The Valley area’s most successful and accomplished women will be honored at a luncheon April 12. On the following pages are profiles of those nominated to receive an award. Join us for an event full of inspiration as we honor those who have done so much for our community.

AWARDS LUNCHEON
Thursday, April 12 | 11:30AM - 1:30PM
Warner Center Marriott | 21850 Oxnard Street | Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Tickets available at sfvbj.com/bizevents

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MARY AKPOVI
Martini, Iosue & Akpovi

Mary O. Akpovi is a highly regarded CPA and business advisor and is known for her ability to handle complex financial, tax and compliance matters for individuals, businesses, estates and trusts. She earned four degrees including a Ph.D. Akpovi and her partners launched their accounting firm in 1991. Today, Martini, Iosue & Akpovi of Encino has 46 employees with two offices and serves clients not only in the United States but all over the world. She has been an active volunteer, serving organizations helping those with disabilities and the homeless, among others. She helped establish a vocational training center in Sierra Leone, and she helps support an orphanage and medical facility in Uganda.

GLADYS AYALA
Chicas Mom Inc.

Gladys Ayala is originally from Paraguay, and is a mother of two teenagers, wife, and businesswoman. Yet she continued working for the community as secretary of Pacoima Chamber of Commerce, and she is founder of the organization Chicas Mom Inc. Chicas Mom is a nonprofit whose main objective is to achieve well-being for women through education. Ayala and Chicas Mom believe that by better educating women, they can achieve a meaningful change in their lives, benefiting their families, our community, and society in general.

ANGELICA BANUELOS
Valley Economic Development Center

Angelica Banuelos has a demonstrated commitment to the San Fernando Valley both in her professional life as well as in her personal life. Her commitment to assisting small businesses via her ever-expanding roles at the Valley Economic Development Center spans 15 years, while her volunteer obligations have made her a mainstay of the Valley community. This dedication to the well-being of the Valley’s small businesses owners and the larger community has been adopted by her staff members, who demonstrate the same level of care and nurturing toward small businesses as Banuelos.

DENISE BEAN-WHITE
Consortium Media + Public Relations

Denise Bean-White is the president and CEO of Consortium Media + Public Relations (CM+PR), a brand development agency with offices in Ventura and Northern California. Through a results-based, strategic, multi-media approach, she helps local, regional, national and international clients bolster their bottom lines and break through development goals. She brings more than 30 years of experience in newspaper, radio, network television and brand strategy background to her work at the agency. As the company founder and leader, she effectively manages, directs and mentors every member of her team.

YVETTE BERKE
Adapt Consulting Inc. / Adapt Ad Specialty

Yvette Berke started Adapt Consulting after leaving the Walt Disney Co. in 1993. The focus was to make “green” mainstream. Initially, consulting was performed in order to reduce the waste streams; then Berke began developing products made from recycled material. Her clients include spcaLA, City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles and the State of California. Adapt focuses on the needs of cities, states, the federal government, law enforcement, fire/ rescue services, humane organizations and corporations that want to project an eco-friendly image. She also helped launch a cage-free adoption center for cats in a retail mall.

LINDSEY CARNETT
Marketing Maven PR

Lindsey Carnett has built Marketing Maven into one of the nation’s most successful public relations and marketing firms in little under a decade. After beginning the company in 2007 in her living room with a few trusted associates, Marketing Maven now handles approximately 100 companies from its Los Angeles and East Coast offices. Carnett has also taken her business expertise globally to enlighten marketing peers, clients and students about best practices in using PR to drive sales, improve organic SEO and grow a positive online reputation.

REBECCA DELUCA
Keller Williams

After getting married and having her son, Rebecca DeLuca decided that working in the film industry was taking a toll on her. She decided to change career paths and became a realtor for Keller Williams. She has become one of the top realtors in Santa Clarita with her Rebecca & Co. branding. Through her company she has had the awards and has been ranked a No. 1 realtor. In addition to being a successful realtor, mother and wife, she also finds time to volunteer in the community.

