplified when I, the CFO, was in a near fatal e-bike accident on a Sunday evening. In very short notice, MJ seamlessly stepped into a Monday morning Board meeting and then without hesitation, partnered with the CEO to ensure business continuity in running the company. This alone deserves a standing ovation and the highest level of recognition possible. She is proof that with MJ in our employ, MeriCal has achieved organizational resilience.



SHANNON KING-GINTER
SENIOR DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT
Meals on Wheels Orange County

Shannon King-Ginter is indispensable to our organization's success because she combines strategic vision with disciplined execution to elevate every aspect of our development program. Since joining in February 2024, she has transformed our fundraising into a more data-driven, relationship-focused, and growth-oriented operation. She launched our first annual giving society, Nurturing Neighbors, strengthening donor engagement and building a sustainable base of support. She also led a major system conversion from DonorPerfect to Raiser's Edge—an ambitious initiative that now enables strategic donor assignments, improved stewardship, and effective moves management. Shannon developed and is executing a three-year strategic plan, including expanding our development team. Now in year two, results are already evident: we've raised \$2,583,529 to date, an 8% increase over last year, and achieved a 57.29% donor retention rate. Her expertise in donor relations and fundraising strategy, combined with her collaborative leadership style, has strengthened our team and positioned our organization for continued growth. Shannon's ability to align strategy, people, and execution makes her an essential leader and a key driver of our success.



BRIAN KITTRIDGE
ORANGE COUNTY OFFICE LEADER
- ASSURANCE PARTNER
RSM US LLP

Brian Kittridge is the Orange County office leader and actively involved in several areas, including client development and business growth, office and people culture as well as overall leadership. His deep passion and care for excellent client service, meaningful relationships, and "can do" attitude make him a go-to resource for RSM partners, employee, clients, and people in the local marketplace. He is indispensable in several areas, including deep industry experience, coaching/mentoring people and deep critical thinking. I personally find him indispensable in all these areas and more!



ANDREY KONOPLEV
CALENDAR MANAGER
Regal Court Reporting

Andrey Konoplev embodies the principle that a great intake manager is the difference between a chaotic situation and a calm resolution. As we have seen since inception at Regal Court Reporting, there is nothing calming about the adversarial nature of litigation. Despite chaotic scheduling requests, Andrey intuitively combines empathy for every situation with strict organization to ensure a smooth, welcoming process for each person seeking help. He has an innate ability to remember things upon first learning of them and an uncanny recall ability. While perfection is rare and excellence is the standard for our firm, in the seven years he has managed Regal's calendar, he has a near perfect track record. In addition to his attention to detail and incredible bedside manner with clients, he has taken it upon himself to become a data analytics specialist, compiling highly detailed and actionable realtime data that helps both our sales and resource teams.

YOUR AI DID ITS HOMEWORK. NOW WHAT?



By Paul Nelson, Esq



She walked into the consultation with a color-coded spreadsheet, five years of flagged transactions, and the quiet confidence of someone who had done her homework. Her AI had processed a decade of bank records overnight. Three years ago, that same stack would have arrived in banker's boxes, alphabetized by someone's best guess, and dumped on a paralegal's desk with a prayer.

Welcome to divorce in the age of artificial intelligence, where the technology is extraordinary, the right uses are narrow, and the wrong ones are expensive.

A few months ago, I wrote in this space about AI-generated legal research: fabricated case citations that attorneys, and their clients, mistook for real law. Judges were not amused. Sanctions followed. The cautionary tale resonated. But it left unfinished business. If AI cannot be trusted to argue California law, what can it do? Quite a lot, provided you know where to aim it and, critically, which version you are using.

The highest-value use of AI in a high-asset dissolution is not legal analysis. It is sorting through the mountain of paper. AI tools are remarkably good at ingesting large volumes of financial data and producing structured, searchable output. A decade of bank records that would take a paralegal two weeks to categorize can be processed in hours, without the two-week sigh that usually accompanies the assignment. Transactions get flagged by amount, vendor, date range, or pattern. Inconsistencies between accounts surface quickly. That is work your attorney can use. It is also work that, without AI, runs up billable hours before the legal strategy even begins.

AI is equally useful before you ever set foot in a conference room. It can help you formulate the right questions, translate legal jargon into plain English, summarize a long financial disclosure, and organize years of correspondence into a coherent timeline. None of that requires a law degree. All of it saves real money.

Here is where people make quiet and consequential mistakes. The free version of that popular AI chatbot on your phone, the one that feels like a very smart, very agreeable friend who never sleeps, may be retaining your conversations to train future models. Feed it your brokerage statements, your business financials, or your spouse's compensation structure, and you may be sharing far more than you intended with far more people than you expected. Enterprise and professional versions of these tools typically offer meaningful data privacy protection and do not retain your inputs. Read the fine print. It is considerably shorter than your bank records, and considerably more important.

What AI cannot do is replace legal judgment. The same tool that organized your transactions will cheerfully opine on your separate property interest in the family business, invent a supporting appellate decision, and deliver both conclusions with the serene confidence of something that has never once been wrong, because it has no idea what wrong feels like.

Use it to organize. Use it to prepare. Use it to save money on the front end. Just remember: the best AI in the world is a spectacular assistant and a terrible attorney. The difference, in a high-asset divorce, is not academic.

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THE INDISPENSABLES



LEESA LOEFKE
OFFICE MANAGER
Buchanan Street Partners, L.P.

Leesa is the cultural heartbeat and operational backbone of our company. In our fast-paced real estate environment, she keeps the office running seamlessly, takes care of our people, and ensures our team has the tools and resources needed to succeed. Leesa approaches company resources as her own. When office equipment malfunctions, she never defaults to a costly service call. Instead, she proactively troubleshoots the issues herself, finding practical and cost-effective ways to keep operations running efficiently. This resourceful, cost-conscious mindset keeps our operations moving without interruption. No two days look the same in real estate, and Leesa handles every challenge with professionalism and grace. Whether she is notarizing urgent closing documents, assisting with employee training or responding to last-minute requests, she adapts quickly and gets the job done without hesitation. Her ability to pivot seamlessly is a true reflection of her dedication and character. Yet what truly sets Leesa apart is her deliberate investment in the people around her. She makes it a priority to recognize and celebrate every employee's birthday, helping each team member feel valued and appreciated. She plans quarterly events, including the annual holiday party, and coordinates a team building give back day to a local non-profit through our children's charity. In an industry that can often be demanding and high-stress, her attention to these details builds morale, fosters loyalty, and keeps our team connected. Leesa embodies everything the Indispensable Award represents, and we are proud to put her name forward.



JESSICA LOPEZ
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING & SALES
Contract Services Group, Inc.

Jessica Lopez personifies the term "indispensable," and Contract Services Group, Inc. is blessed to have her as a leader. She combines strategic leadership with the day-to-day follow-through that keeps the organization moving forward. Since joining the company in 2015 as a Marketing Administrative Assistant, Jessica has earned every promotion through consistent performance, initiative, and a deep commitment to the business. Her growth reflects not only talent, but also a strong understanding of CSG from the ground up including how teams work, what clients respond to, and what it takes to execute at a high level. As VP of Marketing and Sales, Jessica leads the marketing and branding campaigns that shape how CSG is seen in the marketplace. She brings clarity to messaging, positioning, and outreach, ensuring the company's strengths are communicated with professionalism and creativity. Just as importantly, she creates a positive, high-performing experience for her team. Jessica leads with kindness, collaboration, and accountability, helping each person succeed while raising the standard for the entire department. Jessica supports executive leadership by turning vision into reality. She is the go-to person for creative energy and practical problem-solving, consistently improving processes, strengthening communication, and delivering better outcomes. Jessica doesn't just contribute to success; she elevates everyone around her and makes the organization stronger every day.



