SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL

WOMEN’S COUNCIL

2018 AWARDS

PRESENTING SPONSORS

CSUN. CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHridge

MISSION VALLEY BANK

GOLD SPONSOR

Tharpe & Howell, LLP
Letter from the Publisher

The San Fernando Valley Business Journal was proud to celebrate and honor women of achievement in the Valley-area business community with our Women’s Council awards luncheon at the Warner Center Marriott hotel on Thursday, April 12. Described by attendees as an uplifting and inspirational event, the celebration honored Valley-area women who have led by example and provided success stories for the Business Journal year-round! These remarkable women were applauded for demonstrating effective business vision and a passionate commitment to positively impact the world of business, the communities they serve or, in several cases, both.

Scores of terrific nominees were submitted to the Business Journal by readers this year. The judges had the unenviable task of narrowing the field down to winners in eight categories for this year’s big event. Plaques were presented to those winners, whose names were revealed at the event. Profiles of the eight winners are featured in this special section.

It wasn’t easy to select just eight honorees for this year’s awards, so we have also taken the time to once again list all the finalists – superb examples of women who genuinely lead by example and are all winners in their own right.

Best,

Charles Crumpley
Editor and Publisher

Building a healthy community is magical.
Don’t let it disappear.

Regardless of the healthcare landscape, Valley Community Healthcare must continue to be here for those in need. A healthy community is a prosperous community. You can help us build a healthy community for everyone. Join our Corporate Partners.

The Afriat Consulting Group
American Business Bank
Bolton & Company
Brightwood College
California United Bank
Maria Lucia Cruz, DDS
Rickey Gelb, the Gelb Group,
A Family of Companies
Keyes Automotive Group

MedPoint Management
Millennium Dance Complex
Paul Davis & Alberta Bellisario
Insurance Services
Really Great Employee Benefits
San Fernando Valley
Business Journal
SoCalGas
Wells Fargo

Please contact Judi Rose at:
818.301.6321 or jrose@vchcare.org

Valley Community Healthcare
www.vchcare.org

Valley Community Healthcare, a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable agency providing a medical home to almost 27,000 low-income men, women, and children in 2017.
Achieving great things for our community

When a group of people comes along who have the courage and vision to turn dreams into reality, they make the future bright for everyone.

San Fernando Valley Business Journal Women's Council Award honorees, we celebrate your achievements.

wellsfargo.com

© 2017 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved. Member FDIC. (3945701_20022)
CEO OF THE YEAR

DANONE SIMPSON
Montage Insurance Solutions

Danone Simpson is the founder and chief executive of Montage Insurance Solutions in Woodland Hills. She has built an agency focused on employee benefit and property and casualty programs for the commercial and non-profit sectors. Under Simpson’s leadership, the firm has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies and top 25 largest insurance brokerage firms and employee benefits consultants each year since 2009. Her company utilizes human resources tools, consulting, wellness campaigns, health fairs and safety initiatives to reduce premium and employee costs. These services are unique and are an example of Simpson’s innovative and passionate role in the region and industry.

Simpson has more than 18 years of experience in all lines of insurance. Under her leadership the firm has partnered with more than 150 carriers in order to find the perfect insurance solutions at the right price for Montage clients. Her passion has fueled the hearts of her employees to serve the human resources departments, and their employees, as though they were Simpson’s own family.

Simpson understands the challenges of the human resources professional and has established “The Montage Minute” and “My HR Summit,” legal and industry updates and a leadership series to educate HR departments in the ever-changing world of legal compliance and employee management. In addition, Simpson sits on the Valley Village board of directors, on the development board for Make-A-Wish, and has been honored as a founding member of Women for Wishes.

BUSINESS OWNER OF THE YEAR

CONNIE SPARKS
Wadeco Capital

Connie Sparks is the chief executive of Wadeco Capital, Round 1 Funding, and Wade Institute in Castaic. Her business and financing career spans over 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.

She is widely recognized as an award-winning and leading expert on business development, strategic planning, business modeling and financing. Sparks has earned respect from many financial institutions and others in the credit industry, giving her the name “Moneylady.” She was initially thrown into the world of financing from a conversation with a business owner who had taken one of her classes on business plan writing. The business owner, who happened to be a woman, expressed her frustration with trying to secure a loan to grow her business and asked Sparks for assistance.