DONNA DEUTCHMAN
Homes 4 Families

Donna Deutchman is the president and CEO of Homes 4 Families, where she oversees the development of affordable veteran neighborhoods and comprehensive services that empower low-income veterans and their families to enter the middle class. Deutchman has more than two decades of experience growing nonprofits and creating the public-private partnerships that empower them. With Homes 4 Families, she pioneered the outcome-proven Enriched Neighborhood model, which addresses the distinct needs of the veteran community in partnership with the California Department of Veterans Affairs. She has overseen the development of more than 168 homes for low-income families.
Women in business urge others to remain confident

By Robin Heffler

Four women who have been successful in the world of business advised CSUN women Wednesday to show determination and confidence, take chances, and expect some resistance from prospective employers.

The panel—composed of Myrtle Evers of Atlantic Richfield Co. (ARCO), Maxine Bracy of station KIJI, Mildred Tyler of UC Riverside, and Mary Margaret Smith of the National Organization for Women (NOW)—gave their views in a discussion sponsored by the Black Business Association.

EVERS, WHO is community affairs director for ARCO, said, “If you are business-oriented, be sure to put forth all the confidence that is needed to get to the people you want to attract, and you are in, keep your ears and eyes open to the chances to move up the company.

She added that of parents, she was her parents’ first choice for whatever.

“I COULD not toy with whether or not I wanted a career; I had to work."

Evers said she is often asked why she chose to work with a company like ARCO, and that she responds by saying, “The petroleum industry is just beginning to open up to women, and I like being in on the ground floor.”

Speaking that she believes the managerial level is very difficult for women to achieve, she said she has been told her chances to move up the company will be filled by a woman.

#WHEREWOMENRISE

CSUN.  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

TIMES CHANGE. PRINCIPLES DON’T.
Linda Dolson is a certified traditional naturopath. She has additional certifications in homeopathy and as a neuro-physical reprogramming specialist over 15 years. She has also been trained and certified as a domestic violence counselor. She is a former president of Safe Passage and has been on the board of directors for 7 years. Today, Dolson is working as the program director and counselor for Safe Passage. As a counselor and health specialist, Dolson addresses the emotional and health issues of the Safe Passage clients who are women victims of domestic violence.

Debra Donovan has been the executive director of Valley Village for many years. She has proven to be a great leader of a large community-based organization serving the disabled in the San Fernando Valley. She also serves as a mentor in the way she has developed a strong team of leaders and devoted employees with long tenure. Under her stewardship, Valley Village represents an important and sometimes forgotten population. Donovan and her team have managed their organization despite shortages in government support and have proven they are a sustainable organization for the community.

Debra Donovan is executive director of Valley Village.

Lisa Elkan is a real estate specialist with Pasadena Estate Properties, committed to her clients and to her community. Elkan’s specialty is providing personal attention to every client, whether the client is buying or selling real estate. Elkan has also devoted countless hours volunteering in her community. She is a founding member of the Village at Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District and has served as board president for three terms, a position she still holds.

Leslie Elkan is managing partner of the Tharpe & Howell firm.

Lisa PR

Lisa Elkan, Realtor

Leslie Elkan is executive director of Valley Village.

Lisa PR

Stephanie Forman is managing partner of the Tharpe & Howell law firm and oversees its business operations from the firm’s Sherman Oaks office. Forman started at Tharpe & Howell as an associate, and she worked her way up to partner and then to managing partner. Her practice focuses on all phases of civil litigation in both federal and state courts, including arbitration, mediation and trial. She represents a broad range of clients, primarily in the areas of employment and labor law, premises liability, product liability, wrongful death and mass tort litigation, and has extensive experience counseling companies on administrative and regulatory compliance issues.

Stephanie Forman is managing partner of the Tharpe & Howell firm.

Karen L. Gabler has earned the reputation for developing proactive and creative strategies to enhance workplace productivity and avoid employment disputes. She co-founded LightGabler in 2011 and has been instrumental in the firm’s growth, helping to build from seven to 21 people and from 287 to almost 2,500 clients. As a major part of her practice, Gabler serves as an employment law expert for over 700 businesses of all sizes and industries, providing counsel to management and conducting training programs for management and employees.

