Honoring Business Excellence Among Veteran Entrepreneurs
Not only does San Diego have the largest concentration of military on the West Coast, we also have the highest concentration of veterans in our workforce. About 7 percent of the workforce in San Diego County is former military members, almost double the national average. According to the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., San Diego is the fifth-largest market in the country in terms of veteran-owned businesses.

So we are proud to recognize the excellence among us in the business community from our veterans.

The Business Journal recently partnered with The Rosie Network for the second annual Veteran & Military Entrepreneur Conference and Awards at The Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter. The Rosie Network is a local nonprofit incubator dedicated to helping veterans and spouses of military personnel start and grow their own companies.

The Rosie Network hosted a daytime conference that included panel discussions, speakers and breakout sessions covering financing, branding, human resources, legal matters, and more. The SDBJ hosted an awards dinner where we recognized 63 award finalists and nine winners in categories ranging from veteran-owned businesses to veteran business executives in the private sector, military spouses who own businesses and advocates for veteran entrepreneurship.

In addition to The Rosie Network, we want to thank the sponsors who made the awards possible: Cox Business and Wells Fargo.

We hope you enjoy reading about the best of our veteran and military entrepreneurial community.

Barbara Chodos
President & Publisher

James Comstock
Principal, Kaqun Investors

Comstock is a veteran of the insurance and investment field and now operates Kaqun Investors, which distributes health products. He also is president of Intiva Health.

Comstock has held sales and management positions involving pensions, equities, life insurance annuities and group insurance. He was a partner in a brokerage organization and managed his own full-service insurance operation.

He served 38 years in the Army and retired as a Major General in 2006.

He is a member of the Scottish Rite, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The Badge of Honor Memorial Foundation and other veteran-associated groups.

Jenna Harris
Owner, J.E. Harris Consulting

Harris is owner of a consulting firm dedicated to helping nonprofits maximize their revenue streams. She also is owner of Mindful Mill, a sustainable home décor company.

Harris works as Director of Outreach for San Diego Councilmember Chris Cate. Prior to that she was Manager of Events and Operations for the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. Harris is a Point Loma Nazarene University grad. She participated in the LEAD San Diego Impact program in 2017 and serves on the board of The Rosie Network. She also volunteers her time with local dog rescues, Toys for Tots, and the San Marcos Unified Oversight Committee.

Michael Malone
Vistage Chair

Malone is a CPA, former CEO and has been an executive coach for Vistage since 2005 when he hasn’t been deployed. He was CEO of Gryphon Software Corp. and COO of Stellcom Technologies. He also managed the transition and integration of a significant acquisition by a public company.

Malone was founding president of the San Diego Software Industry Council and has been advising venture capitalists and angel investors in San Diego since 1999. Malone also has a law degree.

He spent more than 41 years in the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve, retiring in 2011 as a Colonel.
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Veterans and Military Entrepreneur Awards Finalists

Andrew Adrian
LendIt

Gregg Anderson
41 Orange, LLC

Charles (Chuck) Atkinson
Veterans Association of North County

Bryan Bergjans
Caliber Home Loans

Billicek Boughton
San Diego Women Veterans Network

Reggie Branch
Ajinomoto Althea

Joseph Bulger III
Boarhag LLC

Alex Cameron
Signature Social Marketing

Knight Campbell
Cairn Leadership Strategies LLC

Carolyn Carpenter
5 Talent Entertainment

Shani Cooper
Root and Soul

Jennifer Crawford
Cubic Corporation

Kalani Creutzburg
Cannies & Cannines

Warsama Daoud
Alyhea

Jeff (J.D.) Davids
SmartMoney Veterans

Jon Dien
AUSGAR Technologies, Inc.

Sean Durkin
Pacific Pizza

George Eiskamp
GroundMetrics

Char Ekoniak
Coastal Rock Realty

John Enstrom
Small Business Administration

San Diego District Office

John Farnam
Kura Oncology

Roger Flygare
Roger G. Flygare & Associates, Inc. & Alliance Reporting, Inc.

Dan Frank
Three Wire Systems, LLC

Daniel Garcia
Garcia Hanson Innovations, Inc.

Brent Gleeson
TakingPoint Leadership

Amber Gough
Talent Fusion Point, LLC

Bob Grande
Quality Controlled Manufacturing, Inc.

