

# VALLEY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2024



# HONOREES & FINALISTS



# The 2024 Inside The Valley Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards

**T**he *Los Angeles Business Journal: Inside The Valley* team was proud to celebrate many of the leading lights of business in the Valley for our Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards event at the Warner Center Marriott in Woodland Hills on Thursday, September 5th. Once again this year, we brought the Valley's Community of Business™ together, in person, for a half day of inspiration, education and recognition.

Our morning started with a series of speakers, discussing some of the most riveting and important issues impacting women with leadership roles in business today. Speakers included: **Patrice Bening**, wealth advisor, Morton Wealth; **Dr. Amit**

**Gosalia**, board certified doctor of audiology, West Valley Hearing Center; **Janice L. Miller**, managing partner, Miller Haga Law Group; and **Danone Simpson**, CEO, Montage Insurance Solutions.

These inspiring talks were followed by a dynamic panel discussion that provided real-life examples and actionable takeaways on the topic of visionaries and leadership. Our insightful panelists included **Chandra A. Beaton**, Partner, LightGabler LLP; **Tamara Gurney**, President & CEO, Mission Valley Bank; **Jerri Hemsworth**, CEO & Creative Director, Newman Grace; **Olga Kapitskaya**, AVP - Financial Advisor, RBC Wealth Management (a division of RBC Capital Markets, LLC); and **Angie Richards**,

Vice President, Poms & Associates Insurance Brokers, LLC.

The event culminated with our Women's Leadership Awards luncheon, where we celebrated the accomplishments of the Valley's most talented executives. From an impressive roster of finalists, we presented eight standout honorees with awards. Across the next few pages, you will read inspirational stories about those local women who have achieved remarkable success despite various obstacles and challenges, as well as profiles on each of the finalists.

We are grateful to our sponsors, whose support and involvement made this event possible. Congratulations to all the honorees and finalists!

## THE HONOREES & FINALISTS ARE...



### CEO OF THE YEAR (FOR-PROFIT) HONOREE

#### TAMARA GURNEY

*President & CEO*  
Mission Valley Bank

**T**amara Gurney is the visionary force behind Mission Valley Bank, serving as its founding president and chief executive officer. The bank is a vital asset to the community's growth and sustainability, boasting two branches and divisions specializing in specialized lending, accounts receivable, community development and merchant bankcard services, catering to the needs of over 6,000 clients.

Gurney's journey in community banking began in 1980 when she joined American Pacific State Bank as the executive assistant to the president. Over the course of two decades, she ascended to the role of executive vice president and chief operating officer before the bank's eventual sale.

Today at Mission Valley Bank, Gurney is a true leader who has overcome numerous challenges on her path to success, including breaking

through barriers as a young female entrepreneur and serving as a mentor to young women.

Furthermore, she has contributed her expertise as the past-founding chair of the Community Foundation of the Valleys and remains actively engaged in various local non-profit organizations, including the Southland Sings and Fernando Awards Board.



A W A R D N O M I N A T I O N



“

MY MISSION IS TO  
EMPOWER THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
WEALTH CREATORS

”

**PATRICE BENING**

WEALTH ADVISOR



CATCH PATRICE ON THE LATEST  
MODEARN VIDEO SERIES **COUCH** THE **CONVERSATIONS**





CEO OF THE YEAR (NONPROFIT) HONOREE

**SONYA KAY BLAKE**

*President and CEO*  
The Valley Economic Alliance

**S**onya Kay Blake stepped up to the plate as president and CEO of The Valley Economic Alliance at the onset of the COVID pandemic. During this time, she quickly created virtual programs to assist companies in staying afloat, resilient and open during economic downturns. During this period, she envisioned and held 22 webinars with over 1700 businesses registered for critical resources and contacts.

Entrepreneurship is in Blake's blood, and she's been committed to helping entrepreneurs find financial self-sufficiency and success. With her leadership, she helps create jobs and livelihoods for new neighbors and their families when the Alliance supports those mom-and-pop businesses along Valley's main streets.

One of Blake's passions is to help close the wealth gap. Under her stewardship, one of the essential elements of the Valley Economic Alliance is that it can pursue a prosperous San Fernando Valley in an inclusive, equitable way that honors diversity while pursuing sustainability to create these opportunities, preserve the environment for the future, and enjoy an improved quality of life for all.



**GALEN CALLAHAN**  
FINALIST

*Founder and President*  
805escrow

**G**alen Callahan is a role model for female entrepreneurship, business acumen and mastering work-life balance. Not only is she the founder and president of 805escrow and a former highly successful realtor, she has achieved all of this while raising six children and giving back to her profession and community.

Under Callahan's leadership, 805escrow has gained recognition as one of the region's premier escrow companies, providing escrow services tailored to luxury clients all throughout Southern California. Callahan's almost two-decades of experience in real estate transactions and escrow services have allowed her to grow 805escrow's reach and reputation far beyond the boundaries of the 805 area code.



**LAUREL MINTZ**  
FINALIST

*Founder & CEO*  
Elevate My Brand

**L**aurel Mintz J.D., MBA is the chief executive officer and founder of award-winning marketing agency Elevate My Brand, serving both startups and blue chip global brands like Facebook, Verizon Digital Media Group, PAW Patrol, and Zendesk. Mintz's gift is connecting with people and their stories.

Using her experience working with more than 200 companies in the CPG and technology spaces, Mintz also launched Fabric VC in 2022 to weave together diverse founders with the funding they need and deserve. Fabric VC focuses especially on equity and inclusion in the VC world.



**ILIANA TAVERA**  
FINALIST

*CEO*  
Haven Hills

**S**ince 2015, Iliana Tavera has led one of the largest domestic violence (DV) agencies in Los Angeles County. Established in 1977, Haven Hills started its Crisis Line and Outreach Program to provide DV Survivors with emergency intervention, safety planning and access to resources and referrals. In 1980, Haven Hills opened a 30-Day Crisis Shelter for the many survivors who accessed the Crisis Line or counseling but had no safe place to go.

Tavera has navigated the complexities of leading an organization dedicated to supporting survivors while striving to implement innovative programs that address the complex needs of survivors and their children.



# POMS & ASSOCIATES SALUTES OUR NOMINEES FOR THE 2024 VALLEY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AWARDS:



**Angela Jenkins**  
Velocity Mortgage Capital

**Elaine Cameron**  
Munchkin, Inc.

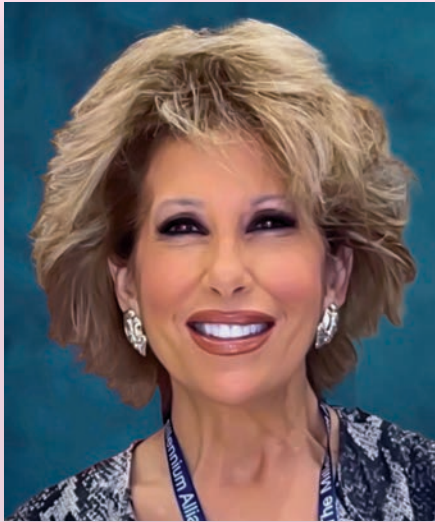
**Vikki Stone**  
Poms & Associates

**Amanda Mazon**  
Mathnasium

## WE CONGRATULATE ALL THE REMARKABLE WOMEN HONORED AT THE EVENT.



[POMSASSOC.COM](https://POMSASSOC.COM)



EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR HONOREE

**LISA LAURENT**

*Chief Medical Officer*  
Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center

**L**isa Laurent, MD joined Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center in late 2022 as chief medical officer. Under her leadership, the hospital has achieved or exceeded performance benchmarks in a multitude of areas. She builds relationships and trust, is a collaborative leader, and has worked exceptionally hard to create an environment where all physicians, especially women physicians, can flourish. She developed a program entitled

Empowerment in Practice to promote engagement, collaboration and patient referrals among women physicians, and has been asked to mentor or coach eight individuals since joining our hospital.

Dr. Laurent's leadership style is strategic, democratic and affiliative, rooted in empathy and understanding – putting people first. She embraces and strives to model the behaviors of servant leadership by prioritizing the needs, success, and aspirations of those whom she leads in a non-judgmental and encouraging environment. She is deeply sensitive to the needs and concerns of the healthcare team and recognizes the importance of appreciating the value, health and well-being, and professional fulfillment of physicians, providers, nurses, associates and volunteers.



**ALLISON CARROLL**

**FINALIST**  
*Design Director*  
Nadia Geller Designs

**A**llison Carroll, a leader in the interior design industry, is the design director for Nadia Geller Designs (NGD), an interior design firm launched by interior designer and media personality Nadia Geller. The firm boasts full-service expertise and works with leading developers and architectural firms like Cityview, AO, KTG, AC Martin, Greystar, and other Southern California-based AEC firms.

