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KIARA BACASEN
Otay Ranch High School

Kiara Bacasen comes from a highly ambitious family that includes five children. Her parents brought their family across the ocean to find a place where their hard work would translate into fair and just returns. Jorgina Hall, Bacasen’s biology teacher and current KiWIN’s community service club advisor, has had the opportunity to observe her. With a rank of five out of 569 students in her senior class, Bacasen is considered one of Otay Ranch High School’s academic leaders. Hall states, “As a 12th grader, Kiara is the first Otay Ranch High School student to have been accepted into the prestigious San Diego Life Sciences Summer Institute High School Student Research Program. Kiara has gained valuable lab experience during the last two months working for Dr. Skowronska-Weller’s lab in the Ophthalmology Department at UC San Diego. By participating in this unique science research project, she has expanded her science knowledge and skills beyond her normal school coursework. Kiara’s supervisor has extended her stay for an additional two months and possibly beyond.” Bacasen is currently working with Dr. Laura Isabel-McCall as she pursues her interest in parasitic infection and the hygiene hypothesis. Bacasen also volunteers with SHARP Chula Vista and Corpus Christi Youth Leadership. She has applied to Stanford, MIT, UCLA and other schools that will allow her to pursue a highly impactful career in mathematics, the sciences and other related subjects.

LIANA MERK
Canyon Crest Academy

It seems that Liana Merk has always been a volunteer. She has been an avid member of the National Charity League for the past six years; donated hours of her time to raise awareness for the San Diego Library; taught children of all ages the joys of caring for animals through the Helen Woodward Animal Shelter; volunteered with Salk’s Education Outreach; and through San Diego Feeding America works to make an impact on the lives of underprivileged San Diego residents. Merk’s love of the STEM environment led to a paid internship as part of the Life Sciences Summer Institute, specifically working for the Laboratory for Gene Expression. Her innate curiosity led her to blossom in this position. She extracted RNA, quantified lipopolysaccharides, determined a cell’s transcriptome, and calculated the exact amount of cholesterol that resides in arteries of an atherosclerosis patient. Merk began researching other types of science and began working with the Nomis Center for Immunobiology and Microbial Pathogenesis. Merk hopes to attend California Institute of Technology, Berkeley or Johns Hopkins University, and has currently been accepted to Caltech and Berkeley, with consideration for the Regents’ Scholarship Program at Berkeley. One of Merk’s teachers says that she is “the absolute dream kid in my 21 years on the job. She’s one of the hardest-working, most conscientious students I’ve taught in my 21 years on the job. She’s also one of the smartest. Driven and motivated to learn, Merk would be an asset to any team or any university.” Shi has applied to Boston University, Columbia University, Northwestern University, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Virginia, Brown University and Rice University for their strong humanities programs.

MEILYNN SHI
Westview High School

In addition to her love of science, Meilynn Shi has a creative side. She plays the violin and piano, reads literature with beautiful prose and loves to ponder philosophical questions. And, of course, she enjoys math and logic puzzles. Shi has always been an active student as demonstrated by her many school activities including: editor-in-chief of news editor and editorial board member for Westview’s national award-winning newspaper; president of Westview Advocates for a Better Environment; and participation on the Westview Peer Consulting group and a varsity competitor for the Westview’s Speech & Debate team. In addition, Shi founded Poway Unified School District Food Recovery. Shi has interned at Dr. Hemal Patel’s cardiology/neuroprotection lab at the UC San Diego VA Hospital, learned how to calculate cell culture time required to be in a place that pulsed with discovery, as we questioned data and prodded assumptions. Shi also interned at the Palomar Medical Center where she is involved in the diagnoses of patients with obesity, high blood pressure and high blood sugar. Jeff Wenger, Shi’s English teacher, notes that “Meilynn is one of the hardest-working, most conscientious students I’ve taught in my 21 years on the job. She’s also one of the smartest. Driven and motivated to learn, Meilynn would be an asset to any team or any university.” Shi has applied to Boston University, Columbia University, Northwestern University, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Virginia, Brown University and Rice University for their strong humanities programs.

TAMMY TRUONG
Vista High School

Ever since Tammy Truong was in kindergarten, she had her heart and mind set on pursuing her dream of a career in the medical field. In the summer of 2015, she was fortunate to attend a summer medical camp at UC San Diego called Camp Cardiac. A year later, she applied to the Summer Medical Academy (SMA) at Rady Children’s Hospital and UC San Diego and was admitted to spend two weeks learning about various branches of medicine such as pediatrics, surgery and pharmacy. The lectures, activities and conversations with health professionals and the relationships with inspiring doctors at the SMA heavily influenced her decision to become a pediatrician. Truong currently volunteers at Tri-City Hospital. During her four years in high school, Truong distinguished herself in several areas and was able to take part in numerous clubs. She also finds the time to teach character leadership to elementary students. Truong also participates in Key Club Service events, and organizes events for Oceanside Parks and Recreation. As a first-generation college student, attending college is a very important to Truong because her parents went through major challenges to immigrate to the United States. Among her many interests Truong plays the piano and composes music, dances in Vietnamese cultural performances, and enjoys being outdoors, hiking and camping. Truong hopes to attend the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) or Boston University.

JESSICA XU
Maranatha Christian School

From a young age, Jessica Xu has been intrigued by how things work and drawn to hands-on activities. When she was four years old, her parents would find her dismantling shipping packaging to construct new structures. In first grade, she brought pH paper from her chemistry kit instead of her stuffed animal to show-and-tell. Since her freshman year of high school, she has been actively involved in designing and building experimental modules sent to the International Space Station, a rare opportunity that exists in a small number of high schools around the world. Xu has worked on two modules that have traveled to space and back. Now as the project manager of the San Diego Youth Space Program (SDYSP), which has expanded to include 20 students from seven high schools, Xu will continue her endeavor with inspiring doctors at the SMA physician assistant program. Xu also founded her school’s newspaper during her sophomore year, and earned National Honor Society recognition during 11th and 12th grades. She volunteers as a camp buddy for special needs children and teaches children’s Sunday school. Her high school counselor Joe Mireles, recognizes Xu as a model student, “Jessica’s unique strengths in science and art... and her ability to explore both areas to such a high level of proficiency during her time in high school are especially worthy of note.” Xu is pursuing a degree in biomedical engineering. She has applied to UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, USC, MIT, Duke, Vanderbilt and Washington University in St. Louis.
Nicole Boramanand
Founder & CEO
Translation Health Consulting Inc.

Nicole Boramanand serves as head of Translation Health, a consultancy designed to ‘translate’ medical technology and healthcare innovations. Boramanand’s career is diverse—from bench scientist to bedside clinician to business executive. She began her science career in San Diego’s biotech industry in the early nineties, when the industry was almost entirely comprised of men. Boramanand pursued a graduate clinical education at Yale University, and leveraged her basic science background in clinical pediatric cardiology practice. After Yale she joined Medtronic’s corporate development group. She was part of the founding team at West Wireless Health Institute, then was recruited to launch Human Longevity’s proprietary, health services platform. As general manager, she created a culture of empowerment with a workforce of 50 percent women.

Brooke Emerling, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Cancer Metabolism & Signaling Network Program
Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute

Dr. Brooke Emerling is a rising star in cancer research and has identified a novel drug target in triple-negative breast cancer. At Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute's NCI-designated Cancer Center, she brings a pioneering research program in breast cancer with strong potential to yield new cancer therapies. Kristina Vuori, M.D., Ph.D., president of SBP states, “Her work is highly likely to influence how we treat this disease in the future.” Emerling, now trains and mentors female graduate students. For women trying to balance the role of wife, mother and scientist, Emerling is a role model. She moved across the country to be part of the faculty at SBF when she was 35 weeks pregnant with her second child. Emerling has created an environment where women are empowered to continue in academic- ics after completing a doctorate degree.

Diane Goostree
President & CEO
ALASTIN Skincare Inc.