Sean Haggerty
Protector Brewery

Lewis Heuermann
Midway Analytics

Chris Hoffmann
Veteran Empowerment Transition Training & Coaching

David Inmon
Redhorse Corporation

Leonard Kaine
Captain USN-retired

Golden Rule Society

Charity (501-c 3)

Paul Kitchin
Atlas Executive Consulting, LLC

Moshe Krafchow
TreeCulture

Annie Lambert
Lambert Professional Group

Ken Lee
Schweitzer Law Group

Alan Lurchbaker
Naval Coating, Inc.

Hernán Luis y Prado
VetPowered, LLC

Hernán Luis y Prado
Workshops for Warriors

Nico Marcologo
Buddy Bowl, Inc.

Richard Marks
RDM Management

Allen Maxwell
Omnis2Max Inc.

Rochelle McLean
Babies in Bloom Birth Center & Boutique

Jessica Merritt
The Special Liberty Project Inc

Nicole Miller
Mission Hills Family Dental

Siuhe Montoya
DroneQuote

Joe Musselman
The Honor Foundation

Stephen Norton
Dickinson Farm

Brent Olsd
Fidelity Security Solutions, LLC.

Brian Raduenz
AEVEX Aerospace/ Merlin Global Services

April Rieger
Girls in Tech

Mia Roseberry
Wounded Warrior Homes

Ben Ryan
Tourmaline Properties

Holly Shaffner
Veteran Affairs/Admission

SDSU

Sean Southard
Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3)

Phillip Stockhouse
Military Defender

David Strobel
Space Micro Inc.

Tony Teravainen
Support The Enlisted Project (STEP)

Mary Trevik
Tastefully Yours

Clay Treska
Family Proud

Scott Tucker
U.S. VetLife

Elizabeth Valenzuela Banker
Shore Solutions

Terry Wagner
Motivated Military Movers

Perry Yee
Active Valor Foundation

Congratulations to
Tony Teravainen
Named Best Executive in the Nonprofit Category

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Mastering Social Media Opened Doors for Military Spouse

**By JESSICA KING**

With a bachelor’s degree in biology rather than business, Alex Cameron was not the typical candidate to launch a marketing company, but that’s just what she did. The founder and chief executive officer of Signature Social Marketing received the San Diego Business Journal’s Best Company Owned by a Military Spouse award for 2018.

According to her company’s website, Cameron founded Signature Social Marketing based on three core values: knowledge, direction and accountability. Prior to launching the company in October 2013, Cameron worked in the hospitality industry, where she discovered a passion for digital marketing and social media.

“I enjoyed teaching my colleagues, co-workers and friends about the power of social media in growing their business,” Cameron wrote on her website. “I immersed myself in the agency world in order to grow my digital marketing knowledge and skill set.”

Cameron worked for some top brands before branching out on her own, including Marriott and Lexus.

Though Signature Social Marketing’s clientele ranges from small businesses to national franchises — offering everything from corporate training to private coaching — the company specializes in social media marketing solutions for businesses averaging $500,000 in annual revenues.

“Very strong and knowledgeable,” Cameron said. Since the spring of 2016, Cameron has also worked as an adjunct professor at San Diego State University, teaching a five-week Social Media Strategies for Business course.

**Alex Cameron**

Bob Hoffman/Bob Hoffman Video

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Executive Powers Her Way Up the Company Ranks

**By JESSICA KING**

Three decades after joining the Cubic Corp., as an electronic technician, Army veteran Jennifer Crawford is receiving praise for her executive leadership. Today, Crawford serves as depot administrator for Abraxas-Cubic Global Defense in the greater San Diego area. But from 1988 to 1997, Crawford’s job was to perform test and troubleshooting services on various receiver products for the giant company she now helps lead.

The San Diego Business Journal recently honored Crawford with the publication’s 2018 Veteran and Military Entrepreneur Award in the Best Executive Public Company category. The publicly traded Cubic Corp., which was started in San Diego in 1951, employs upwards of 8,000 people across three major company divisions. In addition to the Cubic Global Defense arm that Crawford works with, the company also includes Cubic Transportation Systems and Cubic Mission Solutions.

Crawford, a lifelong learner, began her job related-training in 1983, when she earned a certificate in electrical, electronics and communications engineering at the U.S. Army Signal School in Augusta, Georgia. She went on to complete her general education at Arizona Western College, while she continued to serve in the Army. In 1993, she graduated from San Diego State University of California, San Diego.

**Jennifer Crawford**

Bob Hoffman/Bob Hoffman Video

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Former Navy Quartermaster Still Filling Needs for Military

**By JESSICA KING**

With the motto like, “Ensuring our heroes are always mission ready,” Shore Solutions is equipping servicemen and women with everything they need from kitchen goods and office supplies to heavy equipment rentals and tactical gear.