SILVESTRE LOPEZ
MANAGER OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
Project Youth OC

Silvestre Lopez is indispensable to Project Youth OC because his leadership helps create life-changing opportunities for young people throughout Orange County. As Manager of Youth Development Programs, he oversees Shortstop and Project Self, two impactful initiatives that help youth build the skills, confidence, and support systems needed to succeed in school, careers, and life. Through his leadership, young people gain access to mentoring, workforce readiness training, educational opportunities, internships, and community resources that help them envision and pursue brighter futures. He works closely with schools, employers, and community partners to create meaningful experiences that expose youth to new possibilities while equipping them with the tools needed to achieve their goals. What truly sets Silvestre apart is his unwavering commitment to helping others reach their full potential. Whether mentoring staff, supporting a participant through challenges, or developing systems that strengthen program effectiveness, he leads with humility, compassion, and purpose. He has a unique ability to inspire confidence in others and help young people see possibilities for themselves that they may never have imagined. Simply put, Silvestre does more than manage programs—he changes lives. The youth, families, and communities we serve are stronger because of his dedication, leadership, and steadfast commitment to creating pathways to opportunity.

Indispensable
indeed!



Congratulations, **Shree Carter**,
on being recognized by the OCBJ
for what we all know to be true:
you are an *indispensable* part of
the Vanguard University community.

**Thank you for your faithful
leadership and service!**



Congratulations
Leesa Loeffke

**Orange County
Business Journal 2026
Indispensables Honoree**

As Office Manager, Leesa Loeffke is the trusted force behind our Newport Beach headquarters. Whether supporting our team and clients or keeping daily operations running seamlessly, she consistently goes above and beyond with professionalism and care.

Congratulations, Leesa, and thank you for all that you do. Your dedication and leadership drive our success every day.

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PARTNERS, L.P.

THE INDISPENSABLES





KEISHA LUCIER
CHIEF OF STAFF
The Arts & Learning Conservatory

Keisha Lucier is the definition of an indispensable team member at Arts & Learning Conservatory (ALC). She serves as the connective force that keeps the organization operating effectively across its many programs, productions, partnerships, and administrative functions. As ALC has grown from a small community arts organization into a nationally recognized nonprofit serving thousands of students annually, Keisha has become a trusted leader whose institutional knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and unwavering commitment are essential to the organization's success. She is often the first-person colleagues, educators, and community partners turn to when they need answers, solutions, or support. Keisha's impact extends beyond her job description. She coordinates complex logistics, manages critical day-to-day operations, supports program implementation, and helps ensure that productions, classes, special events, and educational partnerships are executed seamlessly. Her ability to anticipate needs, adapt quickly, and navigate challenges allows ALC to maintain its high standard of excellence while continuing to grow. What makes Keisha truly indispensable is her genuine care for others. In a nonprofit dedicated to transforming young lives through the arts, Keisha's behind-the-scenes leadership directly impacts thousands of children and families each year. She is the trusted problem solver and steady force behind the scenes.





XITLALY LUNA
VOLUNTEER MANAGER
South County Outreach

Xitlaly Luna is indispensable to South County Outreach because she has transformed volunteer engagement into one of the organization's greatest strengths. In a nonprofit environment where volunteers are critical to delivering services, Xitlaly ensures SCO has the people, partnerships, and systems needed to support the community. Following the pandemic, she played a key role in revitalizing the volunteer program. As a member of one of the first CaliforniansForAll College Corps cohorts, she helped introduce a new generation of service-minded individuals to South County Outreach while building a sustainable volunteer pipeline. Since 2022, she has expanded and diversified the volunteer base, engaging individuals ages 12 to 99. Her ability to connect people with meaningful service opportunities has strengthened volunteer retention and community engagement. Beyond recruitment, Xitlaly thoughtfully matches volunteers with roles that align with their interests and strengths, improving engagement and effectiveness. She oversees the College Corps partnership, manages the court referral community service program, and coordinates volunteer efforts with corporations, civic organizations, and churches. These partnerships provide vital support for SCO's food distribution and programs while increasing awareness of the organization. Through her leadership, relationship-building skills, and commitment to service, Xitlaly helps South County Outreach meet community needs and advance its mission.





DOUG LUONG
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
TGR Foundation

Doug Luong is an indispensable member of TGR Foundation's flagship TGR Learning Lab Anaheim. Since joining the team in 2005 as one of the first hires, he helped to launch the Lab's programs and has grown with the Foundation as our programs and impact expanded to serve more than 217,000 students across Orange County and beyond. Doug has supported the Foundation's mission to empower students to pursue their passions through education in various roles. Throughout his tenure, he has helped thousands of students discover their passions, develop new skills and pursue their goals. Doug led the computer clubhouse for ten years, followed by seven years as a full-time learning facilitator, teaching a variety of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) courses. In addition to teaching and mentoring local students, he has also guided educators through professional development trainings and supported junior staff in his role as director of programs. The team can always count on Doug's hands-on leadership, knowledge and expertise and can depend on him to return to previous responsibilities when needed to fill gaps. He has stepped in to teach classes, support event logistics and provide counseling to students or staff. Many alumni credit Doug for valuable guidance and experience as they navigated their college and career journeys, including Anaheim Mayor Pro Tem Carlos Leon, who has publicly recognized him as a mentor and a strong component of his success.

Congratulations, Beth Goodman!

A well-deserved honor for
someone whose impact is truly
indispensable.

With appreciation,
Rady Children's Health Orange County





THE INDISPENSABLES









FRANCESCO MANTOVANI

TECH LEAD
Topflight

Francesco Mantovani is a machine — it's not unusual for him to ship four or five builds in a single day. As a tech lead, he's reliable, deeply supportive of his teammates, and a genuinely great coworker who makes everyone around him better. What sets him apart is his incredible dedication and deep involvement in every one of his projects. He combines a thorough understanding of each project with remarkable attention to detail, and that combination has had a huge impact on our work and our clients. He has been an absolute rockstar throughout — the kind of person the team relies on to get things done and to set the standard for quality.



JENNIFER MATSUDA

MANAGER OF PROGRAM IMPACT
Project Hope Alliance

Jennifer Matsuda is truly indispensable to Project Hope Alliance. As our Manager of Program Impact, she has transformed how our organization uses data to drive decision-making, improve services, and strengthen outcomes for the youth and families we serve. Recognizing a critical gap in our use of Salesforce, Jennifer took the initiative to create and develop an entirely new department focused on data and evaluation. She sought out specialized training, built her expertise, and developed the systems, policies, processes, and procedures that now guide data entry, reporting, and implementation across both program and development departments. Her work has created consistency, accuracy, and accountability throughout the organization. Jennifer's impact extends far beyond data management. She collaborates closely with Operations and Finance to ensure teams have the tools, information, and processes they need to succeed. She led the development and implementation of a new assessment tool for case managers and thoughtfully aligned our database to ensure consistency and usability across systems. What makes Jennifer indispensable is her ability to identify gaps before others see them and proactively develop solutions that strengthen the organization. She leads with empathy, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence, while building strong relationships across every department. Jennifer not only supports her direct reports—she helps keep leadership focused, accountable.



SEAN MCGINTY

ERS OPERATIONS SUPPORT
MANAGER
Automobile Club of Southern California

Sean McGinty is indispensable to our company's success because he has consistently transformed complex operational challenges into innovative solutions that improve service, safety, and efficiency at scale. Over his 32-year career, Sean has played a defining role in modernizing our Emergency Road Service operations and strengthening how we serve millions of members. Sean's impact is both strategic and practical. He has led major technology advancements, from early virtual dispatch innovations to modern field service platforms, helping streamline operations, improve response times, and enhance the member experience. His work has also strengthened service provider partnerships and driven more efficient use of resources across the business. What truly sets Sean apart is his ability to anticipate future needs and develop solutions with lasting impact. A standout example is his leadership in creating a vehicle-mounted safety messaging system designed to better protect roadside technicians and stranded motorists. This innovation reflects not only technical expertise, but also a deep commitment to safety and operational excellence. Beyond individual initiatives, Sean has helped redefine how this critical line of business operates, building systems, processes, and capabilities that continue to deliver value year after year. His leadership, ingenuity, and unwavering commitment make him a cornerstone of the organization's success and truly indispensable to its future.

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Congratulations

CHRIS BENNETT

2026 OCBJ INDISPENSABLE



THE MAN. THE MYTH. THE LEGEND.