Diane Goostree is a chemical engineer with an MBA who has spent her career working in public, private and startup life sciences and pharmaceutical companies. Over the course of her career, Goostree has developed prescription and OTC products, gained FDA approval for medical devices and led a company through the IPO process. Having founded and worked as CEO of multiple companies over the years — including ALASTIN — Goostree has made it a point to recruit women executives for her boards, executive officers and management teams. Goostree has served six years on the Athena board of directors, and chaired committees such as the Life Science Special Interest Group. Realizing the impact her mentors made on her own career, Goostree recognizes that she can now give back by mentoring and encouraging others.

Troy Hopps
Global Business Leader
Becton Dickinson

Troy Hopps has a keen understanding of health care priorities in developed and emerging markets. He has superior interpersonal skills and motivates teams to peak performance. Through his leadership, he has encouraged and supported employees to grow Becton Dickinson’s Women’s Initiative Network, Ryoko Kawashima, a dedicated scientist who is building the program under Hopps, appreciates that Hopps’ support enables the program to grow. Hopps has demonstrated integrity and is a role model. He takes mentorship and inclusion seriously. Through his support, Becton Dickinson has seen a positive outcome for women across the business.

Sabrina Johnson
CEO
DARÉ Bioscience
CFO
California Institute for Biomedical Research

Currently serving as Athena Board of Directors Vice-Chair, Sabrina Johnson has long been a role model for women both in the workplace and through formal mentoring. In her dual roles as CEO of DARÉ Bioscience and CFO at the California Institute for Biomedical Research (CaliBr), Johnson is an advocate for women in leadership roles. At DARÉ Bioscience, her staff is 60 percent female. At Calibr, 75 percent of her direct reports are female. Johnson focuses on helping those who mentors achieve their corporate objectives.
DISCOVER WHAT’S NEW AT THE ALEXANDRIA

THE NEW STANDARD FOR HOW WORK INTERSECTS LIFE
Illumina
Manager, Market Development
Ida Khodami
Senior Manager, Bioinformatics Engineering
Ida Khodami is used to being the only woman in the room — but she doesn’t want it to stay that way. She quickly made her mark as the only woman in her electrical engineering group, first at her university and then at Illumina. She seeks every opportunity to mentor other women and she begins in her own workplace. She holds informal, monthly coffee meetings to mentor young female engineers. She also leads a “Learn In” Circle, where female co-workers gather to discuss concepts in Sheryl Sandberg’s book of the same name. To support young women who are beginning STEM careers, she volunteers at Athena’s “MentorFest,” participates in events to educate high school students about careers in science and engineering, and attends the annual Science Expo to encourage young scientists and engineers.

Laing Rikkers
Managing Director & Co-owner
HealthpointCapital
Laing Rikkers is a champion for public health and women leaders in her position at HealthpointCapital, a medical-device firm. Rikkers has led investments in early stage companies that have improved the quality of life for many and accelerated the trajectory of women leaders. The San Diego-based company has grown from $17 million to $207 million. She was instrumental in developing the female CEO of MicroDental Laboratories, one of HealthpointCapital’s largest portfolio companies. Rikkers is chair of the board of directors at one of HealthpointCapital’s newest portfolio companies, ProSimmons Sleep Technologies, which has nearly achieved a 50/50 balance of men and women in managerial roles. HealthpointCapital actively recruits women for the company’s advisory boards and investment committees. Rikkers also acts as chair at the Salk Institute Council, cabinet member of the Salkcascellators, and supporter of Salk’s Women & Science.

Pantea Khodami
Manager, Market Development
Illumina
Pantea Khodami wants to change the world. This big thinker believes her goal can be achieved by harnessing the power of the genome. She believes this technology will change the health field from disease prevention to diagnostics and treatment, including the way medicine is practiced on a global scale. To make her vision a reality, she participates in attracting and developing talent that spans the multiple disciplines of science, emerging technologies, and engineering. She actively mentors high school students, and continuously educates clients, groups and individuals about the field of genomics and how to harness this technology for positive change. She is VP of Programs on the board of MIT’s San Diego chapter where she helps to recruit top talent for her alma mater. As she grows in her own career, Khodami believes that she has a responsibility to empower other women to achieve their highest potential, especially in these traditionally male dominated fields.

Dina Uzri, Ph.D.
Chief Operating Officer
Abreos Biosciences
Dr. Dina Uzri started as the first employee at Abreos Biosciences, bringing new technology from an academic environment to a startup company for commercialization. She has been able to take basic science and make it available for use in the real world to support better biological drug dosing. Additionally, she set the new company up by building the lab infrastructure and training new staff to build the technology pipeline. Uzri fosters excellence in science and business practices while promoting all staff to strive to achieve the highest goals. Uzri’s staff at Abreos has achieved a 50/50 gender ratio. Her support of women in STEM is demonstrated by her work on social interactions in the scientific community in San Diego.

Lucy Su
Senior Vice President of Global Customer Services
CareFusion (now BD)
Lucy Su has more than 20 years of expertise in health care IT and services, primarily in life science companies. She has demonstrated the ability to disrupt unconscious collective norms by continually delivering high-quality results. Su is the executive sponsor of the San Diego WIN (Women’s Initiative Network) chapter and has helped hundreds of women associates in Southern California advance their careers. In Su’s role, she provides mentoring and guidance to WIN chapter leaders, increases visibility of WIN to upper management and secures funding to encourage programs that drive the WIN mission and vision. Su also mentors outside the company to those who reach out to her for advice. This goes beyond developing women, including anyone who might be subject to workplace inequality. She believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to excel, taking it as her personal duty to advocate and lead.

Kim Walpole
Co-founder & CEO
Trials.ai
Kim Walpole, a serial entrepreneur, responded to a real need when she experienced logistic bottlenecks in engaging with clinical trials. Her startup, Trials.ai, is rapidly gaining market traction, having recently locked in UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center as a client. Her life theme has been solving problems and highlighting under-utilized resources along the way. In her early career, she started the “million-dollar club” increasing sales by more than 50 percent for her organization. As CEO of Trials.ai, Walpole leverages her high-ly-networked advisory panel, led in part by two women, to create opportunities for women while maintaining a healthy work/life balance. Johnson demonstrates daily that women can rise to the highest levels of an organization while being thoughtful, respectful leaders with an eye toward helping their peers advance. Johnson is an active volunteer, serving in leadership for six organizations with a focus on those helping women achieve economic self-sufficiency and those supporting STEM education.

Ashley Van Zeeland, Ph.D.
CTO
Human Longevity Inc.
Dr. Ashley Van Zeeland is a neuroscientist with a focus on genomics. Her work on autism revealed that genetic variants were linked to communication pathways within the brain and her work on anorexia nervosa discovered its relationship to an enzyme regulating cholesterol metabolism. In 2011, Van Zeeland co-founded Cypher Genomics and was accepted to mystartupXX, an accelerator at UC San Diego’s Rady School of Business designed to nurture the next generation of female-led technology startups. Cypher Genomics became the most successful exit of the program when it was acquired by Human Longevity (HLI). Van Zeeland now acts as CTO of HLI. She won the International Society for Autism Research Neurobiological Dissertation Award and was named a Dickinson Fellow in 2009. Van Zeeland speaks often on panels to inspire and support women in STEM.