Carroll's experience in the world of arts has shaped the way she views interior design. Through her robust career and experience in creating immersive spaces, Carroll has developed an innate sense of confidence in her ideas. Her philosophy is, "if you believe it, then others will, too."



**LAUREN CORUGEDO**

**FINALIST**  
*Head of Marketing*  
Chef Merito

**L**auren Corugedo is a veteran marketer with experience across CPG, food and Latino culture. For more than 13 years, she has supported Los Angeles-born and legacy brand Chef Merito tap into target audiences, build promotional partnerships, and grow across new markets and distribution platforms.

In her current role, Corugedo oversees all branding and marketing efforts for the tri-generational Latino food brand including its social media, strategic partnerships and live promotions (especially with its growing number of supermarket partners) and community programming. In the past year she positioned Chef Merito as the market leader in carne asada.



**ADI LIVYATAN**

**FINALIST**  
*Real Estate Salesperson*  
Associate  
Rodeo Realty, Inc. -  
The Livyatan Group

**A**di Livyatan is a luxury home specialist, one of the country's top realtors and one of the most accomplished and respected agents in Southern California. With sales over \$300 million per year, Livyatan is in the top 1% of all agents nationwide.

Livyatan is not only the number one ranked agent in the Rodeo Realty Sherman Oaks office, but she is also the top producing agent in all of the San Fernando Valley. Exceptionally well respected, Livyatan has represented hundreds of buyers and sellers in various price ranges. She is one of the very top agents specializing in the development and new construction.



**LARA SAAB**

**FINALIST**  
*Managing Director, CBRE*  
Property Management,  
Greater Los Angeles  
CBRE

**W**ith an impressive 20-year career trajectory, managing director Lara Saab is the market leader of CBRE Property Management for the Greater Los Angeles area. In her role, Saab is entrusted with the development and execution of strategic initiatives, as well as providing day-to-day guidance for over 30 million square feet of office, industrial and retail properties managed by the company on behalf of building owners and investors.

Saab plays an integral role in the CBRE Los Angeles leadership team, overseeing business expansion, nurturing relationships with more than 40 clients, and supervising a workforce of 150 employees.





## Helping to empower women to achieve their financial goals

I can help unlock your financial potential with customized guidance tailored for women. I am dedicated to understanding your unique needs and goals. Invest in your future with confidence—your financial journey deserves a financial advisor who understands you.

**Olga Kapitskaya, CRPC<sup>®</sup>, MBA**

Associate Vice President – Financial Advisor

9465 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700  
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

[olga.kapitskaya@rbc.com](mailto:olga.kapitskaya@rbc.com)  
(310) 205-7756

[us.rbcwealthmanagement.com/olga.kapitskaya](https://us.rbcwealthmanagement.com/olga.kapitskaya)



**Wealth  
Management**

Investment and insurance products offered through RBC Wealth Management are not insured by the FDIC or any other federal government agency, are not deposits or other obligations of, or guaranteed by, a bank or any bank affiliate, and are subject to investment risks, including possible loss of the principal amount invested.

© 2024 RBC Wealth Management, a division of RBC Capital Markets, LLC, registered investment adviser and Member NYSE/FINRA/SIPC.  
All rights reserved.

24-BH-02733 (09/24)



CHAMPION OF WOMEN HONOREE

**DIANE WAGNER**

*Senior Vice President; Project and Information Technology Manager  
Republic Business Credit*

**D**iane Wagner is a true luminary in both the finance and information technology sectors who symbolizes the resilience and determination required of women as they navigated the complexities of career advancement while balancing familial responsibilities, breaking barriers in a predominantly male-dominated field.

Wagner's philanthropic endeavors and community involvement reflect her unwavering commitment to making a positive impact beyond the confines of her professional career. Despite the demands of balancing her work and family responsibilities, she has dedicated countless hours to volunteering at her daughter's schools, providing invaluable IT support and setting up networks to enhance educational experiences. Her tireless efforts have bridged the technological gap in underserved communities, ensuring that teachers have the resources they need to effectively integrate technology into the classroom.

In addition to her work in education, Wagner has been a steadfast supporter of local sports leagues, championing opportunities for children to participate in soccer and skating regardless of financial constraints.

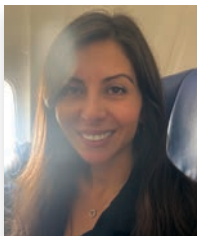


**RITA BOCCUZZI**

*CEO  
Flourish Inc.*

**R**ita Boccuzzi is known by her colleagues as the type of woman who goes above and beyond to make sure that anyone who needs her help is well taken care of. Whether that be by connecting them to the right person, having a supportive conversation, or mentoring during her free time, Boccuzzi is the most incredible example of what it means to be a Champion of Women.

Boccuzzi's primary focus is financial education and empowerment in order to elevate her community, with a special focus on women so that they can educate their families and friends. She believes that a financially educated society is an elevated society and she absolutely practices what she preaches. In her free time she hosts complimentary workshops to help people with their "money journey."



**KARINA CASTAGNA**

**FINALIST**  
*SVP Commercial Strategy  
Mercalis*

**K**arina Castagna is an inspiration for fellow women throughout the healthcare industry with her volunteer work as chair for the pacific region of the Healthcare Business Women's association as well as her commitment to Kidstream in Camarillo to get a kids museum built that will not only serve and educate young kids in the local community but help underprivileged kids access a museum in their backyard.

In addition, Castagna's work success has been driven by her passion to help patients overcome access barriers through creative digital and human patient support services that are marketed to the pharmaceutical industry.



**CLAUDIA SHAH**

**FINALIST**  
*Lead Business Adviser  
Centro SBDC*

**C**laudia Shah leads the Spanish-speaking program of the SBDC in Los Angeles County called, Centro SBDC. She has been leading this program since 2015 dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Latino community in Los Angeles County. With a focus on supporting small business owners who primarily speak Spanish, Centro SBDC provides workshops and one-on-one advising.

Shah believes that economic success should be accessible to all, regardless of language or cultural background. Under her leadership, the organization works tirelessly to bridge the gap between Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs and the resources they need to thrive.



**VIKKI STONE**

**FINALIST**  
*Senior Vice President  
Poms & Associates*

**F**or over 40 years, Vikki Stone has dedicated her career to helping manufacturers, distributors, and property owners minimize claims, reduce insurance expenses, and enhance workplace culture. She brings a passion for the transformative power of strategic risk management.

Stone actively seeks out opportunities to educate and foster stronger risk management awareness particularly to women leaders in safety-forward industries such as manufacturing and transportation. She thrives on hiring and mentoring women, and bringing women across trades together to strengthen networking, learning, and support. A champion for women in business, Stone is a passionate advocate for authenticity and empathy.





MONTAGE  
INSURANCE SOLUTIONS

Together We're Stronger™



*"Our mission is to further your mission with Dedication, Service, and Integrity while protecting your assets and giving back to our community."*

"Whether in times of prosperity or uncertainty, Montage is here to support you and your employees as though they are our family while protecting your company's assets."

Danone Simpson,  
CEO  
Montage Insurance Solutions

- Employee Benefits • Wellness Campaigns • Health Fairs • My HR Summit • HR Consulting • TPA Services •
- Property Casualty • Workers' Compensations • EPLI/D&O • Claims Management & Loss Control • Compliance •



**EMERGING WOMAN-OWNED  
BUSINESS LEADER HONOREE**

**MICHELE BERNSTEIN**

*Owner / President*  
Michi B, Inc.

**L** eading tour marketing executive Michele Bernstein has traveled far and wide during her nearly three-decade career in the concert business, 18 years of which were spent at William Morris Agency, then after it merged with Endeavor, where she rose to become a fully vested partner in the music department headed by Marc Geiger. Still, the self-described “legitimate Valley Girl” has never strayed far from her

roots, born in Encino, raised in Chatsworth and still making her home in the 818 in Sherman Oaks.

The much-decorated Bernstein took the occasion of COVID to leave her home of nearly 20 years to launch her own business, Michi B. Inc., to focus on her expertise of tour marketing, with WME one of her first clients. Her current Michi B. Inc. projects includes overseeing the tour marketing for SZA, Drake, Lizzo, Bruno Mars, Kendrick Lamar, Machine Gun Kelly, Tool, Pearl Jam, Eddie Vedder’s Ohana Festival, Muse, Disturbed, Dead & Company, AFI, Greta Van Fleet and much more. She also launched the original celebrity chef touring circuit with Guy Fieri and Alton Brown.



