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# SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL


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THE 2024 SAN DIEGO

500

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# Letter From The Publisher



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**W**elcome to the 2024 edition of the SD 500. This annual issue of the San Diego Business Journal, published near the close of the year, focuses on San Diego County's most influential business leaders. They are the people who make such a significant impact on our business community and the community at large.

Each year our editorial team researches and updates this list, weighing factors such as recent accomplishments, community involvement and historical or sizeable impact in the business world. Paging through this issue, you will find people representing the diverse array of businesses that defines our great city. Many of the executives we have named you will already know, but you will also be introduced to some new faces.

This year, the SD 500 is published as a perfect bound book that we hope you will keep throughout the year as a resource to understanding San Diego's leaders who have made and are currently making an impact in our Community of Business. We are confident this SD 500 edition will inspire and spark conversations.

This issue is the culmination of a sizable group effort. I want to thank the entire San Diego Business Journal team for all their hard work in producing this edition. Congratulations to each member of this year's SD 500. Thank you for all you do for our region and a special thank you goes out to all of the businesses who continue to support the San Diego Business Journal.

**Kevin Leap**

Publisher  
San Diego Business Journal

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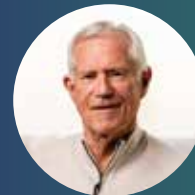
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# ASSOCIATIONS

SAN DIEGO 500

**GARY ACOSTA**

**CO-FOUNDER & CEO, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS AND L'ATTITUDE**

**WHY:** An entrepreneur, public policy advocate and investor, Acosta is co-founder and CEO of NAHREP, the nation's largest Hispanic business organization. **NOTABLE:** Acosta is co-founder of the event L'ATTITUDE and is a general partner of L'ATTITUDE Ventures, the nation's largest venture capital fund exclusively focused on Latino-led start-ups. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Through NAHREP, Acosta created the Hispanic Wealth Project, a nonprofit organization with plans to triple Hispanic household wealth. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "It doesn't matter where you start only how you finish."



**ALFREDO ANGELES**

**CEO, TIJUANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**WHY:** Angeles has implemented branding and investment attraction strategies for different projects in advanced manufacturing fields within the aerospace and medical industries. **NOTABLE:** Angeles has held leadership roles at ICON Aircraft and Bolt Media Internacional. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Tijuana EDC is a nonprofit providing free-of-charge services to foreign companies seeking business opportunities in Mexico. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Appreciate every moment of your life, each step, each change. Appreciate it and it will become a life lesson. There's something to learn from any challenge, experience, and opportunity."



**DIMITRIOS ALEXIOU**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES**

**WHY:** Alexiou advocates for 38 hospitals in San Diego and Imperial counties, committed to equitable access to affordable, safe, high-quality, medically necessary healthcare. **NOTABLE:** Alexiou is part of the California Hospital Association's executive team, representing 400+ hospitals statewide. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Alexiou's leadership extends to regional health boards, addressing issues like homelessness and health coverage for underserved populations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be a lifelong learner – read the news, keep up on current events and trends, continue to add to your experience, build relationships, and embrace change."



**BETSY BRENNAN**

**CEO, DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP**

**WHY:** Brennan runs the Downtown San Diego Partnership, an influential nonprofit which advances the economic prosperity and cultural vitality of Downtown. **NOTABLE:** Brennan has a vision for the next evolution of downtowns as "Central Connectivity Districts," oversees the Clean & Safe Program's enhanced services, and has grown DSDP's leadership in working with the unhoused community. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Brennan is a board member of the International Downtown Association. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Great leaders don't see themselves as great; they see themselves as human."



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**W. ERIK BRUVOLD**  
**CEO, SAN DIEGO NORTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**



**WHY:** Bruvold has continued to expand the services offered to grow prosperity in North County. **NOTABLE:** During his six years of leadership, he has built operational and strategic reserves for the first time in the organization's history; the SD North EDC now averages a year-over-year growth rate of 11.5%. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Bruvold has launched specific small business support programs. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A tight mission statement is vital for organizations at risk of trying to be all things to all people."

**MARK CAFFERTY**  
**CEO, SAN DIEGO REGIONAL EDC**



**WHY:** Cafferty is the center of a collaboration of business, trade, community and education leaders who have a stake in the region's development and strategy in the global economy as part of the San Diego Regional EDC. **NOTABLE:** He has spent more than 25 years designing systems to support career advancement and economic opportunity for American workers. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Cafferty is a board member of Curebound and San Diego Military Advisory Council. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Me, We." – Muhammad Ali

**KEVIN CARROLL**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TECH SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Carroll champions often-overlooked small and mid-sized tech companies that drive the heart of the region's innovation economy. **NOTABLE:** Under Carroll's guidance, Tech SD has led key initiatives that shape and sustain the local tech ecosystem, including Jacobs Talent Initiative. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Carroll has spearheaded initiatives including Data Science Day and activities around AI so the region is seen as a center of excellence in the global innovation economy. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Innovation thrives where talent meets opportunity and Tech San Diego builds those bridges everyday."

**NIKIA CLARKE**  
**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO REGIONAL EDC**



**WHY:** Clarke is also executive director of World Trade Center San Diego, an SDEDC affiliate, leading strategy and program development. **NOTABLE:** Clarke has almost two decades of experience in global and local economic development in academic, private and nonprofit sectors. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Clarke serves on the Board of the International Business program at SDSU and teaches at UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart." – Eleanor Roosevelt

**DONNA DEBERRY**  
**CEO, CENTRAL SAN DIEGO BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



**WHY:** DeBerry is the local leader in Black business matters, advocating for the Black community, with a mission to create generational wealth through business enterprise, education, employment and investing. **NOTABLE:** She has received awards for her outstanding production of the documentary "Walking the Waking Journey." **SOCIAL IMPACT:** DeBerry has served as Executive VP of Global Diversity and VP of Global Diversity for Nike. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Look inward first to see if it's you preventing your goals, aspirations and dreams."

**LISA EASTERLY**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, CYBER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**



**WHY:** Easterly is dedicated to solving cybersecurity workforce, economic development and infrastructure challenges through collaboration with industry, academia and government. **NOTABLE:** Easterly helped found CCOE 10 years ago to grow the cyber industry that's now expanded from 100 to 1,000+ companies in the last decade. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Easterly works on growing and diversifying the cyber workforce, creating opportunities for small business and working with the Department of Defense. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well." – Susan Sanford (Lisa Easterly's mom)

**MATTHEW FEHLING**  
**CEO, BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU OF THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST**



**WHY:** For more than 20 years, Fehling has dedicated his career to ensuring the Better Business Bureau remains a relevant and trusted source. **NOTABLE:** He has served in several roles across the country including the Council of Better Business Bureaus. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Fehling is a board member of the Arizona Coyotes Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit." – Greek Proverb

CONGRATULATIONS

Since 1912, the San Diego Regional East County Chamber of Commerce is the respected voice and advocate for business opportunities, policy and education throughout San Diego County.

Rick Wilson

President & CEO

San Diego Regional East County Chamber of Commerce

SD 500 The Most Influential People of San Diego 2024 Honoree

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MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024  
HONOREE

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**JOSIE FLORES-CLARK**

**PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO COUNTY HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**WHY:** Flores-Clark is dedicated to empowering underrepresented Latinx-owned businesses in the community, ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for success. **NOTABLE:** Flores-Clark is president of the National Latina Business Women Association-SD. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She advocates for the Latinx community working with local businesses and Latinx organizations to create change. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "My struggles should not be yours. By uniting and supporting one another, we can amplify our impact and uplift more Latinx individuals. Progress begins with a single step forward."



**DR. INEZ GONZÁLEZ PEREZCHICA**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MANA DE SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Gonzalez Perezchica serves as the Executive Director of MANA de San Diego, the foremost advocate for Latinas in the region. **NOTABLE:** Gonzalez Perezchica created the MANASD Latina Friendly Workplace Award to recognize local employers who implement policies that enable Latinas and all employees to succeed. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Under her leadership, MANASD has evolved into a strong advocacy platform. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "When a Latina discovers a path to upward mobility, her family progresses, and the entire region benefits."



**ABDUR-RAHIM HAMEED**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, NATIONAL BLACK CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION**

**WHY:** Hameed consults for private and government agencies regarding workforce diversity and contractor participation opportunities in San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** He is a behind-the-scenes advisor to top executives and owners of organizations ranging from two-man shops with annual revenues of \$100,000 to billion-dollar national companies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He helped establish the first African-American state certified Apprenticeship Program in the U.S. as the Inner-City Community Unilateral Apprenticeship Committee designed to train inner-city at-risk youth. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "He who lays late in bed will always scratch a poor man's head." — *Hameed's Uncle James*



**LORI HOLT PFEILER**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

**WHY:** Lori Holt Pfeiler was appointed president and CEO of the Building Industry Association in 2021 -- BIA is San Diego's leading voice of residential development, supporting pro-housing policies, quality jobs, and strong communities. **NOTABLE:** Holt Pfeiler is a former mayor of Escondido (1998-2010). **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Holt Pfeiler served as president and CEO of San Diego Habitat for Humanity for more than 10 years. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If everyone is at the table and respected, we will have better outcomes."



**MIKE KRENN**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, CONNECT WITH SAN DIEGO VENTURE GROUP**

**WHY:** Krenn has been CEO of Connect and SD Venture Group since 2014, leading San Diego's transformation as an innovation hub. He was co-founder of NuFund and EvoNexus. **NOTABLE:** Krenn has helped companies raise over \$700 million, all free of charge. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Krenn is co-founder of XEO. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "It's not about bigger, it's about better. We are not Silicon anything. We are San Diego. And we are going to create the best dang innovation ecosystem on the planet."



**HOWARD KURTZ**

**DIRECTOR OF SALES & MEMBERSHIP, SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS**

**WHY:** After a 27-year career at The San Diego Union-Tribune / Los Angeles Times, he was recently appointed to his position at San Diego Association of Realtors. **NOTABLE:** Kurtz has forged many diverse and notable business partnerships across San Diego County that touched real estate, automotive, associations, retail, sports and local media. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Kurtz served as the product and advertising manager for the U-T's Neighborhood Almanac, an annual 160-page glossy neighborhood guide. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Talk less. Listen more. Be humble."



**VICTOR ALFREDO LOPEZ**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE LINCOLN CLUB BUSINESS LEAGUE**

**WHY:** As the youngest and first Latino Executive Director of the Lincoln Club, Lopez champions small business growth and Latino representation. **NOTABLE:** Lopez has driven record membership and revenue, fosters Latino voter outreach and shares political insights on social media. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Focused on San Diego's Latino and small business communities, Lopez builds partnerships that empower local entrepreneurs and foster representation in decision-making across San Diego County. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Always do what's right and ignore all the other noise."



**SPENCER LUGASH**

**PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS**

**WHY:** Lugash took over in 2024, helping the association provide better service, education and resources. **NOTABLE:** He has streamlined processes, consolidated staff and created better efficiencies, bringing more than \$1M in reduced costs. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lugash is on the board of Levitt & Quinn, providing free and low-cost legal services to vulnerable populations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "There are good days and bad days -- sometimes they happen the same day. Understanding progress can come from both wins and losses is paramount to mental stamina and continued success."



**BRUCE MAYBERRY**

**CHAIRMAN, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**WHY:** Mayberry helps lead CSDBCC's mission to elevate Black businesses through tangible opportunities that result in economic viability for San Diego's Black communities. **NOTABLE:** Mayberry is also President and CEO of JBM Energy Solutions. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** CSDBCC's programs include a business accelerator for Black-owned businesses and a Women's Entrepreneurship Summit, supplying women education and resources to start businesses. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I am committed to elevating Black businesses through tangible opportunities that result in economic viability for San Diego's Black communities."



**MIGUEL MOTTA**

**VP, STRATEGIC OPERATIONS & SAN DIEGO HEAD, BIOCORN CALIFORNIA**

**WHY:** Motta is a global business, strategy and operations professional with experience in Fortune 500 and growth-stage companies in biotech, agriculture and life sciences. **NOTABLE:** Motta has more than 20 years of experience in the life sciences industry, including president and CEO of IRP Health. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Motta is a mentor with the San Diego Squared mentor program. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "[My job is] a fantastic opportunity to support thousands of life science companies to do what they do best, improve human health around the world."



**MARK NEVILLE****EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAN DIEGO BOWL GAME ASSOCIATION**

**WHY:** Neville helps plan and manage sports-related events around the county and leads the SD Bowl Game Association in helping the region's economy annually.

**NOTABLE:** He led a 2018 effort to secure a bowl game that resulted in \$26.5 million in regional economic benefit. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Neville secured a bid for the Holiday Bowl to host the 2022 Transplant Games of America in San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "No one can whistle a symphony, it takes a whole orchestra to play it."

**JAMES SLY****PRESIDENT & CEO, EAST COUNTY EDC**

**WHY:** Sly drives San Diego East County's economic growth by forging partnerships across education, industry, workforce and government. **NOTABLE:** Sly joined the East County EDC in 2012 and during his tenure as its leader, he has developed more than \$150 million in new investments through strategic partnerships, new contracts and fundraising. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sly is a member of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Board.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Water always finds its level... good people rise to the top."

**JASON PAGUIO****PRESIDENT & CEO, ASIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Paguio leads the diverse association that gives a voice to Asian and Pacific Islander voices throughout the region. **NOTABLE:** He has grown the ABASD to its largest membership in 30+ years and is chair of the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Paguio established the strategic alliance that consists of the SD County Hispanic Chamber, SD Black Chamber and ABASD, helping minority-owned small businesses. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you always give, you will always have." – Chinese proverb

**CHRIS THORNE****CEO, NORTH SAN DIEGO BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**WHY:** Thorne ensures that our region's businesses build stronger relationships, seek collaborative solutions, and have an equitable voice. **NOTABLE:** 30-year USN veteran followed by 8 years of small business and non-profit leadership. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a board member of the Gary Sinise Foundation San Diego Chapter, SDMAC Foundation, and Palomar Health Foundation, as well as a Sports San Diego Ambassador. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Assume the best of everyone you meet and help them find the best in themselves."

**WENDY ROBINSON****EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SD FIRE & RESCUE FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Robinson has supported San Diego County's firefighters and lifeguards for nearly 15 years, often saying, "I buy the capes for the heroes." **NOTABLE:** Robinson helped two other fire agencies create and grow foundations advancing public safety throughout California, but she says her greatest achievement has been raising her two children. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** A passionate ally of the LGBTQ+ community, Robinson works with the nonprofit Rob Benzon and Dan Ferbal Foundation, supporting LGBTQ+ youth. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Do good. Be kind. Have fun."

**SARA WILENSKY NAPOLI****PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Since 2010, Napoli has brought together public and private resources to create a safer San Diego, cultivating positive community engagement and helping fund equipment and training to ensure safety. **NOTABLE:** Napoli launched the groundbreaking Women in Blue movement and defeated the local push to defund the police. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Promoting police-community engagement and ensuring our police have what's needed to do their jobs safely, with excellence. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Great leaders have integrity: they say what they are going to do and then do it."

**DEBRA ROSEN****EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SD COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

**WHY:** Rosen is leading change and growth at the San Diego County Bar Association following a 13-month sabbatical. **NOTABLE:** With Rosen's experience and commitment, she is poised to inspire and guide the association towards a bright future, fostering collaboration and positive growth within the legal community. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rosen spent 18 years of driving change at the North San Diego Business Chamber. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Lead with heart and believe in others – those are key to achieving success."

**RICK WILSON****PRESIDENT & CEO, EAST COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**WHY:** Wilson has been advocating for and leading the San Diego Regional East Chamber of Commerce since 2019 and was the SDBJ 2023 Business Nonprofit CEO of the Year. **NOTABLE:** Through strategic planning, Wilson turned around the organization's financial status to create its largest reserve in more than 100 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He has volunteered for St. Paul's Senior Services for nearly 30 years. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Partnerships are the way to grow a business or an organization by being inclusive to all."

**SAMANTHA SCHOLL****ASSOCIATE VP, BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU SERVING THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST**

**WHY:** Scholl is a champion for equitable access, advocating for education, mentorship, and community empowerment. **NOTABLE:** Experience serving hundreds of entrepreneurs, leading transformative initiatives, actively engaging on multiple boards, and volunteering with nonprofits to deepen local impact. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dedicated to inclusive entrepreneurship, empowering underserved entrepreneurs with tailored resources and mentorship, and building a thriving, diverse business ecosystem in San Diego where all entrepreneurs have the opportunity to succeed. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Lead with integrity, adapt purposefully, and empower others to reach their fullest potential."





NONPROFITS

**GREG ANGLEA**

**CEO, INTERFAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**WHY:** Greg Anglea has served as CEO of ICS the past 10 years. **NOTABLE:** During his tenure, ICS's expanded its supportive services, including housing/shelter, food assistance, substance abuse treatment and vocational training. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Anglea's tenure is marked by transformative initiatives like establishing North County's first year-round, all-gender homelessness shelter and creating a recuperative care center for individuals discharged from hospitals without housing. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Change will only come through partnership and collaboration. Leadership and perseverance are crucial in bringing diverse groups together."



**CORI AUSTIN**

**CEO, CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Cori Austin has worked in the relationship and sexual violence prevention movement for more than two decades. **NOTABLE:** Austin has built strategic partnerships with community leaders to develop a countywide response to family homelessness and more. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Austin is on the board of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe when you can find purpose and meaning in what you are doing, your passion is contagious and feeds your overall impact."



**MICHAEL ARMS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, HELEN WOODWARD ANIMAL CENTER**

**WHY:** Michael Arms has been president of Helen Woodward Animal Center since 1999. **NOTABLE:** Under his guidance, the center's adoption team doubled then tripled the number of pet adoptions each month. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** His Business of Saving Lives workshops have taught more than 600 organizations about the successful running of a nonprofit organization. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** You can't run a business with your heart but you have to have a heart for the business."



**PAUL BARIBAULT**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE**

**WHY:** Baribault heads the SDZWA, the nonprofit that oversees the San Diego Zoo and Safari Park. **NOTABLE:** He was previously with The Walt Disney Studios for 22 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Baribault initiated conversations with Chinese conservation partners which culminated in the historic return of giant pandas to the San Diego Zoo, marking the first time in more than two decades that pandas have arrived in the U.S. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference." – *Dr. Jane Goodall*



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER SAN DIEGO**  
**CHANGING LIVES.**

*Congratulations*  
**DANNY SHERLOCK**

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
**SD500**  
MOST INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024

Your hard work, dedication, and vision for San Diego youth continues to inspire us all!

**CASEY CASTILLO**

**CEO, JACOBS & CUSHMAN SAN DIEGO FOOD BANK**

**WHY:** Castillo was appointed CEO by the JCSDFB's Board in 2022, after serving in leadership roles for more than 14 years at the county's largest hunger-relief organization. **NOTABLE:** Under Castillo's leadership, the organization distributed 50 million pounds of food and supported 6,000 flood-impacted residents in FY 23/24. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He's a volunteer coach for his children's baseball and basketball teams and is involved in community service with his church. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "You don't build a business. You build people, and people build the business." – Zig Ziglar



**CHARLES E. DAY**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Day has served as the leader of RMHC-San Diego since 2010, working to provide a home-away-from-home for thousands of families with hospitalized children. **NOTABLE:** Named the SDBJ Most Admired CEO (small nonprofits) in 2015, he also previously served with Rady Children's Hospital for 15 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Day has served with numerous community organizations including the Kiwanis Club of San Diego, Laurels for Leaders, Estate Planning Council of San Diego and AFP San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill



**TAMARA CRAVER**

**CEO, REALITY CHANGERS**

**WHY:** As the CEO of Reality Changers, Craver prepares the next generation of diverse leaders in businesses in San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** She recently secured a \$2 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Since she joined Reality Changers in 2019, the organization has graduated 1,000 high school seniors who have gone on to become the first in their families to attend college. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Tough times never last, but tough people always do!" – Reality Changers' student mantra



**DONNIE DEE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO RESCUE MISSION**

**WHY:** Since 2017, Donnie Dee has been championing solutions to address root causes of homelessness. **NOTABLE:** In 2021, Dee launched Symposiums for Mayors and City Managers, bringing leaders together to regionally address issues. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dee spearheaded the 2023 opening of the Oceanside Navigation Center and in 2024 launched the South County Lighthouse shelter. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Homelessness is not a government problem to fix but a community issue to address. We also believe this is an issue of the heart and starts with HOPE!"





Congratulations

Marty Gorsich, CEO

Century Club of San Diego | Farmers Insurance Open



OPEN

JANUARY 22-25, 2025

The 2025 Farmers Insurance Open returns to Torrey Pines this January. From the first drive to the final putt, you won't want to miss a moment of the action.

See you at TORREY!



FARMERSINSURANCEOPEN.COM



The staff, members, volunteers, and tournament community proudly celebrate your recognition as one of San Diego's top business leaders in the San Diego Business Journal's SD500.

Your leadership and dedication have elevated the Century Club of San Diego and the Farmers Insurance Open, making a lasting impact on both the tournament and our community.

Thank you for your continued commitment to excellence!

# 70 Years of Care Made Possible Because of You!

As Rady Children's celebrates 70 years of growing up alongside San Diego, we reflect on the incredible progress made possible by our dedicated leaders and the support of those around us. From day one, the generosity of time, talent and commitment has driven our innovation and growth, ensuring that every child receives the highest level of care.

**Ernest Rady**



Founder, Chairman and CEO,  
American Assets Trust

**Patrick Frias, M.D.**



President and  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Rady Children's Hospital

**Stephen Jennings**



Chief External Affairs Officer and  
Senior Vice President,  
Rady Children's Hospital

Thank you to Rady Children's SD500 Most Influential Leaders for being an essential part of our journey. Together, we will continue to shape the future of pediatric care and provide hope and healing to the children who need it most.



[www.RCHSD.org](http://www.RCHSD.org)

**CAROL DEDRICH**

**CEO, GIRL SCOUTS OF SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Dedrich is responsible for developing the vision, direction and strategies for GSSD, and positioning the organization as the go-to partner for developing and elevating girls and women. **NOTABLE:** Served as a Captain, Air Defense Artillery (Patriot Missiles) in the U.S. Army. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Member of San Diego Rotary, Downtown Partnership CEO Roundtable, Council Action Network.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Empowered women empower the world. When women stand strong, support each other, and lead with courage, they light the way for others to do the same."



**PAUL DOWNEY**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SERVING SENIORS**

**WHY:** Downey guides Serving Senior's efforts to provide supportive services for low-income seniors to keep them independent and healthy. **NOTABLE:** After 30 years of leadership developing the nationally recognized Serving Seniors model of support, Downey will retire in May 2025. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Downey initiated and led the 2021 Serving Seniors Needs Assessment report, a groundbreaking study focusing on older adult homeless in San Diego.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle



**STEVE DINKIN**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, NATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER**

**WHY:** Dinkin has been the president of the NCR since 2003. **NOTABLE:** He has secured federal contracts with the U.S. departments of Homeland Security, Navy and Treasury. He has also expanded programming outside the U.S. to Europe, Asia and Latin America. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He co-authored two books on conflict resolution: "The Exchange, A Bold and Proven Approach to Resolving Workplace Conflict" and "The Exchange Strategy for Managing Conflict in Health Care." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt



**KRISTINE ENTWISTLE**

**CEO, CHALLENGED ATHLETES FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Entwistle is CEO of CAF, helping individuals with physical disabilities globally thrive through participation in sports and physical activity. **NOTABLE:** She is part of a team at CAF that recognizes and responds to the evolving landscape of adaptive sports and the increased needs of athletes with physical disabilities. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Under Entwistle's leadership, myriad impactful events have been held. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou



Computers 2 Kids congratulates our CEO

**Cheri Pierre**

for being selected among  
the 500 most influential people  
in San Diego 2024



8324 Miramar Mall  
San Diego, CA 92121  
(858) 200-9790  
info@c2sdk.org





# SOLUTIONS FOR CHANGE



We transform the most vulnerable and dependent people into the most empowered, equipped and inspired Overcomers.



**CHRIS MEGISON**  
FOUNDING CEO  
& PRESIDENT

Congratulations on being named a 2024 SD500 honoree! Your leadership and unwavering commitment to transforming lives over the last 25 years make a profound impact on our community. We are so grateful for you.

Love, Your Solutions Family



GET INVOLVED



**SOLUTIONS FOR CHANGE**

Follow us on     

[SolutionsForChange.org](https://SolutionsForChange.org)

**ELIZABETH FITZSIMONS**

**CEO, EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**WHY:** With her team and board, Fitzsimons has led ECS to expand its impact in early childhood education and mental health, and adult behavioral health and homelessness, serving 10,500 people a year. **NOTABLE:** She was named the Business Journal's CEO of the Year in 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** A lifelong volunteer, Fitzsimons belongs to Rotary Club 33, and focuses her professional and volunteer efforts on creating equity and opportunity for all. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "To create possibilities for yourself and those around you: 'Say yes, raise your hand, and empower others.'"



**JANET HAMADA KELLEY**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION**

**WHY:** Hamada Kelley drives the vision and strategy of the Alzheimer's Association San Diego/Imperial chapter to raise funds for dementia research and provide education and resources to those impacted by dementia. **NOTABLE:** A former entrepreneur and consultant, she brings innovative thinking while driving strategy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She serves on the board of the SD Japanese American Citizens League. **QUOTE:** "We need grit to keep going, but we also need the courage to lift others up, and the wisdom to know that success is a team effort." – Sheryl Sandberg



**TONI GRIFFIN**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Griffin has dedicated 25 years to providing employment and training opportunities to people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. **NOTABLE:** She implemented above minimum wage pay for all ambassadors. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** A Club 33 Rotary Board Member, she's actively involved with the 4-Way Speech Contest. **QUOTE:** "Friends of Goodwill, be dissatisfied with your work until every person in your community has an opportunity to develop to his fullest usefulness and enjoy a maximum of abundant living." – Dr. Edgar J. Helms, Goodwill Industries founder



**MICHAEL HOPKINS**

**GEO, JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Hopkins has led JFS of SD for nearly 13 years, helping the organization expand its reach, impact and sustainability. **NOTABLE:** Under his direction, JFS has served 105,000 people in the past year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hopkins' work spans a variety of needs in the San Diego region, including establishing the Center for Jewish Care and providing 915,000 meals to locals in a 12-month period. **QUOTE:** "I learned that if I give our excellent team space, they will deliver in incredibly impactful ways that I wouldn't have even been able to imagine."



**Our answer to homelessness is homes.**

That's why Father Joe's Villages has pledged to build 2,000 affordable housing units. Help us lead the way to solving San Diego's homelessness crisis. Because a homeless life cannot be rebuilt without a place to call home.

Donate at [Neighbor.org](https://Neighbor.org)

**Father Joe's Villages**   
Rebuilding Lives





# Congratulations

President & CEO

## Rick Richardson

For 50 years, CDA has been a driving force for positive change in the community. Our mission is to empower and promote the well-being of families, child care providers, and the greater community through financial and support services.