Laing Rikkers
Managing Director & Co-owner
HealthpointCapital

2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards — Life Sciences

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continued from page 4
Christina Waters, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer, Founder, President
RARE Science

Dr. Christina Waters founded RARE Science, a nonprofit organization, to address a critical unmet need. Worldwide 200 million children suffer from a rare disease and 30 percent die before their fifth birthday. Waters is passionate about finding proper diagnoses and possibly treatment for these rare diseases. RARE Science is an organization comprised of volunteers from professional backgrounds who have championed support locally and world-wide. RARE Bear Army is the cornerstone of the program. More than 1,000 quilters make handmade bears which are gifted to children to show them scientists are working toward a solution to their diseases. Waters studied biology at San Diego State University. She received her Ph.D. in genetics from UC Davis and continued studying genetics at UC Berkeley and Caltech. Waters has served in leadership roles from small biotech to large pharma, including many years at The Genomics Institute of the Novartis Research Foundation in La Jolla.
2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards - Education

Nico Assisi, Ed.D.
CEO
Thrive Public School

Dr. Nico Assisi prepares students for the rigors of college and inspires their love of learning with robust, hands-on experiences to help them discover their gifts. Assisi has a long history of developing educational programs in the Southern California region. She has founded 5 highly successful charter schools and developed innovative, hybrid learning models integrating the best of technology and classroom-based instruction to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. Assisi also spearheaded a school-community outreach initiative for sustainable service learning. She established 120 internships and coordinated grade level-wide job shadow days to provide a look at real-world careers. Partnerships Assisi has established with community organizations and businesses in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) fields add excitement and a connection to programs where students have the chance to explore their passions discover new opportunities and reach new horizons.

Regina Bernal
Entrepreneurship Manager
University of San Diego

Regina Bernal has dedicated her young career to supporting female entrepreneurs and investors. She has mentored more than 200 women in the USD Entrepreneurship Program. Under Bernal’s leadership, USD has established the first bi-national entrepreneurship program that now works with young entrepreneurs from both sides of the U.S. - Mexico border. She also spearheaded a joint effort between USD and Hera Hub, bringing more than 300 female entrepreneurs and investors to the Hera Venture Summit for one of the most powerful learning, networking and funding opportunities for females in San Diego. Bernal recently spoke to more than 2,000 people at TEDxSanDiego on the power of collaboration between the innovation economy in San Diego and Baja California. She continues to be an outspoken advocate for female funding and believes that working with women at the college level is essential to the future of our region.

Pamela Cosman, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Students
UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering

Dr. Pamela Cosman works to create more equitable and productive workplaces. As Faculty Equity Adviser, Cosman conducts annual trainings on unconscious bias for all faculty search committees in the school. Each year, she chairs the Excellence Search Committee, which conducts a competition for candidates active in diversity and outreach. Cosman also serves on the Internal Advisory Board of the CREATE STEM Success Initiative. This multi-year initiative connects researchers from UC San Diego’s Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment, and Teaching Excellence with regional K-12 educators to boost computer science education in underserved schools. She was recently awarded a competitive grant of $511,000 from the state of California for “Advancing Faculty Diversity” in the Jacobs School of Engineering and was named a UC San Diego 2016 Diversity Champion. Cosman has also authored a children’s book, which teaches concepts of wireless communications.

Kim Davis King
Co-Director
mystartupXX at UC San Diego/SDSU

Kim Davis King paves the way for more women to get involved in entrepreneurship through her position at mystartupXX, a Rady School of Management accelerator working to increase diversity and nurture the next generation of female founders through mentorship, education and funding. Recognizing that getting funding from venture capitalists (VCs) is a huge challenge for women, mystartupXX helps students to get their foot in the door of potential funders and prepares them for investor meetings. Similarly, finding female mentors also is difficult because of the small pool of successful female entrepreneurs who have started and run tech-based companies. Studies show mentors are critical to female entrepreneurial success, so King established a partnership between mystartupXX and Athena to provide students access to a curated network of exceptional mentors. Through the work of mystartupXX, King is creating an ever-growing, diverse community of founders to support and network with one another and mentor the next generation of women entrepreneurs.

Susan Baxter, Ph.D.
Executive Director
California State University Program for Education and Research in Biotechnology (CSUPERB)

Dr. Susan Baxter works with students, faculty, industry leaders, state and federal officials to promote the next generation of biotech leaders. Her leadership on the CSUPERB NSF-funded I-Corps led to national recognition for innovative approaches as well as the diversity of the San Diego CSU I-Corps site, which has trained the highest percentage of women and underrepresented participants of any of the sites across the country (40% compared to 17% nationally). She also works on a collaborative CSU-UC team to better balance faculty and administrative gender representation in STEM fields, runs a large annual symposium and works to bring more women on peer review committees, speaker rosters and advisory boards. Baxter partnered with the Doris A. Howell Foundation for Women’s Health Research to provide support to students studying women’s health issues. She also played a key role in convincing CIRM to invest in education of the next generation of STEM cell professionals in the San Diego region and developing internship programs with local industries.

Cora Carmody
Head Goddess
Technology Goddesses

Cora Carmody founded Technology Goddesses with the goal of encouraging girls to become interested and involved in technology from an early age. When Carmody joined SAIC in 2005, she brought the program to Southern California with her, creating the first Technology Goddesses Day Camp in conjunction with the San Diego Girl Scout Council in 2005. Carmody leverages her 39 years in software and systems engineering with the DoD, the intelligence community, NASA and Fortune 500 Companies to educate young girls about coding. Internet of Things concepts, cloud, web and desktop applications, web design, animation, programming and more. Carmody has been a vocal advocate and mentor to women in tech throughout the U.S., with speaking engagements through organizations such as CIO.com, WITI and National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC). She has earned numerous awards for her advocacy of women in STEM.

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Nancy Swanberg
Science Specialist
Del Mar Union School District/
Del Mar Hills Academy

Nancy Swanberg wanted to share her passion for math and science with the next generation, so after a successful career in scientific environmental research at NASA, she went back to school to get her teaching degree. Today, she inspires more than 300 students with hands-on, inquiry-based science classes. Under her leadership, Del Mar Hills became the first school in her district to teach the new “Next Generation Science Standards” (NGSS) at all grade levels. She keeps youth engaged in science outside the classroom by coaching the school’s “Science Field Day” team, working with environmental and other organizations to organize San Dieguito Lagoon Days, and collaborating with UC San Diego and the Salk Institute to start outreach programs and create a structural engineering competition. Recently, Swanberg was selected to participate in the California NGSS: Implementing Three-Dimensional Science Learning, a workshop offered by the Institute for Inquiry at the Exploratorium.

Janette Williams, Ph.D.
Strategic Business Partner
Center for Creative Leadership

Dr. Janette Williams is leading the charge in creating environments where women are treated with dignity, respect and equality. Williams experienced gender bias early in her career while serving as a member of the U.S. Coast Guard, so she spent her free time in community work to empower women, earning her the Coast Guard Person of the Year Award. After finishing her tour, Williams joined the financial sector, another male-dominated industry. Williams worked both internally and with external organizations to promote women in finance through education, mentoring and strategic partnerships. Today, in her work at the Center for Creative Leadership, Williams helps women forge new paths in corporations, government and nonprofits. She works with her team to address perceived gaps, conflicting messages and unique leadership dilemmas for women in technology. Williams is currently working to establish partnerships with various organizations to collaborate, support and enhance young women (sixth through 12th grade) in STEAM programs and conferences throughout San Diego.

Jeff Winkler
Founder & CEO
Origin Code Academy

Jeff Winkler is an active member in the San Diego tech community and a passionate advocate for female representation in today’s programming industry. He started his own coding school with an emphasis on helping individuals secure jobs, particularly women and those transitioning from a military career. To date, more than 100 people, including 25 women, have graduated from the Academy with a 95 percent hire rate. Winkler and his team also devote time to educating young (K-5) girls and boys at Franklin Elementary School, a STEAM Magnet school, introducing computer science to students of all ages and backgrounds. Additionally, Winkler hosts free meet-ups and other events in San Diego that help women without prior computer programming background to learn coding and explore a potential career in the programming industry.
2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards — Technology

Michiko Araki
Vice President, Marketing
SONY

Michiko Araki is an exemplary leader who not only empowers women in the region, but also sets standards globally for her organization. Araki leads a cross-section of teams in the U.S. and Japan and is the founder of STEP Employee Network at SONY Electronics. Araki has helped shape Sony’s health benefits relating to women and families. She also started the SONY Bring your Child to Work Day, which includes more than 200 children each year. In 2016, she led the Product Innovation Group, in addition to her day-to-day assignments as VP of marketing. Araki, a mother to two boys, values work-life balance and leads by example, empowering her team to manage their own work product. She is considered key company talent, and participated in SONY’s first Global Leadership training program with UCLA’s Anderson School of Business in 2013.