Karen L. Gabler is managing partner of the LightGabler firm.

Ruth Garcia-Corrales is executive director of the LA VEDC Women’s Business Center, the only such center in the San Fernando Valley. Within the first eight months of this contract year, it has served over 270 clients with individualized consulting services and trained 1,340 start-up and existing businesses. Her impact includes helping 24 businesses start, the creations of 20 jobs and assisting clients in getting more than $523,000 in financing for their businesses. Garcia-Corrales continues to create unique and demand-based programming that responds to the small business needs of the women entrepreneurs in the Valley community.

Ruth Garcia-Corrales is executive director of the LA VEDC Women’s Business Center.
When it comes to employment law, this is not a good idea:

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Tiffany Grummer is the director of special events and golf tournaments at Valencia Country Club. In her three years as catering director, she has doubled private event sales, making Valencia Country Club a premier wedding and event destination. Valencia Country Club went from having five weddings a year to this year hosting 30. Through her connections in the community, the wedding industry and her cutting edge marketing, she helped turn the venue into a top event location. She is also very involved in the community, winning multiple awards for her volunteerism and leadership skills.

Tamara Gurney, CEO; Marianne Cederlind, executive vice president and chief business banking Officer; Diane Auten, executive vice president and chief financial officer; Linda Rousseau, executive vice president and chief administrative officer; and Jill Clements, senior vice president and deputy chief credit officer, entered the contest as a business team. They make up the female-centric top management team for Mission Valley Bank. The level of banking and financial experience from the five-woman top management team members combined is more than 150 years. The bank these women have built is a true success story, now in its 16th year of operation serving the financial needs of the Valley and surrounding area business communities.

Summer Helene is one of the youngest executives in Hollywood history. Helene's tenacity, demeanor and her uncompromising style earned her the nickname “The Duchess of Hollywood,” known for her ability to “get any film made,” and is often asked to share her experiences in Hollywood on television and radio shows, as well as on panels at Comic-Con International and most major film festivals. On Friday nights, Helene shares her experiences as the host of the popular radio show, “Behind the Scenes,” which helps aspiring and experienced entertainers navigate the Hollywood machine.

Teresa Hill, a realtor for Keller Williams, has built a professional practice throughout the Valley and beyond due in large part to her professionalism. She is extremely knowledgeable in real estate. She has been a realtor for 30 years now and has navigated through the ups and downs of the industry to emerge as one of the leading realtors in the greater Los Angeles area. She also serves as the leader of the successful networking group, Pro-Net, which she helped found.

Jinah Kim-Perek founded WorldWise Productions in late 2008 in Van Nuys while still a full-time reporter and correspondent at NBC News and KNBC-TV. As her video production business has grown over time, she has transitioned to the company full time. In the 10 years since she started WorldWise, she has grown her commercial and corporate video production business to more than $1 million in annual revenue, employing four full-time workers and about 20 contractors. Plus, she still reports part-time at NBC News, covering breaking news and entertainment for MSNBC and NBC News Channel.
Diane Krehbiel
DKKD Staffing
With over 30 years experience as a single mother entrepreneur and business owner, Diane Krehbiel is the founder of DKKD Staffing, a million-dollar executive and technology woman-owned recruiting firm established in 2011. Krehbiel also has over 15 years of experience providing career coaching to jobseekers. She is recognized as a specialist in building technology teams within companies from CIO/CTO/CISO to helpdesk across the United States. She also has more than 40 years of charitable organization involvement.

Gail Lara
Women’s Collaborative Mentoring Program
Gail Lara is the executive director of the Women’s Collaborative Mentoring Program (WCMP) at Valley Economic Alliance. Lara brings over 17 years of experience in small business development, training, and as a business owner. At WCMP, Lara’s mission is clear: to position underserved women entrepreneurs to thrive by providing customized mentoring to achieve sustainable business growth. She also happens to have 25 years of experience in retail buying, sales management, procurement and advertising. Currently, her focus is on building a premier training program for women-owned small businesses.

