The San Fernando Valley Business Journal is proud to present our Women’s Council Awards. At this special annual presentation, top businesswomen in the Valley area will be honored for their achievements. The event is filled with inspiration and recognition as we honor women who have made a difference throughout the San Fernando, Conejo, Santa Clarita, Simi and Antelope Valley area. Award categories include CEO of the Year, Executive of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Rising Star, Not-For-Profit Leader of the Year, Business Owner of the Year, and our annual Lifetime Achievement Award. The following pages contain background information about this year’s remarkable nominees. If you’d like to “attend” the virtual event on Apr. 28, please visit the SFVBJ website and click on “Events.”

LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT
Wednesday, April 28 | 2:00PM
Register at sfvbj.com/bizevents
2021 NOMINEES

BONNIE ABEL
Nothing Bundt Cakes

Bonnie Abel is a human resources professional who owns, operates and manages a Nothing Bundt Cake bakery. Bonnie and Jeff Abel bought their West Hills store in January of 2015. Prior to buying the bakery, Bonnie worked as an HR Specialist for 24 years, with the last 14 years at Amgen. Abel and her team at the bakery were awarded the Small Business Award from the United Chambers of the San Fernando Valley. In 2020 Bonnie and Jeff purchased their second Nothing Bundt Cake bakery in Glendale. Abel said that the best part about this business is being able to help others celebrate their special moments: birthdays, weddings, babies, retirements, graduations — all of the occasions to celebrate life. Community involvement is also important to Abel. She supports many organizations including local schools, churches, temples and synagogues, various Kiwanas Clubs and Rotary Clubs, and many nonprofit organizations.

LORRAINE ALDERETTE
BNV Construction & Specialties Inc.

Growing up in the San Gabriel Valley, Lorraine Alderette had never been introduced to “charities” until she began working for a high-end residential builder over 20 years ago. She was hired as a personal assistant and within a few years became a purchasing agent then director of purchasing where she created budgets and negotiated million-dollar contracts to build housing developments in Huntington Beach, Santa Clarita and Simi Valley. The president of the developer she worked for joined the board of a homeless non-profit and asked her to manage the renovation of an apartment building and historical mansion in Pasadena to be used for homeless families. She threw herself into the project which was a success — and she has been performing similar work ever since. Throughout the last 20 years, Alderette has renovated shelters, safehouses for abused women and children, and housing for foster kids. She also serves as president of the Studio City Chamber of Commerce and has been a board member of the United Chambers of Commerce; ProVisors; Bruin Professionals – San Fernando Valley, Downtown Los Angeles, and Orange County Chapters, Women 2 Women, and SCORE LA.

DENISE BEAN-WHITE
Consortium Media

Denise Bean-White is the CEO and culturalist of brand development firm Consortium Media (CM). Celebrating 30 years in business, the secret to the company’s success is her forward-thinking brand strategy, rooted in her unparalleled passion for ancient cultures. As the company founder and lead, her cultural brand work has successfully helped local, national, regional and international brands by developing innovative and compassionate marketing strategies that resonate with all generations. The corporate philosophy of CM is to do well in the world by doing good works, and Bean-White’s passion to spark change inspired her to develop a deepened focus in social change and transformative behavior shift work in children’s issues. Developed by Bean-White and rooted in compassionate logic, the CM+Thought Shift process was and is CM’s secret ingredient to redefine and evolve messaging for a range of industries including Child Welfare, Social Services, Food Insecurity, Corporate Image, and more.

ALLISON BLACKMON, CPA
gish SEIDEN LLP

Since starting with gish SEIDEN in 2008, Allison Blackmon has focused on accounting and tax services for small to mid-sized businesses, state nexus and state income tax filing requirements, individual income taxes, and tax planning for individuals and businesses. She has extensive knowledge of business tax and takes pride in staying well-informed in order to assist her clients and be their trusted advisor. As a manager, she is also in charge of gish SEIDEN’s mentoring program. She embelishes her role as a mentor and helps the younger staff grow to become well rounded assets of the firm. Throughout her illustrious career, she has been able to serve the various needs of her diverse clientele. Allison has had the pleasure of working with clients in a variety of industries including but not limited to real estate, manufacturing, and professional services.

ADRIANNA CRUZ-OCAMPO
U-Frame-It Gallery

Adrianna Cruz-Ocampo was born in Cali, Colombia and immigrated with her family to the United States in 1971. They settled in Los Angeles, where Cruz-Ocampo fell in love with the art of framing. Her passion for her community was supported through her involvement in a collective effort to visit and care for elderly people living in convalescent homes throughout the Valley. She acquired the entrepreneurial bug while still in high school when she began to work for a small frame shop which ultimately became U-Frame-It Gallery. She is an active member of the Set Decorators Society of America, where she serves on the Board of Directors. She also serves as president of the Studio City Chamber of Commerce, a board member of the United Chambers of Commerce, San Fernando and Region, and a member of the Encino, Greater San Fernando Valley, and West Valley-Warner Center Chambers of Commerce.

AMANDA DELZER
PaymentCloud

Amanda Delzer has been with PaymentCloud for about two years and as the company’s director of finance, has transformed the accounting, administration, and human resources divisions of the business. She has pushed leadership to offer employees 401K benefits, retirement planning, gym subsidies, correct PTO and a better tracking system for vacation time. It has been a complete HR overhaul and has made employees feel more supported. She had to overcome a predecessor that left the position in a tough spot, spending nearly the first four months performing an audit and fixing all of the inconsistencies in the books. But because of that, PaymentCloud has been able to offer more perks to their employees such as 401K benefits, retirement planning, gym subsidies, correct PTO and a better tracking system for vacation time. Each and every employee has benefited from her being in charge of the company’s bottom line.