**SARAH OBERMAN**  
**FINALIST**

*Founder*  
TruNorth Jets

**S** arah Oberman is a skilled, respected charter broker with decades of experience in the aviation industry. After many years of exemplary and innovative work in the charter and flight school business for which she received both regional and national recognition, Oberman launched her own business, TruNorth Jets, in January 2022.

TruNorth Jets expands air-travel options for leisure and business travelers residing along California’s Central Coast and beyond, allowing them to skip the lines and logistical headaches associated with large scale, commercial flight. Oberman’s clients enjoy first-class private jet experiences throughout the United States, to Europe, Mexico, the Bahamas and other destinations.



**DANIELLE ROY**  
**FINALIST**

*Founder*  
Morale Matters

**D** anielle Roy founded Morale Matters, a business

consulting firm, on her maternity leave with a mission to help small and mid-size businesses grow. She previously was on the executive team responsible for talent development and recruiting for over 4000 employees at a Forbes Top 25 Private Company. Roy maintains eight certifications in her field.

Roy’s purpose and passion is to empower inspirational leaders. She left her corporate role on the executive team to pursue Morale Matters full time when she realized she could not encourage her clients to have courage and overcome adversity if she did not have courage herself.



**JEN SAXTON**  
**FINALIST**

*Founder & CEO*  
Tot Squad

**J** en Saxton is a phenom and a serial entrepreneur

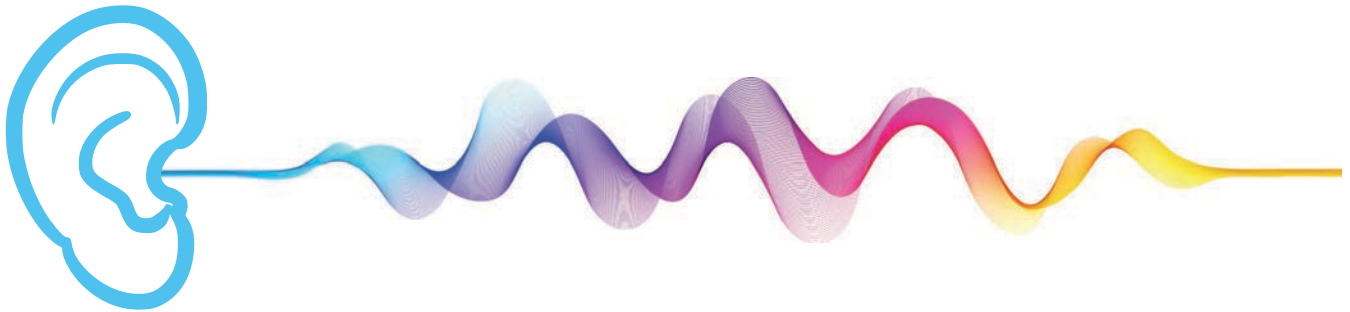
in the baby industry. She sold her first business to BabyQuip in 2020 after scaling and franchising a cleaning service for strollers and car seats into “Geek Squad” style service centers inside big box baby stores nationwide.

During the first lockdowns, Saxton began working on Tot Squad with a vision to transform the baby registry experience to enable new and expecting parents to add services and experiences, not just products, to their gift wish lists. She’s powering it with a platform featuring a nationwide network of baby-industry pros like lactation consultants, night nannies, car seat installers, and more.





**When it comes to your hearing & balance, only choose the **BEST** in Los Angeles! Come find out why we only get 5-star reviews from our patients!**



**Hearing Tests    Ringing in the Ears    Hearing Aids  
Balance Tests    Custom Earplugs    Earwax Removal**

**\*\*Book Your Appointment Today!\*\***

\*Accept most insurances, including Medicare!

**(818) 222-9451**

[www.WestValleyHearingCenter.com](http://www.WestValleyHearingCenter.com)

[info@WestValleyHearingCenter.com](mailto:info@WestValleyHearingCenter.com)





INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR HONOREE

**NADIA GELLER**

*Principal and Managing Director  
Nadia Geller Designs*

Throughout her life, Nadia Geller has been fearless in her career decisions, exemplifying the braveness needed to be a catalyst for change. As the founder and principal of Nadia Geller Designs (NGD), Geller launched her business in 2005. Since that time, she has formed a company that not only works in the full spectrum of real estate, but also on a personal level cultivates a culture of forward-thinking female employees with knowledge on how to

be solutions-oriented in all situations.

After some successes transforming interior spaces on TV, Geller came to Los Angeles and decided to make that the home of NGD. With the goal of pursuing both residential and commercial design projects, she instantly sought to connect with the best architecture firms, developers and general contractors in the city including The Kor Group and Cityview.

Even as Geller rose as a prominent figure in interior design, starting her own company took a significant amount of determination and innovation. Now, Geller has an average roster of 20 projects spanning large ground up multi-family, hospitality, student housing and residential projects.



**BRENDA ALLISON**

**FINALIST**

*CEO  
Coast General  
Insurance Brokers*

Brenda Allison has been at the helm of Coast General Insurance Brokers in Oxnard since 2007, She previously founded and grew the successful firm Allison Commercial Insurance, before acquiring Coast General and merging the two companies into a unified firm that has since grown to encompass a group of nine brokerages.

Throughout her career, Allison has worked tirelessly to overcome obstacles and grow her business. Today she continues to grow her firm. In addition to acquiring Coast General Insurance Brokers in 2007, she acquired three other agencies in 2017 and 2019. She strives to offer risk management solutions tailored to individual needs.



**LISA ELKAN**

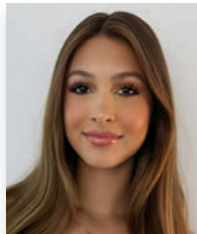
**FINALIST**

*Owner / Founder  
Lisa PR*

Lisa Elkan has over 15 years' experience in mar-

keting and PR for professionals and small businesses, with a niche in legal marketing. Elkan's specialties include marketing, public relations, advertising, social media marketing, business development, and brand management.

Elkan founded Lisa PR in 2012 after working in the field (Guthy Renker Corporation and two prestigious LA law firms) since graduating from UCLA. It was hard at first, but with hard work, passion and drive, Elkan celebrated her company's 12-year anniversary this year. She loves having her own company, making her own schedule, and working with so many exceptional professionals.



**JORDYN JACKSON**

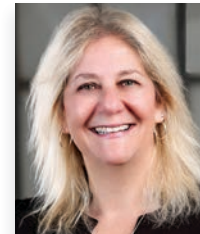
**FINALIST**

*Owner  
Soaring Samaritans  
Youth Movement*

As a second-year student in

Councilmember Lee's LEE12 Leadership in Excellence Program, Jordyn Jackson has been engaged in civic affairs and governance alongside 18 high school students. For over nine years, she has led her nonprofit, Soaring Samaritans Youth Movement. As part of her work, she distributes essential items and humanitarian aid to youth in underserved communities.

In order to sustain these efforts, Jackson established SOAR Jewels, a socially responsible jewelry company. In collaboration with fellow students at her high school, Jackson crafts handmade jewelry, offering service hours to those involved.



**JANICE MILLER**

**FINALIST**

*Managing Partner  
Miller Haga Law Group LLP*

Janice Miller is managing partner of Miller

Haga Law Group LLP, a boutique corporate business transactional law firm in Southern California. She is a highly recognized legal expert with over 25 years of experience as an innovative general counsel. At Miller Haga she serves as a strategic legal partner and business advisor, providing the firm's clients with pragmatic, cost-effective legal and business solutions that minimize risk and maximize profits.

Prior to entering private practice, Miller was NBCUniversal's vice president of business affairs for Universal Studios Hollywood and CityWalk, playing an important role in both the business and legal sides of the billion-dollar expansion of Universal Studios.



# Congratulations

## MISSION VALLEY BANK



**TAMARA GURNEY**  
President & CEO



**PAULA BAHAMON**  
Vice President, Community Development Manager

2024 Los Angeles Business Journal – Inside the Valley - Women's Leadership Award

**Congratulations,** Tamara Gurney and Paula Bahamon for your leadership and impact in Business Banking and Community Development, driving success for our clients and the communities we serve.