### 2024 Impact Numbers



**28,090**  
Children



**9,170**  
Families



**5,100**  
Child Care Providers



[cdasd.org](https://cdasd.org)

[f](#) [@](#) [t](#) [in](#) @cdasandiego

**SUZANNE HUSBY**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, MAKE-A-WISH**  
**SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Husby heads Make-A-Wish San Diego, granting life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses in our community. **NOTABLE:** Husby just celebrated her 21st anniversary on staff – she started as an intern – and became CEO in 2021. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** MAWSD grants the wish of every eligible child regardless of race, income or other demographics. Every volunteer, donor, in-kind supporter and medical partner is local to San Diego/Imperial counties. **QUOTE:** “Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.” – Howard Zinn.

**RUDOLPH JOHNSON III**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, NEIGHBORHOOD**  
**HOUSE ASSOCIATION**



**WHY:** Johnson has been the appointed President and CEO of NHA since 2006. **NOTABLE:** He spent nine years working for the city of San Diego, and eight years at the SD Convention Center, four years as GM. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is on San Diego Foundation Board of Governors and its Black Community Investment Fund Advisory Council as well as CONNECT - San Diego Black Leaders. **QUOTABLE:** In 2010, he told East County Magazine, “The beauty of being a CEO is that no two days are alike.”

**LISETTE ISLAS**  
**CEO, LIFELINE COMMUNITY SERVICES**



**WHY:** Islas is CEO of Lifeline Community Services, guiding the delivery of essential mental health services and economic development programs across San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** As Vice Chair of the San Diego Regional EDC, she works with business nonprofit and philanthropic sectors to develop economic inclusion strategies that benefit all. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Islas is a strong leader, building unique collaborations to solve complex social challenges. **QUOTE:** “If you’re always trying to be normal, you’ll never know how amazing you can be.” – Maya Angelou.

**BOB KAMENSKY**  
**CEO, FEEDING SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** CEO of FSD since early 2024, Kamensky first joined in 2021 as Chief Strategy Officer. **NOTABLE:** A U.S. Navy veteran, Kamensky retired as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Submarine Force. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** As CEO, Kamensky is fostering a strong connection to programs addressing food insecurity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “We are ultimately measured by our results, by the way our actions shape the world around us. Without results, all the kind intentions in the world are just a way of entertaining ourselves.” – Eric Greitens

*Congratulations!*

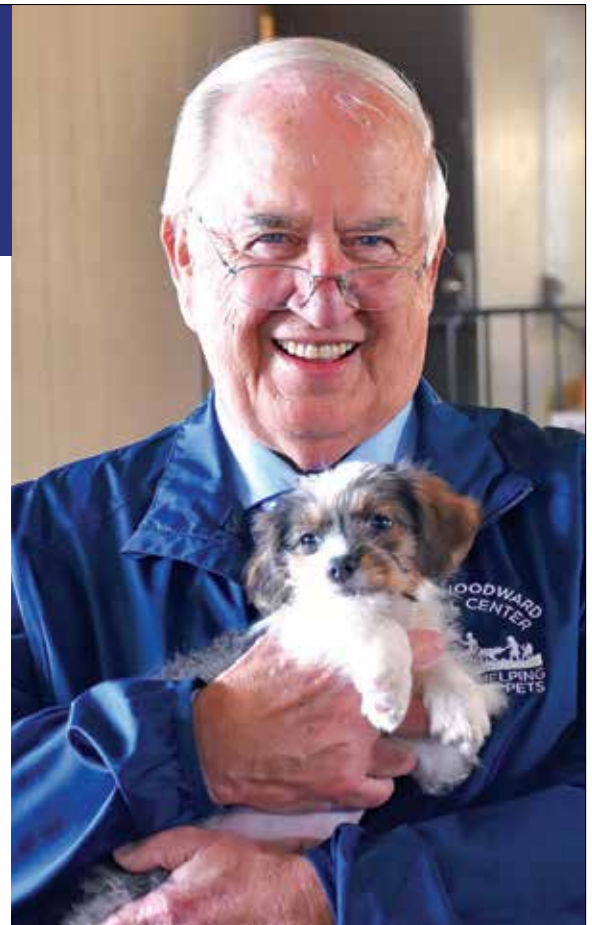
**MICHAEL ARMS**

*CEO & President  
 Helen Woodward Animal Center*



Congratulations for being selected as San Diego Business Journal’s SD500 Most Influential People in San Diego!

Thank you for over 25 years of dedicated service to Helen Woodward Animal Center.



**CHERYL KILMER**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, TERI, INC.**

**WHY:** Kilmer guides TERI to help raise the quality of life for those with developmental challenges. **NOTABLE:** TERI has been cited as a model program in California for the quality of services it provides, including programs such as equine therapy, performing arts, agriculture and resident homes. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Kilmer's TERI has become an internationally recognized center of innovation and social change for those touched by special needs. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you can dream it, you can do it." – *Walt Disney*



**KATHRYN LEMBO**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTH BAY COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**WHY:** With SBCS since 1982, Lembo oversees 400 professionals and 1,200 volunteers. **NOTABLE:** Under her leadership, SBCS has grown from a drop-in center for drug-abusing teens into one of the county's largest social services/community development agencies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** SBCS touches the lives of more than 50,000 people annually. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I've realized the immense value in cultivating meaningful relationships with staff at all levels within our organization. These connections provide meaningful insights and offer opportunities to nurture emerging leaders who drive SBCS' mission forward."



**REAR ADMIRAL TERRY KRAFT**

**CEO, USS MIDWAY MUSEUM**

**WHY:** Kraft leads a team operating a museum with more than 1 million visitors annually. **NOTABLE:** He was previously at General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1981, becoming a naval flight officer in 1982. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a mentor with the USNA Alumni Mentoring program. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I am so honored to be leading this iconic museum! Having flown off Midway during Desert Storm, I feel like my career has come full circle. Our amazing volunteers inspire me every day!"



**HERNAN LUIS Y PRADO**

**CEO, WORKSHOPS FOR WARRIORS**

**WHY:** Luis y Prado has been chairman of the board and CEO at WFW since 2008. **NOTABLE:** He was a U.S. Naval Officer for 13 years and served 16 years in the Navy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Luis y Prado develops workshops for WFW's overall vision, mission and values and also directs strategic decisions, setting goals for growth. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "What if we gave every honorably discharged veteran the opportunity to rebuild America's manufacturing workforce, to have a dignified life, to be a part of the American dream?"



*Congratulations*



**Lisette Islas**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Lifeline Community Services**

On being voted part of San Diego Business Journal's Top Business Leaders

Your dedication to communities across San Diego County has been crucial in empowering youth and their families to build the future they envision and deserve. With over 25 years of experience in community and economic development you are creating impactful change in the region and transforming lives. On behalf of the team at Lifeline, thank you for your leadership.

**About Lifeline**

Visit [lifelinecs.org](http://lifelinecs.org) to learn more, donate & volunteer.

**ARNULFO MANRIQUEZ**

**CEO, MAAC**

**WHY:** Manriquez has dedicated his career to uplifting individuals, families and communities through housing, economic, educational and employment programs.

**NOTABLE:** With more than three decades of experience, he's a community-focused leader working across diverse, regional and binational settings. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a first-generation immigrant who understands the challenges faced by underrepresented communities and promotes economic mobility. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Always be persistent. If you don't ask, the answer will always be no. Step up, ask questions, and show up to ensure you're seen and recognized."



**CHRIS MEGISON**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SOLUTIONS FOR CHANGE**

**WHY:** Megison is the founding CEO of SFC, which exists to transform lives by solving the root causes of homelessness. **NOTABLE:** His trademark impact is his model of leadership in which he leads from the front, a style he learned as a U.S. Marine. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** SFC has saved millions in taxpayer funds while empowering thousands into a purpose-driven life serving for the sake of others to do the same. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "What if the solution to the homeless problem, are the homeless themselves?"



**ANNE MARBARGER**

**CEO, CUREBOUND**

**WHY:** Marbarger since 2021 has led Curebound's mission accelerating cures for cancer. **NOTABLE:** Marbarger was an intelligence analyst at the U.S. Treasury Department. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** With Padres Pedal the Cause, she helped raise \$10 million for cancer research. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "San Diego has the unique resources needed to significantly change how we prevent, detect, treat and ultimately cure cancer in our lifetime. Every person, family, business in this community is impacted by cancer and I truly believe that together, we can become the cancer curing city."



**DOUG MORTON**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO BLOOD BANK**

**WHY:** Under Morton's leadership, SDBB has seen growth in collections, new therapy and expanded hospital partnerships. **NOTABLE:** Morton also raises service animals for the blind and disabled. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Morton drives SDBB's mission of connecting diverse communities to save and improve lives through blood and biotherapies. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I truly believe in this principle: 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.'" – Winston Churchill



# Arnulfo Manriquez

MAAC PRESIDENT & CEO

## CONGRATULATIONS

On being recognized as part of  
**SDBJ SD500: MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE  
IN SAN DIEGO 2024**

We're proud of your exemplary leadership  
and commitment to our communities!

Advocacy & Leadership Development | Education | Economic Development | Housing | Health & Wellbeing

MAACproject.org

**DREW MOSER**

**CEO, LUCKY DUCK FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Moser has been executive director of the Lucky Duck Foundation for nearly five years, helping fight homelessness and fund high-impact programs that address it. **NOTABLE:** Moser was also with the San Diego Hall of Champions for nearly nine years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a coach and board member at Tecolote Youth Baseball, advisory board member and basketball coach at School of the Madeleine. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean." – *Ryunosuke Satoro*



**GRANT OLIPHANT**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, CONRAD PREBYS FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Oliphant is CEO of the Prebys Foundation, the largest independent private foundation in San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** He hosts the Stop & Talk Podcast which interviews San Diego luminaries. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Prebys Foundation gave \$57.6 Million to local nonprofits in 2023. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "To paraphrase Simon Sinek, 'the best companies and leaders view themselves as the crafters and keepers of a defining mission whose relevance will outlast them and demands more than reflexively racing toward a finish line that doesn't in fact exist.'"



**NEIL O'CONNELL**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MT. SOLEDAD NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL**

**WHY:** O'Connell since 2022 has provided leadership and executive management at the Mt. Soledad National Veterans Memorial in La Jolla. **NOTABLE:** O'Connell was a sergeant major in the U.S. Marines, serving 32 years primarily out of the West Coast. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** O'Connell is a board member of San Diego Nice Guys. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Complacency breeds mediocrity, mediocrity leads to mission failure. Invoke trust, respect and kindness and strive for excellence in all capacities and always take care of your people while doing so."



**TAD SETH PARZEN**

**CEO, THE BURNHAM CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT**

**WHY:** Parzen has led BCCA to becoming one of San Diego's most influential and trusted civic organizations. **NOTABLE:** He's known for developing and implementing scalable efforts to solve complex, chronic community/organizational challenges. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Parzen is Vice Chair for WDC 2024 San Diego Tijuana and recently joined the board of SD Regional EDC. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Success is forged through collaboration and a dedication to the communities we serve. Challenges are temporary if we trust our core values to guide us through moments of uncertainty."



**Congratulations**  
**Casey Castillo**

**SDBJ's 500 Most Influential People in San Diego**

Casey Castillo is the CEO of the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank, where he has served since 2008, bringing over 20 years of experience in executive, financial and nonprofit management.

Under his leadership, the Food Bank has navigated significant community challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Great Recession of 2008. Castillo has implemented new fundraising initiatives and overseen multi-million dollar infrastructure improvements to the Food Bank's facilities to increase the organization's ability to feed the now more than 400,000+ people who utilize its services each month.

THE JACOBS & CUSHMAN  
**San Diego Food Bank**

**JEREMY PEARL**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Pearl is the leader of JCFSD, which organization which collaborates with individuals and other groups, leveraging philanthropic capital for positive impact. **NOTABLE:** JCFSD, the oldest community foundation in San Diego County (1967) just hit \$2 billion in total grants, half of that in the last 10 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** A Jewish-community focused organization, 75% percent of its grant work stays in San Diego County. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference." – *Winston Churchill*

**ALICIA QUINN KITAGAWA**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LIFE SCIENCE CARES SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Kitagawa drives venture philanthropy through strategic stakeholder engagement, skilled volunteering and grantmaking. **NOTABLE:** With a broad network across the philanthropic and corporate communities, Kitagawa builds relationships and creates shared value to amplify social impact. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Life Science Cares activates financial and human capital, granting more than \$1.5 million annually and leveraging the expertise and networks of the life sciences/biotech community to support local nonprofits. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be the woman who fixes another woman's crown without telling the world it was crooked."

**CHÉRI PIERRE**

**CEO, COMPUTERS2KIDS**



**WHY:** Chéri Pierre has led Computers 2 Kids to becoming a leading advocate for digital equity. **NOTABLE:** Pierre helped grow the organization into one of the largest nonprofit refurbishers in the nation, providing up to 45,000 computers annually. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Pierre is a member of the Board of Advisors for the Alliance for Technology Refurbishing & Reuse Advisory Council and Nonprofit Refurbishers United. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Digital Equity ensures health, economic, educational and racial equity for all."

**ELIZABETH RAMIREZ**

**CEO, CHICANO FEDERATION OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**



**WHY:** Ramirez for nearly three years has led the Chicano Federation, providing programs and services to immigrants, refugees and ethnic groups. **NOTABLE:** She was previously CIO for Promises2Kids and development director for South Bay Community Services. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is committee chair for Rotary International. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Leading a nonprofit is work from the heart and for me, it's deeply personal. I see my abuelitas, my parents, my tías and tíos in the families we serve. They inspire me to be a better leader every day."

*Recognizing 30 Years of Service*  
**PAUL DOWNEY**

Congratulations to Serving Seniors President and CEO **Paul Downey** for 30 years of leadership and dedication to improving the lives of San Diego's most vulnerable older adults.

Every smiling face on every older adult who gets a nutritious meal, who feels the warmth of friendship, and who finds a safe home thanks to Serving Seniors is a tribute to your unwavering commitment to those who are often forgotten.



[www.servingseniors.org](http://www.servingseniors.org)



**MAJOR AMY & ROB REARDON**  
**DIVISIONAL SECRETARIES, THE SALVATION**  
**ARMY SAN DIEGO REGIONAL OFFICE**



**WHY:** The Reardons provide leadership and development of The Salvation Army programming and mission throughout the county. **NOTABLE:** In response to the January 2024 flooding, the Reardons mobilized a team of volunteers and employees to address needs in affected. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** They cast vision and provide oversight to programs that address people of all ages. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." – Galatians 6:9

**NANCY SASAKI**  
**CEO, UNITED WAY OF SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Sasaki for more than six years has led the UWSD, working to spark community action elevating people toward brighter futures. **NOTABLE:** Sasaki's more than 40-year professional career has been exclusively served in the nonprofit sector. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is a board member of 211 San Diego and San Diego Workforce Partnership Policy Board. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Embracing these opportunities has enabled me to gain valuable insights into operations, internal teamwork, community needs, and the profound influence of leadership on staff and people in the community."

**RICK RICHARDSON**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, CHILD DEVELOPMENT**  
**ASSOCIATES**



**WHY:** Richardson's efforts increased CDA funding to \$270M+, resulting in a fourfold increase in families supported with childcare and resources, additional reimbursement and support for childcare providers. **NOTABLE:** Richardson is a retired Army Colonel with 27 years of military service. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** His board service facilitated Chula Vista Community Foundation's growth and he is helping improve the Otay Valley Regional Park. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Never forget your journey and those who helped you, reach back to help others move forward."

**DANNY SHERLOCK**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**  
**OF GREATER SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Sherlock has been president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego for nearly 40 years. **NOTABLE:** He managed the merger of four independent Boys & Girls Club organizations into one. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** As an executive and leadership coach, Sherlock fosters the growth and development of emerging nonprofit leaders so that they and their teams can impact their communities. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to." – Jim Collins

*Congratulations*

to TrueCare's President and CEO  
**Michelle D. Gonzalez, MPA**, for being  
 named one of San Diego's Most Influential  
 Leaders of 2024 by the San Diego  
 Business Journal!

Your leadership and commitment to the communities TrueCare serves have been instrumental in ensuring that individuals and families in San Diego and Riverside Counties have access to the resources they need to build healthy and happy lives.



760.736.6767  
 truecare.org



**SEAN SPEAR**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, COMMUNITY HOUSING WORKS**



**WHY:** Spear leads affordable housing developer CHW, which also provides services to low-income working families and seniors. **NOTABLE:** He was previously held government community development leadership roles in NYC, SF, LA and Sacramento. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He developed new project financing structures and billion-dollar governmental programs to build communities for those in need. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our goal at the end of the day is to hopefully not just put a roof over somebody's head, but actually come alongside them, support and uplift those households."

**LAURA TANCREDI-BAESE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, HOME START**



**WHY:** For nearly 18 years, Tancredi-Baese has been passionately leading Home Start, Inc., where she has expanded the agency's impact on child abuse prevention through strengthening vulnerable families. **NOTABLE:** Tancredi-Baese founded and grew Home Start's Maternity Housing Program, providing support to pregnant/parenting and their children facing homelessness, and added two social enterprises. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Her years of advocacy as a board member in organizations have impacted thousands of deserving lives. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt

**MARK STUART**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO FOUNDATION**



**WHY:** Stuart is a fundraising/community-building professional with nearly 30 years of experience. **NOTABLE:** SDF has granted nearly \$500 million to nonprofits the last four years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Stuart serves on the Certified Fundraising Executives International Board of Directors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Always make your boss the hero. Find a boss who you wish to support and make a hero. You will be happier, see more career opportunities and have a professional reference for the rest of your career who will cheer for you like no one else."

**AKILAH TEMPLETON**

**CEO & CO-FOUNDER, VETERANS VILLAGE OF SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Templeton leads the largest nonprofit veterans service organization in San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** An organizational change expert and leader, her career in mental health, substance abuse, veterans and homeless services spans nearly 30 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Under her leadership, VVSD has expanded its partnership with Cohen Veterans Network, operating three outpatient clinics in SD and Los Angeles counties. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We are resolute in the belief that it is our job to hold our veterans up. We do it deliberately, intentionally, and with compassion."



**CONGRATULATIONS TO TODD TIBBITS, PRESIDENT & CEO OF YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**



**TODD TIBBITS NAMED**

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



The Y's vision is to be the catalyst to transform lives and communities.

**WELL-BEING TOUCHPOINTS**  
497,852  
289,740 individual lives impacted

**CHILDCARE SERVICES**  
80,034  
Individuals impacted by a Y child care program

**POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & WELL-BEING PROGRAMS**  
over 253,000  
youth and young people engaged through the Y

Join, participate, volunteer or give to the Y at [www.ymcasd.org](http://www.ymcasd.org)

**TONY TERAVAINEN**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SUPPORT THE ENLISTED PROJECT**



**WHY:** Since 2012, Teravainen has overseen STEP as a partner for young military and transitioning veteran families. **NOTABLE:** Under his guidance, STEP grew from SD to Washington and expects to expand nationally. **SO-CIAL IMPACT:** STEP has impacted more than 250,000 military family members and granted \$2.8M to stop loss needs, with a 90% success rate. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Whatever your metric for success, it will emerge from your persistent, focused efforts and relationship building. Life, leadership and business are all team sports."

**TODD TIBBITS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**



**WHY:** Tibbits runs the largest YMCA in the country, with annual revenues of more than \$300 million, serving nearly 500,000 county residents, with more than 5,500 employees. **NOTABLE:** Tibbits and his team have established new partnerships and achieved a record-high \$8.4 million through the Y's annual fundraising campaign. **SO-CIAL IMPACT:** He's chair of the Border Coalition for Y-USA, strengthening the relationship with neighbors in Tijuana and Baja California. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say." – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**MEGAN THOMAS**

**CEO, CATALYST OF SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES**



**WHY:** Thomas guides education and activation for a network contributing more than \$1 billion annually in grants, loans and assistance to nonprofits in SD and Imperial counties. **NOTABLE:** She was formerly executive director of San Diego Coastkeeper. **SO-CIAL IMPACT:** Catalyst works across sectors, aisles and industries to bring funding to collaborative, community-driven solutions to the most pressing challenges. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Catalyst is nothing without the dedicated people that make up its network, and the community advocates and activists we work hand in hand with."

**TONYA TOROSIAN**

**CEO, PROMISES2KIDS**



**WHY:** Torosian leads the group founded more than 40 years ago to respond to children's needs. **NOTABLE:** She was executive director of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families. **SO-CIAL IMPACT:** She's a board member with LEAD San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "One hundred years from now it won't matter what kind of car I drove, what kind of house I lived in, how much money I had in the bank, nor what my clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child." – *Forest Witcraft*



**Congratulations**  
Janet Hamada Kelley  
Executive Director

SD500  
MOST INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO  
2024

On behalf of the San Diego & Imperial Chapter Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and families impacted by Alzheimer's and all other dementia - CONGRATULATIONS!


And thank you for both your leadership and collaboration. Together, we are making an impact. Together, we will #ENDA:LZ!

**ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION**  
San Diego / Imperial Chapter

**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU**  
CALL US ANYTIME  
24/7 Helpline: 1-800-272-3900  
alz.org/sandiego

**Community Impact**  
**83,000 people**  
in San Diego / Imperial County received education, resources, or support in 2023

**Research Impact**  
**\$18 Million**  
invested in San Diego based Alzheimer's / Dementia Research



Congratulations to Sean Spear on being named one of the Most Influential People in San Diego for the 3rd year in a row!

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
**SD500**  
MOST INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024

**Sean Spear**  
President and CEO

**CHW** Community HousingWorks

www.chworks.org **We Build Futures**

**JOHN VAN CLEEF**

**CEO, COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER**

**WHY:** Van Cleef has led CRC since 2018, helping create paths to healthy food, stable homes and safe relationships. **NOTABLE:** His tenure has created greater program accessibility via new centers in Carlsbad and San Marcos and plans to renovate CRC's Encinitas campus. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He previously led The Salvation Army, YMCA and Palomar Health. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits." – *Martin Luther King Jr.*



**SIDD VIVEK**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Vivek has led JASDC since 2019, working to empower youths to achieve future economic success. **NOTABLE:** Vivek was SD Business Journal's CEO of the Year in 2022. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He's a member of the board of directors for the San Diego Regional EDG and on the board of the NTC Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Talent is universal; opportunity is not.' Let's be the opportunity for talented people, who may not be as privileged as us, and who will ultimately make us all better together."



**DEACON JIM VARGAS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, FATHER JOE'S VILLAGES**

**WHY:** Vargas leads FJV, the largest homeless services provider in Southern California. **NOTABLE:** Under his tenure, FJV has helped bring affordable housing, comprehensive medical and behavioral health care, detox and shelter to the most vulnerable. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a deacon of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego, serving Mary, Star of the Sea in La Jolla. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Reflection and discernment leads to prudent decisions." Favorite quote: "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." – *St. Teresa of Calcutta*



**BRENT WAKEFIELD**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, MEALS ON WHEELS SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Wakefield has led MoWSD since 2020, ensuring seniors receive meals and personal connection. **NOTABLE:** Under Wakefield's leadership, the organization opened the Kitchen and Senior Innovation Hub, aiming to deliver 1 million meals annually by 2026. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** MoWSD supports more than 2,100 seniors daily, delivering nearly 60,000 meals monthly. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Leadership is about building systems that make a lasting difference. At Meals on Wheels, it's not just about delivering meals—it's about delivering dignity, connection, and care to those who need it most."





SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

SD500

MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024

CONGRATULATIONS

Julie Lowen

Founder & President

With a team serving hundreds of children every day, Julie Lowen continues to inspire, innovate and grow the definition of early education and childcare.



Children's Paradise

preschool and infant centers

Come work for one of SDPJ's MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADERS



GET INFO

CONGRATULATIONS

Laura Tancredi-Baese

Home Start CEO



Laura, your steadfast commitment to enhancing the lives of San Diego's most vulnerable children, individuals, and families distinguishes you as a true leader in the community.

We are grateful for your visionary leadership.

— Home Start's Board of Directors & Staff



HOME START

Strengthening Families Protects Children

Learn more or make a gift: [home-start.org](http://home-start.org)

**BETZY WEINBLATT-LYNCH**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, LAWRENCE FAMILY JCC**

**WHY:** Since 2017, Weinblatt-Lynch has championed Jewish heritage, identity, experiences and values in San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Weinblatt-Lynch has dedicated more than 20 years of her career in the JCC movement. She was the San Diego Business Journal Businesswoman of the Year in 2019. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Lawrence Family JCC provides an inclusive environment for all. **QUOTE:** "If you believe you can break something, have faith that you can repair it." – *Rabbi Nachman of Breslov*



**BRIAN ZOTTI**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, OPTIONS FOR ALL**

**WHY:** For almost four years, Zotti has served as President and CEO of OFA, empowering adults with disabilities to live life without limits. **NOTABLE:** He drives the vision and strategy for OFA's statewide operations, overseeing more than 400 team members serving 1,700 clients across California. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He serves on the board of directors at San Diego Pride. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Culture is not the weather; it doesn't just happen. Every team member plays a part in making it something special" – *Justen Stevens, Employee Experience Manager, OFA*



**TONY YOUNG**

**INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP**

**WHY:** Young leads SDWP, which helps jobseekers and businesses in the county and is also principal owner at Civic Link Strategies. **NOTABLE:** Young was formerly CEO at American Red Cross in San Diego County and a member of the SD City Council. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Young is President and CEO at RISE San Diego, which develops urban leaders. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe that investing in workforce development is crucial for the economic vitality and long-term success of our community."



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
Most Influential Leaders in San Diego 2024

Congratulations  
**Douglas Morton**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SAN DIEGO BLOOD BANK

On behalf of our donors, staff, volunteers, partners, and the hospitals & patients we serve, thank you for over 20 years of leadership and contributions to our lifesaving mission.

San Diego Blood Bank

To learn how San Diego Blood Bank partners with the community to save local patient lives every day, visit [sandiegobloodbank.org](http://sandiegobloodbank.org)

SBCSSanDiego.org

SB CSS STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Congratulations to our President and CEO **Kathryn Lembo** for her nomination to the SD500. Under her visionary leadership, SB CSS has grown from a small drop-in center to one of San Diego County's largest social service agencies with 500+ staff reaching more than 50,000 children, youth, and families every year - and a new community engagement center on the horizon!

**From all of us at SB CSS: Thank you, Kathie!**



*Congratulations!*  
**BRENT WAKEFIELD**

The Meals on Wheels San Diego Board of Trustees congratulates President and CEO Brent Wakefield on being selected as one of San Diego's most influential people. Through Brent's leadership, Meals on Wheels is poised to combat hunger and social isolation for all of San Diego's seniors and disabled veterans.

## CONGRATULATIONS

To UWSD's President & CEO,  
**Nancy L. Sasaki.**



*San Diego Business Journal's  
SD500 Influential Business Leader*

Thank you for your work ensuring all San Diego County children, individuals, and families have the support they need to achieve educational success and financial security.

[uwsd.org](http://uwsd.org)




A visionary leader who has fostered a culture of empowerment and innovation, driving Options for All to help people live life without limits.



Congratulations to Brian Zotti, CEO of Options for All, on being named one of SDBJ's 500 Most Influential Leaders!