JILL EASTMAN
Academy for Salon Professionals

Jill Eastman is the owner and founder of Academy for Salon Professionals in Northridge. Not only has she been helping her students achieve their Cosmetology and Esthetician licenses since 2015, she has also been helping them make their dreams come true. Even with the perils that COVID-19 has brought, she has still managed to create a safe and productive learning environment for her students and teachers. Eastman has mastered the art of utilizing systems that set students up for success in the industry. Not only has she successfully navigated the Academy through an unprecedented time, but she is also creating business leaders that will bring incredible value to our communities and the industry as a whole.
ELEVATING BUSINESS IN LOS ANGELES AND BEYOND

CSUN’s David Nazarian College of Business and Economics is dedicated to educating a diverse student population to achieve career success and be a force for a better future.

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T productivity, ensure workplace productivity, improve workplace culture, ensure legal compliance and avoid employment disputes. Gabler co-founded LightGabler in 2011. She is instrumental in the firm’s unprecedented growth, helping to build the firm from seven to 27 people and from 287 to over 850 businesses at all sizes and industries, providing legal and business counsel to management and conducting training programs for management and employees. She audits clients’ employment practices to ensure strategic compliance with current laws and conducts investigations of employee complaints regarding harassment, discrimination, employee theft or other misconduct.

LESLIE ELKAN
Village At Sherman Oaks
Business Improvement District

Leslie Elkman is a graduate of UCLA with two decades of experience in the non-profit sector. After helping to launch the Village At Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District (BID) in 1999 with a well-received presentation to the Los Angeles City Council, Elkman became a long-standing member of its board of directors and has been elected president of the board four times. Under her guidance, she and the board have transformed this important commercial corridor from a humdrum area into a bustling, trendy, popular pedestrian-oriented destination that has been mentioned in publications as far away as the New York Times and chosen as a popular filming location. Many terrific businesses have flocked to the area, recognizing its potential to bring success to their doors, restaurants and service businesses. There has been no shortage of customers for these businesses and the Village At Sherman Oaks BID regularly announces new openings in this treasured community attraction.

RANDI FEILICH
Humane Society United States (HSUS) & Project Coyote

Randi Feilich is an MBA graduate from Pepperdine University’s Graziadio School of Business and Management (presidential key executive), and volunteers her time as a district leader volunteer for Humane Society United States (HSUS Congressional District), and also serves as the Southern California representative for Project Coyote. In her volunteer role for Humane Society United States, Feilich works on ongoing Federal, California State and local legislative advocacy and policy work in both her Congressional and Assembly Districts. In her volunteer role for Project Coyote, a national nonprofit wildlife organization, she promotes compassionate conservation and coexistence between people and wildlife, through education, science, and advocacy. In addition, she is a real estate executive and prior to that, an executive vice-president and partner for Van Wagner Communications, a globally recognized outdoor advertising firm.

DENISE J FELDMAN
Action Ad Specialties, Inc.

Denise J. Feldman started Action Ad specialties in 1989 with her sister, Karen L. Gabler, and a well-deserved reputation for developing proactive and creative strategies to enhance workplace productivity, improve workplace culture, ensure legal compliance and avoid employment disputes. Gabler co-founded LightGabler in 2011. She is instrumental in the firm’s unprecedented growth, helping to build the firm from seven to 27 people and from 287 to over 850 businesses at all sizes and industries, providing legal and business counsel to management and conducting training programs for management and employees. She audits clients’ employment practices to ensure strategic compliance with current laws and conducts investigations of employee complaints regarding harassment, discrimination, employee theft or other misconduct.

TRUDY GOLDBERG
NLSLA

Trudy Goldberg began volunteering with Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) after retiring from a 32-year career as a teacher in Los Angeles. Although Goldberg and her husband had been longtime supporters of the NLSLA, which helps people to navigate civil court proceedings that can be confusing and frightening someone who is living in poverty, has limited English proficiency, or has experienced the trauma of homelessness or domestic violence, it was only after she ran into a former student at the annual fundraiser—a woman now working at the organization—that she became involved. Today, after 13 years of volunteering at the Van Noy Self-Help Center, Goldberg has been one of NLSLA’s most passionate, dedicated volunteers. Staffed by lawyers and dedicated volunteers, the center has been a lifeline for litigants requiring protection from domestic violence, resolving child custody disputes, seeking a divorce, and halting an eviction to avoid homelessness.

KRISTINA GOLDMAN
Keller Williams

Kristina Goldman is an All-Star Real Estate Agent serving the San Fernando, Conejo Valley and surrounding areas. Goldman is considered to be a master in sales, successful negotiation and compromise. She is meticulously organized, detail-oriented, passionate about her work and gives 100% to each client. While 2020 was full of challenges, Goldman didn’t skip a beat. Keller Williams Westlake Village awarded Goldman with the Peak Performer of the Year Award as the highest selling agent by units closed at 11 units. She also received the fourth highest individual agent closed volume - at $17,853,500. When Goldman is out of the office, she spends her time giving back to the community through her involvement as a board member for Westlake Agoura Girls Softball and as a board member of the PTA at Willow Elementary.

DR. DOREEN GRANPEESHEH
Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)

Dr. Doreen Granpeesheh is a world-renowned licensed psychologist and behavior analyst with expertise in the field of autism research and treatment. She has worked with a wide range of patients—from individuals with minimal delays to the most challenging individuals whose families had been told to give up hope. Dr. Granpeesheh has an unparalleled recovery rate, enabling individuals with autism to lead independent lives. With a doctorate in psychology from UCLA, Dr. Granpeesheh is licensed by multiple state medical boards and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral. She founded and led CARD to become the world’s largest and most experienced organization effectively treating individuals affected by autism spectrum disorder using the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis (ABA). She is the author of numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and of the book Evidence-Based Treatment for Individuals with Autism: The CARD Model.