THE INDISPENSABLES

SNELL
& WILMER**ROSEMARY MCKAY**

LEGAL ADMINISTRATIVE
ASSISTANT
Snell & Wilmer

For 35 years, Rosemary McKay has been a cornerstone of Snell & Wilmer's Orange County office. As a Legal Administrative Assistant, she is more than a professional—she is a trusted advisor, mentor, teacher, and culture-builder whose influence is seen throughout our organization. Rosemary possesses a rare combination of technical expertise, institutional knowledge, professionalism, and emotional intelligence. Attorneys, paralegals, legal assistants, and administrative staff turn to her for guidance because she not only knows how to solve problems but also takes the time to teach others. Over the years, she has trained and mentored countless employees, helping new team members learn their roles and the values that define our firm: excellence, collaboration, integrity, and service. Her calm demeanor under pressure has become legendary. Whether navigating court filings, supporting attorneys through litigation matters, or helping colleagues through personal challenges, Rosemary remains thoughtful and composed. She is often the first-person people seek out when they need help and the last to leave when a project requires extra effort. Perhaps Rosemary's greatest contribution is her impact on people. Generations of employees credit her with helping them grow professionally and personally. Her kindness, patience, positivity, and willingness to invest in others have shaped our office culture and strengthened the firm. Simply put, Snell & Wilmer would not be the same without Rosemary.

**MADISON MEEHAN**

DIRECTOR OF BRANDING &
COMMUNICATIONS
Westgroup Designs

Madison Meehan is an indispensable part of the firm's success because her impact extends far beyond traditional branding and communications. Recently promoted to Director of Branding & Communications after 3.5 years of dedicated service, she has become a trusted resource across the organization, consistently stepping in wherever needed to help the firm achieve its goals. As the leader of marketing and communications, Madison is responsible for elevating the firm's brand and ensuring its work, people, and values are represented with excellence. She builds meaningful relationships with clients and industry partners through events, project openings, sponsorships, and community engagement initiatives, serving as an ambassador for the firm. Her ability to foster authentic connections strengthens client relationships, expands visibility, and creates opportunities for growth. Madison also plays a key role in shaping the firm's culture. She plans internal events, leads philanthropic initiatives, and creates opportunities for employees to connect, helping cultivate the collaborative environment that defines the organization. Known for her adaptability and initiative, she willingly takes on challenges beyond her job description and quickly learns whatever is needed to deliver results. Her versatility, dedication, and ability to connect people, strengthen culture, and elevate the firm's reputation make her essential to the organization's continued success.

**SABRINA MELLINGER**

CHIEF OF STAFF
Chipotle

Sabrina Mellinger is indispensable to Chipotle because she serves as the connective tissue between executive leadership, strategic priorities, and day-to-day execution. As Chief of Staff to CEO Scott Boatwright, Sabrina is the trusted partner who helps transform vision into action, ensuring the organization remains aligned, focused, and operating at its highest level. Sabrina possesses a rare ability to navigate complex challenges, build strong relationships across functions, and bring clarity to fast-moving priorities. Whether coordinating critical initiatives or streamlining executive operations, Sabrina consistently delivers with professionalism, discretion, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Sabrina played a pivotal role in supporting Chipotle's growth by overseeing the design and construction of the company's Restaurant Support Centers in Newport Beach and Columbus, Ohio, helping create environments that foster collaboration, culture and innovation.

Behind every smooth voyage is a *steady* crew.

Spinnaker Investment Group proudly congratulates **Nikki Wood** and **Nicole Caris**, honored by the Orange County Business Journal as 2026 Indispensables.

They keep us on course every single day —
and now all of Orange County knows it.



OC's
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KERI MESINA
SENIOR DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ENGAGED PHILANTHROPY
Orange County Community Foundation

Keri Mesina, Senior Director of the Center for Engaged Philanthropy at the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF), is truly indispensable to our organization's success. Her passion for philanthropy and commitment to donor intent have helped transform generosity into meaningful, lasting impact throughout Orange County and beyond. Keri leads a team of philanthropic advisors, providing mentorship, training, and strategic guidance while fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and excellence. She is a trusted organizational resource, helping ensure donors receive exceptional service as they pursue their charitable goals. She also manages a portfolio of 128 charitable funds representing approximately \$385 million in assets and oversees 17 grant programs, contributing to nearly \$32 million in grants awarded in FY25 alone. Under Keri's leadership, OCCF launched the Family Volunteer Program in 2024, engaging families in hands-on service and generating more than \$76,000 in grants in its first two years. A trusted leader, she has inspired donors through the Family Foundation Alliance and Impact Philanthropy program, helping transform generosity into lasting community impact. Keri also played a pivotal role in establishing and growing the Promising Futures OC Fund and stewarding the OC Social Justice Fund, directing millions toward educational opportunity and equity. Her vision, leadership, and commitment to donor impact make her exceptionally deserving of this recognition.



ERIC MONROE
VICE PRESIDENT OF DESIGN SERVICES
Crisp Imaging

Eric Monroe is nominated for the Indispensable Award in recognition of his exceptional contributions to the growth and success of Crisp Imaging. Eric has been a driving force within the company, not only because of his extraordinary design talent and deep industry expertise, but also because of the leadership, integrity, and character he demonstrates every day. Eric joined Crisp Imaging during its early years, already highly respected in the print industry for his unmatched color-matching capabilities and design knowledge. From the beginning, he played a critical role in establishing Crisp as the trusted leader in color for the architectural and design community. Beyond his own expertise, Eric successfully built and mentored a team of top-tier talent, creating a department known for its unparalleled skill and professionalism. As Crisp Imaging has expanded its services and capabilities, Eric has continued to evolve alongside the company. Today, he leads a talented team of designers who consistently transform customer concepts into exceptional finished products. His unique ability to interpret a client's vision, combined with his extensive knowledge of print materials and production techniques, ensures that every project is executed at the highest level.



RYAN NISHIMOTO
MARKETING & PARTNERSHIP MANAGER
Octane

Ryan Nishimoto, Marketing & Partnership Manager Octane, Newport Beach

Ryan Nishimoto manages our partner relationship and ultimately their engagement with Octane for our signature events. Since joining Octane, Ryan has increased the relationship among some of our larger clients such as, J&J, Medtronic, Edwards, Abbvie, Experian etc. He has created long-lasting and trusted relationships with the marketing departments across our partners and sponsors. Ryan creates exceptional work products and is tireless in his commitment to excellence on behalf of the companies he serves and Octane. Our team looks to Ryan as a steady hand who is 100% accountable and reliable to provide the level of service our partner organizations rely on and expect. Since joining Octane, Ryan has significantly increased the engagement level of our partners which has resulted in greater outcome for OC and our community.



CONGRATULATIONS



JENNIFER NGUYEN
Creative Strategist

RYAN NISHIMOTO
Marketing & Partnerships Manager

Orange County Business Journal's
2026 Indispensables Honorees

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor.
Thank you for your hard work, leadership, and dedication to
advancing innovation in Orange County.

Fueling innovation. Building companies.
Strengthening Orange County. Join Us.



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Montage International is thrilled to celebrate
Derra Lee Edwards
Vice President of Learning
for her dedicated leadership and impact.



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THE INDISPENSABLES





JASON NOBLE
SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR
The Cannery/Louie's By The Bay

The Cannery/Louie's By The Bay is compelled to nominate Jason Noble as an "Indispensable" for our family group of 10 restaurants. Needless to say, this was very difficult in only choosing one individual as there are possibly five to six who would fit that very unique category. Having said that, Jason qualifies for this recognition as he in effect directly impacts a minimum of three of our restaurants and indirectly the other seven with what he brings to our organization. Jason's title (and we try to shy away from titles as we work to foster the approach that everyone, at all times is directly responsible for any action that makes us better as an organization) is director of special events primarily at The Cannery and Louie's By The Bay. Jason's passion, wisdom, and raw ability that in the past few years vastly exceeded my expectation when the position was first created. Simply put, the impact of one person on the financial impact as well as the additional human element has been something to deeply appreciate and respect. He is a rare gem in his every day presence. He is that rarity of someone you dream of finding, but in reality, don't believe you ever will. But don't anyone try to hire him. Personally, being so wise that we have done everything possible to bond him to us!