[MissionValleyBank.com](https://MissionValleyBank.com)

### LOCATIONS



**San Fernando Valley**  
9116 Sunland Blvd  
Sun Valley, CA 91352  
818.394.2300

**Santa Clarita Valley**  
26701 McBean Pkwy  
Suite 100  
Valencia, CA 91355  
661.753.5693



**COMMUNITY IMPACT ADVOCATE  
HONOREE**

**SONIA SMITH KANG**

CEO  
Mixed Up Clothing

**S**onia Smith Kang is an inspiring leader who has made a big impact in Los Angeles. As the CEO of Mixed Up Clothing, she is running a successful children's apparel business creating clothes that celebrate the many cultures that make up our community. Kang bravely switched careers, from nursing to fashion, to fill a gap she saw in children's fashion, where many cultures weren't represented.

The courage it took for Kang to invest everything into her dream and the passion she shows in helping her community makes her stand out. Her designs are now sold at Macy's and Target.

She's more than a business owner; she's a leader who is helping to build a world where every child can see themselves in the clothes they wear and feel proud of who they are.

Kang's heart for service shines in her volunteer work too. She has been serving the community as an advocate and activist for three decades. She currently serves as vice president of Multiracial Americans of Southern California. As a role model, she is inspiring the next generation.



**BRENDA ALLISON**  
FINALIST

CEO  
Coast General  
Insurance Brokers

**B**renda Allison, who has been at the helm of Coast General Insurance Brokers in Oxnard since 2007, is also a highly regarded and sought-after public speaker for events throughout California. She speaks frequently at agriculture conferences about risk management.

Allison's other speaking engagements focus on financial literacy, children's issues and empowerment of women. She is a regular keynote speaker for foster girls at an annual camp in Santa Barbara County and for numerous non-profits throughout California. An active member in her community, Allison founded the Cuban Culture Club of Ventura County, where she continues to be an active member.



**SHAMEKA  
BEUGARD**  
FINALIST

Founder  
Youth with a Purpose

**S**hameka Beaugard's professional experience is marked by a strong commitment to leadership, education and innovation in community services. Facing and overcoming societal challenges, she has actively created programs that address the gaps in support for young mothers, teens and other disenfranchised groups.

Beaugard's passion can be seen in her nonprofit Youth with a Purpose, and the programs it builds for the community such as the Mommy Mentor Network. Beaugard's organization not only addresses the immediate needs of its members but also equips them with the tools for long-term success. Her efforts have resulted in fostering communal strength.



**MONIQUE  
LAWSHE**  
FINALIST

Partner  
GHC Housing Partners LLC

**M**onique Lawshe is an accomplished executive who combines decades of experience in real estate development with a deep passion for civic improvement and inclusion. Upon graduating with an MBA from UCLA Anderson School of Management, Lawshe broke into development with a project management role at A Community of Friends (ACOF), a small nonprofit that builds and manages affordable housing for individuals experiencing mental illness.

In her 10-year tenure at ACOF, the organization increased the supply of affordable housing units from two buildings and 40 units at the time Lawshe started, to about 1,000 units throughout Los Angeles County.



**LAURA McHOLM**  
FINALIST

Co-Founder &  
Marketing Director  
NorthStar Moving Company

**E**very day is an adventure for Laura McHolm of NorthStar Moving and she thrives off of it because she is reinventing a traditionally male industry and making moving kinder. Her steadfast commitment to corporate citizenship is changing the moving industry through charitable contributions.

McHolm firmly believes that running a moving business means a lot more than lifting things it's about lifting up the community. She has built a company and a life that is built upon a sincere dedication to meeting the highest standards for service and integrity in her relationships with customers, employees and the community at large.

# BIZ DEV FOR NextGen



With Top-Quality, Marketing-Driven Benefits



**NextGen has a home at Echelon.** Echelon was born from the collective expertise of networking and marketing professionals who understand firsthand the challenges and frustrations you face.

Echelon Business Development Network is a membership organization that gives you top-quality, marketing-driven benefits. From Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media promotion to publishing opportunities in both online and print media, we've got a network for you to truly benefit from. *Say hello to a group where you can grow and connect.*

A Multi-Level Membership Organization for Owners, Partners and Associate Attorneys, Accountants, Wealth Advisors, Insurance Professionals, Bankers, Real Estate Professionals, and Business Service Professionals

## MEMBER MARKETING BENEFITS

- Monthly Mastermind-Style Meetings
- Echelon Professional Magazine
- Echelon Radio Podcast
- Echelon Member Blog
- Echelon YouTube Channel



*More Than Just Networking. Way More!*

[EchelonBizDev.com](http://EchelonBizDev.com) | [EchelonProfessional.com](http://EchelonProfessional.com) | [TopTrustedAdvisors.com](http://TopTrustedAdvisors.com)





MENTOR OF THE YEAR HONOREE

**CHANDER ARORA**

*Biotechnology Program Director  
Los Angeles Mission College*

**D**r. Chander Arora is a distinguished Biotech Program director at Los Angeles Mission College, celebrated for her exceptional contributions to biotechnology education. With an illustrious track record and extensive expertise, Dr. Arora has left an indelible mark on her students and the bioscience industry.

Notably, during the pandemic, Dr. Arora's dedication to active learning stood out as she single-handedly continued

in-person training for her students. She successfully turned the challenge to an opportunity when 100% of her trained students during the pandemic were hired with one semester of training.

Dr. Arora's commitment to education and motivation of her students is underscored by numerous accolades, reflecting her unwavering dedication to nurturing the next generation of biotech professionals. Under Dr. Arora's leadership, the Biotech program has been instrumental in launching successful careers for at least 95% of her students in esteemed organizations. In a notable achievement during the Spring 2022 session, eight of her students received on-the-spot job offers, a testament to her exceptional mentorship and program development.



**BRONTË FYKE**

**FINALIST**

*Director of Marketing  
PaymentCloud*

**B**rontë Fyke has been working professionally at PaymentCloud since it's early days. Starting as the single marketing hire for a group of 30 was no small task. But as the company got more successful and grew, so did the team of bright and talented marketers along with it. Now with 14 additional people whom she mentors with a lot of heart, this group of diverse men and women handle everything for five different brands.

Fyke aims to not only encourage everyone's professional growth, but also their personal success and health. She's created a department that has the highest retention rate and lowest call-out rate.



**AMANDA MAZON**

**FINALIST**

*Executive Operations Analyst  
Mathnasium LLC*

**A**s executive operations analyst at Mathnasium, Amanda Mazon brings the company's culture and inclusion to the forefront. She has spearheaded many initiatives for the workforce, including serving as the chair for Mathnasium's Women in Leadership Initiative, leading the Mentor Mentee program, and advocating for a Day of Giving and organized the Sandwich Builders initiative, with the company covering the supplies and the workforce making sandwiches for the homeless.

With Mazon's experience in Human Services, Mathnasium saw reduced turnover in 2023. Her coaching has been instrumental in guiding the management team with their projects and Initiatives.



**SARA MURDOCK**

**FINALIST**

*Executive Director &  
Futurist in Residence  
Eqogo*

**D**r. Sara Murdock is an award-winning, published executive with more than 20 years of experience applying social science research in real world organizations. She's an expert in cultural futurism and has helped dozens of executives across industries understand the impact that their organizations are having now.

More recently, Dr. Murdock has been appointed as Futurist in Residence at Eqogo, a game-changing SaaS. Dr. Murdock and the Futures Index are crafting a much-needed update to the social sciences, which have long excluded women, BIPOC, people with disabilities and other marginalized voices from the research and frameworks that are used to assess and improve impact.



**KIMBERLY RAVENELL**

**FINALIST**

*Partner  
Withum*

**K**im Ravenell is the tax practice leader in Withum's Encino office. She has over 25 years of experience providing tax planning and compliance services for high-net-worth individuals and closely held businesses of all sizes.

Since becoming a partner in 2021, Ravenell has led the tax department through regulation changes and challenges brought about by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the CAREs Act and the Paycheck Protection Program. Over the years, she has mentored dozens of team members. An advocate for mentoring underrepresented groups, Ravenell is a leader of "Women of Withum's" empowerment program.



Employment law  
can be a beach.

We can help.



Congratulations on being a  
Mentor of the Year: Valley  
Women's Leadership nominee!  
Chandra Beaton, Partner

**LightGabler**<sup>LLP</sup>  
*We Make Business Work*<sup>®</sup>

**Innovative | Experienced | Responsive**

EMPLOYMENT COUNSEL & LITIGATION | INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

info@lightgablerlaw.com | LightGablerLaw.com | 805.248.7208





WOMAN TO WATCH HONOREE

**MICHELLE SCHWARTZ**

*Managing Partner, Sherman Oaks, Studio City and Calabasas*  
The Agency

**B**everly Hills native Michelle Schwartz epitomizes the luxury and sophistication synonymous with Los Angeles. Immersed in the city's real estate landscape from a young age, she offers a profound understanding of the area's diverse neighborhoods and skillfully helps her clients find their places within them. As a founding member of The Agency, Schwartz stands as the first female

managing partner for The Agency, and now oversees the company's Valley offices in Sherman Oaks, Calabasas and Studio City.