KIM GUARD
Express Employment Professionals

Kim Guard has been with Express Employment Professionals since 1999. Her first Express franchise was in Beverly, OK, which she ran for over 14 years, then sold the franchise and started traveling for Express to help other franchises throughout the US. Guard moved to California to be closer to family and for the sunshine and opened her Express office in Glendale, May of 2014. This is her second opened franchise with Express Employment Professionals, and her office currently ranks at 55 out of over 800 offices worldwide with over 45% growth year after year. Her goal is to be the top resource for employers and job seekers in the San Fernando Valley. Guard has over 30 years in staffing, human resources, and recruitment. Express has awarded her with multiple community service awards, including two directors’ awards for contributing to overall company growth and service to fellow franchisees.
Employment law. It’s sticky. Don’t get trapped.
2021 NOMINEES

ASHLEY ITIUNG
Westfield Group

A shley Itiung, Westfield's marketing director, spent the past seven years in metropolitan cities like Las Vegas, New York, and Dubai before coming back home to Westfield Topanga - where she first started her retail career 10 years ago. In 2014, she joined Simon Property Group, where she oversaw retailer relations, leasing, marketing and events for over 45 luxury brands at The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace before leading marketing efforts during Simon's $1.1 billion acquisition of The Shops at Crystals in City Center Las Vegas. She then relocated to Dubai, where she worked with the Al-Futtaim Group and continued her efforts during Simon's $1.1 billion acquisition of the first Sears redevelopment and continues to be a part of Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield.

TAYLOR B. JACKSON
Soaring Samartians Youth Movement

A t 16 years old, Taylor Bay Jackson is co-vice president with her sister Jordyn of One World Play Project's program to promote positive play. Jackson has run Soar- ing Samartians Youth Movement since she started it at 10 years old. She owns a jewelry line with Jordyn called 504AP. Jewelry where proceeds go toward impactful programs that she created to teach business skills, life skills, and healthy outlets. Jackson brings soccer balls to kids living in challenging life conditions to remind them of their teach- ings, bond, and ability to soar forward. She and her sister have developed the first child run charity in the history of three Los Ange- les schools to bring community service work hours to the school campus. She has won the President's Volunteer Service Award four times for over 100 hours of time each year dedicated to the community.

ELIZA JESCHKE
Westfield Topanga & The Village, Part of UnibashRodamco-Westfield

Eliza Jeschke was born and raised on the east coast and attended George Mason University outside of Washington, D.C. where she earned her Bachelor’s in Com- munications. After school, she began a career in property management with Boston Properties as a property coordinator but was shortly promoted to the assistant property manager role and oversee $425,000+ square feet of retail in BXP’s mixed-use development, Reston Town Center. She later pivoted and was promoted to the marketing and events manager during her time at Reston Town Center, overseeing over 65 commu- nity event days annually. In 2017, Jeschke relocated to Los Angeles with her husband where she began her role as a marketing associate with Westfield at the Westfield Topanga & The Village property in Canoga Park/Woodland Hills. She has since been promoted to the marketing manager at Westfield Topanga and supports over two million square feet of retail.

CHRISTY KASPER, CPA
gish SEIDEN LLP

Chris Kasper joined gish SEIDEN LLP in 2017, bringing over a decade of expe- rience in both audit and tax. She was recently promoted to partner in Jan 2021. Throughout her tenure, Kasper has focused on managing engagements and developing staff. She also has comprehensive experi- ence in federal and multi-state tax compli- ance, tax planning and consulting for high net worth individuals, corporations, tiered partnerships, trusts, and closely held businesses. Kasper has worked with clients in a variety of industries including real estate, manufacturing, media, advertising, and professional services. She takes pride in building solid relationships with her clients and truly enjoys helping them strategically position themselves to attain their goals. She is also an involved member of the firm’s Auditing and Accounting Committee, which is responsible for the firm’s learning and development initiatives, establishing best practices and broadcasting critical and timely accounting updates.

ADRIENNE KENTOR
Granada Hills Charter High School

A drienne Kentor does. For the past 13 years she has volunteered full time at the Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley as a mentor helping mostly disadvantaged youth prepare for post-secondary education...without a penny in compensation. Kentor started volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club as a homework helper and tutor. For the last six years, Kentor has been volunteering five days per week as a college mentor with high school students through the Future Ready program (formerly the “College Bound” program) at the Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley. In her six years volunteering with these outstanding students, Kentor has worked to address the serious obstacles these students face when it comes to college access.

MARILYN KOZIATEK
Granada Hills Charter High School

M arilyn Koziatek works at Granada Hills Charter High School, one of the high- est-performing schools in the state of California, where she leads the community outreach department. Her work includes increasing parent engagement, launching the school’s first mobile app, creating a work-based internship program to help students gain valuable, real-world job expe- rience and supporting teachers and students through grant-writing. Koziatek’s family instilled in her a deep belief in serving oth- ers and speaking up against injustice. When she was a child, her family traveled the world on humanitarian missions in small vil- lages in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, and Nepal. Her father is a U.S. Army vet- eran and her mother is a retired caregiver. Koziatek chairs the Education Committee at the Valley Industry Commerce Associa- tion, sits on the 38th Assembly Education Advisory Committee, volunteers with the Children’s Hunger Fund, and is a member of the PTA at her kids’ public school.