Debbie Laskey
Branding and More
Debbie Laskey has 18 years of marketing experience and an MBA Degree. She developed her marketing expertise while working in the high-tech industry, the Consumer Marketing Department at Disneyland Paris in France, the nonprofit arena, and the insurance industry. Her expertise includes brand marketing, social media, employee engagement, leadership development, and customer experience marketing. Honored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council, Laskey is currently a brand marketing, public relations, and social media consultant to nonprofits and emerging businesses in Southern California.

Marlee Lauffer
Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital Foundation
Marlee Lauffer serves in the dual-role of president of the Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital Foundation and vice president of marketing and communications for Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital. As president of the foundation, she is overseeing a major capital campaign to raise money for Henry Mayo’s new patient tower. As head of marketing and communications for the hospital she oversees all the hospital’s branding, advertising and public relations initiatives. In addition, she is also responsible for Henry Mayo’s community benefit initiatives, in which the hospital works to develop programs to improve the overall health of Santa Clarita’s residents.
Marie Y. Lemelle
Platinum Star Public Relations

More than 17 years ago, Marie Y. Lemelle’s entrepreneurial spirit led her to establish Platinum Star Public Relations and Management, an award-winning, global marketing and communications firm. Platinum Star, a certified MWBE, was established to assist underserved businesses and women business owners to achieve their goals through positive and consistent exposure. Ever evolving, her clients have covered the gamut from boxing to fashion, the entertainment, film, and music industry and from health and wellness, corporations and to nonprofit organizations that provide services to women, military veterans and other underserved populations.

Olympia LePoint
OL Consulting Corporation

Hailed as the “Modern Day Hidden Figure” by People Magazine and “The New Einstein” by her fans, Olympia LePoint is an award-winning rocket scientist who is unleashing audiences’ brainpower through her work as CEO of OL Consulting Corporation & Publishing. LePoint shares her NASA experience and personal life triumphs as a speaker and author. Despite being raised in poverty, failing in math classes and overcoming painful challenges, LePoint climbed the ranks as a rocket scientist, launching 28 missions into Space. From the ages of 21-30, she was one of the youngest leaders to help launch NASA’s Space Shuttle to success.

Cheyenne Martin
The Cheyenne Martin Foundation

As the executive director of Cheyenne Martin Foundation, Cheyenne Martin was involved in community outreach at an early age. She was always giving of herself whether it was her avid volunteerism, financial and in-kind support or just sage advice, she has always found joy in serving and giving to others. Since its founding, the Cheyenne Martin Foundation’s mission is to empower, inspire, and serve communities by combining philanthropy, mentorship, volunteering, socializing and networking with women of diverse cultures and backgrounds. Martin’s foundation enables women to enhance and develop their quality of life and become architects of their future.

Precious Mayes
Pacifica Hospital of the Valley

Precious Mayes is the chief strategy officer for Pacifica Hospital of the Valley. Mayes has served in many key executive roles such as CEO, CSO and COO for Pacifica Hospital and has been involved in such disciplines as finance and physician management. She also played a key role with the state department of health with survey and OSHA compliance for hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. Additionally, she is the key representative for the hospital to develop and maintain relations with state and federal governing bodies. She is known for her innovative and strategic strategies, which benefit patients, providers and the hospital.

Cyndi McAuley
Therapeutic Living Centers for the Blind

Cyndi McAuley is the executive director of Therapeutic Living Centers for the Blind. Under her stewardship, the mission of TLC is to provide for the lifetime needs of individuals with multiple-disabilities and blindness. McAuley and TLC believe in the value of each individual and promote the philosophy that each participant can be assisted to achieve full potential. McAuley oversees a team of consultants and employees who provide physical therapy, speech and language therapy, orientation and mobility therapy, occupational therapy, child development and nursing services for the intermediate care facilities that comprise TLC’s 12 homes.