JEN NGUYEN
CREATIVE STRATEGIST
Octane

Jen Nguyen is part of a three-person Marketing Team at Octane and owns the branding of Octane both in our local ecosystem but to also attract capital from outside the area. She has built a brand awareness that reaches investors in Boston, NYC, the Bay Area, and others. Her work has elevated the type of image that supports the acceleration of OC in the eyes of global companies, entrepreneurs, and investors attracting companies to establish headquarters in OC. Her attention to detail has resulted in a quality product with high visibility and her willingness to listen and then act results in exceptional outcomes. Jen is absolutely critical to the organization and continues to accept new challenges and grows into each new area of responsibility. She has a solid awareness of what she wants to achieve, accepts, and seeks input and then creates an end product beyond expectations.





HANNAH ORTIZ
AGRICULTURE MANAGER
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

For the thousands of community members who volunteer at Harvest Solutions Farm (HSF) in Irvine each year, Hannah Ortiz is the face of Second Harvest. Hannah, the Food Bank's Agriculture Manager, has overseen the farm since the first month of planting in August 2021. Her passion for the project is evident in every shift, every conversation, every media interview, and every interaction she has. Located three miles from the Food Bank, HSF is a partnership with University of California South Coast Research & Extension Center and Solutions for Urban Agriculture. Largely powered by volunteers, it provides the freshest, locally grown produce available to the nearly 500,000 people (duplicated) in OC that the Food Bank serves each month. It is also one of the largest farm programs run by a food bank in the U.S. As of March 30th, HSF has harvested a total of 9.3M pounds of fresh, nutritious produce for children, families and seniors in need in OC. Hannah evaluates what crops are desired by the community, appropriate to plant in OC growing conditions, and able to be received and distributed by the Food Bank cost effectively. She balances operations, customer service, strategy, tactics, and fluctuations of mother nature –all while fostering a productive collaboration with the partners and remaining focused on the mission of providing nutritious food to the community. At each volunteer shift, Hannah and her small but impactful team provide an engaging, encouraging and positive outdoor experience to individuals as young as seven years old. In fiscal year 2024-2025 alone, Hannah and her team welcomed 8,422 volunteers (duplicated) to HSF who donated a total of over 23,000 volunteer hours. Hannah and her team are one of the reasons Second Harvest has the highest number of annual volunteers of any nonprofit in Orange County.



Congratulations

JASON NOBLE

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

2026 INDISPENSABLE

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EVENTS

1923 Restaurant Group | The Cannery | Louie's By The Bay

Jason has been with the 1923 Restaurant Group for 15 years and has served as Director of Special Events for The Cannery and Louie's by the Bay for the past 11 years. His passion, wisdom, and raw ability have vastly exceeded my expectations when the position was first created. Simply put, the impact one person has had on both the financial success of our restaurants and the people who make them special is something I deeply appreciate and respect. He is a rare gem in his everyday presence.

“ He is that rarity of someone you dream of finding, but in reality don't believe you ever will.

-Ron Salisbury
Owner, 1923 Group





THE INDISPENSABLES





SOC PADUA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORY &
ASSISTANT CORPORATE
CONTROLLER
Ingram Micro

Some of Ingram Micro's most important financial operations and transformation efforts rely on the leadership and expertise of Soc Padua. She is a driving force within Ingram Micro's Finance organization, known for her steady leadership, deep expertise, and ability to take on complex, high-impact work with confidence. Over the past 15 years, she has built an impressive career across Financial Planning, Consolidation, and Corporate Accounting, earning a reputation as a trusted leader who consistently delivers results. Colleagues value her steady approach, strong judgement and commitment to accountability and professionalism, especially in fast-moving and highly complex environments. In her current role, Soc leads a broad and highly visible set of responsibilities within the Finance organization while also serving as the global process owner for Ingram Micro's multi-year Finance Modernization initiative. Since Q4 2024, she has invested significant time and energy beyond her day-to-day responsibilities, helping lead a transformative effort designed to improve processes, strengthen efficiencies and better support the company's long-term growth. Her ability to lead through complexity, align stakeholders, and maintain momentum has made her an essential partner in advancing the future of the global Finance organization. What makes Soc indispensable is her ability to bring foresight, ownership, and a calm, confident presence that strengthens every team and initiative.





SIMON PARK
PRODUCT DIRECTOR -
SHOPGOODWILL.COM
Goodwill Industries of Orange County

Professionalism and dedication are at the core of Simon Park. As Product Director, he decides which features move forward and which ones need more review. His attention to detail and strong understanding of user needs truly stands out. Simon takes the time to fully understand each request before acting, making sure solutions are clear, practical, and delivered with quality. What also sets Simon apart is his commitment to the team. At a large and busy operation like ShopGoodwill.com, long nights and demanding weeks can be part of the job. Simon shows up every time, working closely with the technical team no matter the hour. His input during those late nights helps keep projects moving and ensures we stay on track. Simon also brings a steady and thoughtful approach to his work. He helps keep teams aligned and focused, balancing day-to-day needs with long-term goals. He is dependable, consistent, and always willing to step in when needed. I am very glad he is on our team. His contributions make a real difference, and he is truly an important part of our success.





RACHEL PARRIS
DIRECTOR OF SOURCING
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

Serving almost 500,000 (duplicated) Orange County children, families, and seniors monthly facing food insecurity starts with...food. And gone are the days when Second Harvest relied primarily on food donations from the community. The high need that started with COVID-19 requires significantly more pounds of food and a diversification of food sources. Today, the Food Bank sources food five ways: donations from food manufacturers and distributors, grocery rescue, government programs, two farm partnerships and purchasing food in bulk. As Director of Sourcing, Rachel Parris is the skilled leader who orchestrates it all. She and her team of eight expertly balance: 1) maximizing the amount of food received 2) staying within budget 3) sourcing food that is nutritious and desired by the community and 4) selecting food that can be appropriately received, stored, and distributed by our Operations team in our Distribution Center. All this while remaining flexible to navigate and respond to changing government programs, mother nature's impact on the farm programs, skyrocketing egg prices due to the bird flu, etc. Rachel is the definition of "calm, cool, and collected," bringing stability, strength, and strategy to her position. In recent months, she has restructured the department to create alignment to maximize our food sources. She has a knack for explaining and distilling the complicated nuances of each source in a way that is easily understood by the layperson. Rachel is an expert on California Senate Bill 1383 which requires certain food businesses to donate surplus edible food to food banks and pantries. She provides her expertise within the Food Bank and to affected businesses. In fiscal year 2023-2024 when Rachel started, Second Harvest distributed 35.8 million pounds to the community.

Congratulations!

2026 OCBJ
Indispensables
Honorees



Soc Padua
Exec Dir, Corporate Asst
Controller, Ingram Micro



Allie Ashdown
Sr. Manager, Marketing
Ingram Micro



At Ingram Micro, every associate is indispensable. It's the unique talents, dedication and collaboration of our people around the world that drive our success every day.

We're proud to celebrate Soc Padua and Allie Ashdown as representatives of the exceptional teams they work alongside. Their recognition reflects the dedication of the thousands of associates whose contributions help move our business and our customers forward.

ingrammicro.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO HANNAH ORTIZ & RACHEL PARRIS

on being named Orange County Business Journal
2026 INDISPENSABLES.



Hannah Ortiz, Agriculture Manager



Rachel Parris, Director of Sourcing



**SECOND
HARVEST
FOOD
BANK**
ORANGE COUNTY

FeedOC.org

THE INDISPENSABLES





TORAL PATEL, MBA, HACCP, CP
DIRECTOR - ACCREDITATION,
REGULATORY & LICENSING
*Kaiser Permanente Orange
County*

Toral Patel, Director of Accreditation at Kaiser Permanente Orange County, serves as the indispensable pillar of our institutional integrity, ensuring quality and safety are not just concepts, but lived realities every day. She has cultivated a culture of constant “survey readiness,” transforming what is often a seasonal hurdle into a consistent operational standard. This makes her essential to day-to-day success by ensuring teams remain prepared, compliant, and aligned in delivering safe, high-quality care. Her effectiveness is rooted in the deep, trust-based relationships she has built across the organization. By bridging regulatory requirements and clinical practice, she embeds expectations into daily workflows, ensuring consistency and accountability. She has earned the respect of hospital operations and physician groups, strengthening alignment and proactive problem-solving. These partnerships are matched by her work with external regulatory bodies, where she serves as a transparent, high-integrity liaison. Whether for scheduled evaluations or unannounced visits, she is consistently present—guiding teams in real time and managing every inquiry with calm precision, minimizing risk and disruption. Beyond her expertise, her energy and commitment to “getting it right” inspire teams to turn challenges into opportunities, safeguarding our standards, strengthening our reputation, and ensuring Kaiser Permanente continued success in a dynamic health care environment.