Now, with a real estate career spanning over a decade, Schwartz meticulously caters to both the opulent Westside and the vibrant Valley, showcasing her multifaceted persona on Netflix's *Buying Beverly Hills* Season 2. Leveraging her extensive experience in brand and lifestyle marketing – combined with The Agency's vast global network and resources – she provides her clientele with exposure and insight.

Schwartz's ethos revolves around unwavering communication and transparency. Known for her white glove service commitment to excellence, she orchestrates every facet of the real estate journey with finesse.



**JENNIFER DUET-HERNANDEZ**

**FINALIST**  
*Sales Strategy Manager*  
Athens Services

**J**ennifer Duet-Hernandez,

a San Fernando Valley native, has been in the waste and recycling industry for over 20 years. She has made remarkable achievements in the waste industry, a field traditionally dominated by men. As a Latina, she stands out not only for her professional excellence, but also for breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations.

Duet-Hernandez's innovative approaches and leadership have significantly advanced sustainable recycling and waste practices, earning her recognition and respect from her peers. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Duet-Hernandez is a passionate mentor, inspiring and empowering other women, particularly women of color, in her industry.



**ANNEKE GRECO**

**FINALIST**  
*Executive Vice President*  
Colliers

**A**nneke Greco is an executive vice president based in Colliers' Glendale office. With over 20 years of agency leasing, tenant representation and investment sales experience, Greco is a highly respected and knowledgeable expert in every facet of the commercial real estate lifecycle.

Leading a prestigious team of office experts, Greco calls upon her decades of market knowledge and robust network to cultivate deep client relationships and curate tailored real estate solutions for Class A properties across Greater Los Angeles. She is also actively involved in the National Charity League and serves on the Board of Trustees at Mayfield Senior School in Pasadena.



**KELLY LAFFEY**

**FINALIST**  
*Partner*  
Stubbs Alderton & Markiles, LLP

**W**ith more than a decade of experience in the legal field, Kelly Laffey's practice focuses on advising emerging growth and middle market companies on issues related to corporate governance and formation, venture capital and other financings, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, cross-border transactions, employee compensation, complex stockholder and operating agreements and other general corporate matters.

Laffey's clients are representative of the vibrant startup and middle market ecosystem and include companies in the technology, digital and entertainment, clean energy, health-care, e-commerce, and manufacturing industries.



**ERIN ROSS**

**FINALIST**  
*CEO*  
Girls Inc. of Los Angeles

**L**ike many organizations, Girls Inc. of Los Angeles struggled during the pandemic. CEO Erin Ross was hired in September 2021, charged by a largely new board to bring their once thriving programs back to life, reignite the organization's fundraising efforts and set a new course for the future.

A non-profit veteran with more than 20 years' experience, Ross brought her strategic mind, fundraising prowess and deep understanding of the LA community and school landscape to help turn the organization around. Additionally, Ross launched a signature event, "LA Girls Rise," which took place just eight months after she began in the role.





## Choose a health care partner that's better for your business today, and tomorrow.

Kaiser Permanente is a proud supporter of the Valley's Community of Business.™

Remote, hybrid, in-person. Today's workforce needs care that meets them where they are. More than ever, workforce health is a business strategy. Choose a leader who can help you navigate challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Learn more at [kp.org/choosebetter](https://kp.org/choosebetter)

**For all that is the San Fernando Valley. For all that is you.**

# For Women in Business, Perseverance is Key

By DANONE SIMPSON

**W**omen manage everything. We are strong, resilient, and should always focus on our future. Our past doesn't define us; instead, it serves as a pathway to the opportunities that lie ahead. The current political climate demonstrates what not to do—highlighting shortcomings and prioritizing financial gain. I have never let money define my worth. Today, I proudly manage four companies. My dreams have become my reality through hard work, perseverance, and a deep care for what I do.

This reflects the essence of womanhood. On any given day in our offices, you're likely to encounter two dogs and small children making their way from their mom or grandma's office to the "Montage Kids" room. They bring life and energy to our workspace, and I truly cherish their presence as a reminder of progress and change. It evokes memories of missed opportunities when I could not fully participate in a

"job" because I had no one to care for my three-year-old daughter.

When I interviewed various women for an article, a recurring theme emerged: the countless responsibilities they juggle at various stages of their lives. I've always viewed my life in decades, reflecting on accomplishments, lessons learned, struggles faced, and opportunities embraced. As I approach the end of this current decade, I plan for the next with the same passion. I feel blessed to reflect on my life in this way.

Attending a Tony Robbins seminar profoundly changed my perspective. During one portion of the event, he asked us to envision our lives as individual scenes in a slideshow. One by one, we were to remove the slides with negative memories, ultimately revealing a new mental picture of our lives. While history cannot be erased, we can change our perspective to recognize the impact of wrong decisions and how we or our loved ones have overcome them.

Years later, when I attended "Unleash the Power Within" with a client, I was astonished at how much I recalled Tony's words. However, during the "film of your life" session, I came up empty, unable to identify any painful moments from my past. In that moment of clarity, I recognized the suffering around me; my client was in tears, and the auditorium echoed with emotion. I had to leave the room, realizing that many people are held back from achieving their goals and dreams because of the weight of past traumas.

We can either blame others or choose to reframe our lives and perspectives. It's ultimately up to us to shift our focus from the past to the bright possibilities that lie ahead and persevere to live life to the fullest, creating experiences that reinforce beliefs.

*Danone Simpson is CEO at Montage Insurance; chairwoman at Simpolicy; president at Legacy Heir; and CEO at Bene.*

## Women Leaders Excel Statistically

**W**hat effect does having women in executive roles have on the bottom line?

A survey of 21,980 publicly traded companies in 91 countries demonstrated that the presence of more female leaders in top positions of corporate management correlates with increased profitability of these companies, according to a paper published by the Peterson Institute for International Economics. The 35-page report, *Is Gender Diversity Profitable? Evidence from a Global Survey*, was written by Marcus Noland, Tyler Moran, and Barbara Kotschwar and supported by a major research grant from EY. The research is made up of rigorous data analysis of gender diversity and corporate profitability.

The study shows that the extent of gender diversity and its relationship to profitability varies robustly by country, sector of the economy, and by policies towards

female work opportunities. The research finds no evidence that, by itself, having a female CEO is related to increased profitability, but there is some evidence that having women on a board may help—and robust evidence that women in the C-level is associated with higher profitability. In 2014 data, the study finds that nearly a third of companies globally have no women in either board or C-suite positions, 60 percent have no female board members, 50 percent have no female top executives, and fewer than 5 percent have a female CEO.

The PIIIE report also found strong positive correlations between gender diversity in company size, the size of the company as well as national policies for women's education, family leave, and the absence of discriminatory attitudes toward female executives. The study found that national averages for women's participation on boards range across countries from 4 per-

cent to roughly 40 percent, and that there is greater female representation on board and corporate leadership positions in the financial, healthcare, utility, and telecommunications sectors than in sectors such as basic materials, technology, energy, and industry. This is consistent with the authors' interpretation that what matters most for gender diversity is creating a pipeline of women into corporate management, from elementary education through child-bearing years.

"We have found that some policy initiatives are more promising than others to deliver benefits while promoting gender equality, and that the emphasis should be on increasing diversity in corporate management broadly," said Adam S. Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

*Learn more at [piie.com](http://piie.com).*





23901 CALABASAS ROAD, STE 2001, CALABASAS, CA 91302

(818) 591-4200

MILLERHAGA.COM



### Strategic Business Solutions

- Business Formations, Organization, Restructuring
- Business Exit and Succession Planning



### Commercial Real Estate

- Retail, Office, and Industrial
- Lease, Purchase, and Sales Agreements



### Business Transactions

- General Counsel Services
- Operational Growth and Exit Strategies
- Mergers and Acquisitions



### Regulatory Compliance

- Prop 65
- ADA Accessibility
- Privacy and Data Security



Congratulations

**Janice L. Miller, Esq.**

Managing Partner, Miller Haga Law Group

**and all the nominees for the 2024 Valley Women's Leadership Awards!**



# Defining Company Culture

By CHANDRA BEATON

“Culture” is a word perhaps overused in the context of a “company culture” in this day and age. It has been an even more difficult concept to address given the frequency of remote work and the inherent problems with effectively engaging workers who are not physically “in the office” every day.