At the helm of the South Bay-based company is Chief Executive Officer and President Elizabeth Valenzuela Banker. Under her leadership for nearly three years, the company has maintained an average annual growth rate of 25 percent. For her efforts, Banker was chosen as the Best Entrepreneur in the small company category for the San Diego Business Journal’s 2018 Veteran and Military Entrepreneur Awards.

Banker’s professional ties to the defense sector began in 2005, when she embarked on a four-year service journey with the U.S. Navy. The former Quartermaster, 2nd Class, jumped directly from the Navy into the defense contractor market, holding down various roles within Veteran Logistics Inc., Shore Solutions and the Coronado Defense Co. until January 2016, when she began her current job.

Along the way, Banker studied business administration and graduated from Alliant International University in 2014. Shore Solutions was founded in 2011 as a state-certified economical ly-disadvantaged, woman-owned, minority-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned small business. From its 4,000-square-foot warehouse in Chula Vista, the company fills orders of varying sizes with just over a dozen employees. 

**Elizabeth Valenzuela Banker**

Bob Hoffman/Bob Hoffman Video

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Marine Corps Veteran Shares Wealth of Financial Knowledge

**By JESSICA KING**

With more than two decades of experience helping entrepreneurs raise money, scale rapidly and complete successful exits, Marine Corps veteran Jeff “JD” Davids knows a thing or two about building a powerful team. At SmartMoney Startups and SmartMoney Veterans, Davids works alongside fellow Marine Corps veterans, as well as Air Force and Army veterans, to inform transitioning service members, veterans and any military-affiliated spouses.

SmartMoney Veterans offers an eight-week certificate program through the University of California, San Diego. The course is called Startup Battlefield 101. It is delivered one evening per week via a live webinar and is designed to help would-be entrepreneurs get started with funding and planning and other needs. SmartMoney also offers a related but separate educational program in the form of an apprenticeship program, serving interested service members, veterans and spouses.

For his efforts, Davids received the San Diego Business Journal’s 2018 Veteran and Military Award for Best Advocate for Military Entrepreneurs.

According to his website, Davids has served on management teams of eight venture-capital backed startups, three of which completed successful IPOs and three were acquired by large corporations. The site also states that Davids has closed more than $1 billion in financial transactions, including raising money for angel investors, venture capital firms, strategic corporate investors and completing IPOs and merger and acquisitions from the buy side and the sell side.

**Jeff Davids**

Bob Hoffman/Bob Hoffman Video

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Marine Blazes Business Trail of Impressive Success

By JESSICA KING

Retired Marine Corps Col. David Inmon found a way to leverage his extensive military knowledge while honoring his roots when he founded Redhorse Corp.

The chief executive officer of San Diego-based Redhorse was selected as the Best Entrepreneur by the San Diego Business Journal for the 2018 Veteran and Military Entrepreneur Awards in the large company category.

The Oklahoma-born member of the Choctaw Nation founded Redhorse Corp. in 2008, the same year he left active duty. At first, the company took commercial work to make ends meet, then delved deeper into the government sector as the economy rebounded.

Today, Redhorse offers program management, systems engineering, data analytics and analysis services in the areas of energy, environment, intelligence, mission support and technology. In the past, Inmon likened his company to a “tiny version” of large San Diego defense contractor SAIC.

Redhorse participates in the U.S. Small Business Administration’s 8(a) program due to Inmon’s Native American background, and it is a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business. Inmon was awarded the Bronze Star medal for his service in Iraq. He retired at the rank of Colonel in 2013 after 32 years of active and reserve service in the Marine Corps.

Veteran Knows What Works For Transitioning Troops

By JESSICA KING

Once a caregiver, always a caregiver. That could very well sum up Hernan Luis y Prado’s transition from military to civilian life.

The Navy Achievement Medal and Combat Action Ribbon recipient worked as a hospital corpsman before choosing a civilian life of service, helping veterans find good-paying jobs.

Luis y Prado is founder and chief executive officer of Workshops for Warriors and VetPowered LLC.

Workshops for Warriors is a state-licensed, board-governed nonprofit school that provides quality job training and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs for transitioning service members and veterans. About 40 to 60 students are served per semester, according to the nonprofit. VetPowered LLC is a manufacturing business started to support Workshops for Warriors.

Luis y Prado, a naval officer who served combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, said he felt compelled to start Workshops for Warriors after seeing so many of his peers struggling.