Laura McHolm
NorthStar Moving Company

In the mid-1990s, Laura McHolm moved away from an escalating legal career supporting Fortune 500 companies to fulfill her entrepreneurial spirit when she and her partner launched NorthStar Moving Company in Los Angeles. Today, her fast growing privately held company has expanded into franchising and continues to be the go-to mover for The Getty, A-list celebrities, and other VIPs. Her company has redefined the moving industry as the first to offer “eco-luxury” moving services, elevating basic moving and storage services to a new unparalleled level of customer service, customized care and environmental consciousness.

Colette Menzel Ph.D.
Antelope Valley Hospital

Colette Menzel, Ph.D., is a solution-oriented, dynamic, international executive with a diverse background in finance and operations management. She serves as both chief operating officer and chief financial officer for Antelope Valley Hospital and has been selected by the board of directors as the chief executive officer’s future successor. She has held a variety of leadership roles in industries ranging from professional services to ecommerce to technology. An accomplished writer and sought-after speaker, Dr. Menzel often serves as a guest lecturer for graduate students.

Laurel Mintz
Elevate My Brand

As the founder of Elevate My Brand, digital marketing and live events agency, Laurel Mintz has created a business model where her team’s and clients’ voices are integrated to deliver the best marketing solutions for partners and clients. Mintz works with prestigious global brands including Zendesk, P&G, Danone, Public House Restaurant Group, Bassett, iCoffee and Susan G. Komen. She also sits on the board of directors for the American Heart Association, NAWBO-LA and the Fender Music Foundation. In addition, she is a mentor for The Women’s Global Leaders Initiative and Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship.
Be encouraged and inspired by other women. Over 150 women come annually to the Warriors Entrepreneurship Luncheon Resource Center’s Women, Wealth, Warriors. Both businesses are successful. After being taken on the challenge of following her passion to help others, she is the founder and operator of real estate, and professional service firms. She also works with high net-worth individuals and their closely held companies. Montanio has become known for her expertise in virtually every area of practice. With over 10 years of experience in public accounting, her areas of expertise include tax compliance and tax planning for entertainers, owners and operators of real estate, and professional service firms. She also works with high net-worth individuals and their closely held companies. Montanio has become known for her work ethic, drive, and aptitude. She has made a significant impact in the firm in virtually every area of practice.

Jamie Montanio
Winningham, Becker & Co.

Jamie Montanio is a partner at Winningham Becker & Co., one of the Top 25 accounting and financial services firms in the Valley. With over 10 years of experience in public accounting, her areas of expertise include tax compliance and tax planning for entertainers, owners and operators of real estate, and professional service firms. She also works with high net-worth individuals and their closely held companies. Montanio has become known for her work ethic, drive, and aptitude. She has made a significant impact in the firm in virtually every area of practice.

Karole Morgan-Prager
Blackline

Karole Morgan-Prager serves as Blackline’s chief legal officer. In this role, Morgan-Prager oversees all of Blackline’s legal functions on a global basis. She has more than 25 years of legal experience. As chief legal officer at Blackline, Morgan-Prager was hired to help ensure that the company’s global legal organization could enable Blackline to continue to drive growth, while leveraging greater internal efficiencies – all while preparing Blackline for the company’s IPO, which took place in 2016, approximately 18 months after Morgan-Prager joined the company.

Lisa Odom
Poole & Shaffery

Lisa Odom has been practicing law for over 13 years. She specializes in business law and estate planning. Her career spans working for big corporate law firms to being an entrepreneur and starting her own boutique firm. The impressive thing about her firm is she started with no clients and within a few years she grew her book of business to more than 700 clients. Recently her firm merged with the biggest firm in the Santa Clarita Valley, Poole & Shaffery. Also active in her community, she recently chaired the 2018 Empowering Hearts Gala for a local non-profit in the area.

Tunisia Offray
Women, Wealth, Warriors
Entrepreneurship Luncheon

Tunisia Offray successfully built Offray Accounting and Bookkeeping Services, and later established Prestige Insurance and Financial Services. Both businesses are successful. After being a business owner for 15 years, Offray has taken on the challenge of following her passion to help others. She is the founder of the Shepherd’s Door Domestic Violence Resource Center’s Women, Wealth, Warriors Entrepreneurship Luncheon which provides women with the support, resources, and encouragement needed to step out and create the life they envision for themselves through entrepreneurship. Over 150 women come annually to be encouraged and inspired by other successful women.