Today, she is sought out by lending institutions that seek to partner with her company and to refer their un-bankable clients for her services. Because of her business model and ambition, she now works with 133 lenders nationwide. Building relationships with a diverse group of lenders has afforded her the opportunity to assist business owners with financing no matter their situation. Finally, understanding the importance of having access to financial resources for any startup, Sparks launched a crowdfunding platform to give startups a chance at seeing their dream realized.
Tharpe & Howell Congratulates the Nominees and Award Recipients of the SFVBJ 2018 Women’s Council

Stephanie Forman
Managing Partner/Complex Litigation

Christopher Maile
Employment Litigation/Insurance Professionals Errors & Omissions

David Binder
Employment/Workers’ Compensation Defense

Sherry Shavit
Employment/Class Action

Bob Freedman
Construction Litigation

Charles May
General Negligence/Premises

Paul Wayne
Premises/Product Liability

Tim Lake
Insurance Coverage/Bad Faith

Bruce Salley
Transportation/Subrogation

Established in 1977, Tharpe & Howell, LLP is an AV-Rated full service law firm, partnering with businesses to provide practical, innovative, and cost-effective civil litigation strategies and transactional solutions.

Contact: Stephanie Forman, Managing Partner

15250 Ventura Boulevard • Ninth Floor • Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
www.tharpe-howell.com • P: 818.205.9955 • F: 818.205.9944
EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

STEPHANIE FORMAN
Tharpe & Howell, LLP

Stephanie Forman is managing partner of Tharpe & Howell, the Valley area’s largest law firm, and oversees its daily business operations from the firm’s Sherman Oaks office.

Forman started at Tharpe & Howell as an associate and 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. She has extensive experience counseling companies on administrative and regulatory compliance issues, including environmental and diverse risk assessment matters.

Forman continues to implement new policies and strategies to lead Tharpe & Howell into the future and adapt to the ever-changing culture of the legal industry and meet and exceed client needs. She serves as a mentor to less experienced attorneys, and is a true success story of a woman achieving her goals in a male-dominated industry. Forman is also a member of the Defense Research Institute and the prestigious Claims and Litigation Management Alliance, which is comprised of insurance companies, corporations, corporate counsel, litigation and risk managers, claims professionals and attorneys who, through education and collaboration, promote and further the highest standards of litigation management in pursuit of client defense.

On top of this, Forman is active in several community organizations, and encourages the firm’s attorneys to be active as well, including in local chambers of commerce, human resource professional organizations, and the Valley Food Bank.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT LEADER OF THE YEAR

DONNA DEUTCHMAN
Homes 4 Families

Donna Deutchman is the president and chief executive of Homes 4 Families. 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. Through her years of compassionate service to the Los Angeles community, she has developed a rich expertise in fundraising, branding, marketing, advocacy, government affairs, and non-profit business model development.

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 in Northern Los Angeles communities including Burbank, Santa Clarita, Pacoima and Sylmar.

Deutchman truly embodies what it means to lead with both your head and your heart. She uses her extensive experience in research, model development, supportive services, but she also has her contractor’s license and serves as the general contractor for Homes 4 Families projects. Under her leadership, Homes 4 Families, formerly Habitat for Humanity of San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valleys, has built or repaired over 360 homes for low-income families. In this role, Deutchman also developed guidelines for veteran-specific disability home modifications to address the physical and invisible wounds of war common to combat veterans.
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 Margerrett 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 necessary and get to the people you want to attract, and you are in, keep your ears and eyes to the ground for chances to move up the company.”

She added that of all the challenges she had, being her parent’s first daughter was the most difficult, and whatever.

“THERE 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 beginning to open up to women, and I like being on the ground floor.”

Saying that she believes the managerial level of the company is very difficult for women to get to, she said she has been told her chances have been filled by a woman in computer keypunch, fundraising, politics and publishing, and has written a book entitled, “For Us, The Living.”

After her husband, the late civil rights activist Medgar Evers, was slain, she returned to school to prepare for work with “people, community, and sociology.”

#WHEREWOMENRISE

CSUN

CALIFORNIA
STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTH RIDGE
BUSINESS TEAM OF THE YEAR

TAMARA GURNEY, MARIANNE CEDERLIND, DIANE AUTEN, LINDA ROUSSEAU, JILL CLEMENTS
Mission Valley Bank

Tamara Gurney, chief executive; 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, make up the superb 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 from the ground up is a true success story.