Sheri Bonner
Manager
Qualcomm

The unconventional path taken by Sheri Bonner illustrates that self-motivation can make any dream a reality. Before she returned to school to earn her degree in science of electronics as the only woman in her class, Bonner spent 15 years at Ralphs as a cashier. She went back to school and joined Qualcomm as a lab technician 19 years ago. She is currently a senior support engineer/manager and although she just stepped into her managerial role, she acknowledges that she’s “been bossing around her team” for a long time. For the past six years, she has overseen local high school students in month-long internships, twice per year. At the end of each 30-day internship, Bonner has the student present findings to the team. Despite juggling a family that includes three children, she’s committed to supporting women in STEM.

Susie Armstrong
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
Qualcomm

Named one of the Most Powerful Female Engineers of 2017 by Business Insider, Susie Armstrong has been at Qualcomm for more than 22 years and is a pioneer of the mobile Internet, inventing the software that allows cell phones to send and receive data, a widely impactful innovation. With an innate maker’s curiosity, Armstrong embarked on an engineering career as a trailblazer. She is one of Qualcomm’s few women at the senior vice president level. She’s run large organizations, including a software group of 3,000 engineers, and then led 1,400 worldwide employees responsible for integrating Qualcomm’s chips and software in devices. In her current role for Qualcomm’s Government Affairs, Armstrong scales larger impact by influencing government policy on patents, innovation, and STEM education. She was the driving force behind the Thinkabit Lab, a model the White House highlighted in Computer Science for All. She models leadership traits that are not just gender specific, but have a quality of substance.

Erica Burles
President
Equation Technologies

When she entered the male-dominated software consulting industry in 1998, Erica Burles knew challenges would lie ahead of her. Yet in 2001, she opened her own software and consulting firm, Equation Technologies and has ensured that 50 percent of the staff at all levels is female. Burles has since established a reputation as relentlessly honest and open in all aspects of her work. She is an active contributor to the Huffington Post and a featured speaker on Sage Advice Podcast. Burles was recently recognized by the National Association of Professional Women as an inductee to its VIP Woman of the Year Circle, with prestigious distinction for leadership in business and consulting services. She is a dedicated partner of Athena, Geek Girl, Evonexus and nationally with NCWIT. She is active in the San Diego community and is known by many as a straight-shooting leader who gets things done.

Joy Curth
Senior Offering Program Manager
Intuit

Joy Curth, an international executive in IT for two decades, started her career as an engineer, and has evolved into senior roles in the U.S. and Australia. Curth is passionate about promoting women in technology. She executes on that passion daily for the benefit of her organization’s growth and the parallel benefit of growth for her dedicated female peers. Curth, along with a vice president partner, created Intuit’s “Lean In” Circles in 2013. Curth also serves on the Tech Women at Intuit team to attract, retain and promote tech women. Curth is a dedicated partner of Athena, Geek Girl, Evonexus and nationally with NCWIT. She is active in the San Diego community and is known by many as a straight-shooting leader who gets things done.

Kelly Crothers
Director, Marketing — Virtual Sales & Global Customer Success
Cisco Systems Inc.

In 2004, Kelly Crothers was part of the core group of executives that launched MaintenanceNet Inc., a highly successful Carlisle-based data and analytics software startup. From those early days to the time of its acquisition by Cisco Systems, she has played a pivotal role as the highest-ranking female executive within the organization. Crothers is eager to serve as a mentor and supporter for women at all levels of the company. Cisco’s Carlisle office, in contrast, is made up of 42 percent women — a big reason for that is Crothers’ influence. She has created career growth for women throughout the organization and has been the catalyst behind bringing more women into the business. In 2014, she became vice president of global marketing and product management, fueling the company’s ability to attract large global business customers, to significantly grow revenue, and ultimately, to be acquired by Cisco in 2015. Today Crothers plays a key role in the company’s digital transformation.

Melissa DeVita
Vice President & Division Counsel
Qualcomm Technologies Inc.

Melissa DeVita is vice president and division counsel for Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., overseeing the legal team that supports Qualcomm’s corporate research and engineering efforts. She was appointed to Qualcomm’s Women Leadership Council and is part of a pilot program to create new executive leadership development opportunities for women at Qualcomm. DeVita is generous with her time and knowledge as a mentor and advocate at Qualcomm’s QFINITY program. She also serves on the board of directors for the Girls Scouts of San Diego. In 2012, DeVita was selected for The Daily Transcript as a finalist for San Diego Corporate Counsel. DeVita is an elected member of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (which determines the EMMY® Awards).
Navy SPAWAR Systems Center Pacific
Candace Gallihugh

At age 19, Candace Gallihugh enlisted in the Navy. She wanted to serve on a ship and at the time the only sea duty assignments open to women were on non-combatant ships. At her first duty station, USS MCKEE (AS 41), she led a team of 20 people in the maintenance and repair of electronics equipment for the fleet of submarines in San Diego. She rose through the ranks to become the only female Leading Chief Petty Officer on the aircraft carrier USS JOHN C. STENNIS. She led 60 young sailors, a few female SVPs at Qualcomm. In her first year at the tech giant, she has made an incredible impact on the IT organization. Gallihugh has bolstered the career of countless women in both government and industry, through formal and informal mentoring, advocacy, and recognition.

Maggie Lowe
Staff Manager, IT Qualcomm Inc.

“Real queens fix each other’s crowns,” and this statement defines Maggie Lowe. She not only leads in her job, but also is a founder and the current president of Qualcomm’s QFINITY group, which aims to inspire a more diverse IT organization by increasing awareness of opportunities and encouraging leadership, mentorship and career development. In this role, she is a supporter and facilitator of “Lean In” Circles that provide a safe environment for women to share their challenges and goals. She has also worked to help sponsor and hire interns from Girl Develop It, a group that provides affordable programs for adult women interested in learning software development skills. Lowe has served on Athena’s board of directors, led Pinnacle logistics and currently defines impactful programming as co-chair of the Technology Special Interest Group (TSIG). Under Lowe’s leadership, TSIG produces top quality programming and creates revenue-positive events for Athena. Lowe defines selfless leadership as she is always on the lookout for a crown to fix.

Linda Travis Macomber
RN BSN MBA
Academic Program Director, Master of Science in Health Informatics
Clinical Assistant Professor School of Health and Human Services
National University Technology and Health Science Center

With nearly 40 years of experience in the IT industry, Jan Marshall is responsible for delivering a broad range of IT initiatives to support more than 8,000 Cubic employees in Qualcomm across the globe. She also is responsible for Qualcomm’s 5G and Cellular software roadmap. Kumar credits her motivation to her male peers in college told her she would never make it as an engineer because her parents would ultimately marry her off and she would be a stay-at-home mom. Today, Kumar speaks frequently at industry conferences, most recently delivering the keynote address at IEEE 2016 women’s leadership conference.

Vanitha Kumar
Vice President, Engineering Qualcomm Inc.

“Figure it out.” That was the guidance (along with $500 and a one-way plane ticket) that Vanitha Kumar’s parents gave her when they sent her to the U.S. to pursue her master’s degree in engineering. Clearly, she has figured it out. As vice president of engineering at Qualcomm, Kumar has been an exemplary leader and a critical aspect of Qualcomm’s success, however, her greatest passion is inspiring other women to achieve their own. At Qualcomm, Kumar has established a women’s leadership program for women in software to develop a network of diversity champions by developing a series of specialized programs for women to help them navigate organization challenges and leverage their leadership potential. Kumar heads the modern software technology teams at Qualcomm across the globe. She also is responsible for Qualcomm’s 5G and Cellular software roadmap. Kumar credits her motivation to her male peers in college told her she would never make it as an engineer because her parents would ultimately marry her off and she would be a stay-at-home mom. Today, Kumar speaks frequently at industry conferences, most recently delivering the keynote address at IEEE 2016 women’s leadership conference.

Jan Marshall
Chief Information Officer
Cubic Corp.