Xiomara Pena
Small Business Majority

Xiomara Pena is the founder of XIO Partners, a full-service consulting company. In addition to being an entrepreneur, Pena leads regional efforts as the Southern California outreach manager for Small Business Majority, a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization focused on promoting smart public policy that will positively impact small business owners and entrepreneurs. Small Business Majority also commissions opinion research on both national and state levels to determine small business owners’ views on a range of topics. Pena also manages Small Business Majority’s national Hispanic small business outreach work focused on delivering quality resources for the Spanish-speaking business community.

Laura Rhodes-Levin
The Missing Peace Center

Laura Rhodes-Levin is a professional marriage and family counselor with a master’s degree in science, specializing in anxiety. She owns and operates the Missing Peace Center for Anxiety in Woodland Hills. In 2010 she obtained her certification for Anxiety in Woodland Hills. In 2010 she obtained her certification for Anxiety in Woodland Hills. In 2010 she obtained her certification for Anxiety in Woodland Hills. In 2010 she obtained her certification for Anxiety in Woodland Hills.

Toni Ricci
Elite Dance and Performing Arts Center

Toni Ricci has been studying dance for almost 30 years. Today, she owns and operates a massive dance studio, the Elite Dance and Performing Arts Center in Woodland Hills. In her dance career, Ricci has toured the United States, performed on Broadway, and made numerous television appearances. She also studied ballet with the Anaheim Ballet and has taught at numerous dance schools in the area. Ricci has taught and inspired hundreds of students in southern California in the past decade. The Elite Dance Center is a testimony to her love of dance.
GENNA ROSENBERG  
GennComm

Genna Rosenberg is the CEO of GennComm, a global agency specializing in marketing, communications and brand innovation and centered on the business of play. She is a toy and consumer products industry leader, bringing 20 years of experience across PR, marketing, communications, global brand marketing, retail development and more. Rosenberg’s clients benefit greatly from her innovative and knowledgeable approach to business, far-reaching connections, keen eye on global trends, and deep passion for the industry and social responsibility. Her global clients range from apps giants to top toymakers, to Random House Children’s Books, Dunkin’ Donuts, to Subway Surfers and many top global clients. She has become an authority on topics salient to this under-standard. She is a certified child passenger safety technician since 2009, Saxton is also passionate about reducing the number of children injured in car accidents by teaching parents and caregivers how to properly use their seats.

JENNIFER SAXTON  
Tot Squad

Jennifer Saxton is the founder and CEO of Tot Squad, a baby gear services start-up whose vision is to become the “Geek Squad” of the baby world. Tot Squad provides car seat installations, baby gear cleaning, and stroller repairs in Los Angeles, San Diego, New York City and Washington, D.C. Headquartered in Sherman Oaks, Tot Squad has serviced over 20,000 Southern California families. Certified as a child passenger safety technician since 2009, Saxton is also passionate about reducing the number of children injured in car accidents by teaching parents and caregivers how to properly use their seats.

PENNY SPARK  
Slate Ltd.

In the 1990s Penny Spark founded Slate Ltd., a trusted advisory consulting firm in the residential remodeling and construction arena, providing property owners with architects, designers, remodelers, and contractors who have been vetted, professionally, for high quality technical, business, and ethical standards. She has become an authority and is invited to speak throughout the greater Los Angeles area to property owners on topics salient to this under-regulated, litigious arena, notorious for dissatisfied consumers. In addition to being a driven and passionate entrepreneur, Spark also works tirelessly for several not-for-profit organizations to improve the lives of others both locally and internationally.

PAULINDA BABBINI SCHIMMEL  
The Ovarian Cancer Circle,  
Inspired by Robin Babbini

A fter running a successful digital imaging business for 40 years, Paulinda Babbini Schimmel established the Ovarian Cancer Circle, inspired by Robin Babbini, a nonprofit organization which is a legacy to her daughter, Robin, who died in 2006, at 20 years old, from ovarian cancer. Schimmel found the courage to shine a lasting, forever light on the life of her beautiful daughter and created The Circle, which in the last 7 years has grown into a vibrant organization of volunteers, who work tirelessly to heighten the awareness of ovarian cancer and educate women of all ages about its elusive symptoms.