It started in 2001, when this group of respected community bankers, along with many local area business people, came together to form the bank. This dedicated group opened the doors of Mission Valley Bank in July 2001 after raising slightly more than $6 million in initial capital. The bank’s first location was a humble start; a “triple-wide” trailer in the parking lot of today’s 10,000 square foot headquarters building in Sun Valley. The management team’s commitment to building a bank that was “more about the client and less about the bank” proved to be exactly what the area needed. Mission Valley Bank reached the break-even point after just 11 months of operation and was fully profitable in less than 30 months.

Mission Valley Bank is now in its 17th year of successful operation serving the financial needs of the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys and surrounding area business communities. It is also a preferred SBA Lender. With its corporate headquarters in Sun Valley and Business Banking Office in Santa Clarita, Mission Valley Bank serves clients throughout Southern California.

RISING STAR OF THE YEAR

PILAR VARGAS
Princess P Closet

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 and 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 4 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.

Vargas went from shipping 20 units a month to 3,000 units a week. At the ripe age of 29, she is on the move, growing and expanding. She recently launched PPJ Brand, which is a fashion clothing line and will soon open a second retail location.

In July of last year, she approached the Women’s Business Center program director to suggest she present a workshop for other women to learn social media for business. The workshop was presented at the LAPL Central Library in downtown Los Angeles and she offered the workshop for free. After presenting to a capacity crowd of 100, she now wants to take the idea nationally to other major cities. She feels that giving back is worthwhile. Not only does she present workshops, she continues to thrive and receive training for her business.
HONOREES

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
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 13 years of experience providing career coaching to jobseekers. She is recognized as a specialist in building technology teams within companies. She also has more than 40 years of charitable organization involvement.

Her philanthropic achievements include being a co-founder of a thriving Armed Forces fundraising event in partnership with the American Red Cross called Operation: Ride for the Red, a cycling event established in 2015 to raise funds for military and veterans. She has also (since 2015) been a board member of Ivy Academix, an entrepreneurial K-12 school.

Her many other volunteer work activities include serving (from 2005 to present) on the fundraising and event committee for the Ella Awards – a society of singers honoring top performers. She has also served every year since 2002 in part of the fundraising and event committee for Race to Erase MS. She has also been part of the fundraising and event committee for Athletes & Entertainers for Kids and the fundraising and event Committee for Children Uniting Nations to benefit foster and at-risk children. For nine years she was on the event committee for SLAM – alongside Shaquille O’Neal, Elton Brand and Mark Madsen to generate basketball camps at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
MARY AKPOVI
Martini, Iosue & Akpovi

Mary O. Akpovi is a highly regarded certified public accountant and business advisor and is well respected for her ability to handle complex financial and tax planning and compliance matters for individuals, businesses, estates and trusts. She is also well known for her expertise and experience not only in domestic matters but internationally as well. Akpovi and her partners launched their accounting firm in 1991. Today, Martini, Iosue & Akpovi has 46 employees with two offices and serves clients that span the globe.

Over the past several decades, Akpovi has been instrumental in the success of her clients’ businesses across a wide range of industries and in multiple countries. A case in point, Akpovi started working with a client when the business’ revenue was $10 million. She was involved in the company expansion domestically and internationally. In 2015, 25 years later, she was part of the team that structured and negotiated the sale of the company for over $1 billion.

The winner of the Lifetime Achievement award also is a firm believer in giving back. She was a board member of Exceptional Children Foundation, which strives to help those with disabilities, and more recently she was a board member of Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission, which caters to the homeless, recovering addicts and at-risk youths. Also, she was instrumental in establishing and running a vocational training center in Sierra Leone for three years. Currently, she supports an orphanage, another vocational training center, a medical center and other schools in Uganda. She also assists an elementary school and vocational training center in Kenya. And she takes regular trips to personally get involved with these programs.
NOMINEES