SHAINDEE KREITENBERG
Kreit Mechanical Associates, Inc.

Shaindee Kreitenberg is the current and long-time CEO of Kreit Mechanical. She holds a JD from Loyola Univer- sity, a C36 plumbing contractor license, and is a certified Journey level plumber. She manages and oversees multimillion dollar contract negotiations and heads the continued development and successes of Kreit. She has played a key role in the company’s expansion of various trades and successful engagement in over 200 units of affordable housing with emphasis on safety, quality, environmental impacts; using 60% of recycled products and implementing a “second chance” program for many younger adults reengaging the work force from drug and alcohol addiction. Her leadership has created 20% growth year over year while maintaining the same profit margin. She is respected throughout the company and by other leaders within the industry ranging from vendors to contractors to unions.

HANNAH LEE
City of Los Angeles

H annah Lee would certainly be in the conversation given her commitment to the communities and constituents who reside in this unique corner of our urban landscape in the City of Los Angeles. Having worked her way up through the ranks of Council District 12, Lee is fluent in all aspects of City governance while developing a revered expertise in planning, transportation and economic development. Whether shep- herding residents and developers through the Byzantine process of planning and development, or serving as the point person for some of the more iconic public projects that call CD12 home, Lee has ensured that integrity and alacrity all the hallmarks of her work and because of that, is univer- sally respected.
2021 NOMINEES

DEANA LINDERHOLM
Executives Association of San Fernando Valley

Thorough, detail-oriented, and responsive, Deana Linderholm puts her more than 20 years of sales, event and association management experience to work for executives and their companies. Combining her extensive hospitality background with an expertise in contract negotiation, Linderholm delivers the best to her clients in terms of rates, concessions, and contract terms. She strives daily for “Honor & Excellence” and has proven to be a tremendous asset for meetings and events, anywhere in the world. She has continued to grow a non-profit business association within the San Fernando Valley, even during these times of challenge. She has created new innovative, virtual networking opportunities for members, in addition to sister chapters. She has managed to create topics of inspiration for the members, drive new business to the Association and has secured award winning keynote speakers.

KIMBERLY MAIDEN
Pickwick Pub & Maiden Community

Many in the valley business community have been singing the praises of Kim Maiden for doing so much for the community throughout COVID. While still working hard to keep her own business open, she rallied up the Valley troops and set out to help those around her. From bringing in local businesses to restaurants, locally owned bakeries and clothing stores, she has also united a strong group of people who have a passion for supporting others. She is always sharing her highs and her lows and does whatever she can to bring a little light in times of darkness and chaos. Many businesses that she has highlighted would have otherwise had to shut their doors during the pandemic if she had not stepped up to rally the community in support.

YVONNE MARIAJIMENEZ
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA)

Yvonne Mariajimenez is president and CEO of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, a nonprofit providing free legal services to people living in poverty. As the organization’s leader, Mariajimenez oversees a staff of 163—including 55 attorneys—who specialize in areas of the law that disproportionately impact low-income people, including affordable housing and eviction defense, access to public benefits, support for domestic violence victims, access to healthcare, worker and consumer rights, and employment and training. She began her career at NLSLA more than 40 years ago and became president and CEO in 2019. Her enduring commitment to expanding access to opportunity and justice has made her a fierce advocate for people living in poverty throughout the area. Previously, Mariajimenez was NLSLA’s deputy director for more than 20 years.

JOAN F. MARQUES, PH.D., ED.D.
Woodbury University, School of Business

Joan Marques has reinvented herself from a successful media and social entrepreneur in Suriname, South America, to an innovative “edupreneur” (educational entrepreneur) in California. Her entrepreneurial career spans over four decades and includes the creation and successful management of companies in public relations and advertising, import and export, real estate, media productions, and a nonprofit, focused on women’s advancement. In the US, she has been a co-founder of the Business Renaissance Institute, and the Academy of Spirituality and Professional Excellence (ASPEX). Based on her impressive career and ongoing influence, Dr. Marques was awarded the highest state decoration of her home country, Suriname: Commander (Commandeur) in the Honorary Order of the Yellow Star, in 2015. She currently serves as dean at Woodbury University’s School of Business.
WOMEN’S COUNCIL

2021 NOMINEES

KASIA MAYS
CGI Plus Real Estate Investment Strategies

A COO of CGI Plus Real Estate Investment Strategies, Kasia Mays oversees marketing and public relations, human resources, information technology and most importantly, CGI’s culture, mission, brand, vision and values. An accomplished hospitality expert with nearly 20 years of experience, Mays ensures customer satisfaction for all clients and is focused on luxury and elevated design to shape CGI’s community and make it a best-in-class residential experience. Driven by a strong sense of purpose, Mays’ unconditional passion, creative palate and drive bring extraordinary value to the CGI leadership team. During her long and successful career, Mays has successfully improved operations, increased profits, and created experiences of differentiation and guest satisfaction at every stop she has made. Nearly two decades of experience includes stops at some of the top four-and-five-Diamond luxury sectors of the hospitality industry.

CHRISTY MORA
Elevate My Brand

When Christy Mora decided to establish A Treehouse Group, she wanted to combine her unique knowledge of the online space and how different businesses benefited from each type of marketing style and online presence. As a one stop shop from anyone from small businesses, political campaigns and non-profits, and everything in between. Mora uses incomparable knowledge of various spaces to create custom and unrivaled solutions for every business. Her drive comes from wanting every one of her clients to be successful and offset the complications that businesses face when trying to get their brand constantly online. Mora loves talking solutions and objectives with clients and how to make their goals come to life. She is routinely involved in special projects and collaborations that bring large scale ideas from concept to reality. She also has a unique network in the commerce and payments space from her background and projects in these spaces.