CONNIE SPARKS  
Wadeco Capital

Connie Sparks is the CEO of Wadeco Capital, Round 1 Funding, and Wade Institute. Her business and financing career spans 18 years, helping business owners and managers build transformation and financing strategies to grow their businesses. Additionally, she consults with numerous clients across the country on raising capital and sustaining and expanding their businesses, which led to raising more than $44 million through the Small Business Administration, non-conventional, and hard money lending programs-shaping communities for success. She is an award-winning expert on business development, strategic planning, business modeling, and financing.

TRISH STEELE  
Safe Passage & Women Crowned In Glory

Pageant contestant, cable talk show host, author, and domestic abuse survivor, Trish Steele has turned her story into 23 years of reaching out and encouraging women to fulfill their calling in life. Through Safe Passage, Steele has provided a safe haven of hope, opportunity, and empowerment to victims of abuse while giving them stability, self-confidence and the life tools to develop a deep personal love for themselves and, in turn, the courage to give back to others. Steele herself initially sheltered women in her own home before getting the funds to establish a permanent safe house in Sherman Oaks.

MICHELE STEIN  
NAI Capital

Michele Stein is chief operating officer of NAI Capital Inc., the largest independently held, woman-owned, full-service commercial real estate firm headquartered in Southern California. Stein oversees operations for 15 offices throughout Southern California, including the corporate headquarters totaling over 235 brokers, managers and staff. With 18 years of experience, she leads a team of 60 people in the day-to-day management of the company. She is responsible for all areas of the business, including human resources, marketing, contracts, accounting, information technology, and business development. Stein has a broad and multi-functional background and has developed a strong team structure.
JODY TOERNER
LightGabler

L

Jody Toerner, executive director of the Camarillo-based law firm LightGabler, follows the mantra, “Customer Service Is My God.” She epitomizes this every day, whether dealing with clients or employees. Toerner began with the firm when it opened its doors in 2011 as the office manager but was soon elevated to executive director in 2013 when it became apparent that the firm would grow and her duties would expand. She was instrumental in overseeing and coordinating its growth—from seven to 21 people (including 14 attorneys) and from 287 clients to almost 2,500 today.

JAVE TRIPP
J-n-K Services Inc.

W

When Jave Melamed Tripp established J-n-K Services Inc., a certified minority business and a 100 percent woman-owned business in 1998, she did what everyone did before the advent of the internet—she pounded the pavement and knocked on doors to find customers. Her persistence and drive helped develop a thriving commercial printing and graphic design business in the heart of North Hollywood’s theatre district over a past 20 years. Currently, housed in a 4,000 square foot facility on Cahuenga Boulevard in North Hollywood, J-n-K Services offers graphic design, offset and digital printing services, high-speed copying, mailing services and signage.

LYSA URBAN
Consortium Media + Public Relations

L

Lyssa Urban has a successful track record developing and managing communications strategies including advertising, branding, community outreach, public education campaigns, marketing and media relations—and blends those skills with her passion for philanthropy in her community. Urban brings her versatile background, with both corporate and municipal experience, to Consortium Media + PR, as the firm’s communications manager working with clients locally and statewide. Formerly the public information officer for the city of Ventura, Urban worked with city leaders to create community outreach and communications campaigns.

ELVIA VALENZUELA
Passantino Andersen Communications

E

Elvia Valenzuela is an experienced communications professional who successfully manages a variety of clients across the Antelope Valley. She specializes in public relations, more specifically in the areas of strategic planning, community outreach, social media, media relations, and event management. She is fluent in Spanish, adding tremendous value to Passantino Andersen Communications. She has successfully executed a variety of strategic communication plans for a variety of school districts, municipalities and non-profit organizations. Additionally, her work has contributed to the success of numerous community outreach projects for master-planned communities, commercial developments and community service districts.

