Welcome to the San Fernando Valley Business Journal’s CFO and HR Professionals of the Year Awards supplement in which we honor outstanding work from some of our most critical executives.

More and more, our financial officers and human resource professionals are called on to meet today’s challenges – and I’m not just referring to the pandemic, which has added a layer of troubles on us. But they also must navigate more and more rules and regulations. Our organizations depend – more than ever – on the astute work of these important executives.

We held a virtual ceremony on Oct. 15 and gave awards to six standout CFOs and HR professionals. Their profiles are on the following pages. Joining me in announcing recipients were our presenting sponsors, Chandra Subramaniam, the dean of the David Nazarian College of Business and Economics at California State University, Northridge, and Danone Simpson, the founder and chief executive of Montage Insurance Solution. Thanks to their support, the awards are possible.

Sincerely,

Charles Crumpley
Editor and Publisher
Together We’re Stronger

“It is an honor to be selected by SFVJ, as an HR professional. And, it is a privilege to be part of the Montage family, under the leadership of Danone Simpson.”

-- Janelle Strohmeyer

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

We are proud of our winning team and our amazing HR Director Janelle Strohmeyer’s win - HR in the Emerging Private Company Category Award.

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CFO OF THE YEAR: LARGE PUBLIC COMPANY

STEVEN BINDER
MannKind

Steven Binder is the chief financial officer of MannKind Corp., where he has responsibilities for leading MannKind’s finance, accounting, and investor relations functions on a global basis. He has over 25 years of experience in the health care industry. He most recently spent four years at Stryker Corp., a leading global medical technology company where he served as vice president and CFO for Stryker’s International Group, based in Singapore.

Prior to Stryker, Binder served in a series of senior leadership roles at Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. Prior to that, Binder served in three senior leadership roles at Oncology Therapeutics Network, a U.S. based independent subsidiary of BMS.

Binder joined MannKind as CFO three years ago when the company was on the brink of bankruptcy and the stock price had plummeted below $1 with over $200 million in debt due in 24 to 36 months. Binder over the past three years has worked to help recapitalize the company and restructure the debt. Today, MannKind is thriving with a market cap of almost $400 million and revenue growing 50 percent-plus a year. The company is in its best cash position in the past four years. He has moved the finance team from its offices in Connecticut to here in California and has successfully rebuilt the team. Largely because of Binder’s efforts, MannKind and its lead asset are helping to transform the care of diabetes, and the company has a progressing pipeline with the necessary funding to run it.

CFO OF THE YEAR: EMERGING PUBLIC COMPANY

BILL LINCOLN
ATK Audio Tek

Bill Lincoln has extensive experience in the film and television production business, having served as chief operating officer and chief financial officer for RTL Group, Pearson Television NA and ACI Inc. His prior experience was in television broadcasting where he was CFO for the Fox Television Station Group and director of planning and administration for the CBS owned and operated station, WBBM-TV, Chicago.

He has been with ATK AudioTek since 2007, where he serves as the CFO for the global service company that integrates and optimizes technology for a wide array of clients. With an engineering team and R&D resources larger than many manufacturers and with executive leadership, including Lincoln, deeply vested in client satisfaction, ATK is as powerful and personal as its clients need them to be.

Lincoln has always been top notch in his role as CFO at ATK, but the last four months have thrown him some of the biggest challenges of his career. The company’s core business is based on live event production. Clients include professional sporting events, concerts, festivals, major award shows, and other TV/film production – an industry that has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lincoln’s entire focus has been to swiftly develop creative strategies to keep the company financially sound until its clients return to normal operations – whatever that will mean. He has been working diligently to reduce costs, capitalize on remaining revenue streams, and innovate new solutions that ATK can offer. He has provided ATK with remarkable and efficient fiscal leadership.
With the hardships and difficulties brought on by COVID-19 to our local business community, the David Nazarian College of Business & Economics is here to provide help and support through free consulting services.*

*Performed by Nazarian College students with oversight by an experienced team of Nazarian College faculty.

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Areas of consulting include:
- Business
- Marketing
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CFO OF THE YEAR: LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY

HOWARD KAMINSKY
Vallarta Supermarkets

Howard Kaminsky has played a significant role in growing Vallarta Supermarkets and expanding the company into new regions and markets, all while modernizing the company’s internal technology and brand appearance. In addition, Kaminsky has led Vallarta Supermarkets to become a purpose-driven company, supporting low-income immigrant communities by providing nutritious food and services in under-served food deserts. Kaminsky has excelled not only as a chief financial officer for two large companies, but as a leader in the retail industry with the ability to transform small, family owned companies into large, successful regional employers.

When Kaminsky joined Vallarta Supermarkets as CFO in 2014, the company’s technology consisted of paper records and outdated tracking and POS systems. Kaminsky quickly transformed the company’s accounting systems and its IT and human resource departments, investing in technology and bringing the company up to date. This allowed Vallarta to cut costs, streamline services, better track customer needs, and more efficiently grow its business.