2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards — Technology

Maggie Lowe
Staff Manager, IT Qualcomm Inc.

2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards — Individuals in Education

Thanks for your dedication to our success.

2017 Athena Pinnacle Awards
Individually in Education

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130 locations worldwide. She is described as a fearless leader whose commitment, courage and “can do” attitude are invaluable to the women on her team. Marshall drives Cubic’s Global Enterprise Management (GEM) initiative, which aims to consolidate Cubic’s processes and systems to build enterprise transparency, improve operations and enhance the company’s scalability. As a thought leader in IT, University of San Diego (USD) requested Marshall’s assistance in the development of a new curriculum for their cybersecurity program, which offers degrees and certificates at USD’s Center for Cyber Security Engineering and Technology. In 2015, she was named among the top 100 CIO/CTO leaders in STEM by STEMconnector, a national STEM organization. Marshall believes that diversification leads to innovation and that diversity can only be found in people.

Iris Miao
Digital Design Engineer
Qualcomm Inc.

Iris Miao works in modern processor design and is responsible for a highly complex and power efficient processor being used across multiple projects. In this position and throughout her career, Miao has worked in key technology areas and industries where there are few women. Through Qualcomm’s QWITE organization, she was greatly and positively encouraged as an engineer. This experience has motivated her to give back by being a mentor. She has always strived to instill confidence in and embolden women engineers. It has been her observation that it is not uncommon for women engineers who are technically strong to struggle with other qualities that are a part of career success. Miao helps women understand how to improve those upon those skills and advance.

Susan Miller
Director, Software Development
Oracle

Susan Miller is director of software development in Oracle’s Global Product Security group. Over the past 20 years, Miller has held a variety of leadership positions in software security and systems hardware, all in support of Oracle’s Systems and Security business. Joining Oracle from Sun Microsystems, Miller immediately demonstrated her outstanding organizational and management skills. Beyond the supervisory responsibilities of her role, Miller also currently leads the Southern California region for Oracle’s Women’s Leadership (OWL), and mentors women at various levels of the organization. She led Oracle in sponsoring Women’s Week and Women Connect events with the San Diego Business Chamber. Miller participates in the San Diego division of the Project Management Institute and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP). She is currently driving security assurance across all Oracle Cloud divisions. Miller is on the board of directors for the North San Diego Business Chamber where she oversees community related business presentations and events. She has been recognized with the Professional Business Women of California Industry Leader Award in 2014 and the YWCA Tribute to Women in Industry Award in 2012 and is an active member of Athena.

Ali Najeed
Senior Staff Programmer Analyst
Qualcomm Inc.

Ali Najeed grew up in Afghanistan surrounded by women of strong character, from watching her mother take on the responsibility of leading the household, to attending an all-girls school as one of three male students from first to sixth grade. As a result, he had many female influencers that provided additional perspective between work and school. In his current position at Qualcomm, where he has been named Employee of the Year, Najeed recently mentored and hired women through an affiliation with Qualcomm’s women’s group, QFINITY. Najeed served as a volunteer adjunct professor at SDSU for an upper division elective course in E-business and web development where students are challenged in unique ways. The elective became a mandatory course due to Najeed’s students consistently experiencing a higher job placement rate.

Alicia Monroe
Director, IT
Qualcomm Inc.

Alicia Monroe is a senior leader in Qualcomm IT, as well as a founder and board member of QFINITY, a Qualcomm program focused on developing women. In IT, Monroe directly manages a team of 120 full-time and contract personnel, and indirectly leads global matrix IT teams supporting Qualcomm. Monroe is responsible for being the stakeholder manager for the Qualcomm Semiconductor Operations organization. Her role includes the management of highly skilled technical personnel supporting the most critical business systems in Qualcomm. Monroe has personally overseen and successfully led many transformational business programs. Some examples include three major acquisition integrations of companies with over $1 billion in revenue, the upgrade of the core systems capability and hundreds of operations and supply chain systems/process transformational programs in the past few years. Monroe has built a strong team and leads with great skill, compassion, energy and character. She has developed her staff with a focus on diversity, talent management and equal opportunity, exemplifying the best in IT leadership at Qualcomm.

Sue Prelozni
Founder & CEO
Sustainable Surplus Exchange

Tenacious, dedicated and passionate describe Sue Prelozni’s character and commitment to her mission. After a 20 year career in business development, she founded a nonprofit — Sustainable Surplus Exchange (SSE) — as a green solution to corporate waste. The company was founded to support and build awareness of sustainability in industry by fostering the donation of unused surplus assets. Transitioning from the for-profit arena to nonprofit, she went out on a limb, taking the risk her solution was the right path. Prelozni mentors women leaders of other nonprofits through the Powerful Women Directors group. In recognition of her achievements and collaboration, she was chosen for a “Women Who Mean Business,” award by the San Diego Business Journal. Under Prelozni’s leadership, SSE has received awards and accolades for its community impact including Best Nonprofit of the Year by the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce in 2014.

Nithya Ramanathan, Ph.D.
President & Co-founder
Nexleaf Analytics

Dr. Nithya Ramanathan is a tech leader of 20 years and co-founder of Nexleaf Analytics, a nonprofit that uses sensors to solve and improve global public health and the environment. Ramanathan designed hardware chips for Intel and HP before she co-founded her organization. Nexleaf Analytics sensors monitor storage temperature of vaccines using sensors connected to mobile data networks. Nexleaf’s technologies monitor 7029 refrigerators in India and Africa, protecting $27.8 million worth of vaccines for 6.1 million babies. Nexleaf’s other project uses sensors to monitor safety of cook stoves by women in developing countries around the world. Ramanathan ensures the representation of women at Nexleaf by relying on women’s networks and tech connections to find talented candidates. The executive team at Nexleaf is predominately women, and the organization is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Qualcomm and Google, among others.

Leslie Presutti
Senior Director, Product Management
Qualcomm Inc.

“Paying it forward” is the theme of Leslie Presutti’s personal and professional life. Presutti’s education in both telecommunications engineering and her MBA in international marketing have positioned her well for her current role as a senior director of product management. One of her key responsibilities is enabling E911 and enhancing the technology so that it not only works outdoors, but also indoors to find people in need of medical care. Aside from her day job, through Qualcomm WISE’s mentorship program, Presutti finds time to mentor women in engineering, discussing their career challenges and growth objectives. She has been a member and mentor for Athena since 2013. She also is the founder of a Cancer Ministry, a support group formed seven years ago for cancer patients and their families. Other parishes in her diocese, inspired by her leadership, also are establishing similar programs.
Kristin Slink
Co-founder & Chief Product Officer
LoanHero

Kristin Slink, co-founder and CPO of LoanHero, began her career in consumer finance leading the development of a loan origination platform for medical services. Utilizing her knowledge of the industry and understanding of merchants’ need for multiple finance programs, she co-founded First Look Approval, a consumer finance company with a focus on consulting with merchants on which program would work best for their business. Over the years, Slink has implemented over two dozen consumer finance programs in businesses. LoanHero, Slink’s revenue-positive company, provides a single platform which covers the full credit spectrum. Slink, a tenacious leader and tech startup guru, is not only adept at identifying market opportunities; she has a keen eye for smart talent and ensures women are represented in her organization. As one of only 10 women in the fintech startup space, she is a torch-bearer for tech, finance and leadership.