Overall, I believe our law firm has done a good job keeping our remote and on-site workers engaged by holding group training lunches via Zoom, welcoming new employees with on-site training and meals, and with regular sessions in which we introduce a particular case problem to the group and open it up for discussion either by email or on Zoom. We encourage collaboration and input from others.

An important part of our firm’s culture is that our roles are clearly defined, includ-

ing our COO, our managing partner, the litigation group chair (me) and the advice and counsel group chair. We delegate administrative projects through our COO and attorney assignments to our respective teams through our two group chairs.

Another important aspect of the firm is that we have resisted the urge to silo senior attorneys with a regularly assigned associate or paralegal/admin team. This ensures that everyone has exposure to multiple senior attorneys and associate attorneys. It gives people a broader experience from different perspectives and offers mentoring opportunities for associate attorneys. We believe this reduces the potential for burnout that can come from working with one person who may be a little bit more difficult than another or has a contrasting work style. This system also varies the types of cases that people

work on. Broad exposure builds a more well-rounded associate attorney.

Unlike many law firms, LightGabler LLP has modest billing requirements and an hourly bonus program for extra work. We also provide 20% origination credit to all attorneys, no matter how new they are: if you bring in a piece of work, whether you work on it or not, you receive 20% of the revenue. Plus, we provide Fridays off in the summer for our administrative staff. Lastly, and probably most importantly, we don’t “do drama.” That’s been a hallmark of our managing partner’s philosophy. If all of this has contributed to a positive “culture,” then I believe we have succeeded.

*Chandra Beaton is a partner with LightGabler LLP. Learn more at [lightgablerlaw.com](http://lightgablerlaw.com).*



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**  
OF THE WEST VALLEY

Boys and Girls Club of the West Valley has served West San Fernando Valley youth for the past 32 years. We highlight and express gratitude to companies and individuals who support us in every way. You allow us to fulfill our mission—to inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential, as productive, caring, responsible adults.

## GREAT FUTURES START **HERE.**

To learn more about our impactful work, visit [BGCWV.ORG](http://BGCWV.ORG)

THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF THE WEST VALLEY IS A REGISTERED 501 (C)(3) IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND IS PERMITTED TO RECEIVE GIFTS IN LOS ANGELES. EIN: 95-4419365.

## CORPORATE CHAMPIONS





**Antelope Valley**  
Medical Center

# **GROW WITH US.**

## **Join our fast growing team.**



It's a good time to be part of the Antelope Valley Medical Center (AVMC) team!

Based in L.A. County, AVMC is looking at a bright future with plans of expansion. As we grow, we're looking for candidates to join our exceptional team.

We support and build up our staff to be the best they can be, by providing competitive pay, rewarding benefits, and so much more. AVMC offers a variety of clinical and non-clinical positions.

We look forward to having you join Team AVMC!

**Sign-on  
bonuses  
available!\***

\*Specific positions only.

**Apply Today!**

**[www.avmc.org/careers](http://www.avmc.org/careers)**

**Contact Us:**

**[Recruitment@avmc.org](mailto:Recruitment@avmc.org)**

Follow us **@avmedicalcenter**





# Redefining the Power of Community Banking

**M**ission Valley Bank, founded 23 years ago as a Community Business Bank, has evolved into a notable presence in the banking industry while holding fast to its foundational principles. Starting with a single branch dedicated to serving local businesses, the Bank has added branches in Burbank and Santa Clarita and, nationwide teams for SBA Loans and Accounts Receivable Financing. “Our growth has been remarkable, yet what truly defines us is our steadfast pledge to our clients and communities,” states Tamara Gurney, president and CEO. “We have expanded, but the heart of our mission continues to be the personal touch and community-focused banking that our clients have come to trust and rely on.”

From its inception, Mission Valley Bank was envisioned as a Bank that puts its cli-

ents first, a vision that has never changed. Its commitment to providing high-touch, personalized service has set it apart at a time where banks have moved toward automated, impersonal client interactions. Each client at Mission Valley Bank is treated with a level of care and attention that harkens back to the days of traditional banking, where relationships were key, and a handshake held significant value.

Mission Valley Bank's story is one of growth aligned with community focus. As a designated Community Development Financial Institution, it understands economic development, directing resources and financial education to underserved communities, helping to spur local advancement. This dedication extends to its role in community reinvestment, where it actively participates in programs that support local businesses.

Despite its success, the Bank has maintained its original philosophy of putting the client first. This principle is evident in every transaction and interaction, making the Bank a trusted advisor for countless businesses and individuals. Mission Valley Bank continues to innovate while ensuring that the core values of personalized service, community support, and client-centric solutions remain at the forefront of its mission.

Mission Valley Bank is dedicated to its dual objective of service and growth ensuring that it is an integral part of the community. This commitment to maintaining its roots proves that true business banking is about people, communities, and lasting relationships.

*Learn more at [missionvalleybank.com](http://missionvalleybank.com).*

Member FDIC | Equal Housing Lender

**WE ROCK THE SPECTRUM KID'S GYM**

**FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!**

**“Finally, a place where you never have to say I'm Sorry®”**

We Rock The Spectrum  
**KID'S GYM**  
For All Kids

**(818) 996-6620**  
**[www.wrtsfranchise.com](http://www.wrtsfranchise.com)**





# Emanate Excellence

At CSUN, every day is a success story that's filled with resilience and pride. With nearly 430,000 alumni and 38,000 students, CSUN fuels the region's economy. Learn why we are ranked #2 Best Public University in California by the *Wall Street Journal/College Pulse*.

[www.csun.edu](http://www.csun.edu)



# Transforming Employee Benefits into Culture

Meet Angie Richards, vice president at California-based Poms & Associates, who specializes in crafting top-tier employee benefit programs at the intersection of financial responsibility and company culture. Her passion for her work in benefits is underscored by her passion for wellness, and she augments her benefits market expertise with her lifelong commitment to health and well-being.

“My aim is to always stay under budget while introducing new carrier partners, plans, and funding options—negotiating secure contracts that meet the needs of our clients,” said Richards.

According to clients and colleagues, what sets Richards apart is her approach to “looking out for the fiscal health of her clients regardless of their budgets.” She strives to surpass expectations and bring

innovative options to the table.

With each client, Richards said, “I look at our partnership not as a one-year contract but a long term relationship.”

Starting her career on the carrier side, Richards honed her client-centered approach in every phone call, assisting countless individuals with a caring and empathetic spirit that characterizes her so well. Transitioning to the broker side—where being bilingual made her an asset to and advocate for her clients’ employees—she transformed the benefits approach for a number of large hotel properties. Moving on, Richards became known for her “boots on the ground” assistance, often driving to job sites like wind turbines and manufacturing companies where employees had never used a laptop before, and helping them on a personal level to enroll in benefits.

“Sometimes my clients would worry because they could only afford benefits plans that were at-best like a car with a manual transmission,” she said. “I would tell them ‘I’m going to teach you how to drive it like a Ferrari.’”

Richards collaborates with businesses of all sizes to design, negotiate, and implement customized benefit packages tailored to their unique needs. Her dedication to employee wellness education is described by her colleagues as “unparalleled,” and she’s known for organizing health fairs, prevention checks, nutrition programs, and fitness initiatives. Richards’ energy comes from empowering individuals, planting seeds of knowledge that foster personal growth and well-being, including mental health for which she is a powerful advocate.

*Learn more at [pomsassoc.com](http://pomsassoc.com).*

**CITRINCOOPERMAN®**

**ARE YOU READY FOR WHAT COMES NEXT?**

Access our Private Company Performance Report for valuable insights.

[citrincooperman.com](http://citrincooperman.com)

\*Citrin Cooperman® is the brand name under which Citrin Cooperman Advisors LLC and Citrin Cooperman & Company, LLP, independently owned entities, provide professional services in an alternative practice structure in accordance with applicable professional standards.

**Leading the pack**

**When asked what they believe are the three most important things to their customers, respondents listed:**

- 38% Service
- 35% Pricing
- 29% Product availability

**Leading the pack**

**When asked what they believe are the three most important things to their customers, respondents listed:**

- 38% Service
- 35% Pricing
- 29% Product availability





# FUELING THE FUTURE OF THE VALLEY

SCAN ME



**Transforming the San Fernando Valley starts with our collective initiative, action, and commitment.** At The Valley Economic Alliance, we unite governments, corporations, small businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations to drive real change. Daily, we engage with stakeholders to create enduring positive change and ensure economic vitality for the Valley.