During the last six years as CFO at Vallarta Supermarkets, Kaminsky has overseen the opening of eight new stores and has personally diversified the company’s financial portfolio. He began purchasing properties for future Vallarta locations, and began pursuing New Market Tax Credits. The tax credits allow Vallarta to open new supermarkets in low-income communities where food deserts are pervasive. In the last six years under Kaminsky’s leadership, Vallarta has opened five locations in food deserts where no other supermarkets are found, providing life changing access to nutritious food and necessary goods for low-income community members.

CFO OF THE YEAR: NONPROFIT

LAYNE THRASHER
Prager University Foundation

As the first-ever chief financial officer for Prager University Foundation, Layne Thrasher oversaw a 150 percent growth in fundraising in two years from the time he started, while restructuring the team and staffing strategies, implementing key performance indicators and utilizing best practices in board reporting and financial planning. He scaled up the organization in the accounting and finance, audit and tax, insurance and treasury functions while also serving on the executive team and contributing to strategy and positioning.

Prager University Foundation is an educational nonprofit focusing on digital media as its main distribution platform. Thrasher comes to the organization with 20 years of experience in finance, human resource and strategy roles with a strong focus on scaling firms as they level up. His responsibilities include overseeing the accounting and finance functions of the organization, including ensuring GAAP compliance with annual audit and tax needs, banking and treasury and insurance functions, and managing the human resources and facilities realms as PragerU continues to grow.

Thrasher came to the high-growth organization as it was scaling and looking for its first full-time, in-house CFO. In his first year, he restructured the existing team and staffing strategies, implemented key performance indicators and utilized best-practices from his private-sector experience to optimize enhanced board reporting, financial planning and analysis and budgeting as the company experienced a 70 percent growth in donations and revenues.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Thrasher has taken a hands-on approach to help guide the team through the pandemic, while fighting off furloughs and keeping most of the company employed at full pay while personally researching solutions to keep the team safer when back in office.
Val*Pac, The San Fernando Valley Business Political Action Committee is proud to unanimously endorse the re-election of our outstanding Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey.

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CFO RISING STAR
ERIC CHEN
Meissner Filtration Products

Eric Chen was a long-time banker who only made the transition to chief financial officer of Meissner Filtration Products in 2020. In less than a year – a remarkably short period of time – he has already started to manage the implementation of a new enterprise resource planning system, managed Meissner’s international expansion, and created a better, more efficient banking structure for the company – among other impactful tasks to benefit the company and its customers.

Meissner develops and manufactures filters and housings, integrity test instruments, and single-use bioccontainers and fluid path assemblies. The company serves the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, microelectronics, ultrapure chemicals, food and beverage and allied industries. As a critical piece of the health infrastructure, Meissner is classified as an essential business and has remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Meissner’s operation, logistics, quality assurance, and customer service has continued without disruption.

In fact, the company is growing very fast and to take on a complex company as his first stint as CFO – during a pandemic no less – has been a notable and complex task. He works tirelessly through weekends and has made a commitment to make the company a more efficient and stronger entity.

HR EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR
JANELLE STROHMeyer
Montage Insurance

Janelle Strohmeyer is a human resources executive with 25 years of experience. Her passion is providing HR solutions for her clients by helping them build their HR infrastructure through people, compliance and technology. She also enjoys consulting with early stage ventures and nonprofit organizations. Prior to joining Montage Insurance Solutions, Strohmeyer held several corporate HR leadership positions in retail, transportation, nonprofit and professional services organizations.

She has a reputation for building engaged, dedicated, hard-working and loyal teams that get things done. With a proven, transparent, ability to plan and execute both strategic and tactical priorities, she produces consistent results in a fast-paced, dynamic workplace. She combines high energy and a strong sense of urgency with excellent interpersonal and team-building skills. Driving success is a constant focus with a high priority on customer service and satisfaction, internally and externally.

Strohmeyer also brings to Montage a unique blend of HR experience, including work for a large transportation system where she administered direction for $450 million of overall budget with approximately 700 employees; a nonprofit organization where she effectively oversaw multi-level sensitive HR administrative procedures for 600 employees; and a large nationwide retail company where she actively contributed to $4 million in operational cost savings.

Strohmeyer holds an MBA degree from Trident University in Southern California. She also has an MBA and a Bachelor of Science in both Human Resources and Small Business Management, with honors from California Polytechnic University. She is an active member of many prominent HR organizations including the Society for Human Resource Management both on the national and local level.
Across the country, and in the San Fernando Valley, the annual Book of Lists is an invaluable business development and intelligence gathering tool that is referred to by many CEOs, business owners and top decision-makers throughout the year. Published once a year in December, this business tool is coveted by subscribers and the larger business community. It lists and ranks the top companies in the greater Northern Los Angeles region including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi and Antelope Valleys, and Santa Clarita like no other resource according to criteria such as revenues, percentage growth, assets under management, number of employees etc. The 2021 edition (a compilation of weekly 2020 lists) is right around the corner.

Why the Book of Lists should be a part of your 2020/2021 marketing strategy:

**Maximize your exposure:** CEOs, business owners and other key decision-makers with tremendous purchasing power refer to the Book of Lists year 13.2 times a year.*

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*2014 Readex Subscriber Study.