Nina Smith
EVP & General Manager, Mitchell Casualty Solutions
Mitchell International

Nina Smith serves as role model for every member of her 577-person team, as well as for Mitchell at large. Smith credits her high-performing team’s success to diversity of background, education and ideation. Her commitment to diversity is reflected in the composition of her workforce — 44 percent of her senior leadership team and 66 percent of her overall staff are female. Smith’s early career was spent at Xerox, where she was active in the company’s diversity programs. In fact, she was a founding member of its internal development program for women. Today, she serves on the steering committee for Mitchell’s Women (m) Power Network, an organization committed to helping female employees develop the skills required to assume leadership roles. Her efforts resonate across the industry, as she also is a founding board member of the Alliance for Women in Workers’ Compensation (AWWC), an organization that encourages men and women to work together for the advancement of women and the industry overall.
Beth Branning has helped organizations, boards and individuals change their path toward success and become leaders who inspire other women. Through presentations, planning activities and one-on-one coaching, Branning helps individuals understand how they can achieve transformative results through the strategic planning process. Dozens of women count her as an important influence in their career growth. In addition, Branning has helped many notable nonprofit organizations realize their potential by facilitating their strategic planning efforts. She is the only woman to serve on the local and international ASP (Association of Strategic Planning) boards, where she chaired the International Marketing and Membership committee, co-chaired the annual conference, and led a subcommittee to create the ASP strategic plan.
The Mueller Law Office P.C.  
Principal & Founder

Careers with Wings

Marcy Morrison  
CEO & Founder
CAREERS WITH WINGS

Marcy Morrison helps women uncover and live their passion and purpose in all areas of their lives via her books, coaching, speaking engagements, workshops and trainings. She has spoken at Illumina’s Women’s Leadership Network, Society of Women Engineers, Junior League, National Charity League, RiseUp Women’s Conference, DevelopU Conference, Poderous Women Conference and many others. Driven by her desire to help young women, Morrison worked with Just in Time for Foster Youth to help build its Career Horizons for Young Women program. She also has served on Just in Time’s board and still teaches a Finding Your Passion course, mentoring young women from this program. For the last two and a half years, Morrison has served on the steering committee of the Community Alliance for Youth Success. Via her work in the outplacement industry, she also has supported many women in transition, assisting them in landing their next opportunity.

Maggie Osburn  
Executive Vice President & General Manager
HUB International Limited

Maggie Osburn has made her professional and personal life a case study in leading by example. Through her volunteer work with Rancho Coastal Humane Society, she discovered that victims of domestic abuse often stay with their abusers to protect their pets, and learned of the need for volunteers to foster pets so such women could receive help in a shelter. When the San Diego chapter of the National Human Resources Association broke off from the national organization, Osburn was instrumental in creating the new nonprofit’s identity and branding. Her unique position helps her match outstanding women professionals to companies placing close to 100 people in the San Diego community, and doing so at no charge. Her firm has won numerous national awards, including the highly coveted MarCom Awards for eight consecutive years, which recognizes outstanding achievements by marketing and communication professionals.

Heather Mueller, J.D.  
Principal & Founder
The Mueller Law Office P.C.

Heather Mueller models work-life balance as both a successful professional, wife and mother. She is also committed to guiding young women and entrepreneurs. She is currently a mentor and provides pro bono legal services for mystartupXX, a UC San Diego accelerator, promoting female students in technology entrepreneurship. Mueller also mentors and provides free legal services for Canopy San Diego, a seed-stage investment program for startups in the legal cannabis-ancillary industry. She is an active member of the Salkscrullinators cabinet and was previously a mentor at SDSU’s ZIP launchpad accelerator. She was a founding sponsor and mentor of EvoNexus, a nonprofit accelerator for San Diego startups. Mueller has provided high school and college summer internships to young women interested in a legal career and continues to mentor them through law school, state bar exams and the rest of their careers.

Allison Long Pettine  
Founding Partner
SEED San Diego

Allison Long Pettine is committed to building a thriving tech community in San Diego and changing the landscape of local investing. As one of the mere 7 percent of venture capital investment partners who are women, Pettine is in a unique position to impact the systemic challenges encountered by women seeking capital from primarily male investors. She is an Angel investor focused on funding difference-makers and disruptors in the technology industry. Many of her portfolio companies count numerous women among their executives or were founded by women, including Zady, Trinity, Saambaa and Clarify Medical. Pettine is a board director of San Diego Venture Group and holds a position on the advisory board for UCSD’s basin, as well as the California Institute for Innovation and Development (CIID) at the Rady School of Management. She is a mentor for both EvoNexus, a non-profit technology incubator, and Techstars, a global ecosystem for entrepreneurs.

Amanda Scott  
President
Solution Harbor Inc.

Amanda Scott has built a career recruiting in the traditionally male-dominated fields of accounting, operations, finance, human resources, biotech, software, technology, service, municipalities, clean tech, construction, marketing and sales. In addition to promoting diversity in the workplace, she has been an active member of Athena since 2009, serving on Athena operational committees and acting as a mentor for new FEW groups. She is involved in ProVisors San Diego Collaboration of Professional Women, a group fostering professional growth for women, and led in Human Resources Advisory Group. Amanda also volunteers at a women’s shelter in Oceanside, and has held board positions at the Triathlon Club of San Diego and San Diego Rotaract.

Stephanie Seidman, Ph.D., J.D.  
Partner
Dentons US

For more than 30 years, Dr. Stephanie Seidman has been instrumental in recruiting, nurturing and training promising young women as they transition from scientists to practicing patent law attorneys. Having made the transition herself, Seidman has built a successful bio-pharma patent prosecution practice that was ranked Tier 1 in biotechnology by U.S. News & World Report. Seidman is iconic in her hiring, mentoring and promoting of women, empowering them in an area dominated by men. Currently, all her technology specialists are women. At least 25 to 30 of the most skilled women patent professionals and attorneys can attribute their success to Seidman’s mentoring and training. She has been recognized with numerous awards. Seidman is an example for other women and a catalyst for increasing women’s presence and influence in areas where they once were rare.

Colleen Smith, J.D.  
Partner
Latham & Watkins LLP

A former U.S. Navy officer who believes in service and leads by example, Colleen Smith thrives in areas of the law often dominated by her male colleagues. She works diligently to recruit and mentor female lawyers. Her efforts include diversity outreach through individual meetings, events and programs, both on and off law school campuses, and have resulted in the recruitment and retention of many highly successful women. She also has taken an active role in mentoring junior women in the securities litigation department by organizing and leading mentoring programs, notably a half-day “Women Enriching Business” seminar. Colleen also spends significant time assisting in the firm’s pro bono efforts and has worked on asylum cases for Casa Cornelia and the ACLU Foundation. Smith has been recognized as one of the Daily Journal’s “California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year” in 2017 and has been featured on NPR, CNN, Univision and The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Tedora Purcell, J.D.  
Senior Attorney
Fragomen LLP

Tedora Purcell empowers female professionals through her legal expertise, mentorship, advocacy and community service. She reaches out to women through the Lawyers Club, organizing events to promote gender equality and diversity. She also is a registered mentor with SDSBA and AILA. Purcell is a staunch defender of human rights, and was recognized as the KPBS 2016 Local Hero for her tireless pro bono work to help obtain humanitarian immigration relief for refugees, unaccompanied children, women and victims of crime. Purcell has held various leadership positions with local SDSBA, Lawyers Club, AILA San Diego, BIOCOM and ACC San Diego, and has been instrumental in establishing partnerships between local nonprofit organizations and the private bar. She has been a volunteer attorney with Casa Cornelia for several years, and has received several awards for her pro bono work with indigent immigrants, primarily women and children.
Jodi Smith
Partner
Ernst & Young

Jodi Smith is a role model, mentor and advocate for women, both in and outside of her workplace. She was the first female promoted to partner in the San Diego EY office. Smith has been an integral part of the life sciences community, serving a wide spectrum of companies from multinational corporations to startups, including completing 12 IPOs. She is a member of the Professional Women’s Network at EY, hosting events that foster the exchange of knowledge and experience. For more than 10 years, Smith has led the Working Family Network to help women navigate their careers and family commitments. She also is an active member of BIOCOM. She finds time to give back to the community through Feeding San Diego, United Way, Susan G. Komen Foundation and The Taylor Foundation, in memory of her daughter who died of a rare heart condition in 2014.