KATHRYN PURWIN
Helinet Aviation

Kathryn Purwin has been involved in the aviation community for over 35 years and is one of the few female CEOs in the industry. A pilot herself since 1997, Purwin has a steadfast approach toward safety and service, and a passion for investing in new technology. She earned a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in history and political science from UCLA and holds commercial multiglider and instrument fixed-wing ratings and a helicopter license. Purwin’s late husband, Alan Purwin, co-founded West Coast Helicopters in 1987 and merged it with Helinet Aviation in 1999. Working alongside her husband, she was involved in the companies’ strategic direction since inception. In 2015, she became the CEO of Helinet, providing leadership and direction by working with its team and board of directors to establish long-range company goals. Today she oversees a staff of almost 100.

LAURA McHOLM
NorthStar Moving Company

Laura McHolm was an unlikely start as co-founder of NorthStar Moving Company. McHolm began her university studies at the age of 16. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley she taught basic programming on Apple computers, then worked in marketing for Atari while the company was still in its infancy, and after law school, she worked as a corporate intellectual property lawyer. In the mid-1990s, she moved away from the Fortune 500 to fulfill her more creative, entrepreneurial spirit and co-founded NorthStar Moving Company in Los Angeles. NorthStar Moving is the go-to mover for A-List celebrities, the Getty and other high profile entities in the region. McHolm coined the phrase “eco-luxury moving services” and is changing the way people and businesses move.

STACEY McKINNON
Morton Capital

In 2017 McKinnon made a radical shift from training and management in the fitness industry to join the finance sector, bringing with her a unique skillset deeply rooted in teamwork, leadership and business management. In 2018, at age 32, she earned the position of COO at Morton Capital, a California based Registered Investment Advisory firm. Her appointment as COO at such a young age, and in a primarily male dominated financial C-Suite space, reflects a changing of the tides and a growing power in the industry to recognize talent and results above gender. McKinnon is an enthusiastic advocate for women in finance and closely mentors several of the female team members at Morton. She is also highly active in writing industry and leadership white-papers and is regularly sought after to speak on podcasts and contribute to leadership training programs.

CHRISTY MOBA
A Treehouse Group LLC

When Christy Mora decided to establish A Treehouse Group, she wanted to combine her unique knowledge of the online space and how different businesses benefited from each type of marketing style and online presence. As a one stop shop from anyone from small businesses, political campaigns and non-profits, and everything in between. Mora uses incomparable knowledge of various spaces to create custom and unrivaled solutions for every business. Her drive comes from wanting every one of her clients to be successful and offset the complications that businesses face when trying to get their brand constantly online. Mora loves talking solutions and objectives with clients and how to make their goals come to life. She is routinely involved in special projects and collaborations that bring large scale ideas from concept to reality. She also has a unique network in the commerce and payments space from her background and projects in these spaces.

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GLORIA POLLACK
The Gelb Group

Gloria Pollack has worked as The Gelb Group’s community liaison for ten years — but she has done much more than that. She has kept her life lessons as a teacher and brings organization and instruction to every event she runs, every committee she chairs and every person she meets. Originally from New York, she attended NYU and then began teaching. Upon her move to California she worked for Time Warner Communications. It is said that not much gets done in the Valley without Pollack having a hand in it. Whether it is the Armand Hammer Awards, Fermata Awards, ONE-generation events and many more, Pollack is an instrumental part of the Valley and its nonprofits and programs. She is the person organizations go to for sponsors, emcees, celebrities, nominees and answers to all of their questions.

NAAMA O. POZNIAK
Paz Holding, Inc. / DBA A+ Insurance

Naama O. Pozniak is a certified primordial sound meditation instructor, CEO and founder of Paz Holding, Inc. DBA A+ Health Insurance Services, an award-winning Advisor of the Year and speaker. She has served the American insurance industry for more than 30 years specializing in healthcare reform, employer benefits, international travel insurance, and Medicare. Also very active in her community, Pozniak has taken on leadership roles in and professional affiliations with California Broker Magazine’s Editorial Advisory Board, NAHU Region, LAAHU, and more.

PAULINE SHERER
Pavaso

Pauline Sherer is the founder and CEO of Pavaso, a digital closing platform that automates the signing of legal documents for home loans, real estate and other major transactions. Since its launch in 2015 Pavaso has processed over 250,000 transactions. Prior to Pavaso, she was the CMO/CFO at Generations. She is a 2018 YWCA Women of the Year, 2016 YWCA Women of the Year, and 2019 Women in Business with SmartCEO. She was named a 2018 Entrepreneur of the Year by the Young Presidents’ organization. In 2016 she led Pavaso through an M&A transaction with DocuSign.

LAUREL MINTZ
Elevate My Brand

With a JD, MBA from Rutgers University, Laurel Mintz’s background has uniquely prepared her to run a successful agency. Inspired by the innovative consulting work she executed early in her career with prestigious brands like Public House Restaurant Group, Bassett Furniture and Julie Hewett Cosmetics, Mintz knew she wanted to play bigger. Over a decade later, she has created an agency family serving both startups and blue chip global brands like Facebook, Verizon Digital Media Services, P&G, Fandango and Zendesk. Her favorite saying is FIOGID. Figure it out, get it done. And that’s exactly what’s brought the agency top talent and accolades since 2009. Mintz also sits on the board of Directors for NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship), the Women Founders Network, and the UCLA Restaurant Conference. She is a mentor for The Women’s Global Leaders Initiative. And advises LAVA (Los Angeles Venture Association).