# morning edition

NPR NEWS

**Monday - Friday | 4:00AM - 9:00AM**  
KPBS 89.5 FM | (97.7 FM Calexico)



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: LEILA FADEL, STEVE INSKEEP, MICHEL MARTIN, AND A MARTÍNEZ

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SAN DIEGO 500

EDUCATION

**GAIL F. BAKER, PH.D.**

**SVP & PROVOST, UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Baker believes education changes lives and is at the nexus of teaching and learning at USD. **NOTABLE:** Baker is a champion for faculty and students and improving their educational experience while raising USD's profile. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Baker ensures that USD is a welcoming environment for students and faculty of all backgrounds. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "It's not about you.' As a servant leader, you're a conduit, a bridge; a connector; a builder. Your role is to bring opportunity to others."



**JAMES T. HARRIS III, DED**

**PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Harris has been president at USD since 2015, and says he had his life transformed as a first-generation college student. **NOTABLE:** Harris is ranked No. 2 nationally by the American Enterprise Institute for keeping tuition affordable, improving student success and expanding access for historically underrepresented student groups. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Harris teaches students to embrace David versus Goliath moments – by accepting challenges, thinking creatively and confidently saying yes. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Pope Francis says a shepherd must be among the sheep and smell of the flock."



**SUNITA "SUNNY" COOKE**

**PRESIDENT & SUPERINTENDENT, MIRACOSTA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

**WHY:** Since 2015, Cooke has led MiraCosta College and has been a respected California community college CEO for 17 years. **NOTABLE:** Under her leadership, MiraCosta introduced new degrees, including a biomanufacturing bachelor's degree. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She sits on the San Diego Regional EDC executive committee and serves as Chair of the American Association of Community Colleges, representing 1,100 community colleges nationwide. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be the change you want to see in the world." – Gandhi



**PRADEEP K. KHOSLA**

**CHANCELLOR, UC SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Khosla has been UC San Diego's chancellor since 2012, leading more than 43,000 students. **NOTABLE:** Khosla initiated and led UCSD's first-ever Strategic Plan and 10-year, \$2 billion campaign for UCSD, which eventually raised \$3.05 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He has expanded college access and affordability for underserved populations and initiated interdisciplinary research initiatives to foster collaboration and solve societal challenges. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A mind that is stretched by new experience can never go back to its old dimensions." – Oliver Wendell Holmes



**ADELA DE LA TORRE**

**PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY**

**WHY:** SDSU's president since 2018, De la Torre is the first woman/first Chicana president there. **NOTABLE:** She has more than three decades as an economist, public-health researcher and higher-education leader. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Under her charge, SDSU received federal designation as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Very few accomplishments are individual. Surround yourself with the brightest people who will challenge you in an honest debate. Together with your shared core values and vision, you will reach the best outcome for all."



**P. WESLEY LUNDBURG**

**PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO MIRAMAR COLLEGE**

**WHY:** Lundburg has been president since 2020 at Miramar College (part of SD Community College District) and has nearly 15,000 students. **NOTABLE:** A Coast Guard veteran, he has owned and operated a full-service fishing charter boat company. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a board member of 211 San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Ships don't sink because of the water around them; ships sink because of the water that gets in them. Don't let what's happening around you get inside you and weigh you down."



**ASHANTI T. HANDS**

**PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE**

**WHY:** Dr. Ashanti Hands has been with SDMC for nearly 16 years, including college president since 2022. **NOTABLE:** Hands leads one of the largest community colleges in California (30,000 students), and is HSI, AANAPISI, parent-friendly and Military Gold Status-friendly school. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hands is an equity-focused, joyful leader with deep commitment to diversity, access, belonging and student success. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "You either walk inside your story and own it or you stand outside your story and hustle for your worthiness." – Brené Brown



**MARK D. MILLIRON, PH.D.**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (NU)**

**WHY:** Milliron leads one of the largest private nonprofit Minority Serving Institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions in the U.S. **NOTABLE:** He serves on myriad boards and councils supporting innovation in education. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Milliron served as Deputy Director for Higher Education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and helped found OERcommons.org – the largest digital public library of free education resources in the world. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Learning can open pathways to possibility for people at all ages and stages."





# LIGHTING THE WAY *FORWARD*

THIS YEAR, AS THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO COMMEMORATES ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY, WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR HONOREES FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP, FOR THEIR SERVICE TO USD, FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AS INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THE SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY AND FOR THE MANY WAYS THEY ARE **LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD.**



**Darlene Marcos Shiley**  
CHAIR EMERITA,  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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BURNHAM-MOORES CENTER  
FOR REAL ESTATE



**Coreen G. Petti**  
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT  
OF UNIVERSITY EVENTS  
AND PARTNERSHIPS



University of San Diego®

**DR. DAN MOSHAVI**

**DEAN, FOWLER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY**



**WHY:** Moshavi has served as the Thomas and Evelyn Page Dean of SDSU's Fowler College of Business since August 2022. **NOTABLE:** He was a faculty member and dean at Montana State and San Jose State universities and has career experience in marketing and PR.

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** Moshavi has served as a research fellow for the Nemours Center for Medical Leadership. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The purpose of education is to create in a person the ability to see the world for him/herself." – James Baldwin

**ELLEN NEUFELDT**

**PRESIDENT, CAL STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS**



**WHY:** In her fifth year as CSUSM President, Neufeldt is a national trailblazer in social mobility through innovative programs meeting the needs of both students and community. **NOTABLE:** CSUSM's new behavioral health program allows students to earn a bachelor's degree in three years, starting with dual enrollment in high school. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** San Diego needs 18,500 more behavioral health professionals to meet demand. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Higher education must evolve to ensure a career-ready workforce for the jobs of the future. CSUSM is committed to being an engine of social mobility."

**LYNN NEAULT**

**CHANCELLOR, GROSSMONT-CUYAMACA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**



**WHY:** Neault has managed the GCCCD since 2020, and has more than 30 years in higher education leadership. **NOTABLE:** She has led initiatives focused on fiscal stability and enrollment recovery for the colleges, while forging many successful partnerships in East County.

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** As a tireless advocate, she is focused on equitable access and support for students, many of whom are first-generation, from underserved communities, and adult learners. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." – Nelson Mandela

**LISA ORDÓÑEZ**

**DEAN, RADY SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, UC SAN DIEGO**



**WHY:** Ordóñez was appointed Dean of the Rady School of Management in 2019 and is the school's second dean. **NOTABLE:** She is a 2022 San Diego Business Journal Businesswoman of the Year honoree. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ordóñez has brought a renewed emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion to the school and has made strides in increasing the number of female and underrepresented minority faculty at Rady. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have chosen to acknowledge my limitations and rely on my team. No successful leader works alone."

*Congratulations*  
**DR. SUNNY COOKE!**

MiraCosta College proudly celebrates Dr. Sunny Cooke, recognized as one of San Diego's Top 500 Most Influential People by the *San Diego Business Journal*.

Her visionary leadership and dedication to student success and community impact have made a lasting difference not only in North San Diego County but beyond.

We are honored to have Dr. Cooke at the helm, guiding MiraCosta College toward a brighter future.



*Transforming Lives and Communities for 90 Years*

**COREEN G. PETTI**

AVP, UNIVERSITY EVENTS & PARTNERSHIPS,  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

**WHY:** During her nearly 30 years at USD, Petti has managed some of USD's most prestigious projects. She's co-chairing the university's yearlong 75th anniversary celebration, serving as event chair for USD's Founders Gala. **NOTABLE:** Since its inception in 2009, the Founders Gala has raised more than \$6 million in net proceeds to support USD student scholars. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** USD prepares Changemakers who make positive social change in the world. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Treat people like stars, and stars like people!"



**DR. STAR RIVERA-LACEY, PH.D.**  
SUPERINTENDENT & PRESIDENT,  
PALOMAR COLLEGE

**WHY:** Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey has led Palomar since 2021 after 23 years of work within the California Community College System. **NOTABLE:** Her Ph.D. dissertation focused on exploring the relationship between low-income, first-generation Latinx community college students and counselors with a focus on aspiration, achievement and increasing student success. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Through volunteering, she focuses on the health and wellbeing of our younger generations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Education is proof that life circumstances do not determine your destiny, nor do the confine you to a predetermined path."



**RONALD RAMIREZ**

DEAN, COLLEGE OF BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION, CAL STATE SAN MARCOS

**WHY:** Ronald Ramirez has been the CoBA's dean since April 2022, and was previously a faculty member at the University of Colorado-Denver. **NOTABLE:** Ramirez began his career in private industry, working in the telecommunications, semiconductor and oil industries. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ramirez is a member of the Military Affairs Advisory Council. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Mission-driven organizations have an unmatched energy and dedication to accomplishing a shared goal. Being part of something much larger than yourself encourages commitment and a resiliency to overcoming challenges."



**JESSICA ROBINSON**

PRESIDENT, CUYAMACA COLLEGE

**WHY:** Robinson has been with Cuyamaca College for nearly seven years, president since July 2023. **NOTABLE:** Robinson is proud to be the first Cuyamaca president who's also a Cuyamaca alum. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She's devoted her career to attaining equitable success for community college students, borne from personal history as a first-generation college student and Latina. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Take every single part of you that is different, unique, and possibly overlooked and use it as your superpower. Be unapologetically you, every single day in every possible way."



**National University  
Congratulates the  
SD500 Honorees!**



**Dr. Mark D. Milliron**  
President & CEO



**Dr. Nancy Rohland-Heinrich**  
Executive Vice President,  
Community Engagement

**BREAKING BARRIERS  
BUILDING FUTURES**

-  **80K** Workforce and professional development students
-  **50K** Degree-seeking learners
-  **50%** Undergraduate students who are active-duty military, Veterans, and dependents
-  **240K** Alumni in 50 states and 20 countries
-  **130K** Total learners served per year



**NANCY ROHLAND-HEINRICH, ED.D.**  
**EVP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT,**  
**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (NU)**



**WHY:** For over 40 years, Dr. Nancy Rohland-Heinrich has been instrumental leader in growing the impact of Veteran-founded non-profit National University. **NOTABLE:** Named SDBJ Business Women of the Year 2024 Lifetime Achievement Honoree and 2024 recipient of the Todd W. Gutschow Visionary and Outstanding Leadership Award granted by the Classroom of the Future Foundation. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Incoming Board Chair for LEAD San Diego and Board President-elect of Sports San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “My extensive experience at National University have taught me the importance of creating and cultivating relationships within our communities and deepening my commitment to giving back and paying it forward. Serving others is in the fabric of National University and will always be at the core of our mission.”

**MARK SANCHEZ**  
**SUPERINTENDENT & PRESIDENT,**  
**SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE**



**WHY:** Sanchez has led Southwestern for nearly four years. **NOTABLE:** He has more than 25 years of experience in community college leadership, teaching and instruction, and workforce development. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sanchez developed districtwide implementation of comprehensive race conscious-equity focused instruction, student services and online programs. He’s brought students from diverse backgrounds together to engage in cross-cultural learning and engagement. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Once you realize that you can do something, it would be difficult to live with yourself if you didn’t do it.” – James Baldwin

**SEAN M. SCOTT**  
**PRESIDENT & DEAN, CALIFORNIA**  
**WESTERN SCHOOL OF LAW**



**WHY:** Scott has been president/dean at Cal Western since 2020. **NOTABLE:** Scott secured \$3 million from Elaine Galinson and Herb Solomon and raised a school-record \$1 million matching gift. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Scott speaks frequently on legal education and the diversification of the legal academy. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “To me, leadership is about encouraging people. It’s about stimulating them. It’s about enabling them to achieve what they can achieve – and to do that with a purpose.” – Christine Lagarde

**RICKY SHABAZZ**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO CITY**  
**COLLEGE**



**WHY:** Shabazz has been president and CEO since 2017 at SDCC, focused on student completion, success and social justice. **NOTABLE:** He takes pride in helping students from diverse communities achieve academic excellence and building highly effective teams. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He serves on boards including the Museum of US, the San Diego United Way and the American Association of Community Colleges DEI commission. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Leadership is overrated but very necessary. Don’t get caught up in the numbers. Try to change lives one person at a time.”



**THE CSUSM FOUNDATION BOARD CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT ELLEN NEUFELDT!**

Congratulations to Dr. Ellen J. Neufeldt, president of California State University San Marcos, on being named one of the most influential leaders in the San Diego region!

A visionary leader, President Neufeldt works each day toward making CSUSM a national model for student success while also meeting the diverse workforce needs of the San Diego region. Under President Neufeldt’s leadership, CSUSM remains in the top 1% in the nation on the CollegeNET Social Mobility Index.



**GREGORY SMITH**  
**CHANCELLOR, SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY**  
**COLLEGE DISTRICT**



**WHY:** Smith in February was appointed chancellor of the SDCCD, serving 90,000 students. **NOTABLE:** SDCCD has 5,000 employees and has an annual impact of \$4.5 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Smith’s vision is to uplift the diverse individuals and communities served by SDCCD to expand upward social and economic mobility, support local industry, and improve the quality of life for all. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Curiosity is essential. When we work to understand others we learn more than we teach, we give more than we take, and we elevate entire communities.”

**DENISE WHISENHUNT**  
**PRESIDENT, GROSSMONT COLLEGE**



**WHY:** Denise Whisenhunt has been president at GC since August 2021 after a dozen years at SD City College. **NOTABLE:** She has spent more than 25 years in public service and proudly leads the largest community college in East County San Diego. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She has dedicated much of her professional career working with underserved and underprepared populations, with a focus on increasing access and opportunities through equity-based practices to help students reach their goals. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “My mantra: ‘Be the change you want to see in the world’ – Ghandi

SAN DIEGO DOWNTOWN



SAN DIEGO 500

FINANCE

**CHRIS AMBLE**

**MARKET EXECUTIVE, WELLS FARGO BANK**

**WHY:** Chris Amble is Market Executive of Wells Fargo Commercial Banking for San Diego County and the Inland Empire Region which serves companies with annual sales ranging from \$10 million to \$2.5 billion, and real estate investors with a global portfolio greater than \$25 million. **NOTABLE:** Amble serves on the board of directors of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

**QUOTABLE:** "Pause to think about what better practices and strategies could be, and what best practices might look like."



**VALERIE ATTISHA**

**VP, CLIENT & COMMUNITY RELATIONS, PNC BANK**

**WHY:** Valerie Attisha leads PNC's advertising, marketing and communications, employee volunteerism, client activities, and community engagement strategies in the San Diego region. **NOTABLE:** Her leadership in philanthropy led to PNC being named Outstanding Philanthropic Business by the Association of Fundraising Professionals – San Diego in 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She sits on the boards of San Diego Children's Discovery Museum and The Old Globe. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – *Winston Churchill*



**PAUL BARBER**

**CHAIRMAN, JMI EQUITY**

**WHY:** Paul Barber has been with JMI for more than three decades and is currently chairman of the equity firm, which boasts a portfolio of cloud software companies that represents \$9 billion in combined revenue, \$75 billion in aggregate enterprise value, and over 37,000 jobs. **NOTABLE:** Barber is a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Business School. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster; And treat those two imposters just the same..." – *Rudyard Kipling*



**BILL BIRNIE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, FRONTWAVE CREDIT UNION**

**WHY:** Bill Birnie leads Frontwave Credit Union, which serves 124,000 members, has 13 branch locations and \$1.4 billion in assets. He helped secure Frontwave's naming rights for Oceanside's sports/entertainment arena, which opened in September 2024. **NOTABLE:** Birnie is a 25-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Birnie serves on Oceanside Chamber of Commerce and Defense Credit Union Council boards. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Some people wonder all their lives if they've made a difference. The Marines don't have that problem." – *Ronald Reagan*



**NEIL BLOOM**

**MANAGING PARTNER, INTERLOCK CAPITAL**

**WHY:** Beyond managing Interlock Capital, Neal Bloom is a fixture in San Diego's startup community through his Fresh Brewed Tech podcast and newsletter and Rising Tide Partners consultancy, for which he is CEO. **NOTABLE:** Bloom studied mechanical engineering at UCSD and worked with NASA on the Space Shuttle main engines and the upcoming Artemis program. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is board member of Startup San Diego. **QUOTABLE:** "Joining together and having skin in the game in our community allows for a rising tide to lift all boats."



**RICK BREGMAN**

**MARKET PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO, BANK OF AMERICA**

**WHY:** Rick Bregman leads the San Diego market for Bank of America, the nation's second largest bank. **NOTABLE:** Bregman is BofA's National Co-Head of Healthcare Commercial Banking. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** BofA San Diego's Student Leaders program connects high schoolers with paid internships with nonprofits like Just in Time for Foster Youth and Reality Changers. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are." – *John Wooden*



**TERESA CAMPBELL**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO COUNTY CREDIT UNION**

**WHY:** Teresa Campbell led SDCCU's growth to over 437,000 members, \$11 billion in assets and \$1.6 billion in net worth. **NOTABLE:** Campbell won a Gold Stevie Award in the 2023 Stevie Awards for Women in Business. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** One of SDCCU's community programs is its Lift Up Literacy campaign, collecting books for the San Diego County Library. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Treat everyone with respect; I don't ask people to do something I wouldn't do. And of course, always do what's right for the organization."



**BAMBOS CHARALAMBOUS**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, MARKET TEAM LEAD, J.P. MORGAN PRIVATE BANK, SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Bambos Charalambous' team provides wealth management advice, strategies and services to successful individuals, family offices, foundations and endowments throughout San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Charalambous' more than 15 years of financial services experience includes serving in J.P. Morgan Private Bank's Europe, Middle East and Africa Strategy Team. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** JPMorgan San Diego's Market Leadership Team supports local nonprofits like the Chicano Federation, San Diego Workforce Partnership and the Honor Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The highest form of wisdom is kindness." – *the Talmud*



**DAVID CREAN**

**FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER, CARDIFF ADVISORY LLC**

**WHY:** David Crean, founder of Cardiff Advisory, is a longtime financial leader in healthcare and life science industries. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Crean launched 1004 Venture Partners, a global specialist fund focusing on health tech, age tech and healthcare infrastructures. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Crean volunteers as mentor and advisor at Nucleate and Venture Forward and serves on Biocom Claifornia's Capital Development and Partnering Committee. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Innovate or stagnate. Be willing to disrupt your own business model before others do."



**MICHAEL DORVILLIER**

**CO-OWNER, SYMBIO FINANCIAL PARTNERS**

**WHY:** Michael Dorvillier brings more than two decades of experience to Symbio Financial Partners, which he co-founded with Shari Miller in 2002. **NOTABLE:** Symbio Financial Partners ranks amongst the top 1% of practices at LPL Financial. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He chairs the La Jolla Concours d'Elegance annual automotive event benefiting the La Jolla Historical Society, The La Jolla Merchants Association and other charities. **QUOTABLE:** "The impact we have on our community, the car culture, our sponsors and vendors, and most importantly, our charities, is incredibly impactful."



# From community banking to community building

We're championing inclusive growth in "America's finest city" because when San Diego succeeds, we succeed.

Congratulations to all of this year's SD500 honorees including our exceptional colleagues — Bambos Charalambous and Aaron Ryan.

JPMorganChase celebrates this group of most-admired business community leaders.

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**ERIC ELLINGSEN**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, CALIFORNIA**

**BANK & TRUST**

**WHY:** Eric Ellingsen leads California Bank & Trust, which boasts more than \$14 billion in loans, \$15 billion in deposits and more than 85 branch locations. In 2024, CB&T acquired FirstBank's four branch locations in Coachella Valley. **NOTABLE:** Ellingsen sits on the executive committee of CB&T parent company Zions Bancorporation. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** CB&T offers community development grant programs and an array of resources for women- and minority-owned businesses. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "As CEO at CB&T, it's a privilege to contribute to the growth of the San Diego economy."



**STEVE ESPINO**

**SVP & DIVISION MANAGER, BANNER BANK**

**WHY:** Steve Espino leads Banner Bank, a financial institution with more than \$15 billion in assets and locations in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California. **NOTABLE:** Espino has been playing guitar for more than 50 years and organized his first band at age 13. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Banner holds a fall food drive for the San Diego Food Bank. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do...Sail away from the safe harbor...Explore. Dream. Discover" – Mark Twain



**ROCKETTE EWELL**

**VP, CALIFORNIA REGION MANAGER, COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, U.S. BANK**

**WHY:** Rockette Ewell leads U.S. Bank's California Community Affairs team overseeing philanthropic giving and community outreach efforts. She also leads development of partnerships supporting the bank's corporate social responsibility priorities. **NOTABLE:** She was recognized by San Diego's Diversionary Theatre with the 2023 Fritz Klein Memorial Award in recognition of outstanding philanthropic support for the arts. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ewell serves on the board of Episcopal Community Services. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We are greater than, and greater for, the sum of us." – author Heather McGhee



**KIM FOLSOM**

**FOUNDER, CHAIRPERSON & CEO, FOUNDERS FIRST CAPITAL PARTNERS**

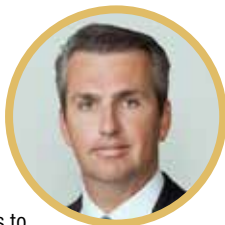
**WHY:** Kim Folsom founded Founders First Capital Partners, the first revenue-based financier and online accelerator focused on growing million-dollar small businesses. **NOTABLE:** Folsom is also founder of LIFT Development Enterprises, Inc., a nonprofit community-development organization helping underrepresented small business owners overcome challenges due to lack of access to capital. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "While everybody focuses on unicorns, we focus on their cousins: the zebras and the Clydesdales."



**GREG GARRABRANTS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, AXOS BANK**

**WHY:** Under Greg Garrabrants' leadership, the \$20.3 billion in assets Axos Bank has ranked as one of the highest performing banks in the country. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Axos Bank Holding company Axos Financial had a stockholders' equity of \$2.3 billion - a 19.5% increase from 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Axos Bank gives to the SEAL Family Foundation and San Diego Rescue Mission. **QUOTABLE:** "Our consistent growth and profitability through various economic cycles are a testament to the diversity of our businesses and strong execution by our team."



**CHRISTOFFER GROVES**

**FOUNDER & CEO, GROVES CAPITAL**

**WHY:** As the co-founder of Groves Capital Inc., alongside his wife, Christoffer Groves has grown the company from a two-person operation into an enterprise of 475 professionals, generating over \$5.6 billion in loan production. **NOTABLE:** Groves is a 2024 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The key to success is focusing on your sphere and helping all those around you to help them achieve their goals in doing so it will always come back around."



**ASHLEY HAYSLIP**

**MARKET PRESIDENT, ENTERPRISE**

**BANK & TRUST**

**WHY:** Ashley Hayslip evaluates business prospects, develops and executes growth strategies and actively pursues Enterprise Bank & Trust's community-focused objectives in San Diego. **NOTABLE:** In her first year leading Enterprise's San Diego commercial team, Hayslip positioned it for sustained growth, recruiting eight new team members and retaining every member of the original team. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2024, she joined the board of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt



**JAY HENSLEE**

**VP & DISTRICT MANAGER, U.S. BANK**

**WHY:** Jay Henslee oversees retail operations for U.S. Bank in Greater San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Henslee helped expand U.S. Bank's regional presence, particularly within the LGBTQ+ and South Bay communities. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Henslee is president of the San Diego Performing Arts League and serves on the boards of Downtown San Diego Partnership, Diversionary Theatre, City Ballet and Horton Plaza Theatres Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Cultivate an environment where people perform, not just because it's their job, but because they would never dream of letting you down."



**ASHOK KAMAL**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FUND MANAGER, NUFUND VENTURE GROUP**

**WHY:** Ashok Kamal leads NuFund Venture Group – formerly Tech Coast Angels, San Diego – one of the largest and most successful early-stage technology investor groups in the region, with more than 350 members. **NOTABLE:** Since 2018, Kamal has served as Entrepreneur in Residence at UC San Diego's Office of Innovation & Commercialization. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Kamal is an Entertainers 4 Education Alliance board member, providing strategy, marketing plans, program curricula and fundraising support for the organization. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Business is a war of attrition."



**MARK KREMERS**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, MLWM MARKET EXECUTIVE, MERRILL LYNCH**

**WHY:** As Merrill Lynch's Market Executive for the San Diego market, Kremers oversees more than 250 associates and \$30 billion in client assets. **NOTABLE:** Kremers served as the Chairman of the Merrill Lynch Market Executive Strategy Council in 2022 and currently serves as the San Diego Market Integration Executive for Bank of America. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is on the board of the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference." – Winston Churchill





# 3 U.S. Bank leaders named among most influential in San Diego

U.S. Bank is proud to celebrate Rockette Ewell, Jay Henslee and Manuel Rodriguez for their recognition in San Diego Business Journal's SD500 list of the most influential people in San Diego for 2024.

Rockette leads the U.S. Bank California Community Affairs team and has developed community partnerships and philanthropic giving across six California markets. Jay has played a key role as U.S. Bank district manager, overseeing retail operations and multiple branches with a team of more than 100 employees. Manuel's more than 20 years of banking experience has bolstered his work managing banking teams in the San Diego and Inland Empire markets.

Thanks to their leadership, the bank's regional presence has expanded throughout California, strengthening their teams, clients and communities along the way.

*Congratulations to Rockette, Jay, Manuel and the other SD500 honorees!*



**ROCKETTE EWELL**

Vice President  
California Region Manager,  
Community Affairs



**JAY HENSLEE**

Vice President  
District Manager



**MANUEL RODRIGUEZ**

Senior Vice President  
Managing Market Director,  
Institutional Client Group



**TODD LANE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, CALIFORNIA COAST CREDIT UNION**

**WHY:** Todd Lane has led Cal Coast since 2014, growing the credit union to \$3.6 billion in assets, nearly 200,000 members, 26 branches and 60 shared branch locations. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Cal Coast opened a Student Financial Center at SDSU with a \$3 million gift to the school. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lane sits on the board of the Cal Coast Cares Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "There is only one thing I ask of myself and those I work with: Make us a better company."



**CHRIS MARSH**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, WEALTH MANAGEMENT, UBS FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.**

**WHY:** Chris Marsh's 20-plus years of UBS wealth management experience has included working with advisor teams from around the world on strategies for growing UBS' global business. **NOTABLE:** Prior to joining UBS, Marsh held professional roles in technology, business development, consulting, and business coaching. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2018, Marsh helped spearhead the San Diego Trafficking Prevention Collective, which educates youths and their caretakers about human trafficking. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "When we do what we do best, we turn it into action and make measurable impact."



**JOHN MAGUIRE**

**DIVISION CEO, TORREY PINES BANK**

**WHY:** John Maguire leads Torrey Pines Bank's operations throughout Southern California and also oversees Small Business Banking for TPB's parent company Western Alliance Bank. **NOTABLE:** Maguire was a founding member of Torrey Pines Bank in 2003. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** At Western Alliance, he co-founded CARES@Work, a resource group for Western Alliance people who are living with cancer, caring for someone with cancer or cancer survivors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "It's about relationships: connecting, supporting, and contributing to a thriving San Diego for 20 years."



**RICK MARTINEZ**

**COMMERCIAL BANKING MARKET LEADER, PNC BANK**

**WHY:** Rick Martinez leads the San Diego Commercial Banking team responsible for growing the San Diego and Temecula Regions for PNC Bank. **NOTABLE:** Martinez has held leadership roles at leading national and local banks Wells Fargo, Bank of Southern California, Torrey Pines Banks and BBVA. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Martinez currently serves as Past-President for Lifeline Community Services and previous board and committee service includes Growing Minds, TrueCare and Chicano Federation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Clear eyes, full heart, can't lose!"