Diane West
Co-founder & President
2Connect

2Connect is a training and coaching company with an all-female staff and a focus on developing confident and effective business speakers. Having overcome a fear of presenting, Co-founder Diane West recognized that presentation challenges are a barrier to a successful career. Over the past 16 years West has supported thousands of professionals around the world through coaching, mentoring and training. In the past year alone, West has personally impacted 56 professional women through her mentoring efforts. She also has held leadership positions that play a role in supporting women in the life science industry. These include Athena, Diversity Alliance 4 Science, MIT Enterprise Forum, CONNECT and San Diego Venture Group.

Monique Williamson
Executive Director
DeskHub Inc.

Monique Williamson’s goal is to expand San Diego’s economic growth by showcasing diverse innovation and talent under one roof. Her vision is to change the way people work together and collaborate. In Little Italy, Williamson opened the doors to the San Diego branch of DeskHub, managing what is now one of San Diego’s largest co-working spaces. Williamson actively advocates for local, women-owned companies and leaders, bringing awareness to their brands and purpose through multiple avenues, including programming, PR and connecting VCs with entrepreneurs. Whether it is donating space to a women-led organization like Athena, promoting civic organizations, hosting community events or bringing mindfulness programs into the community, Williamson continually stays focused on bringing collaborative vision to socially-responsible companies and causes.
The vision for BioLabs was conceived by the founders, entrepreneurs and investors of science-based health care companies. Under the leadership of co-founder Susie Harborth, BioLabs San Diego is operated by a female-led team. This team not only mentors and supports women within the BioLabs network, but creates a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurial women. BioLabs has facilitated numerous opportunities for women in San Diego, as well as women entrepreneurs throughout the country. Across the BioLabs network of innovation spaces live emerging life science companies, 51 percent are guided by a female founder, executive or investor.

Canale Communications has created an environment in which its mostly-female staff is encouraged to grow professionally. The company funds the purchase of leadership books, conference attendance and other educational and growth opportunities. For International Women’s Day, the company supported a local, female-owned restaurant. Corporate growth is achieved through a structured, regular review process — all too often not found at small or even larger places of employment. The company sponsors the BIOCOM Institute and its work encouraging youth to be involved in STEM.

DLA Piper’s Women Emerging Leaders (WEL) program is aimed at developing mid-career female professionals and rainmakers. The goals of the program are to increase the participants’ business acumen, provide opportunities for them to grow their business development skills, provide a better understanding of leadership, and effectively develop, reward, engage and attract women leaders. DLA Piper’s women’s resource group, the Leadership Alliance for Women (LAW), works to advance the firm’s global competitive edge by developing and promoting women lawyers. During monthly networking and learning meetings for women, participants learn how to grow their business, network, and set themselves up for leadership opportunities. The company raises awareness about its leadership opportunities and preparedness through its women’s speaker series and its firm-wide recognition of Women’s History Month and International Women’s Day.

ESET North America strongly believes diversity is key to the success of any great company or community. In 2016, 34 percent of promotions at ESET were to women. For ESET, a workplace that supports women is very important and why ESET created the WOW (Women of the Workplace). In addition, ESET developed ELEVATE for those aspiring to managerial/leadership roles and EMERGE for employees who are already managers. ELEVATE is currently 55 percent women and EMERGE is 50 percent women. In 2013, ESET, in partnership with the ESET Foundation, “Securing Our City” and began hosting Cyber Boot Camp. Early on, there were almost no young girls who attended, but by 2016, almost half were girls. Now in its second year, ESET’s “Women in Cybersecurity” Scholarship awards funds to a young woman interested in pursuing a cybersecurity career. This year, ESET doubled the scholarship amount (to $5,000) and worked with universities and non-profits to help inspire girls think about a career in an industry that desperately needs women in its field.

Worldwide, women are often particularly disenfranchised by existing voting methods. The Everyone Counts vision of elections, using state-of-the-art technologies can right that wrong by making voting less time-consuming for busy working women.

Prior to launching Everyone Counts, CEO Lori Steele Contor was a successful investment advisor with a focus on technology and innovation. She left a 17-year career and used her own capital to fund the early stages of Everyone Counts, including taking no salary. The company’s mission is to ensure that every person in the world with the legal right to vote can do so. Steele Contor’s vision attracted global leaders in the software and elections fields to join the team, which quickly positioned Everyone Counts as a leader in both election administration and as a provider of cutting-edge voting solutions. The tipping point became apparent in late 2012. That year 95 counties used Everyone Counts’ SaaS voting platform in the U.S. Presidential election. Bosnia-Herzegovina provided Everyone Counts’ voting systems to its disabled citizens so they could vote privately and independently for the first time.

Illumina

Illumina has been forging new ground, in its emphasis on its women employees’ involvement in the San Diego life science community. Now in its third year, the Illumina Women Leadership Network (WLN), provides women across the company with access to speakers, mentoring and programming. The initiative, sponsored by the senior leadership team and guided by a senior women’s steering committee, hosts monthly programs in San Diego, which are recorded and webcast to women around the world. In 2016, the network hosted its inaugural women’s fall festival in San Diego with more than 20 organizations and businesses (many of them women-owned) participating. Since its launch in 2014, the WLN has facilitated mentorship of 170 women through Illumina’s professional circles, technical circles and new to leadership circles. The mentoring circles have also provided more than 30 women with leadership opportunities to manage a circle and help others network, navigate their careers and develop their peer coaching abilities.

KPMG

KPMG is passionate about empowering young professionals to pursue and achieve their career goals while balancing their personal lives. In San Diego, women make up 25 percent of partners, 43 percent of the management group and 50 percent of its total employees. At KPMG, diversity and inclusion is a strategic priority. KPMG San Diego’s Network of Women (KOWN) delivers programs to provide professional, career, business and community development and increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of its female professionals. The office also has a Parents Who Know program designed to ease the transition for new and expectant mothers. In addition to developing and mentoring women at the firm, KPMG focuses on developing future leaders in both the community and with their clients. As part of their sponsorship of the Women’s LPGA championship, KPMG annually holds a one-day leadership summit which includes more than 500 high performing and high potential women from their clients, including the firm’s Talent from Southern California Leaders Program, which grants $10,000 scholarships, mentorship, and an introduction to golf to 16 remarkable high school senior women pursuing college studies in business or STEM.

Oracle Women’s Leadership (OWL) program began in 2006 and is a part of Oracle’s overall diversity, inclusion and leadership development strategy. OWL began when a group of senior women leaders met to discuss the advantages of having a special interest group of women dedicating to improving the leadership skills of women. The group quickly became a corporate-wide organization with sponsorship from senior leaders and a budget to allocate full-time resources to its success. Now 76 OWL Communities exist around the world. As a global initiative, the mission of OWL is to develop, engage, and empower current and future generations of women leaders to foster an inclusive and innovative workforce, with a special emphasis on STEM.

RARE Science

RARE Science is a unique nonprofit with a focus on children who have been diagnosed with rare diseases. Internally the core team of RARE Science is composed of a diverse group of women, from life science professionals and homemakers to high school students looking to build a career in life sciences. Its community of support represents women across the world supporting the RARE Bear Program that is instrumental in building rare disease patient communities that have no geographic boundaries. RARE Science’s internal research and partnerships play a large role in educating and promoting women researchers in male dominated fields. RARE Science helps these researchers navigate strategy, coach and guide to grant opportunities. Through the CIRM Bridges grant at CSU San Marcos, RARE Science also supports numerous women working in the stem cell field.
Abrijit Inc. addresses an essential need within the workplace design sector. Abrijit CEO Susan Lord and her son, Vice President Jack Maroney, developed a digital platform to help professionals connect and collaborate when designing work spaces. By developing this platform and venturing into the male-dominated tech industry, Lord has increased awareness of leadership opportunities for women and is becoming a major industry influencer. Lord and her team aim to impact and inspire women nationwide, showing that women with aspirations and opportunities can build successful companies that positively impact the world. Lord is leveraging her 30 years of experience in the commercial furnishing industry to introduce the Abrijit prototype to key industry members. Abrijit has participated in the CONNECT Springboard program as a technology startup, enjoying a wealth of knowledge and resources while fine-tuning its development strategy.