“I saw many of my fellow service members feeling lost with no path to a successful civilian life,” Luis y Prado said. “I needed to change that.”

Luis y Prado served in the U.S. Navy from 1996 to 2012. Along the way, in March 2008, he started Workshops for Warriors and a year later, VetPowered LLC.

The San Diego Business Journal took note of Luis y Prado’s professional accomplishments, selecting him for a 2018 Veteran and Military Award in the Best Entrepreneur micro-company category.

Luis y Prado studied European culture and philosophy at the American University of Paris in France prior to joining the Navy.
CEO Built Up Knowledge, Now Is Building Up Cos.

By JESSICA KING

Retired Air Force Officer Brian Raduenz knows the ins and outs of military business so well that he grew not one but two careers out of it.

Raduenz served for 20 years before joining the private sector in 2008, as a senior technical consultant for Sierra Nevada Corp., a Nevada-based company that primarily works in the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance arena. The same year, he also became senior vice president of program and business development for fellow defense contractor, Merlin Global Services out of Solana Beach.

Eventually, Raduenz rose to be chief executive officer at Merlin, where he remains today — 10 years after he first joined it. In the past decade, Merlin’s revenues have grown 48 percent to $41.9 million in 2017.

Earlier this year, Raduenz also took on the role of CEO of Merlin spin-off, AEVEX Aerospace, a company built off the joining of two other companies — CSG Solutions of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Special Operations Solutions of Tysons Corner, Virginia. The new company is poised to offer a full-spectrum of airborne intelligence solutions. For his efforts, Raduenz was honored in the Best Executive Private Company category in the San Diego Business Journal’s 2018 Veteran and Military Awards.

Raduenz studied electrical engineering at the United States Air Force Academy, and later, communications and radar digital signal processing at the Air Force Institute of Technology. He rounded out his education at the prestigious Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, earning a master’s of science degree in military science and operational studies.

Exec Helps Military Families in Financial Crisis

By JESSICA KING

The recipient of the San Diego Business Journal’s 2018 Veteran and Military Award in the Best Executive nonprofit category is no stranger to high-stakes projects.

Honoree Tony Teravainen is the chief executive officer and co-founder of Support The Enlisted Project, also known as STEP.

Prior to joining the private sector, Teravainen worked in submarine nuclear plant operation and repair as a member of the U.S. Navy. Though STEP’s work is nowhere near nuclear, it is just as delicate — STEP has the important job of giving southern California junior military and recent veteran families financial grants in times of crisis, and working with them to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Teravainen co-founded STEP in 2014. In between being in the Navy and starting STEP, Teravainen held a string of jobs, including working as a chief maintenance engineer for Sony Electronics, serving as president of a specialty part and hardware supply company for antique automobiles and being a lead associate for Booz Allen Hamilton, providing C-level clients with business and organizational analysis, problem solving and counsel.

In addition to his commitments with STEP, Teravainen volunteers as a commissioner on the city of San Diego’s Veteran & Military Subcommittee Steering Group and sits on the Defense, Veterans and Military Subcommittee of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Startup Steers Financial Transition to Civilian Life

By JESSICA KING

Startup US VetLife aims to lessen that problem by providing life insurance and wealth management services to transitioning service men and women.

At its helm is Scott Tucker.

Tucker was recently selected for the San Diego Business Journal’s 2018 Veteran and Military Award in the Best Entrepreneur Startup category.

Tucker founded US VetLife in January. Headquartered in Virginia, the company is admittedly young, with fewer than a dozen employees but passionate about its mission.

“The top priority for most service members in transition is to be financially secure,” Tucker said. “However, most of the financial planning done for post-military life is impulsive. Think about it, transitioning out of the military means that a person’s career is nowhere near nuclear, it is just as delicate — STEP has the important job of giving southern California junior military and recent veteran families financial grants in times of crisis, and working with them to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Most jump at the first job they can get and find a paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle, he said, adding that “most of all, they don’t understand their worth as a veteran in America.”

Tucker via US VetLife aims to end that trend by providing one-on-one consulting and coaching, online webinar/training programs, onsite workshops and speaking engagements.

In addition to running US VetLife, Tucker is director of innovation for San Diego-based US VetWealth and formerly

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In addition to running US VetLife, Tucker is director of innovation for San Diego-based US VetWealth and formerly

an investment advisor with Be Financially Fit, also San Diego-based.

He served as an officer in the U.S. Army from 2002 to 2012, following his graduation from U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where the Ohio-native studied language.