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**ASHISH MASIH**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP**



**WHY:** Since 2017, Ashish Masih has led Encore Capital Group, an international specialty finance company with 2023 revenues of \$1.22 billion, international operations and more than 7,400 employees. **NOTABLE:** Masih is a member of the Wall Street Journal CEO Council. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Every November, Encore’s Connected Week collects food and clothing items to donate to charities. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Credit is the lifeblood of all modern economies and Encore Capital Group plays an essential role in enabling this credit ecosystem.”

**STEVE O’CONNELL**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, CALIFORNIA CREDIT UNION**



**WHY:** Steve O’Connell is president and CEO of California Credit Union, which has over \$5 billion in assets, 25 branch locations and serves 200,000 members. **NOTABLE:** As North Island Credit Union CEO, in 2017 O’Connell led the merger with California Credit Union. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** California Credit Union partners with organizations such as Morale, Welfare and Recreation, the USS Midway, Wings Over America and Wounded Warriors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** Start each day knowing you can make a difference. End each day knowing that you did.”

**A.J. MOYER**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, C3BANK**



**WHY:** A.J. Moyer leads C3bank, a banking institution with offices in Encinitas, San Marcos and Riverside. In early 2024, he led C3’s expansion into Nashville, Tennessee. **NOTABLE:** Before joining C3, Moyer was vice president of business development and strategy for the Behr Paint Company. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Moyer created C3bank’s CARES team, which during the pandemic funded PPP loans for around 500 local businesses. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.” – *Phil Jackson*

**JULIAN PARRA**  
**NATIONAL HEAD, COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL BANKING, WESTERN ALLIANCE BANK**



**WHY:** Julian Parra leads Commercial & Industrial Banking at Western Alliance Bank. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Parra led Western Alliance’s creation of new aerospace and defense banker team, and a food and agriculture banker team, both based in California. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Parra serves on the boards of Junior Achievement, County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce and the CSU San Marcos Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Leadership is about being in the service of others. Be a coach, mentor or sponsor. Don’t be just a boss.”



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**LISA PAUL-HILL**

**CEO, WHEELHOUSE CREDIT UNION**

**WHY:** Lisa Paul-Hill has served as President & CEO of Wheelhouse Credit Union since 2017. During her tenure, she upgraded digital properties, introduced new products and enhanced member experience.

**NOTABLE:** Paul-Hill is a 2024 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is board chair of Make-A-Wish San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "This quote resonates with me on both a personal and professional level. A constant reminder of how valuable and precious time is: 'Time is precious, waste it wisely!' – K Bromberg."



**ALAN PROHASKA**

**REGIONAL PRESIDENT & HEAD OF CORPORATE BANKING, PNC BANK**

**WHY:** Since PNC's expansion into San Diego in 2021, Alan Prohaska has grown the bank's presence in the market exponentially. **NOTABLE:** Prohaska heads up all of PNC's charitable giving in San Diego through the PNC Foundation. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He sits on the board of the YMCA, Symphony, and Regional EDC.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The essence of being human is imperfection. Know that you're going to make mistakes. Failure is simply a price we pay to achieve success." – John C. Maxwell



**MANUEL RODRIGUEZ**

**MARKET PRESIDENT, U.S. BANK**

**WHY:** Manuel Rodriguez leads U.S. Bank's company-wide efforts and activities in San Diego County and chairs the San Diego market's charitable foundation committee. **NOTABLE:** Rodriguez has more than 20 years of banking experience, including a 12-year stint at Wells Fargo working his way from analyst to vice president positions. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rodriguez serves on the boards of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, Junior Achievement and the Downtown San Diego Partnership.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." – Benjamin Franklin



**ALEX RODRIGUEZ**

**SVP & RELATIONSHIP MANAGER, ENTERPRISE BANK & TRUST**

**WHY:** Alex Rodriguez has been Senior VP/Relationship Manager with Enterprise Bank & Trust for 15 years. **NOTABLE:** He holds a graduate degree from the prestigious Pacific Coast Banking School. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rodriguez serves on the board of directors of Accessity, whose mission is to open doors of financial opportunity, primarily to entrepreneurs of color, women, and immigrants.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Each day is a new day. Never worry about problems that have a solution, only worry about those that do not have one."



**AARON RYAN**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, REGION HEAD, SAN DIEGO MIDDLE MARKET BANKING, JPMORGAN CHASE**

**WHY:** As region head and middle market banking manager for JPMorgan Chase, Ryan leads a team responsible for servicing the needs of San Diego mid-size businesses, nonprofits and municipalities. **NOTABLE:** Ryan is a graduate of Vista High and his first job was bagging groceries at Ralphs in Oceanside. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ryan co-leads JPMorgan's Market Leadership Team, which leads the bank's philanthropic endeavors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Life isn't about being perfect; it's about taking wrong turns but enjoying the unexpected views."



**STEVEN SEFTON**

**PRESIDENT, ENDEAVOR BANK**

**WHY:** Steven Sefton leads Endeavor Bank, a publicly traded and community focused business bank headquartered in downtown San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Endeavor grew its deposits by 20% in 2023, and in 2024 expanded into the Southern California markets of Los Angeles and Inland Empire. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sefton is an Advisory Board and Finance Committee Member for The Salvation Army. **QUOTABLE:** "It's too early to declare victory because we just started, but based on what I'm seeing, I'm very bullish right now."



**RICH STEINMEIER**

**CEO, LPL FINANCIAL**

**WHY:** Rich Steinmeier took the reins as CEO of LPL Financial in October 2024, following the ouster of Dan Arnold. **NOTABLE:** LPL's organic growth rate has more than doubled since Steinmeier joined the company in 2018 to lead its growth initiatives as Managing Director and Chief Growth Officer, his role before being named CEO. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "While change is always present, one thing has endured since I joined LPL six years ago: every day, our employees and our clients inspire me." – via LinkedIn post



**PAUL THIEL**

**PARTNER & SAN DIEGO MANAGING DIRECTOR, PATHSTONE**

**WHY:** Pual Thiel has nearly four decades as a leader in media, business and finance. He currently manages Pathstone's emerging San Diego office, launched in 2024. **NOTABLE:** His career also includes co-founding an AI technology company. He is a current member of the NuFund investor group and is Chairman's Roundtable Chairman Emeritus. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Thiel serves on the boards of the San Diego Humane Society and the La Jolla Institute for Immunology. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Inertia is the most powerful force in business, and in life."



**DAN YATES**

**CEO & CO-FOUNDER, ENDEAVOR BANK**

**WHY:** In 2017, Dan Yates co-founded Endeavor – the first new bank in San Diego in 10 years, which is now a publicly-traded bank serving businesses. **NOTABLE:** In March 2024, Endeavor announced the issuance of \$12.5 million in fixed-to-floating rate subordinated notes – capital raised for expansion into new market. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Yates is board chair of the Conrad Prebys Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Embrace change, empower your team, and lead with a vision that inspires greatness in your organization."



**SCOTT YATES**

**SVP & REGIONAL MANAGER, CALIFORNIA BANK OF COMMERCE**

**WHY:** Scott Yates is the regional leader of California Bank of Commerce, a commercial bank with \$4.6 billion in assets. **NOTABLE:** In August 2024, Yates helped lead the merger of Southern California BanCorp and California BanCorp. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Yates serves on the advisory board of the San Diego Financial Literacy Center, which helps individuals and families better understand how to manage their finances. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Do what's right. Do your best. Treat others as you would like to be treated." – Lou Holtz's "Three Simple Rules"



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**FRED ASLAN****CEO, ARTIVA**

**WHY:** Artiva CEO Fred Aslan is a veteran life science executive and investor with a history of successes. In 2024, he led Artiva's upsized, \$167 million IPO.

**NOTABLE:** Aslan cofounded Receptos Pharmaceuticals, which sold to Celgene for \$7 billion. **SOCIAL**

**IMPACT:** Aslan is on the board of BayBrazil, a nonprofit that connects U.S. and Brazilian tech communities. **WORDS**

**OF WISDOM:** "Find a career that genuinely aligns with your passions, and every day contributions will be highly enjoyable."

**JAMES CALLAGHAN JR.****PRESIDENT & CEO, TURN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**WHY:** James Callaghan Jr. heads TURN Behavioral Health Services over 650-person statewide operation focused on behavioral health, substance use, criminal justice, housing and veteran services. **NOTABLE:** Callaghan has decades of experience in nonprofit governance, leadership and mentoring. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Callaghan is the Chair of the Board for the San Diego North County Economic Development Council. **WORDS OF**

**WISDOM:** "TURN never stops seeking innovative solutions, and our diverse workforce and culturally competent programs embody our core values of Integrity, Diversity, Mentorship, and Inclusion."

**SARAH BOYCE****CEO, AVIDITY BIOSCIENCES**

**WHY:** Sarah Boyce joined Avidity as President and CEO in 2019, coming in with a bang by delivering the company a \$100 million Series C, followed by a nearly \$275 million IPO in 2020. In 2024, she led Avidity's more than \$345 million upsized public offering. **NOTABLE:** In 2023, Avidity 2023, signed a \$2.3 billion global licensing and research collaboration with Bristol Myers Squibb. **QUOTABLE:** "We would not be where we are today without the support, inspiration and partnership of the rare disease communities ..."

**GEORGE DEVRIES****CHAIRMAN & CEO, AMERICAN SPECIALTY HEALTH**

**WHY:** George DeVries co-founded American Specialty Health in 1987 and grew it to be the nation's largest independent administrator of specialty health care programs. **NOTABLE:** DeVries served on the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy and was a 2022 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** DeVries is on the Board of Trustees of the Culver Academies. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Whether it's a challenge you are trying to face, it's the people that make the difference overcoming it."

**DAVID BRENNER****PRESIDENT & CEO, SANFORD BURNHAM PREBYS MEDICAL DISCOVERY INSTITUTE**

**WHY:** David Brenner's experience in leading important health and science organizations extends well beyond his current role heading the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute. **NOTABLE:** Prior to his current role, Brenner guided nearly \$2 billion in expansions at UCSD – including the opening of the Jacobs Medical Center. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they say: We did it ourselves." – Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu

**RODGER DOUGHERTY JR.****SR. DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS, KAISER PERMANENTE SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Rodger Dougherty is responsible for Kaiser Permanente San Diego's health plan, hospital and medical group communications, public relations, and marketing efforts. **NOTABLE:** Dougherty began his career as a fire captain and paramedic for the Rural Metro Fire Department in Pima County Arizona. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He serves on the boards of San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, Downtown San Diego Partnership and Sports San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Adversity doesn't build character, it reveals it."

**KATE BRODERICK****CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER, TRI-LINK BIOTECHNOLOGIES – MARAVAI**

**WHY:** Kate Broderick led development of TriLink's CleanCap reagent, which has been pivotal for mRNA technologies deployed in manufacturing programs, including COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. Broderick is currently helping oversee TriLink's new \$130 million Sorrento Valley lab announced this year. **NOTABLE:** In 2023, Broderick named to the 2023 PharmaVoice 100 list. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Maravai LifeSciences Foundation supports nonprofits including Curebound and Voices for Children. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The noblest cause in science is to dedicate your life to developing life-changing medicines."

**ERIC DUBE****PRESIDENT & CEO, TRAVERE THERAPEUTICS**

**WHY:** Eric Dube leads Traverre Therapeutics' mission to find treatments for rare diseases. In 2024, FDA fully approved Traverre's FILSPARI treatment for rare kidney disease IgAN. **NOTABLE:** Dube is a 2023 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dube serves on the steering committee for the Rare Disease Diversity Coalition. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I see the CEO role in biotech as one of finding great people and then giving them the vision and space to do their great work."

**JOE BURNETT****PRESIDENT & CEO, CLEARPOINT NEURO, INC.**

**WHY:** Joe Burnett led ClearPoint Neuro through a rebranding and pivot from a neurosurgery navigation product to a therapy-enabling tool. **NOTABLE:** This year, ClearPoint had record quarterly revenue across all its segments and also brought to market its SmartFrame OR navigation platform and ClearPoint Prism Laser Therapy System device. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** ClearPoint supports the Parkinson's Association of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "There is nothing you keep. There is only your reflection" – Andy Hull, Manchester Orchestra



**SHAHAB ELMI**

**CEO, CYMBIOTIKA**

**WHY:** Since founding Cymbiotika in 2018, Shahab Elmi has turned the supplements company into one of the nation's fastest growing businesses. Between 2020 and 2023 alone, Cymbiotika's revenue ballooned by 1,155%. **NOTABLE:** Elmi is a 2024 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Elmi supports Helping Hands for Afghans, Feeding America, Surfrider San Diego, and Animal Pad. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." – *Norman Vincent Peale*



**MICK FARRELL**

**CHAIRMAN & CEO, RESMED**

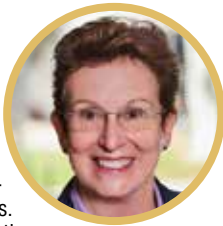
**WHY:** Mick Farrell has led ResMed to become the global leader in manufacturing innovative medical products and digital health solutions for treating and managing respiratory conditions, such as sleep apnea. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, ResMed posted record revenue of \$4.7 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The ResMed Foundation provides support for STEM and Arts education within San Diego County. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Without the help and support of your colleagues, you are dead in the water. With it, you can move mountains."



**JANE FINLEY**

**SVP & AREA MANAGER, KAISER PERMANENTE**

**WHY:** Jane Finley is the senior executive for all Kaiser Permanente Health Plan and Hospital Operations in San Diego County, representing more than 10,000 employees, three hospitals and 26 medical office locations. **NOTABLE:** Finley is a past chair of the Hospital Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She serves on the Board of Trustees of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and is on the boards of 211 San Diego and San Diego Regional EDC. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Always begin with the end in mind. And remember, the best way to succeed is to do what you love. Passion and purpose equals success."



**KERRY FORDE**

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, KAISER PERMANENTE**

**WHY:** Kerry Forde oversees Kaiser Permanente's three San Diego region hospitals with 789 licensed beds. **NOTABLE:** Prior to her COO role, she served Kaiser as Chief Nurse Executive – topping a long career in nursing that included a stint as a registered midwife in London. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "True success is helping others reach their full potential. There is no more meaningful investment a leader can make than providing their employees with the resources they need to succeed."



**PATRICK FRIAS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, RADY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

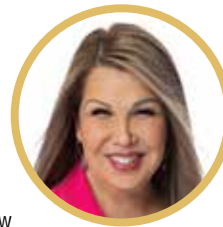
**WHY:** Patrick Frias leads Rady Children's Hospital San Diego, which in 2023 was named to the U.S. News & World Report Best Children's Hospitals Honor Roll, a distinction awarded to only 10 children's hospitals nationwide. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Frias led the merger of Rady Children's with Children's Hospital of Orange County. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Frias is on the Board of Trustees of the Rady Children's Hospital Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "At Rady Children's, we believe in mission first and people always."



**MICHELLE GONZALEZ**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, TRUECARE**

**WHY:** Michelle Gonzalez leads TrueCare's network of 23 health centers and more than 700 staff members who serve nearly 65,000 patients across San Diego and Riverside counties. **NOTABLE:** Under Gonzalez' leadership, TrueCare opened new health centers, launched an innovative doula program, introduced new acupuncture and podiatry service lines, and supported initiatives to encourage the growth and development of children, teens, and young adults. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** TrueCare provides no-cost services to underserved communities through mobile health clinics and key partnerships. **QUOTABLE:** "Health care is a right, not a privilege."



**DIANE HANSEN**

**CEO, PALOMAR HEALTH**

**WHY:** Diane Hansen leads Palomar Health, the largest hospital district in California. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Hansen led several new programs at Palomar, including strategic partnership agreements with Sharp HealthCare and University of San Diego; as well as an innovative restructuring of how the hospitals are managed. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Palomar Health, with Camp HOPE America, provide camping and mentoring programs focused on children and teens exposed to abuse. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe success stems from dedication, innovative thinking and a profound commitment to our community's well-being."



**NEIL HATTANGADI**

**CEO, CORTICA**

**WHY:** Neil Hattangadi and his wife Suzanne Goh founded Cortica in 2017 and have grown it to 25 centers in nine states, serving children with neurodevelopment conditions. **NOTABLE:** Hattangadi is a 2023 SDBJ CEO of the year. In 2024, Cortica was a recipient of the very first Autism Impact Fund. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Cortica is a supporter of the San Diego Race for Autism. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "To echo the sentiments expressed by Cortica's co-founder and chief medical officer Dr. Suzanne Goh, MD, BCBA, 'Neurodiversity is, above all, recognizing that every human being brings unique gifts to the world.'"



**MELISSA HAYDEN-COOK**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SHARP HEALTH PLAN**

**WHY:** Melissa HaydenCook leads Sharp Health Plan, which provides care to more than 140,000 members in San Diego and Riverside counties. **NOTABLE:** Hayden-Cook is a recipient of a San Diego YWCA Tribute to Women and Industry Award. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hayden-Cook sits on the boards of the California Association of Health Plans, the Health Plan Alliance, and the North San Diego Business Chamber. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." – *Theodore Roosevelt*



**DAVE HORTON**

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, KAISER PERMANENTE**

**WHY:** As CAO, David Horton oversees Kaiser Permanente San Diego's ambulatory and virtual care operations and functions. **NOTABLE:** Previously, Horton held a progressive leadership role over Kaiser's Primary, Medical, & Surgical Services including Emergency and Ancillary Operations. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Horton mentors several organizations including the American College of Healthcare Executives, The Myositis Association and Rare Action Network. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If we are not a little bit uncomfortable every day, we're not growing. All the good stuff is outside our comfort zone" – *Jack Canfield*







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**CHRISTOPHER HOWARD**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SHARP HEALTHCARE**

**WHY:** Chris Howard oversees Sharp HealthCare's more than 19,000 employees, 2,700 affiliated physicians and 1,800 volunteers. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Howard expanded Sharp's North County reach through a partnership agreement with Palomar Health, and helped spearhead a Spatial Computing Center of Excellence to explore healthcare uses for the Apple Vision Pro. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Appreciate the good times and never be daunted by the bad times; with enough focus and hard work, there are few challenges that can't be overcome."



**STACEY HROUNTAS**

**CEO, SHARP REES-STEALY MEDICAL CENTERS**

**WHY:** Stacey Hrountas leads Sharp Rees-Stealy's team of more than 3,000 employees and 700 providers who serve more than 400,000 patients throughout San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** Announced early 2024, Sharp Rees-Stealy's Otay Ranch Medical Center is currently undergoing an \$86 million transformation that will double its size. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hrountas is chair of the North San Diego Business Chamber board of directors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Success isn't just measured by numbers; it's about enriching lives and powering positive change."



**FREDERICK HOWE**

**FOUNDER, CHAIRMAN & CEO, MEDIMPACT**

**WHY:** Howe is an entrepreneur and healthcare visionary known for disruptive thinking and technological breakthroughs in the pharmacy industry. **NOTABLE:** As a pharmacist, Howe saw firsthand families struggling to afford medications and founded MedImpact 35 years ago to change that. Today, MedImpact provides pharmacy and health solutions to 20+ million people. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Howe supports the American Red Cross, Rady Children's Hospital SD, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Make-A-Wish Foundation, among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "You can't make the world a better place by thinking small."



**STEPHEN JENNINGS**

**CHIEF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICER & SVP, RADY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

**WHY:** As Chief External Affairs Officer, Stephen Jennings oversees all external marketing and government relations at Rady Children's Hospital, as well as the hospital's fundraising activities, which include more than 400 events per year. **NOTABLE:** Jennings holds a board seat with the National Conflict Resolution Center. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Jennings serves as Executive Director of Rady Children's Hospital Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Rady Children's Hospital. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." – John Lennon



**Jane Finley,  
Senior Vice President  
and Area Manager  
Kaiser Permanente  
San Diego**

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St. Paul's Senior Services

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**Michael McHale**

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**LAURA JOSH**

**GENERAL MANAGER, CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS VEBA**

**WHY:** Laura Josh was named California Schools VEBA General Manager in 2023. In that first year, VEBA doubled its impact, attracting as many members in the first six months of 2023 as they did during the entire year of 2022. **NOTABLE:** ‘The VEBA Direct’ model pilot, launched in 2024, improves care quality and pricing transparency and has the potential to save participating employers over \$100 million annually. **QUOTABLE:** “For my team, I seek to identify and optimize the greatness in each one of them.”



**MIKE LALICH**

**AREA MEDICAL DIRECTOR & CHIEF OF STAFF, KAISER PERMANENTE**

**WHY:** Dr. Michael Lalich leads the Southern California Permanente Medical Group in San Diego’s more than 1,600 physicians providing primary, emergency and specialty care throughout San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** In 2023, Lalich’s duties expanded with the opening of Kaiser Permanente’s \$403.3 million San Marcos Medical Center. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lalich is a member of the board of directors of Make-A-Wish San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Character may be manifested in the great moments, but it is made in the small ones.” – *Winston Churchill*



**GERALD JOYCE**

**PRESIDENT, SALK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES**

**WHY:** Gerald Joyce leads the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, one of the world’s most premier research organizations. In 2024, Salk received \$20 million from the European foundation NOMIS to advance neuroimmunology studies. **NOTABLE:** While leading Novartis’ research institute, Joyce’s team brought 14 compounds into human clinical trials and received three FDA approvals. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Curiosity-driven science is the foundation for transformative advances in global health, sustainability, and quality of life.”



**JAY LICHTER**

**MANAGING PARTNER, AVALON BIOVENTURES**

**WHY:** Jay Lichter, Ph.D., has more than 25 years of experience leading and investing in biotech and pharma companies. In 2022, building on the success of predecessor investment group Avalon Ventures, Lichter helped found Avalon BioVentures and closed its first fund of \$135 million for early-stage biomedical companies. **NOTABLE:** Lichter has executed over \$6 billion in transactions and is the inventor on over 250 patents and patent applications. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Only hire people that can do something better than you and then get out of their way.”



**Kerry Forde, RN  
Chief Operating Officer  
Kaiser Permanente  
San Diego**

Thank you Kerry, for your leadership of Kaiser Permanente’s San Diego, Zion and San Marcos Medical Centers, and your commitment to the safe, high-quality care, and superior care experience our members receive each and everyday.

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**KEVIN LUSTIG**

**FOUNDER & CEO, SCIENTIST.COM**

**WHY:** Kevin Lustig founded and leads Scientist.com, the leading research platform for the pharmaceutical industry. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Lustig led Scientist.com's launch of the first digital storefront to offer research services in partnership with life sciences services company PhenoVista. Scientist.com also expanded its R&D services through a partnership with drug discovery company Evotec. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lustig founded nonprofit lab incubator Bio, Tech and Beyond. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Never trouble trouble 'til trouble troubles you." – *old proverb (sometimes attributed to Bruce Lee)*



**NICK MACCHIONE**

**CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER, UC SAN DIEGO HEALTH**

**WHY:** Nick Macchione oversees UC San Diego Health's strategic partnerships and leads UC San Diego Health's public and community health initiatives. **NOTABLE:** As director of San Diego County's Health and Human Services Agency, Macchione developed the region's public testing and vaccination programs during the COVID pandemic. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Macchione developed San Diego County's award-winning comprehensive population health strategy, Live Well San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Live, learn and lead everyday with purpose, and passion in partnership for pursuit of high quality and accessible health care resulting in public good throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties."



**DR. GENE MA**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, TRI-CITY MEDICAL CENTER**

**WHY:** Dr. Gene Ma was named President and Chief Executive Officer of Tri-City Healthcare District beginning in March 2023. Prior to that, he served in various leadership roles within Tri-City, including Chief Medical Officer. **NOTABLE:** Ma is a 10-time honoree as one of San Diego's Top Doctors in Emergency Medicine. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Tri-City partners with more than 80 local nonprofit and community organizations as part of its COASTAL Commitment initiative. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." – *Tim Notke*



**MAGDA MARQUET**

**CO-FOUNDER & CO-CEO, ALMA LIFE SCIENCES**

**WHY:** Magda Marquet co-leads early-stage investment firm ALMA Life Science that funds innovative healthcare companies, many of which she serves as a board member. **NOTABLE:** With ALMA co-founder Dr. François Ferré, Marquet successfully launched Althea Technologies, acquired in 2013 by Ajinomoto, and co-founded spinoff operation, AltheaDX, acquired by Castle Biosciences in 2022. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Among her many volunteer activities, Marquet serves on the boards of Voices for Children and Curebound. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Life is a daring adventure or nothing." – *Helen Keller*



**David Horton, MBA, MPT  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Kaiser Permanente  
San Diego**

Thank you for your servant-leadership of Kaiser Permanente's Medical Group in San Diego County, and your unwavering commitment to the well-being of our San Diego members as they receive care at our 29 locations throughout the County.

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**DENA MARINUCCI**

**CSO & COO, TRUVIAN**

**WHY:** As both Chief Operating Officer and Chief Science Officer, Dena Marinucci oversees Truvian's manufacturing, operations, human resources, program management, and clinical development, including the company's development of a blood testing platform that raised \$74 million in 2024. **NOTABLE:** Marinucci is a Biocom Life Science Catalyst Award winner. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Marinucci is a board member of Connect's executive committee. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Honored to be among this prestigious group. Truvian is proud to call San Diego home!"



**KEVIN MATTSON**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN YSIDRO HEALTH**

**WHY:** Since 2013, Kevin Mattson's tenure as CEO of San Ysidro Health has been one of growth. In 2024, SYH purchased the Joe & Vi Jacobs Center to expand health services in Southeastern San Diego. **NOTABLE:** San Ysidro Health has been recognized as a Health Center Quality Leader. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mattson currently serves on the California Primary Care Association and the CalPACE boards. **QUOTABLE:** "San Ysidro Health believes everyone deserves access to high quality medical, dental and behavioral health services ..."



**TREY MARTIN**

**CEO, MARVAI LIFESCIENCES**

**WHY:** Trey Martin leads Marvai Lifesciences, a manufacturer of products that enable the development of drug therapies, diagnostics and novel vaccines. **NOTABLE:** Marvai has a market cap of \$1.83 billion and employs around 570 people. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Marvai LifeSciences Foundation supports UC San Diego, SDSU, USD, Curebound and Voices for Children. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "At Marvai we are privileged to help our customers realize the next generation of medicines, and I am honored to lead the company at this important time."



**PATTY MAYSENT**

**CEO, UC SAN DIEGO HEALTH**

**WHY:** Patty Maysent leads UC San Diego Health's more than 14,000 team members, serving more than 1 million patients annually. **NOTABLE:** Under her leadership, UC San Diego Health has vastly expanded its facilities, including an East Campus in College Area. Further expansion is expected in 2025 with the 62-acre UC San Diego Medical Center development in Hillcrest. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Maysent is a board member of the Boys and Girls Club of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe that everyone deserves the advanced health care provided by an academic health system."