ALYssa POZNIAK
Paz Holding, Inc. / DBA A+ Insurance

Naama O. Pozniak is a certified primordial sound meditation instructor, CEO and founder of Paz Holding, Inc. DBA A+ Health Insurance Services, an award-winning Advisor of the Year and speaker. She has served the American insurance industry for more than 30 years specializing in healthcare reform, employer benefits, international travel insurance, and Medicare. Also very active in her community, Pozniak has taken on leadership roles in and professional affiliations with California Broker Magazine’s Editorial Advisory Board, NAHU Region, LAAHU, and more.

MOLLY SANDBERG
Elevate My Brand

Molly is the Co-Founder of Elevate My Brand where she helps entrepreneurs and founders attract and convert their dream clients. Her work is rooted in values and building an elite team. Elevate My Brand has worked with some of today’s best known brands such as Ashley Stell, Lord & Taylor, and the Fast Company Innovation Group. Elevate My Brand has been featured on Inc, Forbes, Entrepreneur and in 2016 was voted the Best Marketing Agency in the West Coast by Entrepreneur Magazine. Molly is a sought after speaker and is featured in the book Women Entrepreneurs Who Are Changing the Game.

Ari W searchData and sound meditation instructor, CEO/ founder of Paz Holding, Inc. DBA A+ Health Insurance Services, an award-winning Advisor of the Year and speaker. She has served the American insurance industry for more than 30 years specializing in healthcare reform, employer benefits, international travel insurance, and Medicare. Also very active in her community, Pozniak has taken on leadership roles in and professional affiliations with California Broker Magazine’s Editorial Advisory Board, NAHU Region, LAAHU, and more.

LAUREL MINTZ
Elevate My Brand

With a JD, MBA from Rutgers University, Laurel Mintz’s background has uniquely prepared her to run a successful agency. Inspired by the innovative consulting work she executed early in her career with prestigious brands like Public House Restaurant Group, Bassett Furniture and Julie Hewett Cosmetics, Mintz knew she wanted to play bigger. Over a decade later, she has created an agency family serving both startups and blue chip global brands like Facebook, Verizon Digital Media Services, P&G, Fandango and Zendesk. Her favorite saying is FIOGID. Figure it out, get it done. And that’s exactly what’s brought the agency top talent and accolades since 2009. Mintz also sits on the board of Directors for NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship), the Women Founders Network, and the UCLA Restaurant Conference. She is a mentor for The Women’s Global Leaders Initiative. And advises LAVA (Los Angeles Venture Association).
Carolyn Rose has dedicated her life to supporting the most vulnerable people in need through her work in founding and sustaining the non-profit organization, MEND-Meet Each Need with Dignity, and through her years of service to local communities in the San Fernando Valley. Rose and her husband Ed started MEND in the late 60’s after they saw the suffering that so many people were going through in their local community. What started with humble beginnings has now turned into an agency with the largest food bank and food pantry in the San Fernando Valley, along with a number of programs to support the poorest people in the community. MEND is celebrating 50 years of existence this year. Rose has been an active leader that has worked selflessly throughout the years to help people in need.

Miri Rossitto is president and CEO of CowE Communications, a Woodland Hills women-owned business and brand development firm. CowE is an acronym for ‘Community of Working Entrepreneurs’ and reflects Miri’s dedication to the inspiration, education, and connection of business owners, citizens, and community leaders throughout the San Fernando Valley. Rossitto is a trailblazing entrepreneur who took an idea and formed it into a thriving business in just a few years. Under her strong leadership, CowE Communications and its team of top-notch experts help firms build stronger, healthier businesses. Active in several chambers of commerce and other business organizations, Rossitto and her business colleagues are educating and inspiring a new generation of leaders in the San Fernando Valley. She also serves on a variety of boards and is a supporter of many location organizations.

Vicky Schiff is founder, managing partner and COO of Mosaic Real Estate Investors, Vicky Schiff takes responsibility for all aspects of the business including, investments, investor relations, finance, HR, as well as helping shape the firm’s overall strategy. She is a functional COO, as well as being a member of a four-person investment committee that makes all decisions about the company’s ongoing investments and strategy. Schiff is continually scanning the market for opportunities, working hard to find those markers that are not overcrowded and will provide investors with the optimum opportunity for success. Since beginning her investment career three decades ago, Schiff has put her stamp on the commercial real estate industry. She is also committed to serving various industry, non-profit and educational organizations. Schiff has also been a frequent industry panelist and has spoken at institutional conferences.

Bonnie Schlachte has been in the field for over 25 years working every job from direct care professional to executive director. In middle management, she led teams to understand that being in compliance with regulatory requirements doesn’t negate being person-centered and thinking outside the box. She understands that being financially responsible is central to ensuring best practices and that everything centers around the strength of the relationships that are built. As an executive director, Schlachte has built a reputation for understanding that her number one job is to educate the public about the organization’s mission and the brilliant individuals it supports. She educates the funding sources about how the organization can meet the specific needs of each individual. She educates donors about the vital importance of the work TLC does and how its contributions impact lives.

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Julie Acevedo-Lopez 323-219-1557
2021 NOMINEES

NANCY HOFFMAN VANYEK, ACE
Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce

B ncy Hoffmann Vanyek, ACE is CEO of the Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce and the first and only woman to head the organization in its 110-year history. At the age of 23, she started as the communications manager of the (then-called) Van Nuys Chamber of Commerce. Within six years, she was named the Chamber’s first female CEO. Vanyek is a results-driven professional with experience in both the political and business arenas. She has shaped consensus and achieved big-picture goals by uniting people and the business community toward a shared vision. She gracefully connects with high-power political leaders, small business owners, struggling workers, and everyone in between, recognizing the intrinsic value everyone brings to the table across differing cultures, generations, and values. She has created numerous programs to further the Chamber’s mission, oversaw mergers and small businesses.