KRISTINE PETERS
SENIOR DIRECTOR,
PROGRAMS, UNITED TO END
HOMELESSNESS
Orange County United Way

Kristine Peters is truly indispensable to the success of United to End Homelessness. As Senior Director of Programs, she oversees some of our most critical initiatives, including Family Prevention & Diversion, Welcome Home OC, Whatever It Takes, and Whatever It Takes Youth. Welcome Home OC has housed 1,315 people, and 165 property managers, owners, and developers have opened doors to voucher holders to make this possible. These programs represent the direct connection between our mission and the thousands of OC residents who rely on housing assistance and support services each year. Kristine has a unique ability to turn vision into action. She seamlessly bridges strategy and implementation, ensuring complex programs operate efficiently while evolving to meet community needs. Her leadership strengthens partnerships across nonprofit, government, healthcare, and philanthropic sectors, creating coordinated solutions that no single organization could achieve alone. Kristine brings clarity to complex situations. Her deep knowledge of homelessness systems, housing interventions, and program operations allows her to anticipate issues before they become barriers and identify opportunities that improve outcomes for those we serve. Beyond her technical expertise, Kristine is a trusted leader who mentors her team, supports partners, and fosters a culture of excellence grounded in compassion and respect. She ensures programs remain effective, responsive, and centered on the people they help.





JENNY PHAM
PRIVATE BANK LENDING TEAM
LEAD
Citizens Private Bank

Jenny Pham has been integral to our success from the very beginning. As the founding Citizens Private Bank hire in Orange County, she joined six weeks ahead of the broader team—and was so well-prepared that we were able to begin lending on day one. That level of ownership, focus, and execution continues to define her impact. In the early days, Jenny did it all. As our sole lending specialist, she expertly managed single-family, multifamily, and commercial real estate transactions while helping lay the groundwork for our platform. Just 20 months later, the strength and scale of the lending business reflect the high standard she set from the outset. Jenny’s influence has since expanded well beyond our local market. She now leads lending specialists across the broader platform, while remaining deeply engaged in and integral to the success of our Orange County business. What truly sets Jenny apart is how she leads. She brings humility, lifts those around her, and approaches every challenge with a steady, positive energy. Her presence, especially in the most demanding moments, helps set the tone for the entire team. Our success is a direct reflection of Jenny’s contributions. She is a highly valued and indispensable member of our organization.

Congratulations, Val!

Tarsus Pharmaceuticals’ Chief of Staff and a 2026 OCBJ Indispensables Honoree



VALENTYNA CHEBANOVA

Your passion for our mission to revolutionize eye care and your enterprise-wide leadership make you indispensable to our ongoing success.

Congratulations from your
Tarsus Team!



CONGRATULATIONS

Diane Guo



on being recognized as an
OCBJ 2026 OC Indispensable!

WARE MALCOMB

THE INDISPENSABLES

Restaurant365

kei concepts

revitate



MATT POBST
VP STRATEGIC INNOVATION
Restaurant365

Matt Pobst was the first employee at R365 and has been with us all 15 years through the journey. He helped design and write the first version of our software and has been the glue to helping it evolve over all these years. While he doesn't sit in the CTO type of role, he's a cross-functional connector always willing to take a minute with anyone he can help and is brilliant enough to find unique solutions others would never think of. He shares industry context, company history, and brings an amazing entrepreneurial approach that is infectious. If someone is stuck in a pit with a problem, Matt is the guy who immediately jumps in with them and starts digging out with a solution. He also thinks with a customer-first mindset helping others not just think about our solution but about those who will actually use it everyday. R365 would not be the company it is today without him. His approach permeates through our entire culture and everyone in the company knows about Matt Pobst.



KHOANG QUACH
CORPORATE SOUS CHEF
Kei Concepts

Khoang Quach has been with Kei Concepts for ten years, dating back to our early days, and he has been one of the most loyal and dependable people in our organization throughout that journey. As Corporate Sous Chef, he plays a critical role in supporting our kitchen operations, but what makes him truly indispensable is his willingness to do whatever is needed to keep the business moving. Over the years, he has worked in almost every position in the kitchen and understands the operation from the ground up. That hands-on experience, combined with his work ethic and commitment, makes him someone our team can always count on. Khoang is the type of person who is always one call away. Whenever support is needed, he shows up. He steps in without hesitation, helps solve problems, and puts in the work necessary to support both the team and the company. He leads by example through action, consistency, and care. More importantly, Khoang has helped build a culture within Kei Concepts that values commitment, resilience, and putting the company's interests first. He gives 200% to his work and has done so for many years. His dedication has been part of our foundation, and his presence continues to make a real difference in how our restaurants function and how our teams stay strong.



CYNTHIA RESENDIZ
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Raj Capital/Revitate

Cynthia Resendiz has been an indispensable part of our family and organization for over 15 years. She manages what we often refer to as the "four-headed monster" — Marta, Raj, Lisa, and Alex — with a level of precision, discretion, and calm that is truly exceptional. Cynthia is far more than an Executive Assistant. She is the operational backbone of our day-to-day lives, seamlessly coordinating complex calendars, travel across multiple time zones, and the management of our properties. She ensures that every detail is handled before it becomes a question, allowing us to focus fully on our respective roles and responsibilities. What sets Cynthia apart is her ability to anticipate needs and create order within constant motion. Nowhere is this more evident than in her coordination around Sacramento Kings, Portland Thorns, and Portland Fire games, where logistics are layered and fast-moving. We never have to wonder if something has been handled...with Cynthia, it always has. Beyond her operational excellence, Cynthia brings a steadiness and professionalism that anchors everything around her. She is trusted implicitly and relied upon universally. Simply put, she is not just a right hand... she is four. Cynthia is the definition of indispensable.

Congratulations

Matt Pobst

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

2026 ESSENTIAL LEADERS HONOREE

Behind every great company are extraordinary people whose impact is felt every day—even if it's rarely seen.

Matt, thank you for your vision, dedication, and countless contributions to Restaurant365.

We're proud to celebrate you.

Restaurant365

Congratulations

2026 OCBJ Indispensables Honoree

Maggie Guevara

Director of Purchasing, ECOS

Congratulations to Maggie on her recognition as Indispensables honoree! Her exceptional talent, tireless dedication, and collaborative spirit inspire us every day.

ECOS

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THE INDISPENSABLES



WILLIAM ROESNER

DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC
OPERATIONS
Westcliff University

Few individuals have a greater influence on a university's success than those who ensure excellence remains strong through periods of growth. At Westcliff University, that person is Dr. William Roesner. As Director of Academic Operations, Bill brings together institutional knowledge, academic expertise, operational discipline, and trusted leadership in a way that few can. He possesses an exceptional ability to translate complex priorities into sustainable action while ensuring growth never comes at the expense of quality, compliance, or student success. Throughout Westcliff's expansion across programs, modalities, and locations, Bill has been a stabilizing force. His work strengthens academic operations, supports faculty excellence, advances student outcomes, and reinforces the standards and continuous improvement efforts essential to institutional success. Bill is often the leader others rely upon when decisions require both strategic perspective and operational insight. He has a unique ability to identify risks early, align stakeholders, and guide teams toward practical solutions. Much of his work happens behind the scenes, yet its impact is visible throughout the academic enterprise. What makes Bill indispensable is his ability to balance ambition with rigor—providing the leadership and stewardship that help position Westcliff for continued success.