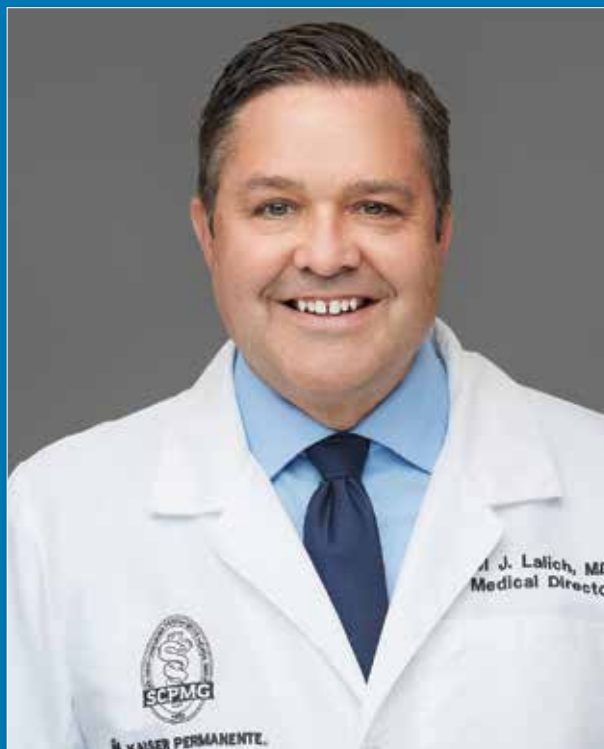
**Michael Lalich, MD  
Area Medical Director  
and Chief of Staff  
Kaiser Permanente  
San Diego**

Thank you for your selfless leadership of San Diego County's largest independent medical group, with more than 1,600 physicians in more than 90 specialties and subspecialties.

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**BRETT MCCLAIN**

**EVP & COO, SHARP HEALTHCARE**

**WHY:** Brett McClain oversees operations of Sharp's four acute care and three specialty hospitals, three medical groups, ambulatory and clinical service lines. **NOTABLE:** McClain was instrumental in Sharp's reorganization plan to consolidate executive leadership under a regional strategy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** McClain has served on community boards including Catholic Charities. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I'm a 'work to live' kind of person. I am so grateful that I am working and living my best life right now!"



**MICHAEL MCHALE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, ST. PAUL SENIOR SERVICES**

**WHY:** Michael McHale has more than two decades of management and development experience in the senior care and hospice industries. He currently leads St. Paul's Senior Services' programs and services at five locations in San Diego. **NOTABLE:** McHale is published in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management for his innovation in hospice tele-health services. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** St. Paul's is San Diego's largest non-profit senior care organization. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "When we lead with compassion, we pave the way for true progress."



**DAMIEN MCDEVITT**

**CEO, ASPEN NEUROSCIENCES**

**WHY:** Damien McDevitt has over two decades of experience in life sciences and currently leads Aspen's mission to bring personalized, induced pluripotent stem cell treatments to patients with Parkinson's disease. The company became dosing patients in a Phase 1/2a clinical trial in 2024. **NOTABLE:** McDevitt is an author of 70 scientific publications and published patents. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** McDevitt sits on the advisory board of Life Science Cares. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Aspen's innovative stem cell technology has the potential to positively address unmet medical needs and transform patients' lives."



**MARK MCKENNA**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, MIRADOR THERAPEUTICS**

**WHY:** Mark McKenna has a history of starting and leading successful biotech companies. He is currently chairman, president and CEO of Mirador Therapeutics, which he co-founded in 2024 to address unmet needs chronic immune-mediated and inflammatory diseases. **NOTABLE:** McKenna previously led Prometheus Biosciences, which sold to Merck in 2023 for \$11 billion – San Diego's largest biotech deal ever. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The path to success isn't linear: think big, focus small, persevere through adversity, and enjoy the journey."



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**DR. RAKESH PATEL**

**CEO, NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTHCARE**

**WHY:** Rakesh Patel leads Neighborhood Healthcare’s 19 community health centers serving over 78,000 patients in San Diego and Riverside counties. In 2024, Neighborhood broke ground on a new dental location in Escondido. **NOTABLE:** Patel chairs the board of managers for Integrated Health Partners of Southern California, representing 270,000 individuals. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Patel is a San Diego Chapter Board Member of Amigos de las Americas. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Healthy communities are prosperous ones. Offering care regardless of circumstance makes everyone better – together!”



**PETER SCHULTZ**

**CEO, SCRIPPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**WHY:** Peter Schultz, PhD, is a world-renowned chemist and leads the 100-year-old Scripps Research – San Diego’s oldest research institute. In 2024, Scripps expanded its La Jolla campus with a new 83,000-square-foot lab building. **NOTABLE:** Schultz has received the Wolf Prize in Chemistry, the Alan T. Waterman Award of the National Science Foundation, the Arthur C. Cope Award of the American Chemical Society. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “It’s hard to do something transformative without risk, but such ideas are what change the world.”



**KEVIN SAYER**

**PRESIDENT, CEO & CHAIRMAN, DEXCOM**

**WHY:** Kevin Sayer leads Dexcom, the global leader in real-time continuous glucose monitoring for people living with diabetes. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Dexcom launched the over-the-counter Stelo, a CGM for people Type 2 that do not require insulin – a first in the industry. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dexcom’s One Step Ahead Foundation awards grants to organizations that focus on assisting people living with diabetes, and their caregivers. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “I want as many people as possible who can benefit from glucose biosensing to have access to the life-changing technology.”



**LAURA SHAWVER**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, CAPSTAN THERAPEUTICS**

**WHY:** Shawver’s more than two decades of leadership in life sciences has included CEO stints at Silverback Therapeutics and Synthorx. She currently leads Capstan Therapeutics’ development of targeted in vivo RNA-based therapies. **NOTABLE:** Capstan has raised \$340 million since 2021, including \$175 million in 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Shawver founded The Clarity Foundation to improving treatment options for women with ovarian cancer. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Our ability to innovate in the life sciences requires both the scientific and patient point of view. Better medicines are made by seeing and understanding these different perspectives.”



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**Kevin Mattson**  
 President and CEO

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## KEN SONG

### CEO, CANDID THERAPEUTICS

**WHY:** Ken Song has a strong track record of leading successful biotech companies. His latest is Candid Therapeutics, launched in 2024 to pioneer autoimmune therapies with T-cell engager antibodies.

**NOTABLE:** In addition to launching Candid, Song also in 2024 led RayzeBio as CEO through the company's \$4.1 billion acquisition by Bristol Myers Squibb.

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** Song is board director at ElevAate, a non-profit organization for East Asian American leadership in biopharma. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The faster you fail, the quicker you find the path to success".



## CHRIS VAN GORDER

### PRESIDENT & CEO, SCRIPPS HEALTH

**WHY:** As president and CEO, Chris Van Gorder has led Scripps Health to become one of nation's foremost health care institutions. **NOTABLE:** The 100-year-old Scripps Health is regularly recognized as a best hospital in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Van Gorder served 20 years as a Reserve Assistant Sheriff for San Diego County. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "No matter what challenges your organization faces or you personally face ... don't resist change; promote it. Don't fear the future; welcome it in."



## JACOB THAYSEN

### CEO, ILLUMINA

**WHY:** Jacob Thaysen was appointed CEO of Illumina in September 2023 and in 2024 he laid out a new growth plan for the company. **NOTABLE:** Early in his career, he was founder and chief technology officer of Cantion, a research and defense application development company based in his native Denmark.

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Illumina iHope China program provided 1800 families with genetic testing in 2024. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "At Illumina, we're laser focused on helping customers unlock the power of the genome and deliver biotech breakthroughs."



## SCOTT WOLCHKO

### CEO, FATE THERAPEUTICS

**WHY:** Scott Wolchko has led the \$200 million-pls market cap Fate Therapeutics since 2015. He started at the company as CFO in 2007, a role he added back on to his leadership duties in 2024. **NOTABLE:** Fate in 2024 raised a \$100 million private placement and also treated the first patient with systemic lupus erythematosus with the company's CAR T-cell program in a Phase 1 study. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Fate contributes to the community through employee volunteer opportunities and financial support of local organizations.



## ERIC TOPOL

### FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, SCRIPPS TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE

**WHY:** Eric Topol is the founder and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, which aims to individualize healthcare by leveraging human genomics and combining it with the power of wireless digital technologies. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Topol was featured in the inaugural TIME100 Health list of most influential people in health in the world. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Topol's research includes studying the causes of long COVID. **QUOTABLE:** "Remarkable progress in life science and multimodal AI will create exceptional opportunities to prevent major diseases."



## HENRY TUTTLE

### PRESIDENT & CEO, HEALTH CENTER PARTNERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**WHY:** As Health Center Partners of Southern California CEO, Henry Tuttle supports FQHCs, Indian Health Centers and primary care organizations in San Diego, Imperial and Riverside Counties. **NOTABLE:** HCP's 17 member organizations provide care to 800,000 patients each year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Tuttle is a member of the board of the California Primary Care Association, where he chairs the Government Programs Committee. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "... the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die." – Senator E. M. Kennedy



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**KIMBERLY J. BECKER****PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY**

**WHY:** She has overseen San Diego International Airport since 2017. **NOTABLE:** Capital improvement projects under Becker's watch include the \$3.86 billion New T1 program. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The airport was named the second-ever carbon neutral airport in North America. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity." – *Amelia Earhart*

**ERIC DEMARCO****CEO, KRATOS DEFENSE & SECURITY SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Having run the show at Kratos Defense & Security Solutions (NASDAQ: KTOS) for two decades, DeMarco is raising the company's profile as an aerospace contractor. **NOTABLE:** The CEO's presence in San Diego's defense contracting community goes back even farther, as he was previously president, COO and CFO for Titan Corp. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Think straight, talk straight. No games, no fluff, say what you mean."

**STEVE BRASS****PRESIDENT & CEO, WD-40 COMPANY**

**WHY:** As CEO of WD-40 Company, Brass is responsible for developing and implementing high-level strategies, all operations, and oversight of all relationships and partnerships for the chemical maker. **NOTABLE:** He has been with the company since 1991. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2024, the company launched a new grantmaking program committed to transformational philanthropy, taking a systematic, collaborative approach to grantmaking with an eye toward long-term change. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The future belongs to the learners, not the knowers" – *Eric Hoffer*

**BRUCE FOLKMANN****PRESIDENT & CFO, SDG&E**

**WHY:** Folkmann is a certified public accountant, has been SDG&E president and chief financial officer since 2020, and joined its parent corporation, Sempra, in 2005. **NOTABLE:** His work includes testifying before the California Public Utilities Commission. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He sits on the board of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Caring for our communities is at the heart of everything we do, every single day."

**JENNIE BROOKS****EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT – NAVY MARINE CORPS TEAM, BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON**

**WHY:** She leads the regional office of Booz Allen Hamilton (NYSE: BAH), supporting Navy-Marine Corps clients and spearheading partnerships with Qualcomm and Tableau. **NOTABLE:** She is board chair of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and sits on the Dean's Advisory Board at the SDSU College of Engineering. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** BAH employees work with students at Hoover and Kearney high schools. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "San Diego is a remarkable place with some of the best talent in the nation."

**KEVIN GERAGHTY****COO, SDG&E**

**WHY:** Geraghty is the utility's chief operating officer and chief safety officer where his responsibilities consist of the engineering, construction, operations and maintenance of the utility infrastructure. **NOTABLE:** As part of his emergency management duties, he oversaw SDG&E's preparation and response to damage caused by Tropical Storm Hilary in 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a board member of San Diego Habitat for Humanity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Nothing matters more than the safety of our employees and the communities we serve."

**DAVID CARVER****PRESIDENT, GENERAL DYNAMICS NASSCO**

**WHY:** Carver leads NASSCO's operation centered on the San Diego waterfront. Its primary client is the U.S. Navy. In addition to repairing Navy ships, the business builds Navy auxiliary ships from the ground up. A big order for oilers keeps the yard busy. **NOTABLE:** Carver joined NASSCO in 1987 as a management trainee. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** NASSCO offers internships and participates in events benefiting the larger community, including school supply drives and neighborhood cleanups.

**COL. ROBERT HERRMANN**  
**COMMANDING OFFICER, MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR**

**WHY:** Herrmann is commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. He took his new assignment in July 2024. **NOTABLE:** Herrmann has accumulated more than 2,400 flight hours in the EA-6B Prowler aircraft. In his previous role, he oversaw the assignments of more than 7,000 officers across various aviation-related military occupational specialties and directly managed assignments for more than 700 colonels. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one." – *Marcus Aurelius*

**SCOTT CRIDER****SVP, EXTERNAL & OPERATIONS SUPPORT, SDG&E**

**WHY:** Crider oversees various aspects of community relations and communications as well as electric pricing and forecasting, supply management, supplier diversity, logistics, fleet, real estate, land services and facilities. **NOTABLE:** Earlier, as a public affairs manager, Crider made the case for the utility's Sunrise Powerlink. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He sits on the board of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Creating a vibrant San Diego means building dreams, shaping futures, and inspiring a thriving community."

**KEITH JONES****EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN & OWNER, ACE PARKING**

**WHY:** Jones is part of the third generation of family owners at Ace Parking. **NOTABLE:** The parking garage at City Hall was named after Jones' grandfather, Evan Jones. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** For more than 10 years, ACE's Park For Pink campaign in October has donated a portion of their revenues to support communities across the country. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I am humbled every day, and that is a gift."



**JEFF MARTIN**

**CEO, SEMPRA ENERGY**

**WHY:** Martin runs one of San Diego's handful of Fortune 500 companies, overseeing utilities (they include SDG&E), energy infrastructure and a growing business exporting liquefied natural gas. The company is growing; it plans to spend \$48 billion on capital improvements over five years. **NOTABLE:** Martin was previously vice president and CFO for Sempra. In that role, he led the company's \$9.45 billion acquisition of Texas utility Oncor. **GO ARMY:** Martin is a West Point graduate. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Inspiring leadership cultivates new leaders, at all levels of the organization, driving collective success and resilience."



**EUGENE "MITCH" MITCHELL**

**SVP, CHIEF LEGISLATIVE OFFICER, SDG&E & SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GAS, SEMPRA**

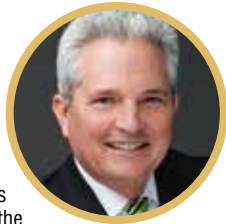
**WHY:** Mitchell has extensive public policy and government affairs experience gained from work at Sempra and its operating companies, as well as the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. **NOTABLE:** He has championed diversity and inclusion within Sempra and its operating companies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mitchell has served on the San Diego Housing Commission since 2020 and has been its chairman since 2022. His work on civic and nonprofit boards is extensive.



**MICHAEL NAYLOR**

**CEO, PKL SERVICES INC.**

**WHY:** Naylor, a retired U.S. Marine Corps colonel, runs PKL Services Inc., a Poway defense contractor that works extensively in military aviation. Under one of its contracts, PKL trains members of Singapore's air force at a military base in Idaho. **NOTABLE:** Naylor's Marine Corps career included piloting Marine One for the president of the United States and other dignitaries. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** PKL hires veterans, a group highly attuned to customer needs.



**REAR ADM. SEIKO OKANO**

**COMMANDER, NAVWAR**

**WHY:** She is commander of the U.S. Navy's Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, joining the organization in August 2024. She leads a team of 11,000 people. One high-priority initiative, Project Overmatch, aims to advance naval operating architectures. **NOTABLE:** A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Okano later earned a master's degree in space systems engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School. She is a native of Evanston, Illinois.



**KAZEEM OMIDIJI**

**DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, SDG&E**

**WHY:** Omidiji has been SDG&E director of community relations since 2021, with a dozen years of experience in the energy and utilities sector. **NOTABLE:** He started his career with internships at NV Energy and SDG&E. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He leads SDG&E's charitable giving in STEM education, climate action, safety and economic prosperity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members" – Coretta Scott King



**JOHN POPE**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NAVWAR**

**WHY:** He is the top civilian at NAVWAR, the San Diego-based U.S. Navy command that oversees much of the Navy's cybersecurity and IT. **NOTABLE:** The Navy is negotiating a deal with Manchester Financial Group and Edgemoor Infrastructure and Real Estate to redevelop NAVWAR headquarters and nearby Navy land in Old Town. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** NAVWAR and Naval Postgraduate School offer scholarships for students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.



**CLIFFORD 'RIP' RIPPETOE**

**CEO, SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER CORPORATION**

**WHY:** He oversees the convention center, the area's largest convention venue and the site of Comic-Con. TwitchCon, a gathering devoted to gaming and streaming, will hold its confab there through 2028. **NOTABLE:** The pandemic changed Rippetoe's job when the convention center housed homeless people and later, teen-age migrants. **HIGHER CALLING:** Rippetoe has a master's degree in divinity and ministry from Claremont School of Theology. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Values define success. I live into our values with our San Diego Convention Center team."



**REAR ADM. BRAD ROSEN**

**NAVY MAYOR, U.S. NAVY**

**WHY:** The New Jersey native is known – unofficially at least – as the Navy Mayor, as he oversees every shore facility in California and adjoining states. He has held the job since 2022. **SHORE POWER:** In cooperation with the port district, Naval Base San Diego is gaining California Low Carbon Fuel Standard credits as Navy ships use shore power rather than shipboard systems. **FLY NAVY:** In a previous assignment, Rosen commanded a squadron of P-3C patrol aircraft.



**STEVE SOUTH**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, EDCO DISPOSAL**

**WHY:** He leads EDCO, a family owned and locally operated waste collection and recycling company serving Southern California since 1967. **NOTABLE:** With a focus on recycling, EDCO has developed an extensive network of material recovery facilities, construction and demolition processing facilities, commingled recycling processing centers, recycling buyback centers and more, all designed to maximize recovery efforts. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** EDCO participates in community cleanup events.



**CAROLINE WINN**

**CEO, SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC**

**WHY:** She has led the local gas and electric utility since 2020. She joined the company in 1986 as an associate engineer and also held jobs at SoCalGas. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She serves on the boards of Father Joe's Villages, Monarch School and American States Water Co. **IN THE NEWS:** In April, Winn was on hand for ceremonies inaugurating electric-powered freight truck service crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.





SAN DIEGO 500

LAW

## MICHAEL ATTANASIO

### PARTNER, COOLEY

**WHY:** Michael Attanasio is chair of Cooley's global Litigation Department. **NOTABLE:** A Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers, Mike has defended clients in some of the most noteworthy cases in San Diego, including Peregrine Systems and 101 Ash Street. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program recognized Cooley with its 2023 Outstanding Law Firm Award for the firm's pro bono legal services. **QUOTABLE:** "I defend companies against threats to their innovation and success, and I defend individuals against threats to their freedom."



## ERIC BESTE

### PARTNER-IN-CHARGE, BARNES & THORNBURG LLP

**WHY:** Eric Beste focuses his practice on white-collar criminal defense, internal investigations, and compliance matters, and complex business litigation. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Barnes & Thornburg in 2024 launched a partnership with Villanova Charles Widger School of Law to utilize law students for pro bono work for nonprofits through the Stand Together Initiative and Koch Pro Bono Initiative. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I'm proud to share this recognition with the San Diego team, reflecting our commitment to delivering high-quality legal solutions."



## VINCENT J. BARTOLOTTA, JR.

### FOUNDING PARTNER, THORSNES BARTOLOTTA MCGUIRE

**WHY:** Vincent J. Bartolotta specializes in litigation with a focus on personal injury, business disputes and condemnation. **NOTABLE:** Bartolotta's firm have won numerous seven- and eight-figure results for their clients, including a \$20.3 million jury verdict for a client involved in a rollover accident. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Bartolotta's firm supports more than 36 charities financially and as volunteers, including Make-a-Wish and Big Brothers Big Sisters. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "When the bad times hit, stay the course, do your best and things will work out."



## CALLIE BJURSTROM

### MANAGING PARTNER, SAN DIEGO, PILLSBURY WINTHROP SHAW PITTMAN LLP

**WHY:** Pillsbury Managing Partner Callie Bjurstrom's practice involves the prosecution and defense of intellectual property rights. **NOTABLE:** In 2023 and 2024, Bjurstrom was recognized in the World Trademark Review 100. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Pillsbury participates in Feeding San Diego's "Food from the Bar" fundraising program. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you refuse to settle for anything less than your best, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish in life." – *Vince Lombardi*



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An accomplished open water swimmer and former U.S. Army JAG Officer, Steve Coopersmith enjoys a challenge. The founder of a boutique business litigation law firm, he constantly keeps his team motivated to take on complex cases, to give the wisest counsel and to obtain the best results possible.

The Coopersmith Law Firm's primary focus is handling corporate and partnership breakups, financial fraud and executive-level employment litigation, as well as fine art disputes and selected large municipal and land use matters.

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On the list of San Diego Super Lawyers honorees since 2014, Coopersmith was also selected as one of the Top 50 Influential Veteran Business Leaders and a Leader in Law finalist by the Business Journal in recent years, as well as to the list of the Best Lawyers in America® in the category of Commercial Litigation.

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SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



## WHERE YOU NEED US

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Congratulations to our own Eric Beste on being named to the San Diego Business Journal's SD500. Your dedication to excellence continues to shape San Diego's legal landscape. We celebrate your place among the city's most influential leaders.



Eric Beste

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**DAVID S. CASEY, JR.**

**MANAGING PARTNER, CASEYGERRY**

**WHY:** David Casey, Jr. is managing partner of San Diego's oldest plaintiffs' law firm, which was founded by his late father, David S. Casey Sr., in 1947. **NOTABLE:** He was on the Plaintiff's Steering Committee overseeing litigation of the Volkswagen Emissions scandal, which resolved for a historic \$14.7 billion settlement. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Casey is a volunteer for the American Association for Justice's Trial Lawyers Care initiative. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "It is an honor to represent and support an individual whose life has been severely impacted."



**DENNIS DOUCETTE**

**MANAGING PARTNER, PROCOPIO**

**WHY:** Dennis Doucette was named Procopio's Managing Partner in October 2024. Previously, he served in the firm's Management Committee and led the firm's Business and Technology Team. **NOTABLE:** He has participated in more than 500 corporate finance transactions—including mergers and acquisitions and venture financing. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He serves on the boards of the San Diego Regional EDC, Design Institute of San Diego and is Vice-Chair of USD's Board of Visitors. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "As my mother used to say: 'If you only have a dime, you should give a nickel to someone less fortunate.'"



**STEVE COOPERSMITH**

**MANAGING PARTNER, THE COOPERSMITH LAW FIRM**

**WHY:** Steve Coopersmith is an experienced business and commercial litigator whose practice is primarily focused on partnership, contract, financial fraud, employment, real estate, and securities disputes. **NOTABLE:** Coopersmith served as a military prosecutor in the U.S. Army's Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps. Where he held the rank of Captain. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Coopersmith is a member of San Diego Rotary Club 33. **QUOTABLE:** "Representing both plaintiffs and defendants, we provide clear thinking and intelligent advice to a wide range of clients."



**BILL EIGNER**

**PARTNER, PROCOPIO**

**WHY:** Procopio Partner Bill Eigner leads the firm's Business/Technology team. His practice emphasizes venture capital and the governing, operating, buying, selling and merging of growing technology and other businesses. **NOTABLE:** Eigner is on the boards of advisors of many San Diego's most promising startups, including Greenbutts, Athletiverse, SokyaHealth and Indie Health. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is Trustee Emeritus of the San Diego Police Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "There is no 'they' who are running things. You need to step up."



Congratulations to San Diego office managing partner **Callie Bjurstrom** for being recognized as one of San Diego's Most Influential People by the *San Diego Business Journal*!

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We are honored to announce **President and Dean Sean M. Scott** has been named one of the **top 500 most influential business leaders** in the San Diego area by the San Diego Business Journal.

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**DANIEL FALLON**

**SAN DIEGO MANAGING PARTNER, TYSON & MENDES**



**WHY:** Managing Partner Dan Fallon leads Tyson & Mendes' San Diego office, specializing in professional liability, personal injury, commercial liability and business litigation. **NOTABLE:** He negotiated a beneficial settlement on behalf of a Los Angeles real estate broker in a lawsuit related to a multi-million-dollar mansion sold by a Grammy-winning artist to a cultural institution. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a trustee of the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation, which awards grants to non-profit organizations. **QUOTEABLE:** "Just like plaintiffs, defendants need to argue pain and suffering!"

**MICHAEL GLEASON**

**PARTNER-IN-CHARGE, HAHN LOESER**



**WHY:** Michael Gleason has more than two decades of experience in business litigation, including consumer class action defense, product liability, fraud and real estate. **NOTABLE:** He founded the firm's Proposition 65 defense group, providing compliance advice to businesses to decrease risk of alleged violations. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Gleason is on the board of the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Take everything you like seriously, except yourselves." – *Rudyard Kipling*

**JAMES P. FRANTZ**

**OWNER, FRANTZ LAW GROUP, APLC**



**WHY:** James Frantz's 45-plus-years of legal experience includes litigating catastrophic injury claims, amusement park accidents, product liability and more. **NOTABLE:** FLG played an important part in achieving a \$13.5 billion settlement against PG&E on behalf of victims harmed in Northern California wildfires. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Frantz is board member of Impact Teen Drivers, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing cell phone-distracted driving by minors. **QUOTEABLE:** "Professional credentials make a difference in case preparation, in settlement negotiations, and in court."

**JOHN GOMEZ**

**FOUNDER & CEO, GOMEZ TRIAL ATTORNEYS**



**WHY:** John Gomez founded his firm to exclusively represent consumers in personal injury, mass tort, class actions, employment and other forms of litigation. **NOTABLE:** He attended the University of San Diego where he graduated magna cum laude and as an Academic All American. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Gomez endowed the La Raza Lawyers of San Diego Scholarship fund and the Community Youth Athletic Center. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Si Se Puede." – *Dolores Huerta/Cesar Chavez*

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Foley is proud to congratulate our colleague on being honored for the *San Diego Business Journal's* SD500 Most Influential People In San Diego 2024.



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FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

**RANDY GROSSMAN**

**SAN DIEGO OFFICE PARTNER, MANAT PHELPS & PHILLIPS**

**WHY:** Randy Grossman has 30-plus years of prosecutor and private practice law experience. He was tapped to lead Manat Phelps’ San Diego office in 2023, and serves in its Trial, White Collar and Investigations practice. **NOTABLE:** Previously, he was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California and helped create and implement national policies regarding white collar crime and corporate compliance. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Grossman is on the board of STAR/PAL. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “I’m honored and humbled to be acknowledged alongside so many impactful people across San Diego.”



**CHRISTOPHER HOFFMAN**

**REGIONAL MANAGING PARTNER, FISHER & PHILLIPS**

**WHY:** Christopher C. Hoffman founded and leads Fisher & Phillips’ San Diego office where he has represented hundreds of employers in labor law matters and counsels his clients on employment issues. **NOTABLE:** Hoffman was recognized by The Best Lawyers in America in 2013, 2014, and 2016 - 2025. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Fisher & Phillips is part of the I Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, which coordinates pro bono projects to address systemic racism. **QUOTABLE:** “I have focused on assisting companies strategically avoid and, when necessary, respond to their employment-based concerns.”



**STEFFI HAFEN**

**SAN DIEGO MANAGING PARTNER, SNELL & WILMER**

**WHY:** Hafen helped lead the 2020 opening of Snell & Wilmer’s San Diego office and was appointed managing partner in 2022. **NOTABLE:** She is co-leader of the firm’s Private Client Services practice group and partner in the General Federal Tax practice group. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Snell & Wilmer’s San Diego staff dedicate their time and services to numerous nonprofit organizations. **QUOTABLE:** “Our success over the last two years has enabled us to attract and retain a close-knit and dynamic group of topflight lawyers in the San Diego office.”