- Gladys Ayala, Chica Mere Inc.
- Paulina Balbuena Schiemoen, the Dorwin Cancer Cure, Inspired By Robin Balbuena
- Angelina Bonifacio & Team, VEDC
- Jamie Brotton Martino, Winningham, Becker & Co., LLP
- Denise Brown-White, Consortium Media + Public Relations
- Yvette Berke, About Consulting Inc. / Adopt-Ad Specialty
- Lindsey Carroll, Marketing Maven PR
- Rebecca Deluca, Keller Williams
- Linda Dalton, Safe Passage and Women Crowned In Glory
- Debbie Donson, Valley Village
- Lisa Elkan, Lisa PR
- Leslie Elkan, Leslie Elkan, Realtor
- Anna Eskandarian, New Horizons
- Karen L. Gobler, LightGobler
- Ruth Garcia-Corales, VEDC
- Linda Grauso, The Golden State Company / SeShe
- Tiffany Grummer, Valencia Country Club
- Summer Helene, California Pictures of Paramount Pictures
- Yoni Herschlag, M&P Logistics Inc
- Theresa Hill, Keller Williams Realty
- Jinho Kim-Park, WorldWide Productions
- Guadalupe Loera, Women’s Collaborative Mentoring Program
- Debbie Luckey, Branding and More
- Marilyn Laffoon, Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital Foundation
- Marie V. Lemelle, Platinum Star Public Relations
- Olympia LePoint, DL Consulting Corporation
- Cheyenne Martin, The Cheyenne Martin Foundation
- Precious Mayes, Pacifica Hospital of the Valley
- Cyril McKinley, Therapeutic Living Centers of the Blind
- Laura McHale, NorthStar Mining Company
- Colette Merz, Ambrose Valley Hospital
- Laurel Mintz, Elevate My Brand
- Karen Morgan-Prager, Blackline
- Lisa Olson, Pride & Sheffey
- Tonia Offray, Women Wealth Warriors
- Xiomara Pena, Small Business Majority
- Laura Rhoden, The Missing Peace
- Toni Rici, Elite Dance and Performing Arts Center
- Genna Rosenberg, GennComm
- Jennifer Saxton, Tot Squad
- Penny Sparks, Slate Ltd
- Trish Steed, Safe Passage & Women Crowned In Glory
- Michele Stein, NAI Capital
- Judy Turner, LightGobler
- Jane Trigg, Jek Services, Inc.
- Lyna Urbain, Consortium Media + Public Relations
- Elvia Valenzuela, Pansionario Anderson Communications
- Bianca Valenzuela, Valenzuela Enterprises, Inc.
- Shana Warren, The Boys & Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley
- Penney Wet, C.R.H., Sun the Way Consulting
- Jamie Williams Woody, Anna’s Beauty College
- Kimberly Wyerd, Northeast Valley Health Corporation
- Lise Young, The Rescue Train
- Ani Zadorian, JLK Rosenberger

Providing strategies to help protect what our clients work so hard to build.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

San Fernando Valley Business Journal
CFO/HR Professionals of the Year Awards

The San Fernando Valley Business Journal is proud to announce the CFO/HR Professionals of the Year Awards. This event honors the finance and human resources professionals in the Greater Northern Los Angeles region, including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi & Antelope Valleys and Santa Clarita.

Nomination Deadline
Monday, May 10

Awards Reception
Wednesday, June 13
11:30am-1:30pm
Hilton Woodland Hills

To nominate or purchase tickets, please visit www.sfvbj.com/bizevents.

Presenting Sponsors

LSUN | CalCPA | CalCPA | The D1 Group | CalCPA
A luncheon to announce the winners of the 2018 Women’s Council awards was held April 12 at the Warner Center Marriott Hotel in Woodland Hills. The event feted nearly 70 Valley-area nominees whose accomplishments made them stand out. From that group, winners were named in eight categories. Helping to announce the winners and give awards were Marianne Cederlind of Mission Valley Bank; Deborah Cours of the David Nazarian College of Business and Economics at California State University, Northridge; and Luanna Lindsey of Wells Fargo Bank, all representatives of the presenting sponsors.

1. Dawn Ellerbe, Jesse Revlin, Karen Sabourin, Audrey Wheatly, Sherry Sidick, Deborah Cours and Deborah Heisley, all of California State University, Northridge.
2. Donna Deutchman (right), winner of the Not-for-Profit Leader award, with presenter Marianne Cederlind of Mission Valley Bank.
3. Pilar Vargas, winner of the Rising Star award, with her mother.
4. The Business Team of the Year award went to the female-centric leaders of Mission Valley Bank. Left to right, they are Marianne Cederlind, Jill Clements, Diane Auten and Linda Rousseau. Not pictured is Tamara Gurney.
5. Mary Akpovi stands as she is announced as the winner of the Lifetime Achievement award.
6. Stephanie Forman, center, is presented with her Executive of the Year award from presenters Luanna Lindsey of Wells Fargo and Charles Crumpley of the Business Journal.
7. Danone Simpson speaks after she was announced as the winner of the CEO of the Year award.
8. Connie Sparks walks to the podium after she was announced as Business Owner of the Year award winner.
9. Diane Krehbiel, winner in the Volunteer of the Year category, with her award plaque.