LINA SABIC

SR. DIRECTOR STORE OPERATIONS
Pacsun

Lina Sabic, Senior Director of Store Operations at Pacsun, is truly an icon within our organization and the embodiment of what it means to be indispensable. For more than 12 years, she has been a loyal, steady force behind the scenes, consistently stepping forward to lead, solve problems, and drive results that keep our business moving. Leading a team of five, Lina plays a pivotal role in translating strategy into operational execution across our store fleet. She is known for stepping in at a moment's notice—regardless of the size or complexity of the challenge—to ensure initiatives are delivered and teams are supported. Her fearless approach to leadership allows her to take on the toughest assignments with confidence, clarity, and an unwavering focus on outcomes. What truly sets Lina apart is her attitude. She leads with a positive spirit, a calm presence, and a genuine commitment to the people around her. In moments of pressure or uncertainty, Lina is often the first to volunteer support, bringing solutions and stability when they are needed most. Over more than a decade with Pacsun, Lina has become synonymous with reliability, resilience, and trust. She represents the very best of operational leadership and is widely respected across the organization. Simply put, Lina is not only indispensable—she is foundational to our success.



CARISSA SANCHEZ

GENERAL MANAGER &
NUTRITION SERVICES LEADER
Kenady LLC Lifespring Home Nutrition

As General Manager, Carissa Sanchez is the operational backbone of LifeSpring Home Nutrition and a leader whose work directly impacts the health and well-being of thousands of Southern California residents. LifeSpring has been a healthcare-aligned nutrition provider helping seniors and medically vulnerable individuals remain healthier, safer, and more independent at home through delicious, culturally responsive, home-delivered meals and nutrition support. Since 2003, it has delivered more than 15 million meals and built long-standing partnerships with health plans, healthcare providers, county agencies, and community organizations throughout Southern California. Due to new partnerships, it is now poised to scale to 30 counties in the state. Carissa has advanced through multiple roles since 2005 and today she leads a team of registered dietitians, drivers, customer service representatives, and kitchen staff and coordinates the weekly delivery of over 4,000 medically tailored meals in Southern California. She is responsible for hiring, training, coaching, and developing staff while fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration, and exceptional customer service. She has a B.S. in Nutrition & Food Science from CSU Chico, and she combines operational excellence with clinical nutrition expertise. Her leadership has helped drive innovation, improve customer satisfaction, expand specialized meal programs, and position LifeSpring for continued growth.

Orange County Business Journal's Indispensables Honorees

Westcliff University proudly congratulates **Giang Do, Director of Business Intelligence**, and **Dr. William Roesner, Director of Academic Operations**, on being recognized as **Orange County Business Journal's Indispensables Honorees**, an award celebrating the professionals whose leadership, expertise, and dedication make them indispensable to their organizations.

As a career-focused university committed to innovation and student success, Westcliff is proud to celebrate the impact Giang and Dr. Roesner make every day.

Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!



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THE INDISPENSABLES





DALLAS STAPLETON
VP, TREASURY MANAGEMENT
SALES MANAGER
Customers Bank

Dallas Stapleton is the kind of leader who is always willing to step up to the plate, no matter the circumstance, and he consistently keeps things running smoothly behind the scenes. He is truly the glue that holds everything together. Whether it is helping plan a team event, jumping into an internal project to improve processes, or joining a last-minute call to assist a customer, Dallas is always willing and happy to help. One of the things that makes Dallas indispensable is his passion for educating both clients and colleagues on Treasury Management services. He makes sure people understand not just what they are doing, but the “why” behind it. He constantly seeks out information, builds and shares resources, and is a wealth of knowledge for those around him. Dallas is the go-to person on projects because people know they can count on him. He is well known, highly regarded, and respected across Customers Bank, with colleagues from many different departments reaching out to him because they trust his knowledge and know he will give them 100% of his attention. What makes Dallas so essential to the day-to-day success of the organization is not just what he knows, but how he shows up for others. He is dependable, thoughtful, and always focused on making processes better and easier for everyone. Dallas is one of those unsung heroes who helps make the corporate culture special, and he is incredibly deserving of the Indispensable Award.





PAIGE SMITH
OFFICE MANAGER
South County Outreach

What makes Paige Smith truly indispensable to South County Outreach is her ability to successfully manage multiple competing priorities while maintaining accuracy, efficiency, and a positive attitude. As the operational backbone of the organization, Paige ensures daily operations run smoothly while supporting nearly every aspect of SCO’s work. Since joining the team in 2018, she has helped guide the organization through significant growth and change, including the challenges of the pandemic and the expansion of pantry locations across South Orange County. As the longest-serving member of the team, she brings invaluable institutional knowledge and a steady, solutions-oriented approach to every challenge. Her deep understanding of the organization’s operations and history makes her a trusted resource for both leadership and staff. Paige oversees daily administrative operations while also supporting housing clients through property management. She serves as a trusted resource for residents in SCO’s condominium units, helping individuals navigate periods of transition with dignity and care. A highly collaborative problem-solver, Paige consistently identifies solutions, improves processes, and supports staff, partners, and clients alike. Always willing to step into any role where support is needed, her dedication and adaptability help South County Outreach operate effectively and fulfill its mission every day.





FAHEEM SORATHIA
ASSISTANT CONTROLLER
Haskell & White LLC

Faheem Sorathia is an invaluable member of Haskell & White internal finance team. He is proactive, extremely responsive and a wiz with systems. He manages his time well, stays on top of deadlines, and continuously looks for new ways to automate and streamline processes. Faheem has great working relationships with all levels at the firm and provides excellent service to both the Tax and Audit teams, as well as clients. He communicates clearly, is quick to respond to requests and finds solutions to issues as they arise. It is evident that client service, both internal and external, is of utmost importance to him. Since joining the firm, Faheem has developed best practices related to billing and the month end close. As billing has gotten more voluminous the team is still able to close on time due to internal efficiencies. He built a new metrics package to accompany the monthly financials that reduced the time needed for flux analysis and provided a more concise view of financial results. Faheem is a true team player and always willing to pitch in where needed to help others out and is great mentor to others on the team. Community outreach is also especially important to him. He is involved with OneOC, Success with Purpose and the Institute for Community impact. He volunteers with the Boys & Girls Club of Central Orange Coast, is a soccer coach for his son’s team, a cub scout leader, and is active at his son’s school.



CONGRATULATIONS, LISA O’NEILL

AN OCBJ INDISPENSABLE TRANSFORMING
CANCER CARE IN ORANGE COUNTY

Every day, you tell the story of hope. Through your leadership, you have elevated our mission, celebrated our people and connected our community to the lifesaving work happening across City of Hope®. We are grateful for your impact and proud to celebrate this well-deserved recognition.



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COUNTY

Lisa O’Neill
Director,
External Communication

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THE INDISPENSABLES



MATTHEW STAUB

SENIOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY
Adams Corporate Law

Matthew Staub is a senior M&A attorney at Adams Corporate Law with 15 years of experience guiding privately held businesses across a wide range of industries, including emerging technologies, healthcare, manufacturing, and hospitality. He works closely with companies at every stage of their growth, advising on mergers and acquisitions, private equity transactions, corporate governance, capital raising, and other critical corporate matters. Matt is often relied upon to lead high-value transactions—managing moving parts, aligning stakeholders, and ensuring transactions continue progressing even when challenges arise. What distinguishes Matt is his composure under pressure and his disciplined approach to problem-solving. In high-stakes mergers and acquisitions, deals rarely stall for a single reason. Complexity, shifting priorities, and the push and pull of negotiations can all threaten momentum. Matt is the steady hand that keeps transactions moving forward—guiding them from initial structuring through closing with discipline and focus. Clients consistently note his ability to distill complex issues into clear next steps and execute with precision—qualities that are essential in transactions where timing, coordination, and judgment are critical. In a field where complexity is constant and execution matters, Matt's ability to stay focused, anticipate challenges, and move transactions forward is what makes him indispensable to both his team, as well as the clients he serves.