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AQUASEND

Aquasend provides continuous, real-time water quality monitoring to aqua farmers, significantly impacting their ability to increase production while minimizing unnecessary labor and maintenance costs. As a female in a predominantly male-dominated industry, CEO Kristin Elliott is no stranger to perseverance, risk or challenging work. Upon inheriting Precision Measurement Engineering from her father and stepping into the role of President and CEO, Elliott knew that championing women in the industry – ensuring they were listened to and had a voice – was paramount. In just over two years, Elliott has created Aquasend, tripled company growth and expanded the company roster, including many women along the way. Elliott prides herself on being a woman in tech and science, and takes every opportunity to mentor employees aspiring to leadership in science and technology.

COIN UP

Coin Up is a mobile donation app that allows users to virtually “round up” their credit and debit transactions and donate that “spare change” to a qualified charity of their choice. Coin Up’s Founder/CEO Leena Patidar drew upon her background as a CFO and auditor to ensure she built best practices into her company; and the highest levels of encryption and back-up-proof technologies into the app. Coin Up is a women-led business, with women representing 80 percent of the management team. Through Patidar’s perseverance, Coin Up has become the only officially-approved mobile donation app with a choice of charities available in the Apple Store. Allowing users to virtually donate their spare change is incredibly impactful for organizations. Ronald McDonald House, for example, collects approximately $27 million per year in physical spare change. At its core Coin Up is a social impact company and attracts strong women leaders who are passionate about the nonprofit sector, providing an intersection where they apply skills and nurture compassion to find significance in their careers.

Feetz founder and CEO Lucy Bead’s frustrating quest to find the perfect shoe in fit and style led her to founding Feetz, an innovative, 3D-printed shoe company that requires three pictures of each foot be taken and sent using a mobile phone. The technology maps over 5,000 data points to create a pair of shoes that’s guaranteed to fit and match the buyer’s style. The Feetz force is over 50 percent women, with Bead acting as mentor, leader and cheerleader for all. Bead ensures she has quarterly one-on-one meetings with the team, setting up short- and long-term goals and providing guidance along the way. In this capacity, Bead encourages and guides the women in her employ to expand and think outside the box. Bead has spoken at the Founders Institute, guiding young startups with her experience and knowledge. In addition, Bead will be a speaker at an international innovation and training institute for footwear called SLEM Summit, in the Netherlands.

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The health care industry is slow to adopt technologically-driven change, and is not yet ready to fully embrace the use of new apps or software. GeiaFit is hoping to change that by introducing a mobile health technology platform that enables patients to better manage their health and occupational therapy practitioners by shifting the focus of interactions from injury and illness to maintaining health and wellness. GeiaFit has already assembled an advisory board that includes three female health care practitioners across the country. GeiaFit CEO Lisa Fitzpatrick’s goal is to create a strong platform for women to be leaders in a health care revolution. Her commitment to empowering women within her company to move into leadership positions extends beyond her organization and into the professions of physical and occupational therapy. Fitzpatrick has dedicated years to mentoring young women on the profession of occupational therapy and the differences they can make in patients’ lives through this field. Fitzpatrick believes that training leaders requires a commitment to individuals to show them a path of inspiration, creativity and strength.

The LoanHero platform empowers merchants to extend instant point-of-sale financing, ensuring consumers receive the best loan product, regardless of their credit. The platform uses technology to enhance the user experience for merchants, borrower and lender alike. LoanHero co-founder and Chief Product Officer Kristin Slink is a sought-after speaker on the topic of women in technology and leadership. At LoanHero’s offices, three of the nine people on the core management team are women, and Slink herself takes on the role of internal mentor, showing by example that leadership opportunities are available and encouraged for women, particularly in an industry that has few women represented in senior executive roles.

Urban Translations’ technology provides digital menu solutions for the hospitality industry, bringing affordable new technology to the field. Urban Translations’ CEO, Samantha Urban, believes in the importance of motivating women to challenge industry norms. To that end, she champions coaching and mentorship, and focuses on providing quality training to her team. Drawing on her experience and connections with corporations like Samsung has provided Urban’s team significant experiences to collaborate outside the company. In addition, Urban Translations is currently collaborating with Trabaja Mama’s to provide jobs to mothers in Venezuela, bringing these Central American women opportunities to utilize their skills and earn better wages while working part-time from home.

Diversity isn’t just a good initiative — it’s good business.

Nomination Deadline: Monday, June 26, 2017
Nominate or order tickets online at: www.sdbj.com/bizevents/
Event Information: Contact the Events Department at 858.277.6695

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ALASTIN Skincare

ALASTIN Skincare is emphasizing awareness of leadership opportunities for women in the company by hiring a female CEO, increasing the female representation on its board of directors and providing multiple role models throughout the organization. Fully 67 percent of employees at the manager level and above are women. ALASTIN encourages its national sales force, composed primarily of experienced women sales executives, to manage their territories as businesses. This practice allows the sales team to identify key accounts and partner with physician practices to cooperatively market ALASTIN Skincare products and technology. ALASTIN recently won the Most Innovative Product Award at the internationally-renowned MyFaceMyBody Awards for its breakthrough serum that complements non-surgical skincare procedures in promoting speedy recovery, reducing side effects and increasing patient satisfaction.

AristaMD

AristaMD CEO Rebecca Cofinas has worked in the health care industry for 20 years. During her tenure with Scripps, she noticed the inefficiencies in handling referrals and, set out to find a solution to remedy the problem. In 2014, AristaMD, a digital health company focused on improving the specialty referral process, was born. The company is advancing novel, clinical-stage products in women’s reproductive health to expand options and improve outcomes, reinforcing the importance of product development in women’s health.

ImmunoActiva

ImmunoActiva, a cancer immunotherapy company developing therapeutic cancer vaccines using proprietary, genetically modified cell lines is dedicated to hiring women in science, and promoting innovation and leadership in a gender-blind, meritocratic system. Dr. Stella Sung, ImmunoActiva’s co-founder and chief business officer, is a long-time champion of women in life sciences. Sung has spent most of her career as a life science venture capitalist and biotechnology executive. She believes the key to developing women leaders in science is to generate interest in the science, engineering and math fields during the earliest, most formative school years. To that end, she devotes a considerable amount of time, energy and resources to promoting the STREAM (Science, Technology, Research, Arts and Math) program at the Solana Beach School District. In addition to serving on the school site council, and helping bring Engineering in Elementary modules to the site, Sung mentors women with scientific backgrounds who want to transition from academia to industry.

ProdermIQ

ProdermIQ, Inc. was co-founded by Eveie Wilpon Schwartz, who has led a life and career focused on celebrating, developing and promoting women in leadership. Though the company is just starting to hire, they have already identified women who are leaders in their field as top candidates to fill upcoming leadership roles within the organization. The company is committed to securing women in leadership roles and with their success and growth as a priority. Currently, its female intern is being exposed to an entrepreneurial environment with opportunities and projects allowing her to learn and grow with her personal career goals in mind. ProdermIQ was twice invited to the White House to participate in President Obama’s National Microbiome Initiative.

An idea born out of a personal tragedy, Trials.ai enables new treatments to arrive to patients faster by accelerating the clinical trials process. CEO Kim Walpole experienced firsthand the frustrations that arise from logistical bottlenecks when she tried to enroll a friend into a clinical trial for pancreatic cancer. Those frustrations led to the idea that later became Trials.ai, an intuitive platform that gained the attention of researchers at UC San Diego’s Moores Cancer Center while still in beta. The researchers found the solution they sought in the Trials.ai platform, and became its first paying customer. Walpole is leveraging her 20 years of sales experience to drive her company forward. She draws upon that experience when accepting invitations to speak to students at UCSD and SDSU, sharing insights on topics such as entrepreneurship, leadership, teambuilding and diversification. Walpole’s goal is to ensure that women in tech know they can be successful in both their work and family lives if they engage the right support systems.

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The more women we empower, the more impact they can have. We’re proud to work with all of our 2017 Athena Pinnacle Award nominees. Congratulations and thank you for helping us bring the future forward faster.

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