**MYRIAH JAWORSKI**

**MEMBER IN CHARGE, CLARK HILL**

**WHY:** Myriah Jaworski is an expert in privacy and data breach class action litigation, regulatory investigations, and bet-the-business technology disputes. **NOTABLE:** She was an expert speaker at Center for Democracy & Technology’s June 2024 “Confronting Demographic Data Challenges in New AI Fairness Requirements” panel discussion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Jaworski is Chair of the San Diego County Bar Association Privacy and Cybersecurity Law Executive Committee. **QUOTABLE:** Jaworski told Compliance Week in February 2023: “Businesses have a compelling interest in addressing privacy.”



San Diego Business Journal’s  
**SD500 Most Influential People 2024**

Congratulations to our Executive Shareholders and all of this year’s honorees



Douglas Pettit, Esq.



Andrew Kohn, Esq.



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# Our firm would like to congratulate San Diego's 2024 Top 500 Most Influential Business Leaders

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



Vincent J. Bartolotta, Jr.



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Vincent J. Bartolotta, Jr., is a founding partner of Thorsnes Bartolotta McGuire, LLP. He specializes in Plaintiff's litigation with an emphasis in major injury cases, business disputes and condemnation cases. A tenacious trial lawyer, Bartolotta was recognized as CAL ABOTA's 2003 Trial Lawyer of the Year for the State of California and Best Lawyers in America - a recognition he's received every year for the past 30 years.

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**ANDREW KOHN**

**CEO & SHAREHOLDER, PETTIT KOHN INGRASSIA LUTZ & DOLIN**

**WHY:** Andrew Kohn has served as his firm's CEO since its inception in 2006. His civil litigation and trial experience is primarily in personal injury, business litigation and products liability. **NOTABLE:** Kohn has achieved Martindale-Hubbell's highest rating for legal ability and ethical standards. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Kohn is involved with Harvard- and University of Arizona- affiliated alumni organizations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood..." – *Theodore Roosevelt*



**KEN ROLLINS**

**PARTNER IN CHARGE, COOLEY**

**WHY:** Rollins is partner in charge and head of corporate practice for Cooley's San Diego office, counseling companies and VCs in the life sciences, medtech and technology industries. **NOTABLE:** His representative transactions include advising the IPOs of Synthrox, Tocagen and 2024's Artiva filing, among many more. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rollins serves on the board of Clarity Foundation, which works to improve treatment for ovarian cancer patients. **QUOTABLE:** "I am an extension of my clients, serving as an advisor at critical inflection points as my clients grow and succeed."



**JASON MURTAGH**

**SAN DIEGO OFFICE HEAD, BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY**

**WHY:** Jason Murtagh leads Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney's San Diego office and chairs the firm's California Employment Law practice. **NOTABLE:** Murtagh's law experience includes handling cases from small claims to the U.S. Supreme Court. He is a self-described "plane geek" and once flew around the world in 14 days. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Nationally, Buchanan supports the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the United Way. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Two things are essential for success: (1) do good work; and (2) be a good person."



**HEATHER ROSING**

**CEO & PRESIDENT, KLINEDINST**

**WHY:** Rosing has built a national reputation as a skilled litigator in issues of fraud, breach of fiduciary duty, professional negligence, malicious prosecution, civil conspiracy, RICO, and more. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, she received the California Women Lawyers' Judith Soley Lawyer as Citizen Award for her commitment to service in diversity and gender equality. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rosing was the inaugural president of the philanthropic California Lawyers Foundation, the largest statewide voluntary Bar Association in the country, and is current President of its philanthropic organization, the California Lawyers Foundation.



**EMIL PETROSSIAN**

**SAN DIEGO MANAGING PARTNER, GLASER WEIL**

**WHY:** Emil Petrossian is a sought-after attorney in the areas of commercial disputes and real estate, financial services and intellectual property litigation. **NOTABLE:** After law school, he clerked for the Honorable Gary A. Feess (ret.) of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. He has litigated numerous arbitrations in federal courts of appeals and the California Court of Appeal. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He serves on the board of Teach Democracy and regularly handles major pro bono matters, including nationally significant impact litigations.



**DOUGLAS A. PETTIT**

**PARTNER, PETTIT KOHN INGRASSIA LUTZ & DOLIN**

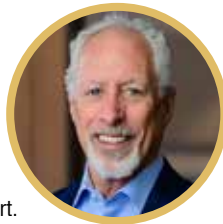
**WHY:** Douglas A. Pettit has extensive experience in civil litigation, business litigation, and professional liability. **NOTABLE:** Pettit has achieved Martindale-Hubbell's highest peer review rating for legal ability and ethics. He is also a lecturer at the University of San Diego, where he teaches a course in Experiential Advocacy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Pettit is active in the American Board of Trial Advocates, working to preserve 7th Amendment rights. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Let your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears." – *Nelson Mandela*



**FRED PLEVIN**

**SAN DIEGO MANAGING PARTNER, QUARLES & BRADY LLP**

**WHY:** Fred Plevin leads Quarles & Brady's San Diego office, bringing more than 35 years of experience advising and representing California employers in all types of litigated employment disputes in state and federal court. **NOTABLE:** He is a fellow of the prestigious College of Labor and Employment Lawyers. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Plevin is immediate past president of the Wage & Hour Defense Institute. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Success isn't measure by the result but by whether you delivered your very best work." – *Vince Lombardi*



Congratulations!



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



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San Diego Office  
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**SARAH SCHAFFER**

**FOUNDER & CEO, SCHAFFER FAMILY LAW GROUP**

**WHY:** Sarah Schaffer’s legal experience includes challenging, high-conflict family law matters, difficult child custody disputes and complex community property division for a high-net-worth clients. **NOTABLE:** She is one of only a handful of Certified Family Law Specialists certified by The State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is active with Kid’s Turn of San Diego and Casa Cornelia Law Center. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” – Ruth Bader Ginsburg



**SEAN SOUTHARD**

**FOUNDING PARTNER, CROSBIE GLINER SCHIFFMAN SOUTHARD & SWANSON LLP**

**WHY:** Sean Southard is CGS3 founding partner and a leasing specialist who has completed transactions totaling more than 10 million square feet of commercial real space. **NOTABLE:** Southard is recognized as a 2025 “Best Lawyer – Real Estate Law” by Best Lawyers in America. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Southard was commissioned by the U.S. Navy, serving tours in Iraq and Somalia. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Cause no harm. Look for the similarities. Find yourself in the others.” – Jason Garner



**MARC S. SCHECHTER**

**FOUNDING PARTNER, BUTTERFIELD SCHECHTER LLP**

**WHY:** Marc Schechter specializes in employee benefits, ERISA, and business matters. He has extensive experience designing, drafting and implementing all types of qualified and nonqualified employee-benefit programs. **NOTABLE:** He was selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America 2024-2025 in the field of Employee Benefits Law. He has an AV Peer Review rating from Martindale Hubbell. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Schechter has taught the ERISA/Employee Benefits course as adjunct professor at California Western School of Law. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Where words fail, music speaks.” – Hans Christian Andersen



**VAN A. TENGBERG**

**PARTNER, FOLEY & LARDNER**

**WHY:** Van A. Tengberg brings more than four decades of legal expertise to Foley & Lardner’s Real Estate practice and Finance, Hospitality & Leisure, and Sports Industry teams – especially in the area of representing golf clubs, wof which he is considered an industry expert. **NOTABLE:** He holds an AV Preeminent rating from Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Ratings. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Tengberg served on the boards of the Sabin Children’s Foundation and the Southern California Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.



**RONSON SHAMOUN**

**CEO, RJS LAW**

**WHY:** Ronson Shamoun specializes in federal and state taxation matters, with an emphasis on criminal tax defense, tax controversy, international tax, and estate planning. **NOTABLE:** Shamoun is also an Adjunct Professor of Law at USD School of Law and an Adjunct Professor of Tax USD Knauss School of Business. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is treasurer for the Honorary Deputy Sheriff’s Association. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Working hard doesn’t kill you, stress kills you. Working hard is like exercise, it makes you stronger”



**DAVID SHAPIRO**

**FOUNDING PARTNER, LAW OFFICES OF DAVID P. SHAPIRO**

**WHY:** David Shapiro has built one of San Diego’s most respected criminal defense firms since opening its doors in 2010. **NOTABLE:** His firm was recognized as a fastest growing law firm in the U.S. by LawFirm500 and was a 2022 Better Business Bureau Torch Awards for Ethics Winner. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** His firm supports Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Second Chance, Genesis Recovery, and San Diego’s Friendship Soccer League. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “The uniform is always on. There are no days off. We shouldn’t want it any other way.”



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

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**Congratulations to our founding partner Sean Southard, one of the SD500!**

A master at high-velocity real estate deals, Sean has been essential to the continued growth and success of CGS3 – playing a key role in some of the region’s most high-profile commercial real estate transactions. He is well deserving of this recognition as one San Diego’s Most Influential Business Leaders.

**ROBERT TYSON**

**STRATEGIC MANAGING PARTNER,  
TYSON & MENDES LLP**



**WHY:** Robert Tyson is considered the preeminent expert on defending companies from “nuclear verdicts” - jury awards exceeding \$10 million. In 2024, the firm he co-founded with Patrick Mendes expanded into Philadelphia and Tallahassee, marking 25 locations nationwide. **NOTABLE:** Tyson is author of the best-seller “Nuclear Verdicts: Defending Justice for All.” He is also founder of Insurtech company Schaefer City Technologies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a member of the President’s Advisory Council at Villanova University. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “My mantra: Justice for All.”

**TRACY WARREN**

**SAN DIEGO MANAGING SHAREHOLDER,  
BUCHALTER**



**WHY:** Tracy Warren manages Buchalter’s fast growing San Diego team of labor and employment attorneys. She also co-chairs the firm’s Sports Practice Group. **NOTABLE:** Warren is also currently a sports broadcaster for FOX Sports and a former broadcaster for ESPN. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is outside counsel to the boards of Women Leaders in College Sports and Sports Events and Tourism Association. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Success in life is all about making good choices, so choose to be positive.” – former Notre Dame women’s basketball coach Muffet McGraw

*Congratulations*  
to David P. Shapiro for being selected as one of San Diego’s most influential leaders for the second time since 2022.

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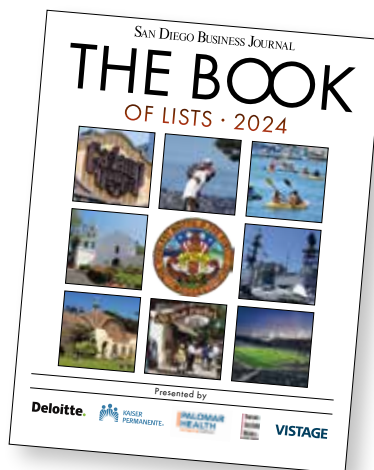
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**BOOK OF LISTS 2025**

**PRINT PUBLICATION:** The Book of Lists continues to be the best local company database in San Diego County. It includes approximately 90 lists covering key industry sectors in the business community. Competitive Edge Research compiles the lists from a variety of sources, and queries the companies to confirm information, self-reported revenue, local employee numbers and other pertinent information. When available, credible data from third-party sources is also used for key metrics in compiling our lists. Each list is updated once or twice a year depending upon various factors.





**DAVID ABELES**

**RESIDENT & CEO, TAYLORMADE GOLF**

**WHY:** Abeles has been leading TaylorMade Golf since 2015, and has nearly 25 years of experience in the golf industry. **NOTABLE:** TaylorMade has made Newsweek's Top 100 Most Loved Workplaces list three consecutive years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Abeles is a board director at Pop Stroke Entertainment Group. **QUOTABLE:** Abeles told Golf Digest: "We want (golf) to be more approachable, more friendly, easier to play, and our role in that is to make sure that the equipment that comes to market helps golfers get there."



**MARY CHEEKS**

**GENERAL MANAGER, JAMUL CASINO**

**WHY:** Cheeks is a gaming industry veteran with 30 years of experience in casino management and casino finance, and joined Jamul in 2018. **NOTABLE:** Cheeks began her career on the East Coast, managing casinos in New York, Pennsylvania and as Harrah's CFO in Atlantic City. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Cheeks works closely with the community to ensure the casino is a welcome presence and a good corporate citizen. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Believe in the power and strength within you. Embrace the challenges as opportunities for growth."



**ANNE BENGE**

**CEO, CULTURA**

**WHY:** Bengé is CEO and founder/owner of Cultura, designing and furnishing places for workplaces for more than 60,000 San Diegans. **NOTABLE:** Bengé was the San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year in 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Bengé says bringing joy to so many people in their workplace is huge "but for me personally, I love helping women achieve amazing things by \*seeing\* them and shining a light on them so they can see what I can see." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Don't ever burn a bridge."



**BARRY EDELSTEIN**

**ERNA FINCI VITERBI ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, OLD GLOBE THEATRE**

**WHY:** Appointed artistic director in 2012, Edelstein was previously director of the NY Shakespeare Festival. **NOTABLE:** This summer, the Globe became one of 10 theatres in the country to complete Shakespeare's canon with Edelstein's landmark production of Henry 6. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Old Globe brings theatre to nearly 30,000 San Diegans in neighborhoods around the county, free of charge. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** ("Much virtue in 'if.'" – *Shakespeare*) "'If' is a magic word that starts us thinking about change. 'If' we imagine something, then we can do it."



**RICHARD BLAIS**

**RESTAURANTEUR/CELEBRITY CHEF, EMBER & RYE, JUNIPER & IVY, THE CRACK SHACK**

**WHY:** Blais is a James Beard Award-nominated cookbook author and TV personality who appeared on Bravo's "Top Chef" series. **NOTABLE:** He owns and operates Trail Blais, a forward-thinking culinary consulting group that designs and launches restaurants across the country, including Ember & Rye in Carlsbad. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Blais in 2023 authored "Plant Forward: 100 Bold Recipes for a Mostly Healthy Lifestyle." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Really the only motivation is through deliciousness; cooking great food that people want to eat again."



**MICHAEL ESPOSITO**

**FOUNDER & CEO, SNAKE OIL COCKTAIL CO.**

**WHY:** In 2010, Esposito founded Snake Oil Cocktail Company, San Diego's first cocktail consulting and event mixology company. **NOTABLE:** Snake Oil's first event was providing bar service at the Sundance Film Festival and it has partnered with Warner Brothers, Comic-Con and Disney designing red-carpet cocktail experiences. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Snake Oil Cocktail Company is a regular partner with the non-profit community, supporting events and fundraisers across the spectrum. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The best events are like swans – graceful above, driven by a symphony of effort below."



**OLIVER (CHIP) BREWER III**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, TOPGOLF CALLAWAY BRANDS**

**WHY:** Brewer has been director, president and CEO of Topgolf Callaway Brands Corp. since March 2012. **NOTABLE:** Brewer led Callaway's \$2.66 billion acquisition of TopGolf in 2021. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In fulfilling Topgolf Callaway's mission to drive growth and value, Brewer told stakeholders in 2023, "we share a commitment to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and well-being," with a focus on employee well-being and belonging. **QUOTABLE:** "We believe in the diverse, inclusive nature of Modern Golf and its ability to bring joy to people's lives."



**MARTHA GILMER**

**CEO, SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**WHY:** Gilmer has been CEO of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra since 2014 and leads the organization in its initiatives and goals. **NOTABLE:** Gilmer partnered with the Port of San Diego on the Symphony's permanent outdoor venue, The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Symphony focuses on inclusivity and expanding the role of orchestral music. **QUOTABLE:** "As an audience member listening to this orchestra, what we really hope is that it can transport you to another place, or another way of thinking."



**DAVID BRONNER**

**COSMIC ENGAGEMENT OFFICER, DR BRONNERS**

**WHY:** Bronner is Dr. Bronner's top executive and the grandson of company founder Emanuel Bronner. **NOTABLE:** Dr. Bronner's holds the status of the highest scoring B Corp in the world among companies dedicated to positive social and environmental impact over the profit motive. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Bronner champions regenerative organic agriculture, fair trade, organic labeling, animal rights, criminal justice reform and reform in drug policy. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" – *Martin Luther King Jr.*



**DAVID GLANZER**

**CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS & STRATEGY OFFICER, SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON**

**WHY:** Glanzer manages communications with local, national and international print and digital media representatives, serving as the media contact and spokesperson for Comic-Con. **NOTABLE:** Gilmer partnered with the Port of San Diego on the Symphony's permanent outdoor venue, The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Symphony focuses on inclusivity and expanding the role of orchestral music. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be passionate about your project, then don't just sell it, share the enthusiasm."





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**ROBERT H. GLEASON**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, EVANS HOTELS**

**WHY:** Gleason was appointed President and CEO of Evans Hotels in 2014, becoming the first executive outside of the Evans family to run the company's day-to-day operations. **NOTABLE:** He joined Evans Hotels as a reservations agent at 17, working his way up to CFO prior to earning his law degree. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Gleason serves on the board of the California Travel and Tourism Commission. **QUOTABLE:** "‘Always Grateful; Never Satisfied’ means appreciating people and progress while recognizing the imperative to make things better."



**MARTY GORSICH**

**CEO, CENTURY CLUB OF SAN DIEGO / FARMERS INSURANCE OPEN**

**WHY:** Gorsich oversees the Century Club of San Diego, host organization of the Farmers Insurance Open. **NOTABLE:** The Century Club has an annual economic impact of \$67.5 million with the tournament's national and international broadcast coverage a marketing asset for the local economy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Century Club supports charity partners with time, funding and leveraging members' skills and expertise. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Your true worth is determined by how much more you give in value than you take in payment."



**DARIN HARRIS**

**CEO, JACK IN THE BOX**

**WHY:** Formerly CEO of CiCi's Enterprises from for five years, Harris started as CEO of Jack in the Box in June 2020. **NOTABLE:** In 2023, Harris led Jack in the Box's \$585 million acquisition of Del Taco. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Jack in the Box Foundation has raised over \$3.7 million for No Kid Hungry and also supports the American Red Cross. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our customers are also our neighbors, our friends, and our extended family, and we are proud to support them as they explore what life outside the box can mean for them."



**TONY HAWK**

**FOUNDER & CEO, TONY HAWK INC.**

**WHY:** Hawk was one of the world's top skateboarders at age 16, and during a 17-year pro career, won more than 70 skateboarding contests. **NOTABLE:** He co-founded skateboarding company Birdhouse in 1992 and three years later competed in the first Extreme Games. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hawk's foundation, The Skatepark Project, helps build public skateparks for youth in underserved communities. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "You might not make it to the top, but if you are doing what you love, there is much more happiness there than being rich or famous."



**TROY JOHNSON**

**FOOD CRITIC/PUBLISHER, SAN DIEGO MAGAZINE**

**WHY:** In 2021, Johnson and his wife, Claire, invested in San Diego culture, buying and modernizing the city's iconic 75 year-old media company SDM and launched SDM Studios. **NOTABLE:** With partners, including Alex Morgan, Drew Brees and Rob Machado, Johnson launched the annual Del Mar Wine + Food Festival. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Through SDM and Food Network, Johnson is critical in raising the national profile of San Diego's food, drink and restaurant culture. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Behind every great culture or brand is a story well told."



**ERIC KEEN-LOUIE**

**ARTISTIC PRODUCING DIRECTOR, LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE**

**WHY:** Keen-Louie is an artistic leader at La Jolla Playhouse, one of the country's most vital developers of new theatrical works. **NOTABLE:** He has overseen seven shows that transferred to Broadway including the Tony Award-winning *THE OUTSIDERS* and upcoming *REDWOOD*. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Keen-Louie is vice president of the National Alliance of Musical Theatre and consults nationally about nurturing diversity in the theater. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there's a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind, and dreaming ahead." – Tony Kushner



**JOE KUDLA**

**FOUNDER & CEO, VUORI**

**WHY:** A former model for Dolce & Gabbana and previously a CPA at Ernst & Young, Kudla launched Vuori in 2015. **NOTABLE:** Vuori has 35 stores in major U.S. markets with its flagship store in Encinitas. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Vuori focuses on designing products to last while making efforts to reduce the water and chemical footprint of its products. **QUOTABLE:** "Great businesses exist in the eye of the hurricane, and it's all about the relationships that we have with one another, how we treat each other every day."



**BRIAN LEE**

**GENERAL MANAGER, THE UNIVERSITY CLUB AT SYMPHONY TOWERS**

**WHY:** Lee has more than two decades of experience in the hospitality industry. **NOTABLE:** Under Lee's guidance, the downtown San Diego club was awarded the 2021 City Club of the Year by ClubCorp. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Participating in local outreach programs and partnering with influential organizations gives the club's members the opportunity to make a real difference in the community. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I am proud of how diverse the club has become... It all makes for a really great fabric of this place."



**BRIAN MALARKEY**

**CO-FOUNDER, PUFFER MALARKY COLLECTIVE**

**WHY:** Co-founder of Puffer Malarkey Collective, celebrity chef and restaurateur Malarkey has created more than 15 successful restaurant concepts; his portfolio includes Herb & Wood, Anima, and Herb & Sea. **NOTABLE:** Malarkey was a finalist on Bravo's Top Chef Season 3 and is also the founder of a line of cooking oils under the Chefs Life name. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Chefs Life partners with hospitality nonprofit Golden Rule Charity. **QUOTABLE:** "Don't skimp on quality and quantity. Give people the amazing experience they deserve."



**TONYA MANTOOTH**

**CEO & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SAN DIEGO FILM FESTIVAL**

**WHY:** Mantooth is an acclaimed commercial and entertainment film producer and in 2012 took on the SD International Film Festival leadership role. **NOTABLE:** Mantooth has won 10 regional Emmys, 60 international Tellys and ADDYs; the Film Festival is among MovieMaker Magazine's 'Top 20 Film Festivals in North America.' **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mantooth is a member of Patrons of the Prado and on the advisory boards of Women4Empowerment and Pillars4Dignity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The fears you didn't face today will become your limit tomorrow."



**CODY MARTINEZ**

**CHAIRMAN, SYCUAN TRIBAL COUNCIL, VICE CHAIRMAN, SAN DIEGO FOOTBALL CLUB**

**WHY:** 2024 is the 10-year anniversary of Martinez's chairmanship at Sycuan, elected to a third four-year term in 2021. **NOTABLE:** He was instrumental in bringing MLS to San Diego; next year marks the launch of San Diego's newest professional sports team. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Martinez has been growing the tribe's economic interests, promoting cultural awareness and improving community resiliency. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Give me knowledge so I may have kindness for all" – *unknown Native American*



**BO MAZZETTI**

**LEADER, RINCON TRIBE**

**WHY:** Mazzetti was elected Tribal Chairman in 2007 after serving previously as vice chair and council member. **NOTABLE:** Mazzetti is also president of the federally chartered San Luis Rey Indian Water Authority, the nation's oldest Indian water authority. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** An economic impact study by Beacon Economics showed that the Rincon Tribe supported more than 4,000 jobs, contributing \$231 million in labor income and \$34 million in tax revenue in 202. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."



**LAUREL MCFARLANE**

**FOUNDER & OWNER, MCFARLANE PROMOTIONS, INC.**

**WHY:** McFarlane offers her company's clients more than 20 years of hands-on event planning experience and relationships. **NOTABLE:** McFarlane is founder and president of the San Diego Event Coalition and is a leader in the industry, spearheading new trends and innovations. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** McFarlane Promotions for more than two decades has helped hundreds of nonprofits make millions of dollars through fundraisers. **QUOTABLE:** "The best way to show your customer you appreciate them is by exceeding their expectations and creating space for surprise and delight."



**MICHELLE METTER**

**PARTNER & CO-FOUNDER, FAST FORWARD EVENTS**

**WHY:** Metter is Fast Forward Events partner and co-founder of San Diego Food & Wine Festival, in its 20th year. **NOTABLE:** Metter has helped define San Diego as a culinary destination and into the spotlight; through her work, workforce readiness for San Diego's restaurant and hospitality has improved. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She serves on board for San Diego Tourism Association, San Diego Events Coalition and International Association of Exhibition Executives. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Strive to live a life of purpose and passion and always drink Champagne."



**MIKE MURPHY**

**REGIONAL SENIOR DIRECTOR, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL**

**WHY:** Murphy has three decades of hospitality management experience and started in 1991 as a bell captain in North Carolina. **NOTABLE:** Murphy, at the Bayfront Marriott, was awarded General Manager of the Year and Opening Hotel of the Year in 2016 from Marriott. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Murphy initiated a fundraiser for Rady's Children's Hospital in 2016 and it continues today, raising more than \$100,000. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be." – *Rosalynn Carter*



**ROBERT RAUCH**

**CHAIRMAN & CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, BRICK HOSPITALITY**

**WHY:** Robert Rauch is Chairman and as Chief Strategy Officer guides Brick Hospitality, an employee-owned hotel-management group, led by some of his senior executives. **NOTABLE:** Rauch is known as the "Hotel Guru" for his extensive knowledge of the hospitality industry. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Throughout his career, Rauch has been a consistent supporter and advocate for professional women in the hospitality industry. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our team's diverse mix of talents enables us to tackle the most complex hospitality challenges. Our breadth of experience and agility make us unique."




**JIMBO SOMECK**

**CEO, JIMBO'S ... NATURALLY!**

**WHY:** Someck cares for customers and staff, championing community involvement, being economically viable, and honesty, integrity and respect. **NOTABLE:** A dedicated runner, twice Someck had streaks of running six years without missing a day. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Someck is committed to the community, children and the environment, promoting environmental groups and practices, contributing to charities and spreading the power of nourishing ingredients. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Some men see things as they are, and say 'why.' I dream of things that never were and say 'why not.'" – *George Bernard Shaw*





**Congratulates Anne Evans**  
SD 500 Honoree



San Diego natives Anne and William Evans founded Evans Hotels in 1953. Employing over 1,200 locals, the family-owned hospitality company operates the Bahia Resort Hotel and Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa on Mission Bay as well as The Lodge at Torrey Pines in La Jolla.

**KURT STOCKS**

**PRESIDENT, LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA RESORT**

**WHY:** Stocks since 2020 has led LEGOLAND California Resort in Carlsbad with two hotels, a water park and aquarium. **NOTABLE:** Stocks was formerly a professional rugby player and later a managing director at Fitness First Malaysia. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2023, LEGOLAND California partnered with Merlin’s Magic Wand Foundation to gift more than 3,000 LEGO sets to patients at Rady Children’s Hospital. **QUOTABLE:** “Our hope is that each show leaves families with smiles on their faces, music in their heads and unforgettable memories in their hearts.”



**CAROL WALLACE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO THEATRES**

**WHY:** Wallace is president and CEO of San Diego Theatres, a nonprofit overseeing San Diego Civic and Balboa theatres, ensuring they remain vital cultural centers. **NOTABLE:** Wallace led the historic Balboa Theatre’s 100th anniversary celebration, highlighting its legacy and impact on San Diego. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Through programs like the Balboa Theatre Grant Fund and Silent Film Mondays, Wallace promotes arts accessibility and showcases community-based. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Value the arts organizations and creative spaces that bring us together.”