SHANNON TAYLOR

DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE
Smarty Social

For more than seven and a half years, Shannon Taylor has been a driving force behind one of Smarty Social's most specialized and business-critical functions: Customer Experience. As Director of Customer Experience, she has helped build, scale, and continuously evolve the systems, teams, and processes that support social engagement for some of the world's leading healthcare and medical technology brands. Shannon oversees a large team responsible for managing thousands of customer interactions across social platforms, ensuring every response is timely, thoughtful, compliant, and aligned with client expectations. In highly regulated industries where brand reputation can be shaped by a single interaction, her work serves as a critical safeguard for both our clients and our agency. What sets Shannon apart is her ability to bring structure and clarity to complex environments. She has developed guidance, operational workflows, and management approaches that have strengthened service quality and improved team performance at scale. Her leadership has helped transform customer experience into a strategic discipline that delivers value far beyond day-to-day engagement. Shannon is also a trusted resource during high-stakes situations. She works closely with client teams and internal stakeholders to navigate sensitive issues, manage risk, and ensure thoughtful, consistent responses during moments that matter most. In addition to leading a high-performing team, Shannon provides valuable insights from social conversations that help clients better understand audience sentiment, identify emerging trends, and make more informed business decisions. Her expertise, operational leadership, and commitment to excellence have played a significant role in Smarty's growth.



SUMMER TAYLOR

AUDIT & ASSURANCE
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Deloitte

What distinguishes Summer Taylor is her knowledge of board priorities and her ability to help boards and C-suite leaders navigate key issues. As an Audit & Assurance Managing Director at Deloitte & Touche LLP with more than 25 years of experience, she is a trusted advisor to executives and directors, bringing technical knowledge, judgment, and credibility to the boardroom. Whether it is financial reporting, governance, regulatory complexity, risk oversight, or strategic transactions, Summer helps boards and management teams address critical issues with clarity and confidence. Summer is committed to helping others pursue board service. She is a leader in educating and preparing current and future board members for serving on public and private boards. Through her leadership of Deloitte's Board-Ready Program in Orange County, she has created opportunities for education and connection for aspiring board candidates. Her service as a board member of Forum for Corporate Directors reflects her credibility and commitment to advancing governance. Summer is indispensable to Deloitte as a respected client service leader, a recognized authority on board governance, and a generous mentor. She advises boards and the C-suite of publicly traded and privately held retail and consumer products companies on complex financial reporting while also mentoring our people. She brings value to clients and lasting impact to our people and community. Quite simply, Summer makes Deloitte stronger.

Congratulations to Matthew J. Staub

Recognized in the Orange
County Business Journal's
2026 Indispensables issue.

Matt's commitment to helping
businesses successfully close
complex transactions reflects
the values that define
Adams Corporate Law.

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THE INDISPENSABLES



ALMA TOGGENBURGER

SR. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST
Glaukos Corporation

Alma Toggenburger is an indispensable force behind the culture and community impact that defines Glaukos. For more than a decade, she has gone beyond the scope of her role, shaping the programs, relationships, and traditions that bring our values to life. Through her own initiative, she built and continues to grow our community outreach and volunteerism efforts, while also leading employee engagement and internal events that strengthen connection across the organization. Her impact is both visible and foundational. In the past year alone, Alma organized more than 35 volunteer events and coordinated the adoption of nearly 200 families globally during the holiday season. She doesn't just plan these efforts, she actively recruits, motivates, and participates alongside employees, ensuring strong engagement and meaningful outcomes. What sets Alma apart is her deep personal commitment. She consistently gives her own time, including nights and weekends, to ensure these initiatives succeed. Her presence is widely recognized both within the company and throughout the community, reflecting the authenticity of her dedication. Alma is indispensable because her contributions and passion are both highly valued and are not easily replaced. She has built the infrastructure of our culture of service and engagement, and her work continues to strengthen employee connection, reinforce our values, and expand our impact beyond the workplace.



ESMERALDA TORRES

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Idea Hall

Esme Torres is the heart of our day-to-day operations and one of the primary reasons our team can perform at such a high level. Esme consistently goes above and beyond, supporting leadership, colleagues, clients, and partners with a positive attitude and unwavering willingness to help. She keeps countless moving pieces running smoothly behind the scenes, anticipates needs before they arise, and ensures our team has what they need to succeed. She is the person everyone turns to for answers, support, and solutions, and she always delivers with professionalism, grace, and a smile. Just as importantly, Esme helps create the culture that makes Idea Hall special. From birthdays and work anniversaries to promotions and personal milestones, she makes sure people feel recognized and appreciated through thoughtful cards, flowers, balloons, gifts, and celebrations. While the balloons, cards, and celebrations bring smiles to our team, they represent something much deeper—Esme's sincere care for the people around her and her desire to make everyone feel seen and appreciated. The Orange County Business Journal's "Indispensables" recognition was created to honor the unsung heroes who make success possible. Esme embodies that description perfectly. Her impact is felt across every corner of our organization, and Idea Hall is stronger, more connected, and more successful because of her.



DANN VAIL

SR BDM
IDS Group

In an Integrated Engineering firm, Dann Vail is in all meetings with MEP, Structural, Civil, Architectural, and Landscape Design. He always works in a spirit of cooperation, always wanting to learn more from others and sharing best practices that he has implemented with his 30 years of Industry experience. As our sole business developer he engages all groups, finds common ground, and motivates those positively around him. He is not C suite, but our two main Principals would agree Dann is a wonderful and positive asset to the company. In a world that is forever changing, Dann keeps up not on "trends" but proven inevitability in many vertical markets. He is always willing to share what he knows and mentor the younger employees he works with. "Selfless" is the best word to describe him. It is a win for him to help people smile and think positively, no matter the deadline or circumstances. His ability to adapt, from working with a shipping clerk to a company CEO, is no secret, he simply treats everyone the same with respect and a forward direction.

Celebrating a Decade of Excellence

For over a decade, *Sumer Bowles* has been an essential part of the Orange County Business Journal team. Her professional expertise, collaborative spirit, and great sense of humor keep our projects moving forward and bring out the best in everyone around her. We are a stronger workplace not just because of her hard work, but because of who she is.

Thank you, Sumer, for being truly indispensable to our success.

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Sumer Bowles
Director of Advertising
& Marketing

THE INDISPENSABLES



ERYN VO

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO AND CPO & BOARD LIASON
Beyond Blindness

At Beyond Blindness, Eryn Vo is the person who keeps the organization running. As Executive Assistant to the CEO and Chief Program Officer and

Board Liaison, she connects leadership, staff, board members, families, and community partners, helping ensure nothing falls through the cracks at every level. Her extreme ability to anticipate needs, solve problems, and keep countless moving pieces organized allows the team to stay focused on helping children with visual impairments and other disabilities reach their fullest potential. Eryn's impact extends far beyond her title. She coordinates executive priorities, supports the board, manages office operations, and ensures staff have the resources they need to succeed. She is often the first-person colleagues turn to for help and the person making sure important details are handled before they become challenges. What makes Eryn truly indispensable is her willingness to do whatever is needed. On any given day, she may be coordinating executive priorities and board meetings in the morning, stepping into a classroom to change diapers or help care for children during staffing shortages in the afternoon, and pulling on rain boots during a storm to help protect campus facilities from flooding. As Beyond Blindness has grown from serving 200 children and families annually to more than 1,500, Eryn has been a steady presence helping the organization grow while maintaining the welcoming, family-centered environment that families and staff value.



MIRIAM VOLLE

MSOD, SR. MANAGER,
CONSULTING
Kaiser Permanente Orange County

Miriam Volle, Director of Strategy at Kaiser Permanente Orange County, has been nothing short of

transformative, serving as the primary engine behind our most critical operational advancements. Her leadership is the indispensable force turning the vision of our Cardiac Surgery Program into a functional reality. By meticulously organizing the build-out and navigating the complexities of its launch, she is ensuring this high-stakes service line integrates seamlessly into our existing infrastructure without compromising safety or efficiency. Beyond specialized programs, her influence extends across hospital operations. She consistently identifies bottlenecks and implements high-quality, scalable solutions that make workflows leaner and more effective. Whether leading cross-functional teams or refining internal protocols, her focus remains on elevating care standards while maintaining fiscal responsibility. What truly sets her apart is her infectious "can-do" spirit. In the complexity of healthcare, she serves as a unifying catalyst, aligning physicians, administrators, and frontline staff toward a singular goal. Her ability to foster collaboration ensures every stakeholder is invested in our mission: delivering world-class, affordable care to the Orange County community. She does not just manage strategy—she builds the culture required to execute it, making her an essential pillar of our leadership team and a champion for the patients we serve.