JESSICA SPRAUGE, CPA, MBT
gash SEIDEN LLP

Jessica Sprague, who was recently promoted to tax director at gash SEIDEN, has more than 15 years of experience providing business tax planning strategies and tax compliance services for clients operating in a wide variety of industries. Sprague has tremendous and deep expertise in a multitude of business taxation areas including partnerships, corporations, multi-state, and state and local. She takes the time to understand her client’s industry and familiarize herself with their clients’ needs, so that she can capitalize on opportunities to minimize tax liability and maximize value. She works with a diverse range of clients ranging from small- and mid-sized businesses to large multi-national companies. Sprague builds solid relationships with her clients and enjoys helping them strategically position themselves to attain their goals. She is the chair of the firm’s Tax Committee, which is responsible for firm learning and development initiatives, internal best practices, and disseminating updates.

BIA NCA VOBECKY
Vobecky Enterprises, Inc.

Bianca Vobecky is the founder and president of Vobecky Enterprises, a business dedicated to providing construction and construction-related service such as tenant improve- ment, construction management, project staffing, supplier of construction materials and nationwide tracking. Since founding Vobecky Enterprises in 2006, the focus of her efforts has been the building of meaningful professional relationships with a focus on customer service. Vobecky obtained her California Contractor’s License in October of 2009 and in just three short months, she won the company’s first federal contract with the US Government. She has helped her company obtain over 30 federal contracts, multiple local utility contracts and worked with many of the local large firms. Vobecky and her firm have won several awards including the Supplier of the Year Award from Sempra Energy and Minority Champion award from the SBA, and others. Vobecky is also a supporter of many local organizations which supports women owned, minority owned and small businesses.

ALEXANDRA VON TIERGARTEN
Robert Half

Throughout her staffing career, Alexandra Von Tiergarten has placed thousands of professionals at jobs with local businesses. She is dedicated to her work and is committed to assisting job seekers as they work to further develop and advance in their careers. She is equally committed to the local businesses that rely on her team to find the talented professionals they need to thrive. She has proven herself as a key leader and mentor within Robert Half and amongst her team. After only nine months of joining Robert Half, she successfully ran $5 million of business and has continually grown her operations 10-15% for nine years in a row. In addition, Von Tiergarten is passionate about developing and motivating her staff. She has successfully hired, developed, and retained a solid team, which many have followed in her footsteps and have moved into leadership positions themselves.

JESSICA YASUKOCHI
Valley Industry and Commerce Association

Jessica Yasukochi is currently the vice president for the Valley Industry & Commerce Association (VICA). Although frequently outside of the public spotlight in a very public organization, Yasukochi has built a solid reputation among the Valley’s most recognized power players in the business community for running VICA’s operations with logistical precision. She coordinates numerous VICA events while maintaining an outstanding organizational system, including a million dollar budget she is responsible for and for keeping the information flowing to the 4000 plus corporate members of VICA as well as to the VICA officers, staff and affiliates. She is the hub at the center of complex networks of policy people and business leaders. She was promoted to vice president from director of operations and before that, executive assistant, primarily because of the leadership strengths she demonstrates while working within VICA’s very ambitious and business-driven environment.

JAVE TRIPP
J-n-K Services, Inc.

Born and raised in Mexico City, Jave Tripp graduated with a degree in Chemistry from the University of Texas in Austin. When she established J-n-K Services, Inc., a Certified Minority Business and a 100% 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 for her new business. Her persistence and drive helped develop a thriving commercial printing and graphic design business in the San Fernando Valley over the past 13 years. Today, J-n-K Services offers graphic design, offset and digital printing services, high-speed copying, mailing services and signage. The design and printing firm also adheres to green business practices using soy-based inks and recycled paper stocks. Tripp’s objective has always been to provide clients the best solutions for their companies’ needs, whether they are a small business or a Fortune 500 firm.

LARA SCHMOISMAN
The Darl

Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Lara Schmoisman is the founder and CEO of The Darl, a marketing strategist and coach, host of the “Coffee N9” pod-cast, and an international speaker. With more than 20 years of experience working in radio, television, film, and marketing, Schmoisman has — armed with an accent, grit, and true authenticity – empowered entrepreneurs, personal brands, and those seeking to build an in-house marketing department through the three specific coaching programs of her “Future-Proof Your Business” 3-Step Accelerator System. Today, with the best people around her, the right processes in place, and a lot of hard work, she continues to move forward and conquer goals. Whether it is volunteering in the community or completing a project with a tight deadline, Schmoisman gives everything her all.

JITKA STANLEY
Servpro of Malibu/Topanga/Pacific Palisades/Brentwood

Jitka Stanley is the director of operations at Servpro Malibu, She is WRTI/ASD-FSTI/OCT certified, ICBC and EPA Lead Safety certified. Stanley has years of experiences in the industry. From estimates to inspections, she’s always on the go. She brings motivation and guidance to the team. She has overcome many obstacles in the past year, including a change in ownership when her husband abruptly left the company. Despite a challenging transition, she has led the company through the pandemic with grace and persistence. Her tenacious- ness and business acumen has secured a solid reputation for her company’s clients, and a caring and well-maintained company culture for her employees.

ALEXANDRA VON TIERGARTEN
Vobecky Enterprises, Inc.