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

**BUSINESS WOMEN**  
of the year awards **2024**

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**NANCY ROHLAND-HEINRICH, Ed.D.**

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,  
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**KIMBERLY HUNT**  
ANCHOR, ABC 10 NEWS SAN DIEGO

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**JENNIFER BARNES**

**CEO, OPTIMA OFFICE**

**WHY:** Jennifer Barnes is the chief executive and founder of Optima Office, which provides accounting, bookkeeping and HR services to businesses. **NOTABLE:** Barnes was named by the San Diego Business Journal as a 2024 Women of Influence in Accounting & Finance honoree. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Barnes has been a board member with Junior Achievement of San Diego County for more than a decade. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Your employees are your biggest asset, treat them well! Happy team = Happy Clients.”



**REID CARR**

**CEO, RED DOOR INTERACTIVE**

**WHY:** Red Door Interactive is a multichannel marketing agency for enterprise brands. Reid Carr has been president and CEO for 22 years. **NOTABLE:** Red Door launched an advertising campaign in August for California Grown, an organization promoting California produce and agriculture. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Carr is a board member at Voice of San Diego and San Diego Sport Innovators. **QUOTABLE:** “Since founding the company in 2002, my role is now focused on listening, learning, sharing, and leading.”



**MIKE BARONE**

**NORTH AMERICAN PRESIDENT, HUB INTERNATIONAL**

**WHY:** Mike Barone is the North American president of employee benefits for insurance brokerage HUB International. **NOTABLE:** Barone is also a member of Hub’s California Executive Management Team and National Employee Benefits Executive Committee. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Barone is the chair of the San Diego chapter of the Young President’s Organization. **QUOTABLE:** “In addition to day-to-day direction of the firm, I maintain direct strategic planning relationships with clients, and lead strategic benefits planning, population health management, employee engagement and communication, healthcare reform guidance and compliance.”



**JILL COLLINS**

**CEO & CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, AUDACITY HEALTH SERVICES**

**WHY:** Jill Collins leads Audacity Health, an analytics, strategy and creative company that serves the life sciences industry. **NOTABLE:** Audacity Health won three MUSE Creative Awards in 2024 for the company’s website, brand identity and purpose video. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Collins is a member of CEOs Against Cancer, the Forbes Agency Council and a board member of Connect. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Science explains how the world works, but navigating that world successfully requires respect and compassion.”



**TREVOR BLAIR**

**CEO, BLAIR SEARCH PARTNERS**

**WHY:** Trevor Blair has led his eponymous executive search, recruiting, and workforce development company since 2016. **NOTABLE:** Blair’s firm manages 40-50 search engagements annually for clients across California and on the East Coast. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Blair is a board member of the military veteran support non-profit Zero8hundred. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Pay it forward.”



**ANNA CROWE**

**CEO & FOUNDER, CROWE PR**

**WHY:** Anna Crowe is a recognized public relations expert, best-selling author, speaker, and marketing faculty. **NOTABLE:** For over 20 years, she has represented iconic brands around the globe, pivoting from a Big 4 CPA track to founding and scaling a national public relations agency. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Crowe is president of the San Diego chapter of the Entrepreneurs Organization and is an active member of the PEERS Network. **QUOTABLE:** “Being an entrepreneur, a business owner can be difficult at times, and this community is designed to help entrepreneurs thrive.” *(speaking of her EO appointment)*



**BILL BRENNAN**

**CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, CMR**

**WHY:** Bill Brennan joined CMR in 2020 with over 24 years of industry experience as a principal, broker at other large insurance firms. **NOTABLE:** CMR was ranked 54th on Business Insurance’s 2023 list of the best places to work in the insurance industry. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Brennan is on the executive board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Diego County. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** I believe a life spent giving is a life worth living.



**DEEDEE DEMAN**

**CHAIR & CEO, BENCH INTERNATIONAL**

**WHY:** DeeDee DeMan has led Bench International for 50 years, from a single-person life-science and healthcare executive-recruiting firm into a global recruiting and advisory business. **NOTABLE:** DeMan serves on the board of governors of BIOCOM California and is a member of BIOCOM’s DE&I Task Force. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** DeMan founded The Bank of Women, a group of over 1,100 women who are ready for independent director and C-suite roles. **QUOTABLE:** “It’s my team who makes me a better human being and a far better leader.”



**RYAN BUELL**

**FOUNDER & CEO, SAYVA**

**WHY:** Ryan Buell founded the finance, IT, HR and consulting company Sayva Solutions, Inc. in 2014. **NOTABLE:** Sayva was named one of the San Diego Business Journal’s best workplaces for the eighth consecutive year in 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Buell serves on the boards of the Better Business Bureau and Connect. **QUOTABLE:** “As CEO, my top priority is ensuring our culture is consistent with our values.”



**LAURIE FISHER**

**PRESIDENT, LMA WORLDWIDE**

**WHY:** Laurie Fisher has led LMA Worldwide, a marketing and advertising agency, since founding the company in 2005. **NOTABLE:** With over 20 years of media experience across multiple platforms, she places an emphasis on cutting-edge marketing strategies for clients’ success. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Fisher has provided pro bono marketing to Shabbat San Diego, Second Chance, Classic for Kids, the Kindness Initiative, Mano a Mano Foundation and Humble Designs. **QUOTABLE:** “Understanding the true impact of marketing goes beyond simple metrics—it’s about driving growth.”





# Celebrating excellence!

Marsh McLennan Agency is proud to announce that Chris Williams, CEO of our West Region, has been honored as one of this year's SD500 recipients! This distinguished award recognizes Chris's remarkable leadership and the vital role our company plays in the San Diego business community. Under his guidance, we continue to innovate and drive success, setting new standards in our industry. Join us in congratulating Chris on this well-deserved achievement!



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A portrait of Chris Williams, CEO of the West Region, sitting and smiling. He is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt and glasses.

**Chris Williams**  
CEO, West Region

**JIM FLOROS**

**FOUNDER & CEO, FLOROS & ASSOCIATES**

**WHY:** Jim Floros leads Floros & Associates, a consulting firm for nonprofit organizations. **NOTABLE:** Floros has more than 40 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, previously holding senior roles with the Burn Institute, the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank and the California Association of Food Banks. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Floros served as the VIP speaker at Cause San Diego's annual Cause Conference in 2024. **QUOTABLE:** The Floros & Associates moniker is: "For Profit solutions for Nonprofits."



**RACHEL FORD HUTMAN**

**CEO, FORD HUTMAN MEDIA**

**WHY:** Rachel Ford Hutman founded Ford Hutman Media in February 2020, specializing in media relations and executive visibility to biotech, digital health, and medtech companies. **NOTABLE:** She has led communication strategies for brands like Illumina, Johnson & Johnson and Best Buy. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ford Hutman has previously served on the boards for dbaPlatform and the Palomar College Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have stood on the shoulders of giants throughout my career. My advice is to watch what others are doing and listen more than you speak."



**JONATHAN HANWIT**

**CEO, THINKPARALLAX**

**WHY:** Jonathan Hanwit is a founding partner and CEO of thinkPARALLAX, a sustainability strategy and communications agency. **NOTABLE:** Hanwit has worked with international brands such as Southwest Airlines, Twitter, and Qualcomm on large-scale purpose-driven communications projects. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hanwit has sat on the board of advisors for the Kroc School at the University of San Diego since 2018. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** Prioritize purpose over profit and use your business as a force for good.



**PETER HEALD**

**CEO, SIGNATURE ANALYTICS**

**WHY:** Peter Heald leads Signature Analytics, an accounting and CFO business advisory service provider. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Signature Analytics was named to the San Diego Business Journal's list of the Best Places to Work. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Heald is a member of Vistage, which bills itself as the world's largest executive coaching organization. **QUOTABLE:** "I am grateful to our entire team for their hard work, dedication, and continuous improvement in making Signature Analytics such an incredible place to work."



**KARLA HERZOG**

**FOUNDER & CEO, INNOVATIVE EMPLOYEE SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Karla Herzog is the leader of Innovative Employee Solutions, a provider of remote and contingent workforce solutions that she founded in 1971. **NOTABLE:** IES was ranked eighth on the San Diego Business Journal's list of the fastest-growing large private companies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Herzog volunteers with Operation Homefront and the San Diego Humane Society. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we remain steadfast in our commitment to delivering innovative and client-centric solutions for the evolving workforce."



**MARK HOOLEY**

**COO, COHNREZNICK, LLP**

**WHY:** Mark Hooley has worked at CohnReznick LLP for more than 20 years and was promoted to COO in 2022. **NOTABLE:** Hooley is the chair of CohnReznick's Innovation Office and has served on the company's executive board. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hooley sits on the board of Cleantech San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Success means finding the right balance between work life and family life. You must be equally accountable to both."



**DAN HOM**

**PRESIDENT, FOCUSCOM, INC.**

**WHY:** Hom has led the public relations and public affairs firm Focuscom, Inc. since 2007. **NOTABLE:** Hom has worked in the public relations and public affairs industry for more than 20 years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hom is the Advisory Board president for the Asian Business Association of San Diego and the Political Action Committee chair for the Lincoln Club of San Diego. **QUOTABLE:** "We're all here part of this great experience of 'The American Dream.' And that's something we need to cherish."



**JASON JAGER**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR & SENIOR PARTNER, BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP**

**WHY:** Jason Jager has been managing director and senior partner at the Boston Consulting Group since 2002, with a focus on med tech, life sciences and diagnostics. **NOTABLE:** Boston Consulting Group opened its new San Diego office in Little Italy in January 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Boston Consulting Group estimates it has dedicated more than 1 million hours to social impact in the last decade. **QUOTABLE:** "Focus on building a highest performing team and the rest will follow."



**STEFAN JENSEN**

**PARTNER & CEO, MOTIONSTRAND**

**WHY:** Stefan Jensen has been a partner and CEO for more than eight years at Motionstrand, a full-service digital agency of creative thinkers and technical experts. **NOTABLE:** Jensen also works closely with the senior leadership team to evolve and expand the agency. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Motionstrand has donated over \$250,000 to help build the Children's Discovery Museum's brand and digital experience. **QUOTABLE:** "We win when we connect caregivers and patients with the most innovative brands and therapies available."



**JASON KRUGER**

**PRESIDENT & FOUNDER, SIGNATURE ANALYTICS**

**WHY:** Jason Kruger founded Signature Analytics, an accounting and CFO business advisory service provider, in 2008. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Signature Analytics was named to the San Diego Business Journal's list of the Best Places to Work. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Kruger is actively involved in the school that his three daughters attend. **QUOTABLE:** "Technical background is important, but our culture and fitting in our culture is absolutely critical as well." (from 2018 "It's Your Business" interview)



# VISTAGE

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"All of us at Vistage extend a big congratulations to the SD500 honorees. Success has no finish line, and we are here to help at every step along your leadership journey."

**SAM REESE**

CEO, Vistage Worldwide, Inc.

Honoree, SDBJ SD500 Most Influential People in San Diego 2024

**GREGG LANDERS**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CAAS & INTERNAL CONTROL SERVICES, CBIZ**

**WHY:** Gregg Landers is a managing director with CBIZ, overseeing the firm's accounting and advisory services across Southern California. In 2024, CBIZ became the largest professional service provider of its kind after acquiring non-attest business Marcum LLP for \$2.3 billion. **NOTABLE:** He previously worked for a Fortune 100 firm, a startup and a rapidly growing mid-sized firm. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Landers is a member of multiple professional organizations and sits on the advisory board for the Cal State San Marcos College of Business.



**JULIE LOWEN**

**FOUNDER & CEO, CHILDREN'S PARADISE PRESCHOOL**

**WHY:** Julie Lowen leads Children's Paradise, a collection of early-childhood education centers. **NOTABLE:** Children's Paradise expanded its footprint in 2024, adding centers in Carlsbad, Escondido and Poway, with another planned in Ramona. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She chairs the Smarty Patch Foundation, a nonprofit that provides financial and resource "patches" to promote continuous early learning of children in troublesome situations. **QUOTABLE:** "Childcare empowers families to work. Productivity is also increased when parents are not worrying about their children."



**ALESSANDRA LEZAMA**

**FOUNDER & CEO, TOOTRIS**

**WHY:** Alessandra Lezama founded TOOTRIS, an on-demand childcare technology platform. **NOTABLE:** TOOTRIS was designated a Live Well San Diego partner organization. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lezama is a board member of the San Diego Foundation and chair of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce board. **QUOTABLE:** "The entire business community and communities at large recognize that childcare is kind of like that sticky glue that holds everything together."



**LOU MANSO**

**FOUNDER, PRESIDENT & CEO, LOU MANSO AGENCY**

**WHY:** Lou Manso leads the Lou Manso Agency, the creative and branding arm of The Media Buying Company, Inc. **NOTABLE:** The Media Buying Company's past and present clients include Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Dell, Dolce & Gabbana and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Manso is a frequent volunteer in the Scripps Ranch community. **QUOTABLE:** "We go where we think the client will be best served." (from September 2024 interview on KUSI's Good Business San Diego)



**Celebrating San Diego's Finest!**

From all of us at Apex 365 Workforce Solutions, congratulations to this year's SD500 leaders! Your contributions to San Diego's economy are commendable, and we are inspired by your leadership. At Apex 365 Workforce Solutions, we're dedicated to helping businesses thrive by supporting compliance, safety, and operational efficiency. Together, let's continue to make a positive impact across our vibrant business community.



**BLANCA RINCON**  
CEO & Founder, Apex 365 WS Team



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**RIC MILITI****CEO & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, INNOVISION MARKETING GROUP**

**WHY:** Ric Milioti heads InnoVision Marketing Group, an advertising agency specializing in casino, health-care, nonprofit and retail. **NOTABLE:** InnoVision was named to the 2024 Best Places to Work SoCal list by the Best Companies Group. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Milioti sits on the advisory boards of the National Native American Human Resources Association, the Palomar Health President's Council and the Fentanyl United Crisis Coalition. **QUOTABLE:** "As CEO, I truly believe one of the most rewarding parts of my role is helping each and every team member grow and thrive."

**PAUL NATION****SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, CBIZ**

**WHY:** Paul Nation oversees the CBIZ offices of Southern California, and the direction of client services. He has been with the company since 1979 and has been in public accounting for more than 40 years. **NOTABLE:** He has served as an expert witness in Federal and California Superior Court in numerous cases involving business litigation, damage determination and forensic accounting. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Nation is a member of the World Trade Association of San Diego, Corporate Directors Forum and the North County Economic Development Council.

**JULI MORAN****MANAGING DIRECTOR, DELOITTE**

**WHY:** Juli Moran is marketplace leader of Deloitte's San Diego practice, overseeing audit, tax, consulting, and advisory services and leading marketplace and community activities. **NOTABLE:** Deloitte is the official technology integration partner of the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Moran sits on the American Heart Association – San Diego Division's board of directors. **QUOTABLE:** "I always call San Diego an innovation ecosystem, like a mini version of a Bay Area, Shanghai, Boston, et cetera..."

**JACK PERKINS****FOUNDER & CEO, CFO HUB**

**WHY:** Jack Perkins founded CFO Hub in 2017, offering fractional financial services of CFOs, controllers, HR professionals and accountants to businesses, nonprofits and government contractors. **NOTABLE:** CFO Hub was named to the Inc. 5,000 Fastest Growing Companies list for the third consecutive year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Perkins is a board member for the sustainability-oriented San Diego nonprofit Kitchens for Good. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Energy and persistence conquer all things." – Benjamin Franklin



We are proud to congratulate our colleagues

**GREGG LANDERS, PAUL NATION & ARMON MILLS**

on being recognized by the San Diego Business Journal as three of the

**Top 500 Executives in San Diego**

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**JILL POZNICK EPSTEIN**

**CEO, INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS & BROKERS OF CALIFORNIA**



**WHY:** Jill Poznick Epstein leads the IIABCal, handling daily management of the organization and working directly with the executive committee and board of directors. **NOTABLE:** Poznick Epstein is the former executive director of the San Diego County Bar Association. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Poznick Epstein volunteers as a driver for Jewish Family Service of San Diego. **QUOTABLE:** "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us" – Ralph Waldo Emerson

**SAM REESE**

**CEO, VISTAGE WORLDWIDE, INC.**



**WHY:** Sam Reese leads Vistage Worldwide, Inc. – the world's largest coaching organization for small and midsize businesses. **NOTABLE:** Vistage serves more than 45,000 members across 35 countries. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Reese founded, sponsored and coached an AAU basketball club in Denver, which covered expenses for players provided they were successful students. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Great leaders are inquisitive and welcome new ideas that challenge their thinking."

**VICTOR RAMSAUER**

**CEO, PRESIDENT & SHAREHOLDER, LEVITZACKS, CPAS**



**WHY:** As LevitzZacks CEO, Ramsauer advises the firm's clients on the sale, acquisition and divestiture of businesses with values exceeding \$175 million. **NOTABLE:** Ramsauer also advises various government contractors in preparing for the successful completion of pre-award surveys by Defense Contract Audit Agency. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ramsauer sits on the Downtown San Diego Partnership's board and finance committee. **QUOTABLE:** Ramsauer told the Journal of Accountancy in 2022: "Money is oftentimes not a motivator, but it sure can be a demotivator, so you have to be at the right level."

**JAMIE REID**

**BOARD CHAIR & CO-FOUNDER, C3 RISK & INSURANCE SERVICES**



**WHY:** Jamie Reid is chairman of C3's board and leads the company's Complex Comp division. **NOTABLE:** C3 was ranked third on Insurance Business America's 2024 list of the best insurance brokerages in the U.S. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Reid is a member and San Diego chair of the mentorship organization Alder, formerly known as Gen Next. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you can dream it, you can do it."



**Karla Hertzog**  
Founder & CEO  
A toast to 50 years at IES's anniversary celebration.

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Congratulations Karla Hertzog, Founder & CEO of IES, for being recognized as one of SD500's Most Influential People!

Thank you for your vision, leadership, and contributions to the community.

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**Alessandra Lezama**  
TOOTRIS Founder & CEO

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**EMILY REX****FOUNDER & CEO, DEPARTURE**

**WHY:** Emily Rex leads Departure, a hybrid firm combining technological expertise and brand development. **NOTABLE:** Departure provides brand-building expertise to major businesses like Harley Davidson, Bulleit Bourbon and CrossFit. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Rex is vice chair of the Girl Scouts San Diego board of directors and a board member for the San Diego Humane Society.

**QUOTABLE:** "We believe that creativity and interactivity have only one purpose - to present great content in such a way that makes users want to engage with it, own it and share it."

**JEANNE SCHMELZER****EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NETZEL GRIGSBY ASSOCIATES**

**WHY:** Jeanne Schmelzer has served as the executive vice president of the business and nonprofit management consultant Netzel Grigsby Associates since 1997. **NOTABLE:** Schmelzer has managed capital campaigns and fundraising projects for clients including Meals on Wheels of San Diego, the city of Poway and the Armed Services YMCA. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Schmelzer is board president of the North County Philanthropy Council. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Being a business woman is like a running a marathon, enjoying the journey and not just the destination."

**RITA STEEL****PRESIDENT, PROFESSIONAL TALENT SOLUTIONS, WEST & SOUTHWESTERN OPERATIONS, ROBERT HALF**

**WHY:** In her role with the staffing agency Robert Half, Rita Steel manages more than 100 offices and six practice groups and has been with the firm for 35 years.

**NOTABLE:** Robert Half was ranked 24th on Fortune's 2024 list of the best workplaces for women. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Steel is the vice president on the board of directors for the City Ballet of San Diego, which provides education and outreach programs. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "True leadership empowers individuals to exceed their own expectations, unlocking potential they never imagined possible."

**SETH STEIN****CEO, EASTRIDGE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Stein has been staffing and workforce management company Eastridge Workforce Solutions' chief executive for nearly five years and has worked for the company for nearly 26 years. **NOTABLE:** Based on market research, Eastridge's customer satisfaction is double that of the staffing industry average. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Stein led Eastridge's transition to a fully employee-owned company. **QUOTABLE:** "The thesis is that if you have happy engaged employees, and if you treat them well, the clients will experience that."

**PAT SULLIVAN****CEO, PAT SULLIVAN CONSULTING**

**WHY:** Pat Sullivan's consulting firm works with clients to sharpen business strategy, market competitiveness and improve their bottom lines. **NOTABLE:** Sullivan is the former executive director of the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, retiring in 2020 after 29 years of service. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sullivan is co-chair of the board for the San Diego Cyber Center of Excellence. **QUOTABLE:** "Sometimes the greatest ideas start small and then gain momentum once people find out about it."

**MAGGIE WATKINS****CEO, MAGGIE T. WATKINS CONSULTING**

**WHY:** Maggie Watkins founded her eponymous consulting firm in 2023, serving professional services firms. **NOTABLE:** Watkins received a lifetime achievement award in September at the 2024 Corporate Directors Forum's annual Director of the Year Awards for her contributions to nonprofit organizations. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Watkins sits on the board of the Sharp Grossmont Foundation and chairs the Sharp Healthcare Foundation's Stewardship Committee. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning." – Bill Gates

**CHRIS WILLIAMS****CEO – WEST REGION, MARSH MCLENNAN AGENCY**

**WHY:** Chris Williams has worked for Marsh & McLennan since 1993 and has served as West region CEO since 2019. **NOTABLE:** His current role includes oversight of nine offices and some 1,300 employees across California, Arizona and Alaska. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Williams is a board member with the San Diego Regional Economic Development Committee. **QUOTABLE:** "Unlimited possibilities come with seemingly unending challenges, and it is vitally important that business owners partner with an insurance professional that is committed to seeing them thrive."

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**DON ADAIR****EVP & CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER,  
SWINERTON**

**WHY:** Don Adair is responsible for enhancing and expanding the internal and external relationships that support Swinerton's customers and employee-owners. He started with Swinerton Builders in 1988 moving to the San Diego Division in 1999. **NOTABLE:** Swinerton's projects include a \$250 million downtown apartment tower. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Swinerton has outreach programs to small, local and historically disadvantaged businesses. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Your actions are the architects of your brand. Take ownership of your actions for they sculpt not just your brand but the legacy you leave behind."

**BEN BADIEE****PRESIDENT & CEO, BADIEE  
DEVELOPMENT INC.**

**WHY:** Badiee Development, Inc. specializes in developing logistics and industrial projects in the Western U.S. **NOTABLE:** Badiee has started more than 10 business ventures. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Badiee is a member of NAIOP and the University of San Diego's Policy Advisory Board. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Adversity and failure are your best friends. Whatever you encounter, it's always for your advantage and growth. Train your minds to keep looking for that advantage."

**AMBER ANDERSON****TEAM LEADER AND BROKER ASSOCIATE,  
TEAM ANDERSON PACIFIC SOTHEBY'S  
INTERNATIONAL**

**WHY:** Amber Anderson and Brandon White of Team Amber Anderson have sold more than \$600 million in residential real estate along the San Diego coastline and its environs. **NOTABLE:** With a client list which includes many Fortune 500 corporate executives, pro athletes and institutional investors, Amber has distinguished herself as an elite broker in San Diego County. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She is young member Vice President of real estate business networking organization FIABCI, the International Real Estate Federation.

**PAUL BARNES****DIVISION PRESIDENT, SHEA HOMES  
SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Paul Barnes has overseen Mission Valley developments and master planned communities in Scripps Ranch and Chula Vista. **NOTABLE:** Barnes' team has built more than 8,500 homes and developed 100+ local neighborhoods. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Barnes works with Habitat for Humanity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Now more than ever, I appreciate and recognize the importance of mentoring a younger generation of industry leaders and trades professionals that will create the housing opportunities of the future."

**AL APUZZO****PRESIDENT & PRINCIPAL, LEE &  
ASSOCIATES, NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Al Apuzzo has nearly three decades of experience in commercial real estate brokerage, development, asset management, and consulting. **NOTABLE:** Lee & Associates had more than \$20 billion in transactions in 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lee & Associates' CompassionateLEE brings people together to help family members of its employees and others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Show up every day, always take the high road and put your team first."

**TAMI BARNHART-REESE****PRESIDENT, BARNHART-REESE  
CONSTRUCTION, INC.**

**WHY:** Tami Barnhart-Reese co-founded Barnhart-Reese Construction, Inc. with her father, Douglas Barnhart, and husband, West Reese. **NOTABLE:** Barnhart-Reese Construction, Inc. is the latest Barnhart family. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The business supports a variety of San Diego organizations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." – *William Shakespeare/Hamlet*

**GUY ASARO****PRESIDENT & CEO, MERIDIAN  
DEVELOPMENT, LLC**

**WHY:** A 36-year real estate veteran, Guy Asaro manages all business-related activities, acquisitions, and equity partnerships. **NOTABLE:** Founded in 2014, Meridian Development is one of San Diego's most prolific developers. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Asaro chairs the Joint Coalition on Inclusionary Housing Policy of the Building Industry Association of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Often, the most complicated problems can be solved with the simplest of solutions, which are overlooked because of their simplicity."

**JASON BARRY****REALTOR, JASON BARRY TEAM /  
BARRY ESTATES**

**WHY:** Barry's team sold some of the most expensive homes in San Diego County. **NOTABLE:** Barry's team had sales of more than \$6 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Jason Barry team supports Cathedral Catholic High School, St. Augustine High School, Roger Rowe Elementary and Middle School, The Nativity School, The County Friends, and Bridge for Kids. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you can leave every situation better than you found it, then you have led a purposeful and fulfilling life."

**JAMES AWFORD****PRINCIPAL, BNBUILDERS**

**WHY:** James Awford manages BNBuilders' Southern California region and its projects which have ranged from less than \$1 million to more than \$300 million. **NOTABLE:** BNBuilders in 2023 received a construction safety award. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He supports Habitat for Humanity, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Rady Children's Hospital San Diego, Mary's Place, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Fostering an open and collaborative culture is a key part of being able to successfully deliver the highest quality projects for our clients."

**LAURA BARRY****REALTOR, BARRY ESTATES**

**WHY:** Laura Barry and business partner Jim Graves hold the San Diego County record of the most homes sold for \$10 million or more. **NOTABLE:** Laura Barry was the first agent to sell over \$100 million in a calendar year and now has three to four times that annually. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She supports cancer research and animal welfare organizations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be willing to do what others won't and you'll receive results others don't."



**SEAN BARRY**

**BROKER-OWNER, LUXURY COAST GROUP BARRY ESTATES, INC.**

**WHY:** Sean Barry has 20 years-plus experience in North County's luxury market. **NOTABLE:** Luxury Coast Group has annual sales of more than \$150 million. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Barry supports the Torrey Pines Foundation and coached numerous youth sports teams.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Surrounding myself with the right people is a great feeling – people who have excellent character, who are willing to collaborate with one another, and who have deep ties to the communities we serve."



**DANIEL BRODERICK**

**PRESIDENT AMERICAS ADVISORY, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD**

**WHY:** Daniel Broderick oversees brokerage and transaction services across all markets in North and South America. **NOTABLE:** Prior to Cushman, he was president and CEO of BRE Commercial. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Broderick is an advisory board member of the University of San Diego Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Less is often more. Learn something new every day by being open minded and curious. Progress can only be achieved through change and evolution, otherwise known as growth."



**MIKE BERRYHILL**

**VP, DIVISION MANAGER, SWINERTON**

**WHY:** As Division Manager of Swinerton's San Diego operations, Mike Berryhill leads an office that is one of the largest contractors in the county. **NOTABLE:** Berryhill has three decades of construction industry experience. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Berryhill works with the Downtown San Diego Partnership, Associated General Contractors San Diego, and The Swinerton Foundation.