CONNOR WEISSMAN

MECHANICAL ENGINEER
BioPhotas, Inc.

At BioPhotas, innovation is at the heart of everything we do, and few individuals embody that spirit more completely than Connor Weissman. Connor serves as a Mechanical

Engineer, but his impact extends far beyond his title. Over the past several years, he has become the technical backbone of our product development efforts and is one of the most trusted and dependable members of our organization. Most notably, Connor took full ownership of the development of our next-generation electronics and software platform—one of the most significant and strategically important projects in our company's history. This initiative required not only advanced engineering expertise, but also creativity, persistence, and the ability to solve highly complex challenges. Connor delivered on all fronts. What makes Connor truly indispensable is his rare combination of technical brilliance, accountability, and humility. He consistently approaches every challenge with a solution-oriented mindset and a calm determination that inspires confidence across the organization. Whether collaborating with manufacturing, quality, regulatory, or executive leadership, Connor is the person we count on when success is critical. Beyond his technical contributions, Connor exemplifies the values that define our culture: integrity, innovation, teamwork, and excellence. Simply put, Connor is the kind of employee every company hopes to find—and never wants to lose.



Great Companies are Built by Great People

Celluma believes that innovation isn't measured only by the products we create—it is measured by the lives we improve and the people who make that possible.

As we celebrate 15 years of advancing light therapy for health, healing, beauty, and longevity, we proudly recognize Connor and Maritza for earning the Orange County Business Journal's

Indispensable Employee recognition.

Thank you for helping make Celluma a company where purpose, innovation, and people shine together.

Changing lives, one light at a time.



Congratulations to Trish Evans on being recognized as one of the Orange County Business Journal's Indispensables!

Congratulations to Trish Evans on being recognized as one of the Orange County Business Journal's Indispensables. For more than 25 years, Trish has helped shape The Shea Center's growth and life-changing impact through equine-assisted services. Her unique blend of clinical expertise, operational excellence, technology leadership, and strategic vision has critically helped build the systems and infrastructure that expanded client service hours from 2,000 annually to more than 17,000, empowering over 1,400 individuals with disabilities, veterans, and families each year. A certified EMT and American Red Cross CPR/AED instructor, Trish also leads critical safety, emergency preparedness, and risk management efforts, ensuring the well-being of clients, volunteers, staff, and horses. Her humility, innovation, and unwavering commitment embody servant leadership. We proudly celebrate this well-deserved honor and her extraordinary service to The Shea Center mission of empowering people with disabilities through equine assisted services and therapies.



THE INDISPENSABLES





BRIANNA WHYTE
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
KDA, Inc.

Brianna Whyte is truly the glue of KDA and an indispensable part of the company's success. Since joining the organization, she has stepped into a critical role helping support and operate a family-owned business with dedication, professionalism, and genuine care for both the team and the company's mission. Working closely alongside the CEO's sons, Brianna plays an essential role in managing and executing the day-to-day operations that keep the organization running smoothly. Her ability to balance priorities, solve problems, communicate effectively, and keep teams aligned makes her a trusted and reliable leader within the company. What makes Brianna especially valuable is that she does more than simply complete tasks she actively invests in the vision that Karla Dennis has built for the company. She continuously works hard to help move that vision forward while maintaining the values and culture that make KDA unique. Beyond operations, Brianna has created a positive and welcoming workplace environment. She is personal and approachable with everyone she works with, building strong relationships across the organization and ensuring employees feel supported and connected. Her energy, commitment, and leadership contribute to making KDA an enjoyable place to work every day. Brianna's dedication, work ethic, and ability to bring people together make her not only essential to daily operations but also a key contributor to the continued growth and long-term success of KDA.





NIKKI WOOD
CLIENT CONCIERGE
Spinnaker Investment Group

Nikki Wood is the human face of one of the most important moments in a client's financial life. As Spinnaker Investment Group's Client Concierge, Nikki has spent four years turning what could be a stressful, complicated transition into an experience clients remember for all the right reasons. At the heart of Nikki's value is her mastery of the retirement plan rollover process. Moving a retirement plan into an IRA involves layers of paperwork, coordination, and regulatory detail that can feel overwhelming to clients who are navigating it for the first time. Nikki makes it seamless and painless. Her deep familiarity with the process means clients feel guided and confident every step of the way, rather than anxious about what comes next. That peace of mind is not a small thing it is often the difference between a client who feels truly served and one who simply feels processed. Nikki also plays a critical role in getting clients fully set up on Spinnaker's technology platforms. In today's investment environment, a client's ability to access and engage with their accounts digitally is essential. Nikki ensures that no client is left confused or disconnected, bridging the gap between sophisticated financial tools and the real people who depend on them. Over four years, Nikki has built the kind of institutional knowledge and client trust that cannot be quickly replicated. She knows the firm, she knows the clients, and she knows how to bring the two together effortlessly.





NICOLE WOODWORTH
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER
Hub for Integration, Reentry & Employment

Nicole Woodworth embodies what it means to be indispensable. Before joining HIRE as a full-time employee in January 2025, she dedicated nearly four years as a volunteer because she believed deeply in our mission of helping justice-involved individuals rebuild their lives through employment and opportunity. When Nicole stepped into the newly created role of Business Development Manager, she did so without prior experience in the field but with an exceptional willingness to learn, serve, and lead. She quickly became one of HIRE's most trusted ambassadors, building relationships with employers, community partners, and stakeholders throughout Orange County. Her efforts have helped expand employment opportunities and increase job placements for the individuals we serve. What truly sets Nicole apart is her commitment to doing whatever is needed to advance the mission. Whether representing HIRE at community events, supporting clients, welcoming guests, helping organize programs, filling in for colleagues, or assisting leadership with strategic initiatives, she consistently steps up with professionalism, positivity, and heart. Nicole is trusted by clients because she genuinely cares about their success. She is valued by staff because she is a collaborative team player who helps wherever needed. She is respected by leadership because she combines passion, reliability, and action. Simply put, Nicole is the glue that helps hold many pieces of our organization together.

REGISTER TODAY!

Event Date: October 7, 2026

The 12th Annual
INNOVATOR
of the YEAR AWARDS

October 7, 2026

Luncheon & Awards Program

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Irvine Marriott

The *Orange County Business Journal's* twelfth annual **Innovator of the Year Awards** honor, recognize, and celebrate Orange County individuals and their organizations who demonstrate brilliance and leadership in innovation. While most recipients are in tech, we also have recognized innovators in product development, service delivery, and even business processes.

Reservation Information

Tickets*: \$225
Table of Ten: \$2025

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MATTHEWS™



J.A. CHARLES WRIGHT
MANAGING DIRECTOR
MATTHEWS™

When J. A. Charles Wright was named Market Leader of the Matthews™ Orange County office in 2022, he entered a market with significant potential and set about building something lasting. What he has created since is one of the most consistently high-performing offices in the firm, recognized as a top producer nationally and built on a roster of more than 50 agents he has personally developed. His trajectory culminated to his current role of Managing Director, a position he has held since 2025. J.A. brings a rare combination of production credibility and leadership instinct to his role. With over 150 transactions and more than \$500 million in career volume, he has earned the trust of some of the industry's largest apartment owners, private investors, institutions, and publicly-traded REITs. That credibility is what makes him effective not just as a broker, but as a leader. His agents follow his example because he has lived it. Day to day, J.A. drives strategic growth and business development of the office, oversees operational execution, leads recruiting, and ensures agents have the resources, coaching, and accountability structures needed to perform at a high level. He has built a culture where production and mentorship are not at odds but reinforce each other. His impact on the firm extends beyond deal volume. The office he leads has become a model for how Matthews™ operates at the market level, and the agents he has mentored have become top producers in their own right.