PILAR VARGAS
Princess P Closet

P

Pilar Vargas (better known as “Queen P”) arrived in the United States from Peru with her parents 15 years ago. The family migrated to California where they moved into a small apartment in North Hollywood where they lived until she was 19. After several stints in retail, Vargas launched Princess P Jewelry. She has now garnered over four million followers on all of her social media platforms. She has a capacity to reach an audience of 120 million people through her social media influencer friends. She went from shipping 20 units a month to 3,000 units a week.

BIANCA VOBECKY
Vobecky Enterprises Inc.

B

Bianca Vobecky is the founder and president of Vobecky Enterprises, a business dedicated to providing construction, construction management and nationwide trucking services. Since founding Vobecky Enterprises, the focus of Vobecky’s efforts has been the building of meaningful professional relationships with a focus on customer service. In keeping with her ambitious spirit, Vobecky obtained her California Contractor’s License, in just a few short months, she won the company’s first federal contract and has continued working with 35 federal agencies, several utility companies and numerous large corporations.

SHANNA WARREN
The Boys & Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley

S

Shanna Warren is a woman with many educational accomplishments that have all been focused on the development and care of children. She has taken many steps throughout her career to educate herself (including earning a series of advanced degrees) in order to execute her abilities in the most effective ways possible. As a result, Warren’s years at the Boys & Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley have brought the organization to new heights and have positively improved the lives of countless youth. Warren’s efforts have been recognized on both a local and national level.

PANNEY WEI
See the Way Consulting

P

Panney Wei is an award-winning writer, TV/radio host, hypnotherapist, and motivational speaker on personal leadership, the power of the mind and achieving one’s potential. She also focuses on inspiring people to break through negative patterns, overcome obstacles, and achieve personal and professional dreams. Wei is also the CEO of See the Way Consulting, giving individuals the tools, solutions and wisdom, both personally and professionally, to overcome life’s obstacles, and achieve potential. She provides the insight, knowledge, and feedback clients desire, and the energy, inspiration, and the courage to help manifest their dreams and to not only endure, but thrive.

NOMINEES
JAMA WILLIAMS
Woody
Jama’s Beauty College

Jama Williams Woody has been a salon owner in Woodland Hills for 10 years. As an owner she has serviced the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles and clients as far as Santa Barbara and Las Vegas. Her passion for healthy hair care and hair growth has allowed her to gain a loyal clientele base. After having much success as a salon owner, Woody expanded her passion for beauty into helping others achieve their dreams of working as a professional in the industry by opening her own cosmetology school called Jama's Beauty College. Her school offers cosmetology, esthetics, barbering and manicuring.

KIMBERLY WYARD
Northeast Valley Health Corp.

Kimberly Wyard serves as CEO of Northeast Valley Health Corp., a position she has held since 1996. Wyard first joined the staff of NEVHC in 1974, the year after it opened its first health center in the city of San Fernando. NEVHC has since grown to 15 health centers providing over 300,000 medical and dental visits per year. Under her leadership, the organization has also grown to the point where it is now employing almost 1,000 individuals who provide quality medical care to almost 75,000 patients living in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys.

LISA YOUNG
The Rescue Train

For the last 18 years, Lisa Young has dedicated her life to saving animals, first as a small independent rescuer, to now running a small but mighty animal nonprofit that not only helps animals but their owners as well. She has saved thousands of animals through The Rescue Train Adoption Program, Shelter Intervention Program, Race for The Rescues event, and last year’s Hurricane Harvey Airlift. This year, under Young's stewardship, The Rescue Train is launching a program that helps people and families affected by Alzheimer's with their pets.

ANI ZADORIAN
JLK Rosenberger

Ani Zadorian joined JLK Rosenberger on April 15, 2015 after just giving birth to her second child. Zadorian hit the ground running and quickly made her impact on the firm. She was the first female manager of the firm's Glendale office. She has worked to improve the firm culture of cultivating and developing women employees and was given the latitude and freedom to do so by the partners of the firm. She launched the Women Lead program, which was and continues to be a unique way of showing the women of the firm, just how valuable and important they are.