Bianca Vobecky is the founder and president of Vobecky Enterprises, a business dedicated to providing construction and construction-related service such as tenant improvement, construction management, project staffing, supplier of construction materials and nationwide tracking. Since founding Vobecky Enterprises in 2006, the focus of her efforts has been the building of meaningful professional relationships with a focus on customer service. Vobecky obtained her California Contractor’s License in October of 2009 and in just three short months, she won the company’s first federal contract with the US Government. She has helped her company obtain over 30 federal contracts, multiple local utility contracts and worked with many of the local large firms. Vobecky and her firm have won several awards including the Supplier of the Year Award from Sempra Energy and Minority Champion award from the SBA, and others. Vobecky is also a supporter of many local organizations which supports women owned, minority owned and small businesses.
Research Underway to Explore Women’s Participation in Seed Funding

The National Women’s Business Council (NWBC), a non-partisan federal advisory committee created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners, commissioned the first comprehensive study examining the factors that may influence women’s participation in the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs—also known as America’s Seed Fund. NWBC intends for the report to provide a baseline understanding of the inclusion of women entrepreneurs and female principal investigators in the advanced technology business realm funded by SBIR/STTR. The report also highlights targeted efforts to increase the involvement of women by the 11 funding agencies and SBA-funded entrepreneurial support organizations.

This study uses award-level administrative data provided by funding agencies to the SBA and is publicly available on SBA.gov. “Female business owners and entrepreneurs in all types of industries continue to grow in number and influence,” said NWBC Women in STEM Subcommittee Chair Monica Stynchula. “NWBC is committed to advocating for women in business, including STEM innovators and entrepreneurs, and this study will help inform the Council’s policy recommendations to Congress, the White House, and SBA set to be released later this year. Federal programs like SBIR and STTR give women the opportunity to innovate and launch or expand their enterprise.”

‘NWBC is committed to advocating for women in business, including STEM innovators and entrepreneurs, and this study will help inform the Council’s policy recommendations to Congress, the White House, and SBA set to be released later this year. Federal programs like SBIR and STTR give women the opportunity to innovate and launch or expand their enterprise.’

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Turning Roadblocks into Building Blocks for Women-Owned Businesses

By LUANNA LINDSEY

T
oday, there are nearly 13 million women-owned businesses, which represents 42% of all U.S. businesses. These businesses employ 9.4 million workers and earn $1.9 trillion in revenue. Over the past five years, the number of women owned small businesses increased by 21% while comparatively, all new businesses increased only 9%. Despite their successes, women entrepreneurs still face many challenges to obtaining funding for their enterprise and building a support network to ensure their business stands out and is positioned for success. As these business owners navigate these challenges—as well as ongoing difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic—here are some steps that can help to turn these roadblocks into building blocks for their success:

Continue to explore funding options—Women-owned small businesses have been more heavily impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, with 71 percent reporting a loss in revenues or sales according to a Wells Fargo/Gallup study completed last year. As business owners continue to feel the impact of these unprecedented times, there are many assistance options to help businesses and non-profits continue their road to recovery. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is a great starting point to learn about available federal resources and programs. Traditional lending products such as 7(a) loans, 504 loans and SBA express loans can provide access to capital, as well as specific relief programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

There are also many free resources and tools to help educate women business-owners on other credit and financing options. Additionally, when choosing a lender, consider financial institutions that have demonstrated a commitment to supporting women-owned businesses. As the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and SBA express loans can provide access to capital, as well as specific relief programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

No matter which sources you choose to fund your business, build a network, and establish a plan, remember that knowledge is power.

Identify your support network—Having a support system to lean on is a huge asset for any business owner, but it’s especially important for women. While COVID-19 has created many unique challenges to in person networking and meeting face-to-face, it’s important as ever to seek virtual ways to get involved with organizations dedicated to supporting women business owners. For example, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) have chapters and regional partners across the country that offer peer-to-peer professional development programs for members. These organizations are dedicated to helping women find the right financial tools to successfully run and grow their businesses. Another great resource for women business owners is SCORE, which offers online newsletters and webinars in addition to an extensive database of female mentors.

Business owners should also consider the immense value of having an assigned relationship manager at their primary bank. According to a recent Barlow survey, 70% of small businesses who interact with a dedicated Account Officer are very satisfied with their bank compared to those who don’t.¹

Be you and set measurable goals—Every business owner needs to consider market saturation and how to make their particular offerings stand out and get noticed. When thinking about starting a business and establishing goals, women business owners should consider both their personal and business objectives, and see where they align. What’s motivating you to establish your business and what makes your business unique? One of the most important things women entrepreneurs can do to stand out is to be their authentic selves, while planning and setting measurable goals along the way. One way to organize is to get ideas down on paper by creating a written business plan to shape your strategy. It will also be important to check-out competitive intelligence tools that can help you map your business against competitors and inform your path forward. Your business plan should reflect changes in your business, the industry or the market. With COVID-19 impacts, it is equally important to incorporate the changing needs of customers and economic conditions in order to keep your plan current and respond to the ever-changing environment.

No matter which sources you choose to fund your business, build a network, and establish a plan, remember that knowledge is power. By taking the time to arm yourself appropriately, you can confidently navigate potential roadblocks and pave the path for your business success.

¹ The 2019 State of Women Owned Small Businesses Report (American Express)
² Barlow Small Business Rolling 4 Quarter Data (4Q2019-3Q2020) SBO $100k-$10MM; Q: Overall, how satisfied are you with your company’s primary bank?

Luanna Lindsey is Senior Vice President, Small Business Leader with Wells Fargo.