**Together, we're shaping the future for a vibrant region** that spans over 400 square miles, supports more than 160,000 businesses, and is home to over 2 million residents. In alliance and collaboration with the Cities of Burbank, Calabasas, Glendale, Los Angeles and San Fernando, we are committed to building a thriving tomorrow for all.

Learn more and help make an impact at [EconomicAlliance.org](https://EconomicAlliance.org).

## THE ALLIANCE IN THE COMMUNITY





# Mentorship as a Strategic Tool

By JERRI HEMSWORTH

I've always been a firm believer that mentoring plays an essential role in professional service professions. In today's environment of hybrid, remote, and in-office working, it's even more important for younger team members to create connections and succeed in their professions. It's made my own business stronger.

Fields like law, marketing, accounting, and financial services demand a high level of expertise, interpersonal skills, and ethical standards, many of which are not taught in universities. Mentoring, therefore, becomes instrumental in fostering these attributes. It ensures the continued success and development of professionals within these fields. I believe there are four critical ways mentoring is vital to all businesses and their younger team members.

First, mentoring accelerates the learn-

ing curve of new professionals. The complexity and high stakes associated with these professions mean that newcomers often face a steep learning curve. A mentor provides guidance, shares insights from their own experiences, and helps mentees navigate the crazy waters of the profession.

Second, mentoring fosters professional growth and development. Beyond technical skills, professional service professionals need to develop soft skills such as communication, client management, and leadership. Since these skills are not emphasized in universities, mentors act as role models, demonstrating these skills in practice and providing constructive feedback.

This interaction helps mentees develop a well-rounded skill set that is crucial for career success. Mentors can also introduce mentees to professional networks, opening doors to new opportunities and collabora-

tions that might otherwise be inaccessible. This is the ultimate mission of Echelon Business Development's NextGen groups.

Third, mentoring enhances job satisfaction and retention. Professional service professions are often demanding and stressful. Having a mentor can provide emotional support, helping mentees manage stress and avoid burnout. Mentors can offer advice on work-life balance and career planning.

Finally, mentoring promotes a culture of continuous learning and improvement. In our rapidly evolving business environment, professionals must stay updated with the latest trends, regulations, and best practices.

*Jerri Hemsworth is CEO of Newman Grace and founder of Echelon Business Development Network.*

# Black Women are Blazing Trails

A recent Goldman Sachs *One Million Black Women* (OMBW) survey found that six in 10 Black women view entrepreneurship as an important pathway to wealth creation, and believe more can be done to advance entrepreneurship opportunities. By addressing the systemic barriers they face when building their businesses, entrepreneurship could become a viable pathway to help narrow the opportunity gap.

With 1,200 respondents, *One Million Black Women National Survey: Empowering Entrepreneurs* is the latest national survey from *One Million Black Women*, Goldman Sachs' \$10 billion investment commitment to help narrow opportunity gaps in the lives of at least one million Black women by 2030.

Key findings from the national survey include:

- 64% of Black women are optimistic about their ability to grow their wealth over the course of their lifetime.

- 61% of Black women view entrepreneurship as an important pathway to wealth creation (compared to 42% of US adults).

- 54% of Black women who do not currently own a business have considered starting their own business.

The majority of Black women surveyed shared that increased access to entrepreneurial resources and opportunities would be the tipping point for them to start a business.

- 77% of Black women said they are more likely to start a business if they had increased access to business loans, grants, lines of credit or seed funding (compared to 58% of U.S. adults).

- 71% of Black women said they are more likely to start a business if they had access to a business training course or accelerator program (compared to 43% of US adults).

- 71% of Black women said they are more likely to start a business if the pro-



cess to obtain a business or trade license or permit was easier (compared to 49% of US adults).

- 67% of Black women said they are more likely to start a business with access to more networking opportunities (compared to 43% of US adults).

*Learn more at [GoldmanSachs.com](https://www.goldmansachs.com).*



# The Significance of Hearing and Balance

By DR. AMIT GOSALIA

In 2024, the significance of hearing and balance has never been more crucial, as recent studies have highlighted the profound impact these senses have on overall health and quality of life. One of the most striking revelations comes from a Johns Hopkins study, which found that untreated hearing loss is strongly linked to an increased risk of dementia. The study suggests that individuals with hearing loss are up to five times more likely to develop cognitive decline, making early detection and intervention essential.

Hearing and balance are interconnected systems that play vital roles in daily life. Hearing allows us to communicate effectively, engage socially, and enjoy our environment, while balance enables us to navigate our surroundings safely. Impairments in either system can lead to signifi-

cant challenges, including social isolation, increased risk of falls, and, as mentioned, cognitive decline. With the aging population on the rise, the prevalence of hearing and balance disorders is expected to increase, making it even more important to address these issues promptly.

One of the key reasons why patients should only seek care from a qualified audiologist is the complexity of diagnosing and treating hearing and balance disorders. Audiologists are healthcare professionals who specialize in identifying, diagnosing, and managing hearing and balance issues. They possess the expertise and training necessary to provide accurate assessments and develop personalized treatment plans.

Audiologists consider the broader implications of hearing loss, such as its impact on cognitive function, emotional well-be-

ing, and overall quality of life. By seeing an audiologist, patients can receive targeted interventions that not only address hearing loss but also mitigate associated risks, such as falls and dementia.

In conclusion, as we move further into 2024, the importance of hearing and balance cannot be overstated. With compelling evidence linking hearing loss to dementia and the increasing prevalence of balance disorders, it is imperative that individuals seek care from an audiologist. Early intervention can make a significant difference in maintaining cognitive health, preventing falls, and ensuring a high quality of life.

*Dr. Amit Gosalia is a board certified doctor of audiology with West Valley Hearing Center. Learn more at [westvalleyhearingcenter.com](http://westvalleyhearingcenter.com).*

## CELEBRATING ILIANA TAVERA!

**Congratulations to Iliana Tavera, CEO of Haven Hills for her nomination in the CEO of the Year category.** Under her guidance, Haven Hills has continued to be a beacon of hope for survivors of domestic violence in San Fernando Valley since 1977.

For over four decades, Haven Hills has provided comprehensive support through a range of core programs, including a 24/7 Crisis Hotline, emergency shelter, and an 18-month Transitional Program. We also offer outreach services, workshops, and trainings to empower survivors and educate the community.

At Haven Hills, we believe in serving all survivors. We proudly offer support to women, men and their children as well as inclusive services to the LGBTQ+ community, as well as allowing pets at our facility, ensuring that everyone has access to safety and support.

Thank you, Iliana, for your visionary leadership and for making a profound difference in the lives of so many.

Congratulations to the other nominees who work tirelessly to make our community a better place. Together, we are building a safer, more compassionate world for everyone.



To learn more about Haven Hills, visit [havenhills.org](http://havenhills.org)



# The Transformative Concept of Coopertition

By JANICE MILLER

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, traditional notions of competition are evolving. One such transformative concept is “coopertition,” a blend of cooperation and competition. This strategy, though seemingly paradoxical, allows businesses to collaborate with their competitors to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Coopertition involves a strategic alliance where competing firms work together towards common goals while maintaining their competitive edge in other areas. This dual approach enables companies to leverage each other's strengths to create value that would be difficult to achieve independently.

While the idea isn't new, it was new to me when I was starting out in the cut-throat world of entertainment law. Back

then, I worked for two industry giants before launching my own boutique law firm. As a business transactional lawyer—working for others or myself—it's always been my duty and my honor to give my clients the most accurate and cost-effective solutions to their problems. Yet sometimes, doing what's best for the client means calling for assistance when the scope of work is beyond what we can deliver on our own.

Too often, we run ourselves ragged trying to do it all, know it all, and be everything to all people, when a much easier solution has been right under our noses all along. Regardless of what you do for work, you can always find people who can help you do it better, faster, and more efficiently.

Despite its advantages, coopertition comes with challenges. Sharing sensitive

information with a competitor can lead to potential conflicts. Clear agreements and robust legal frameworks are essential to manage intellectual property rights and prevent misuse.

Coopertition represents a forward-thinking strategy in the business world, offering a blend of cooperation and competition that can drive innovation, expand markets, optimize resources, and mitigate risks. By carefully navigating its challenges, companies can harness the power of coopertition to achieve greater success in today's interconnected global economy.

*Janice Miller is the managing partner at Miller Haga Law Group in Calabasas and the author of the book “Coopertition: Cooperation Between Competitors For the Benefit of All.” Learn more at [millerhaga.com](http://millerhaga.com).*

## Survey Reveals Key Opportunities and Challenges

Last year, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and ADP released the results of a survey of women business owners. Nearly 92% of women-owned businesses are microbusinesses, businesses with fewer than 25 employees. While the businesses may be small, they provide the lion's share of the family income, with 63% of the business owners providing 50-100% of the household income. By giving these businesses the resources to grow, we will see an opportunity to increase wealth in our most underserved populations.

“Women business owners are the drivers of our nation's economy and the leaders in our communities,” said Karen Bennetts, NAWBO National Board chair. “By supporting women business owners and providing them with the necessary resources, we are building the bridge to wealth creation, allowing them to grow

and scale their businesses. We appreciate the support of great companies like ADP who recognize this vital section of the American economy.”

According to the Annual Business Survey, women-owned 1.24 million or 21.4% of employer firms in the US. Women-owned businesses account for \$1.9 trillion in receipts, 10.9 million employees, and \$432.1 billion in annual payroll.

One of the challenging pain points described in the survey results is hiring. While hiring has been challenging in many industries, survey results show that 41 percent of NAWBO members report hiring is more difficult than ever before. Many reported losing an applicant to a competitor. Forty-three percent had no staff, so losing out on an applicant could mean the difference between missing or making an order fulfillment deadline.

The good news is that there are strat-

**“Women business owners are the drivers of our nation's economy and the leaders in our communities.”**

egies to help ease the stress of hiring. Smaller businesses may even have an advantage, said Kiran Contractor, director of talent acquisition at ADP. “As a small organization, you can take a personalized approach.” She encourages small business owners to do their best to determine what applicants value and incorporate that into the offer.

Founded in 1975, NAWBO is the unified voice of America's more than 12 million women-owned businesses representing the fastest-growing segment of the economy.

*Learn more at [NAWBO.org](http://NAWBO.org).*



# Shaping the Future of Health Care

**C**amille Applin-Jones, the new senior VP and area manager for Kaiser Permanente Panorama City and Antelope Valley, shares insights on creating a more integrated and inclusive healthcare system, initiatives shaping the future of patient care, and exemplary leadership:

**Future of Healthcare:** Healthcare must continue to evolve to address diverse community needs. Emphasizing support for aging populations, proactive health strategies, and advanced technology can help to ensure accessible care. Enhancing care quality while reducing costs is essential for an effective, sustainable system.

**Promising Trends:** Three initiatives could transform US healthcare. Value-based care strengthens patient-doctor relationships, promotes holistic care, and supports effective care-coordination. Pharmacy initiatives are aiming to make med-

ications more affordable for patients and reduce financial burdens. Non-traditional care settings, like home-based care, and responsible AI hold promise to improve care outcomes and experiences without compromising safety or quality.

**Digital Innovation:** Post-pandemic, digital innovation has transformed healthcare, improving care delivery and outcomes. Smart devices and advanced technologies revolutionize care management. Automated systems facilitate appointment tracking, medication reminders, and video visits, enhancing care integration and accessibility. At Kaiser Permanente, expanded telehealth services are enabling virtual consultations and remote monitoring of chronic conditions, allowing patients to receive home-based care and continuous management of long-term health issues.

**Inclusive Healthcare:** Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (EID) have been core passions throughout my healthcare career. A supportive and inclusive environment profoundly impacts employees, physicians, and patients. Feeling seen and heard is fundamental to health and well-being. A diverse workforce enriches the care we provide for our communities.

**Excellent Leadership:** Exemplary healthcare leaders need vision and agility to adapt to rapid changes. A strong focus on patient-centered care involves listening to and learning from patients to tailor services. Effective leaders excel in communication and collaboration, inspiring teams and driving innovation to ensure responsive, high-quality care. Talent recruitment and retention are equally important.

*Learn more at [kp.org](http://kp.org).*



**BUSINESS FOCUSED.  
PEOPLE POWERED.  
CLIENT INSPIRED.**

Brenda Allison, CEO & Broker

We're an independent insurance agency - meaning we compare plans and protection from multiple insurance companies to find the best value for your business

CoastGeneralinsurance.com  
(805) 644-4740  
CA Lic #OF60642

**SERVING CALIFORNIA BUSINESSES SINCE 1977**

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 NOMINEES!

**Brenda Allison**  
Coast General Insurance Brokers

**Chander Arora**  
Los Angeles Mission College

**Rainy Austin**  
The Agency

**Paula Bahamon**  
Mission Valley Bank

**Denise Bean-White**  
Consortium Media

**Chandra Beaton**  
LightGabler LLP

**Shameka Beaugard**  
Youth with a Purpose

**Patrice Bening**  
Morton Wealth

**Michele Bernstein**  
Michi B, Inc

**Sonya Kay Blake**  
The Valley Economic Alliance

**Rita Boccuzzi**  
Flourish Inc.

**Lara Buitrago**  
SingerLewak

**Galen Callahan**  
805escrow

**Elaine Cameron**  
Munchkin, Inc.

**Allison Carroll**  
Nadia Geller Designs

**Karina Castagna**  
Mercalis

**Lauren Corugedo**  
Chef Merito

**Adrianna Cruz**  
U-Frame-It Gallery

**Justine DelMonico**  
Capital Commercial Management

**Jennifer Duet-Hernandez**  
Athens Services

**Lisa Elkan**  
Lisa PR

**Brontë Fyke**  
PaymentCloud

**Nadia Geller**  
Nadia Geller Designs

**Jamie Gonzalez**  
Lagerlof, LLP

**Anneke Greco**  
Colliers

**Cathleen Green**  
Stubbs Alderton & Markiles, LLP

**Janice Kang Guardado**  
Kelly Partners Burbank Services

**Tamara Gurney**  
Mission Valley Bank

**Jordyn Jackson**  
Soaring Samaritans  
Youth Movement

**Angela Jenkins**  
Velocity Mortgage Capital

**Ginger Jonas**  
USI Insurance Services

**Sonia Smith Kang**  
Mixed Up Clothing

**Dina Kimmel**  
We Rock the Spectrum  
Kid's Gym



Fisher Phillips is proud to support  
**2024 Los Angeles Business Journal:  
 Inside The Valley's Women's  
 Leadership Symposium & Awards**  
 and extends our congratulations to all winners.

fisherphillips.com

444 South Flower Street | Suite 1500 | T 213.330.4500 | Los Angeles, CA 90071  
 21600 Oxnard Street | Suite 650 | T 818.230.4250 | Woodland Hills, CA 91367



**Kelly Laffey**  
Stubbs Alderton & Markiles, LLP

**Lisa Laurent, MD**  
Providence Saint Joseph  
Medical Center

**Monique Lawshe**  
GHC Housing Partners LLC

**Adi Livyatan**  
Rodeo Realty, Inc. -  
The Livyatan Group

**Amanda Mazon**  
Mathnasium LLC

**Laura McHolm**  
NorthStar Moving Company

**Stacey McKinnon**  
Morton Wealth

**Janice Miller**  
Miller Haga Law Group LLP

**Laurel Mintz**  
Elevate My Brand

**Dr. Lizette Montes**  
West Valley Hearing Center

**Sara Murdock**  
Eqogo

**Shandreka Niblett**  
Spectrum Commercial  
Real Estate, Inc.

**Sarah Oberman**  
TruNorth Jets

**Mariana Orozco**  
Withum

**Kimberly Ravenell**  
Withum

**Sarah Reznick**  
Sherfina Advisors

**Samantha Rikken**  
Gibbs Giden Locher Turner  
Senet & Wittbrodt

**Erin Ross**  
Girls Inc. of Los Angeles

**Miri Rossitto**  
Cowe Communications

**Danielle Roy**  
Morale Matters

**Lara Saab**  
CBRE

**Jen Saxton**  
Tot Squad

**Michelle Schwartz**  
The Agency

**Claudia Shah**  
Centro SBDC

**Danone Simpson**  
Montage Insurance Solutions

**Marty Stevens-Heebner**  
Clear Home Solutions

**Vikki Stone**  
Poms & Associates

**Iliana Tavera**  
Haven Hills

**Dr. Sara Terheggen**  
The NBD Group, Inc.

**Michell Tutor**  
CBRE

**Diane Wagner**  
Republic Business Credit

**Carol Wolfe**  
Rodeo Realty, Inc.

**SPECTRUM**  
COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE, INC.  
818.252.9900 | spectrumcre.com

**BUILDING FUTURES**  
ONE PROPERTY AT A TIME

*Exceptional Leadership*

Congratulations to Shandreka Niblett on her nomination for the Women's Leadership Award. Her exceptional leadership, dedication, and vision have been instrumental in guiding our team to success.

Encino | Valencia | Century City

**SHANDREKA NIBLETT**  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Industrial | Office | Retail | Investments | Property Management