**QUOTABLE:** "I look forward to maintaining the division's award-winning culture as we continue to build our self-perform expertise, develop talent, and create growth opportunities for our employees while expanding the markets we serve in San Diego."



**ROSS BROWN**

**PRINCIPAL, BNB BUILDERS**

**WHY:** Ross Brown, Principal at BNBuilders, has more than 20 years of experience in life science and higher education projects. **NOTABLE:** BNBuilders has been the general contractor on several notable projects at the University of California San Diego. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Brown is the head of the Community Involvement Team at BNB and organizes volunteer activities with several nonprofits.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We empower our people to do the right things and make the right decisions for our clients."



Douglas and Nancy Barnhart Cancer Center, Chula Vista, CA



East Village Green Park | Rendering courtesy OJB Landscape Architects



Douglas E. Barnhart  
Chairman  
Barnhart-Reese Construction and  
Makena Medical Buildings LLC



Tami Barnhart Reese  
President  
Barnhart-Reese Construction

*Barnhart-Reese Construction, Inc. and Makena Medical Buildings LLC are proud to congratulate Douglas Barnhart and Tamela Barnhart Reese on being recognized as Top Executives in San Diego!*



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# SERVING SAN DIEGO

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As proud the owner of Willis Allen Real Estate, a family business with a 110-year legacy, I am honored to be apart of the San Diego Business Journal's SD500 list with so many strong and influential leaders in our community.

At Willis Allen Real Estate, we are excited to announce our continued partnership with Forbes Global Properties (FGP). Our role as a founding member of this exclusive network allows us exclusive access to Forbes' affluent audience, uniquely positioning us in the luxury global market. Forbes Media's extensive reach, with over 133 million hits monthly, enhances visibility for our San Diego listings.

Forbes Global Property's governing board, of which I am the Vice Chair of, is comprised of independently owned residential brokerages worldwide. Forbes is committed to offering top-tier support to it's agents, distinguishing us from our competitors and reinforcing our dedication to a personalized, client-first approach.

We remain deeply committed to San Diego and our community-centered values. We're here for the long term, embracing change with integrity and a focus on quality, not quantity. Led by myself since 1994, our leadership team remains steadfast in upholding our standards and adapting to the evolving real estate market. With a strong legacy and vision, we look forward to continuing our success in the years ahead.

Andrew E. Nelson  
President



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**MARC BRUTTEN**

**FOUNDER AND CEO, BRUTTEN GLOBAL**

**WHY:** Brutten Global and affiliate companies have acquired, owned, and operated more than 30 companies. **NOTABLE:** Prior to forming Westcore, Brutten was president of Shidler West, Inc. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Groups Brutten supports include The New Children's Museum, Sharp HealthCare, Mechanics Bank, and the Burnham-Moore Center for Real Estate at the University of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The true benefit of hard work is the ability to give back to the community at large in many ways."



**ROSS CLARK**

**CO-FOUNDER, THE DICKINSON & CLARK TEAM AT COMPASS**

**WHY:** Ross Clark and partner Brett Dickinson represented the two largest residential deals in La Jolla's history. **NOTABLE:** Clark is a U.S. Army veteran. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Clark works with La Jolla Youth Sports, La Jolla High School PTA, and the La Jolla Historical Society among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "By truly working hard and leading with respect, integrity and compassion towards colleagues, clients, and competitors, one can inspire others to be more confident collaborators, stronger professionals, and better people."



**SEAN CADDELL**

**GLOBAL REAL ESTATE ADVISOR, PACIFIC SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY**

**WHY:** For nearly 20 years, Sean Caddell has established himself as a top agent in San Diego's luxury coastal and equestrian communities. **NOTABLE:** Caddell received the Christie's International Real Estate Luxury Specialist Award in 2015, 2016 and 2017 and earned Equestrian Living magazine's Top Equestrian Agent honor. **QUOTABLE:** "To think about it, when there are thousands and thousands of agents that are part of the Christie's network from around the world, to be in the top group like that, that's really great. And my clients love it."



**MIKE CONROY**

**VP OF OPERATIONS, LEVEL 10 CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Mike Conroy has more than 29 years of experience in construction in San Diego County and throughout California. **NOTABLE:** Level 10 Construction's high profile San Diego County projects include Frontwave Arena in Oceanside. Other clients of Conroy's include University of San Diego; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; and entertainment clients such as SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Level 10 Construction supports numerous charitable organizations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our goal is for our clients to consider us an extension of their team."



**MAXINE & MARTI GELLENS**



As native San Diegans working on behalf of the community for a combined 87 years, Maxine & Marti Gellens are honored to be recognized in the San Diego Business Journal's 500 Most Influential People!

As leaders in the real estate profession, they are committed to innovation and growth, and strive to provide the best for their clients

858.551.6630  
teamgellens@gellens.com



maxine & marti  
**GELLENS**  
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**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY**  
HOMESERVICES

CALIFORNIA  
PROPERTIES

## WILLIAM DAVIDSON

**PRESIDENT & FOUNDER, DAVIDSON COMMUNITIES**

**WHY:** William Davidson has built more than 5,000 homes in 45 communities with a value of more than \$2 billion. **NOTABLE:** Since 1978, Davidson Communities has built quality luxury homes of architectural distinction in San Diego, Orange County, and the San Francisco Bay Area. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Davidson Communities sponsors an annual holiday food drive benefitting the San Diego Food Bank. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Good design doesn't come only from a classroom. It arrives, unannounced sometimes, just by keeping your eyes open."



## PERRY DEALY

**PRESIDENT & CEO, DEALY DEVELOPMENT**

**WHY:** Perry Dealy has more than 47 years of real estate experience. **NOTABLE:** Dealy's projects include the Convention Center Expansion, Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego and Navy Headquarters downtown. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dealy supports the Lincoln Club, USS Midway Museum Board, and the Downtown San Diego Partnership. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Downtown is in the midst of a post COVID identity crisis with the opportunity to look for the next generation of planning and big ideas."



## DEREK DAVIS

**PRESIDENT, DAVISREED CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Derek Davis formed davisReed Construction in 2002 with EE Reed after more than 35 years in the construction industry. **NOTABLE:** davisREED is in the top 200 general contractors with seven locations nationwide and over 30 years in the business. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Derek Davis is a board member of the Ecke Family YMCA and a strong supporter of many local events and charities. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Teamwork is a given, leadership is a necessity."



## BRETT DICKINSON

**CO-FOUNDER, THE DICKINSON & CLARK TEAM AT COMPASS**

**WHY:** Brett Dickinson and his partner Ross Clark represented the two largest residential deals in La Jolla's history. **NOTABLE:** Dickinson built a strong global network stemming from a successful ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) tennis career. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dickinson supports the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla Playhouse, and Youth Tennis San Diego among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Leading with kindness, dedication, honesty, hard work, and a healthy competitive spirit will create a positive collaborative environment and lasting success."



## HARPER CONSTRUCTION Celebrates 50 Years of Excellence

Since 1974, Harper Construction has been a leading provider of innovative design-build solutions, specializing in a range of facilities, from military installations to higher education construction. Our commitment to quality has earned us a reputation as a cornerstone of the construction industry, with numerous awards for safety, sustainable building practices, and design excellence.

We take pride in our longstanding partnerships across various sectors. These collaborations have enabled us to contribute to critical infrastructure projects that support national security and foster academic growth. Our deep expertise in diverse construction environments, combined with our unwavering commitment to quality, has established trust and respect among our clients.

As we look toward the future, Harper Construction remains dedicated to building for tomorrow, today. Our core values guide our work, ensuring that every project is executed with the highest priority and meticulous attention to detail.

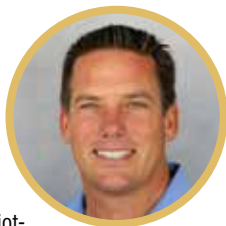


Learn more about the work we do at [harperconstruction.com](http://harperconstruction.com)

**KURT EVANS**

**PRESIDENT, LUSARDI CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Kurt Evans has more than 25 years of experience in strategic planning, overseeing the growth and development of Lusardi Construction. **NOTABLE:** Lusardi Construction is licensed or authorized to build in more than 30 states, Canada and Mexico. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Evans supports the Semper Fi Fund and Patriotic Service Dog Foundation and is a member of YPO. Lusardi Construction supports the Challenged Athletes Foundation and the Padres Pedal the Cause. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Never pet a burning dog."



**JOHN FRAGER**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGING DIRECTOR & REGIONAL LEADER, CBRE**

**WHY:** John Frager has broad experience in everything from commercial real estate to leadership and management. **NOTABLE:** CBRE has more than 500 offices in more than 100 countries, employing more than 115,000 people. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Frager is member of the board of trustees of the University of San Diego and has always been passionate supporter of Big Brothers Big Sisters. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Strategy is a commodity; Execution is an art!"



**RAYMOND FOX**

**PRINCIPAL, RAYMOND FOX & ASSOCIATES MEDICAL ARCHITECTURE & CONSULTING**

**WHY:** Raymond Fox & Associates is a nearly 40-year-old healthcare architectural firm that has worked on projects across the U.S. and in Canada and Mexico. The firm's primary focus is out-patient medical practices, but the firm also works on hospitals and senior living developments. **NOTABLE:** The firm's San Diego County clients include Palomar Health, San Diego Fertility Center, Alexander Surgery Center and Imaging Healthcare Specialists. **QUOTABLE:** "I'm constantly weighing, how do I make this patient's personal experience as good as possible."



**NICK FRASCO**

**PARTNER, WEST REGION, LONGFELLOW REAL ESTATE PARTNERS**

**WHY:** Nick Frasco leads Longfellow Real Estate Partners' strategic growth and operations in the Western United States. **NOTABLE:** Longfellow has a portfolio of more than 16 million square feet valued at more than \$10 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Frasco is a member of the University of Southern California Alumni Association and NAIOP. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I am thankful for the role our team has in supporting the life sciences in our region."



Congratulations to Eric Hepfer on being named to the San Diego Business Journal's 2024 SD500 Most Influential People list!

Hines is proud to celebrate Eric's achievement as part of a legacy that began in San Diego in 1997. Since then, Hines has made a lasting impact on the city with landmark projects like Petco Park and La Jolla Commons, contributing to the development and vitality of our region. Guided by a commitment to steady growth, Hines maintains a deep dedication to the San Diego community—pioneering developments like Riverwalk and Carlsbad Raceway that enhance the city while supporting local initiatives that give back to the region. Eric's recognition is a testament to the ongoing dedication of the Hines team to shaping a thriving future for San Diego.



**MAXINE & MARTI GELLENS**

**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOME SERVICES**

**WHY:** A well-known and highly regarded mother-daughter real estate team of Maxine and Marti Gellens, they and their team have sold thousands of homes in San Diego County since the two became partners in 1994. **NOTABLE:** Maxine and Marti Gellens are native San Diegans. Based in La Jolla, they specialize in the coastal areas of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** Always do the right thing, no matter the circumstances. Focus on putting the client's needs first. Be available, attentive, and committed to serving others with integrity and care.



**RYAN GREEN**

**DIVISION PRESIDENT, LENNAR**

**WHY:** Ryan Green has demonstrated a history of working in the construction industry. He is skilled in development, budgeting, sales, feasibility studies, and entitlements. **NOTABLE:** Lennar Corp. is one of the nation's leading homebuilders. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lennar in 1989 created the Lennar Foundation that receives \$1,000 per home sold to offer grants to support at-risk children and medical research and others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Success is a community effort, not an individual sport."



**CARLOS GONZALEZ**

**DIVISION PRESIDENT, CLARK CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Carlos Gonzalez leads Clark Construction's projects in Southern California, which include notable projects like Snapdragon Stadium, Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital and Phase 3 of San Ysidro Port of Entry. **NOTABLE:** Clark Construction is one of the largest building and infrastructure companies in the U.S., with annual revenue exceeding \$6 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Gonzalez serves on the national ACE Mentor Program board. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Making a positive impact on every person we work with is our most important and rewarding professional responsibility."



**ZACH HAMMOND**

**GENERAL MANAGER, SUFFOLK SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Zach Hammond is responsible for expanding Suffolk's presence across many industries from hospitality to aviation. **NOTABLE:** Suffolk has over \$5 billion in annual revenue and 3,000 employees and 11 offices across the country. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Charities supported by Suffolk include San Diego Brain Injury Foundation, International Humanities Foundation, The Honor Foundation, Jewish Family Service of San Diego, and Wounded Warrior Support Network. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "San Diego is a very special place, and we have a very special team."



*Congratulations*  
**Matthew J. Semic, PE**

**Matthew J. Semic**, President and Principal at Latitude 33 Planning & Engineering, with over 20 years of experience, has joined the distinguished ranks of the **San Diego Business Journal's SD500!**

A seasoned leader on landmark projects such as UC San Diego's Triton Center, San Diego International Airport's New Terminal 1, and the San Diego County Operations Center, Matt has made exceptional contributions to our community.

**We look forward to his continued impact as a valued member of the SD500.**

Latitude 33 celebrates outstanding industry leaders for their dedication and contributions to our community.

**Congratulations to all the honorees!**

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**JEFFREY HARPER**

**PRESIDENT, HARPER CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Jeff Harper has 32 years of experience with Harper Construction and specializes in design-build projects. He purchased the company in 2005 from his father Ron who founded the company. **NOTABLE:** Harper Construction specializes in military construction. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Harper Construction continues to support the SDSU Construction Engineering and Management Program, the San Diego Rescue Mission, the AGC of San Diego, the AGC of America, and FCA San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The person who knows 'why' will always be the boss over the person who knows 'how'."



**ESTEAN H. LENYOUN**

**PARTNER, SUDBERRY PROPERTIES**

**WHY:** Estean Lenyoun heads Sudberry Properties' urban redevelopment, economic and community development, and socially responsible investing efforts. **NOTABLE:** Sudberry Properties has developed approximately 12.6 million square feet of commercial and residential property. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lenyoun has served on multiple boards, including Impact Urban America, Urban Strategic Solutions, Well Fargo Bank Community Board, and Rescue Mission. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Find the work culture that drives positive change, then lead with purpose and vision to inspire others to follow."



**J. KEVIN HEINLY**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, WORK SECTOR LEADER & PRINCIPAL, GENSLER**

**WHY:** Kevin Heinly has more than 30 years of experience working on the design of everything from office buildings to entertainment projects. **NOTABLE:** Gensler has more than 6,000 employees worldwide. Heinly grew the San Diego practice team from 20 to 100. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Heinly works with the Urban Land Institute, and the Downtown San Diego Partnership, NAIOP and the NewSchool of Architecture and Design Advisory Board. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "A lot of people have talent – drive and perseverance are what sets excellence apart."



**GARY LEVITT**

**OWNER & FOUNDER, SEA BREEZE PROPERTIES**

**WHY:** Gary Levitt's Sea Breze Properties has over \$500 million in development throughout San Diego and is developing North City, considered to be the new downtown of San Marcos. **NOTABLE:** Levitt is a chartered accountant and CPA who has been involved in real estate since 1984. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a member of Friends of Del Mar Mesa. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We want to create the kind of city we love being in, where life can go wonderfully off script, where things can surprise you."



**ERIC HEPFER**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, HINES**

**WHY:** Eric Hepfer is overseeing the \$3 billion Riverwalk redevelopment project in Mission Valley. **NOTABLE:** Hepfer is a former Navy submarine officer and a graduate of Harvard Business School and Virginia Military Institute. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hepfer is president of the San Diego chapter of NAIOP and involved in the firm's ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and sponsoring an intern program to help disadvantaged workers find construction jobs. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Don't be afraid to dream big."



**CONGRATULATIONS!**



TO AL APUZZO  
ON BEING  
RECOGNIZED AS  
ONE OF THE  
500 MOST  
INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN  
SAN DIEGO 2024!



**SAUL KLEIN**

**CEO & DIRECTOR, SAN DIEGO MLS**

**WHY:** Saul Klein is considered the father of technology and Internet adoption in the residential real estate industry. **NOTABLE:** He created RealTalk, one the first online real estate communities, in 1995. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Past president of the Greater San Diego Association of Realtors, past volunteer director of the California Association of Realtors, and a past director of San Diego MLS. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "As I look through multiple listing services, I believe tomorrow will look a lot different from yesterday."



**ANDY LA DOW**

**MANAGING PRINCIPAL, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** La Dow oversees Cushman & Wakefield's operations in and strategic business growth of Cushman & Wakefield's Advisory business in San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Cushman & Wakefield is one of the most active brokerages in San Diego County. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** La Dow serves on the Board of the San Diego Yacht Club Sailing Foundation and NAIOP. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Aggressively remove internal silos, friction and competition in the system to drive culture." – Francis Frei, Harvard Business School



Your leadership has been instrumental in creating a supportive and high-performing team culture while always keeping our clients at the forefront. Your focus on achieving top results and fostering opportunities for our agents sets us apart from our competitors in the commercial real estate industry.



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**IAN MAHON**

**CEO, LEVEL 3 CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Ian Mahon leads Level 3, a leader in hospitality renovation and construction projects ranging from small tenant improvements to multi-million-dollar hotels and multifamily apartment and condo projects. Level 3 has worked and is currently working on notable projects in Oceanside, including the SALT and South River Village projects. **NOTABLE:** Mahon comes from 5 generations of French Acadian Home builders, which later settled in Swansea, Massachusetts. **QUOTABLE:** "The foundation of our success has always been the longevity of our relationships developed with our clients."



**MIKE MAHONEY**

**WEST REGION PRESIDENT, RYAN COMPANIES**

**WHY:** Mike Mahoney brings more than two decades of multifaceted industry experience to his role leading and directing Ryan's development, design, construction and real estate management teams. **NOTABLE:** Ryan Companies is a major developer of multifamily residential, commercial and industrial projects throughout California. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mahoney supports the San Diego Building Industry Association, NAIOP San Diego PAC, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation San Diego/Hawaii chapter. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Read and re-read the poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling. There is tremendous real-world wisdom in there for life's journey."



**GREG MCCLURE**

**PRINCIPAL, DELAWIE**

**WHY:** McClure leverages architectural experience with corporate, education, and life science clients on a variety of projects including ground-up and tenant improvement. **NOTABLE:** McClure has been acknowledged as a Leader of Influence in Life Science by the San Diego Business Journal for three consecutive years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Delawie is a member of USGBC, NAIOP San Diego and California Life Science (CLS). **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Build and maintain relationships with friendship and love. At the end of the day, love is all we have."



**NEAL MCFARLANE**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, MCFARLANE ARCHITECTS, INC.**

**WHY:** Neal McFarlane owns McFarlane Architects, an architectural, planning, and interior design firm that specializes in life science and advanced technology projects. **NOTABLE:** Over the past 21 years, McFarlane Architects has designed over 15,000,000 square feet of life science and advanced technology projects. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** McFarlane supports St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Make-A-Wish Foundation, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "None of us have a crystal ball that can tell us our future, but we all have the ability to create our future."



**TIM MEISSNER**

**PRESIDENT, MEISSNER**

**WHY:** Tim Meissner has more than 35 years of experience in commercial real estate operations. **NOTABLE:** Meissner manages a real estate portfolio of more than 16 million square feet. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Meissner supports Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate, and the San Diego Foundation, among others. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Follow your interests and talents. Let positive relationships with others be a primary value. Be a person true to your word who is always honest in words and actions."



**JOE MONACO**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, DUDEK**

**WHY:** An employee-owned company, Dudek is ranked one of the top 105 U.S. environmental firms. **NOTABLE:** Dudek has grown to a 700-person, national firm with projects in all 50 states. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dudek's DuGood philanthropic initiative supports communities through monetary and volunteer contributions. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have always been fascinated with the interplay between science and policy. Where the objective of science is discovery, the outcome of policy needs to be a decision."



**VINCENT MUDD**

**MANAGING PRINCIPAL, MARKET LEADER, STEINBERG HART**

**WHY:** Vincent Mudd has more than 30 years of experience in the architecture, engineering and construction industry. **NOTABLE:** Mudd earned the "Cool Californian" award by the California Air Resources Board for his work on several LEED Platinum, Gold and Net Zero projects. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mudd served in multiple organizations, including the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Burnham Center for Community Advancement. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Steinberg Hart is creating experiential places .... teeming with inspiration and vibrancy ..."



*Congratulations*  
**Marc Brutten**

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
SD500  
MOST INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024

Marc Brutten is recognized as one of the most prolific commercial real estate investors on the west coast. Over the past 30 years, through Brixton Capital and other real estate investment firms Marc founded, he has facilitated a cumulative transaction volume of \$14 Billion.

Marc is involved in in numerous professional and community organizations, and is dedicated to improving his San Diego community.

**HONORED AS A TOP SAN DIEGO BUSINESS LEADER 2024**

BruttenGlobal | BRIXTON | WESTCORE EUROPE | WESTCORE EUROPE | BRUTTEN FAMILY FOUNDATION | UNITED APARTMENT GROUP | Airport Development Partners

**GREG MUELLER**

**CEO & PRINCIPAL DESIGNER, TUCKER SADLER ARCHITECTS**

**WHY:** Tucker Sadler Architects' CEO and Principal Designer Greg Mueller has designed some of San Diego's most notable projects, especially along San Diego's waterfront. **NOTABLE:** Projects reimagined under Mueller's signature include the Portside Pier and The Rady Shell. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mueller supports Casa de Amparo, the San Diego Symphony, SBSC and Veterans Village of San Diego. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "What begins as a relationship between the architect, client, and end user results in exciting relationships between form, color, space and the complete environment."



**RYAN NESSEN**

**SVP & CALIFORNIA DISTRICT MANAGER, SUNDT CONSTRUCTION**

**WHY:** Ryan Nessen joined Sundt in 2003 as a project manager and became a senior vice president and California district manager in 2020. The 134-year-old Sundt is among the country's largest general contractors and specializes in transportation, industrial, building, concrete and renewable power work. **NOTABLE:** Nessen has 30-plus years of construction experience and is a former U.S. Navy Seabee. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Nessen previously served on the board of directors of the Sundt Foundation and is active within several industry organizations. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be the leader you would follow."



**R. MICHAEL MURPHY**

**CHAIRMAN, MURPHY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY**

**WHY:** R. Michael Murphy develops state-of-the-art corporate industrial, technology and life science parks in San Diego. **NOTABLE:** Murphy Development Company has developed more than 10 million square feet of projects. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Murphy has served on many San Diego nonprofits, including the Scripps Memorial Hospital Foundation, the Bishop's School, and the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Buying the best land and delivering the highest quality buildings in the market ensures long term success."



**GREGG NEUMAN**

**OWNER, THE NEUMAN TEAM, BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES CALIFORNIA PROPERTIES**

**WHY:** With more than 40 years in real estate, Greg Neuman's experience encompasses a wide range of real estate sectors including property management, luxury home sales, foreclosures and investment properties. **NOTABLE:** Gregg Neuman is Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California top agent for the number of homes sold from 1992 to 2022, having sold more than 7,000 properties with a cumulative sales volume exceeding \$3 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Neuman served his country as a Seaman in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1966 to 1970.



**MICHAEL NEAL**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, H.G. FENTON**

**WHY:** Michael Neal leads H.G. Fenton's portfolio of more than 18 apartment communities and 1,200 commercial spaces. **NOTABLE:** In high school, Neal rebuilt a 1956 Ford F-100 truck into a 140-mph racing machine. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a member of SDSU's Campanile Foundation, and participates in NAIOP's National Investment Management Forum. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We all have gifts of talent and skills we develop. Our opportunity is to approach each day committed to leveraging them fully for the betterment of the communities and people around us."



**ERIC NORTHBROOK**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR, VOIT REAL ESTATE SERVICES**

**WHY:** Northbrook oversees Voit's operations and directs brokerage professionals in San Diego and Carlsbad. **NOTABLE:** A broker-owned commercial real estate firm, Voit opened the San Diego office in 1987. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Northbrook founded HeadNorth, a non-profit group that enhances the quality of life for people and families living with spinal cord injuries. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Spend your money on experiences and not more things. Invest early and retire early. Family is more important than anything."



**ANDREW NELSON**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, WILLIS ALLEN REAL ESTATE**

**WHY:** Nelson leads Willis Allen Real Estate's eight offices and 200 agents. **NOTABLE:** Navy pilot during the Vietnam War, Nelson grew up in Del Mar and has been working for Willis Allen since 1977. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Nelson is a board member of Scripps Memorial Hospital Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We're a family and there's a brand and a loyalty and a respect that we nurture, and I think people respect that."



**TIM OLSON**

**MARKET LEAD & SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, JLL COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE**

**WHY:** Olson has been involved in more than 780 transactions totaling 15 million square feet valued at more than \$2.8 billion. **NOTABLE:** JLL in 2023 had nearly \$21 billion in revenue with a staff of 110,000 in more than 80 countries. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Olson volunteers as a youth sports coach. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Strive to be the best version of yourself by committing to personal growth and setting aspirational goals."



**TIM PENICK****PRESIDENT, T.B. PENICK & SONS, INC.**

**WHY:** Tim Penick and his brother Marc have built the family owned T.B. Penick and Sons Inc. into one of the nation's top construction companies. The company has received safety awards from the Associated General Contractors of America and the American Society of Concrete Contractors, among others. **NOTABLE:** Penick was named San Diego Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Tim Penick, along with his brother Marc, is a past recipient of the San Diego-Imperial Council of the Boy Scouts of America's Good Scout of the Year Award.

**SUNMEET PAREKH****MANAGING PARTNER, HP INVESTORS**

**WHY:** Parekh manages HP Investors, which in 2024 had multiple projects in San Diego County and elsewhere. **NOTABLE:** HP Investors has grown to have a real estate portfolio of about \$1 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Downtown San Diego Partnership, Gaslamp Quarter Alliances, board member of NAIOP, a San Diego Advisory Board member of US Bank, board member of the University of San Diego Burnham-Moores Policy Advisory Board, and chairman of the Downtown San Diego PBID-Clean & Safe. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We love the Southern California market, especially San Diego."

**SUMIT ROY****PRESIDENT & CEO, REALTY INCOME CORP.**

**WHY:** Sumit Roy has served as Realty Income's CEO since October 2018 and president since 2015. **NOTABLE:** Realty Income is an S&P 500 company and member of the S&P 500 Dividend Aristocrats index. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Realty Income offers financial support to nonprofits advocating and advancing racial justice. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our core investment philosophy is to partner with leading operators in industries that have demonstrated an ability to deliver favorable risk-adjusted returns over the long term."

**ERIC STENMAN****U.S. PRESIDENT & CEO, BALFOUR BEATTY**

**WHY:** Eric Stenman is responsible for more than \$5 billion in revenue and more than 5,000 employees. **NOTABLE:** Stenman is a 2024 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Stenman is a former Boy Scouts Good Scout of the Year and served at the state, national and local levels of the Associated General Contractors of America. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "If you can see it, commit to it and believe in yourself. You can achieve anything you set your mind to."

**LINDA SANSONE****OWNER, LINDA SANSONE & ASSOCIATES, PACIFIC SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY**

**WHY:** Linda Sansone has been a luxury real estate expert for 27 years with a master's degree in accounting and is a CPA and former CFO. **NOTABLE:** She has closed more than \$1.5 billion in sales. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sansone is a board member for The Country Friends in Rancho Santa Fe. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I lead with a philosophy of hospitality - going the extra mile, delivering extraordinary care and professionalism."

**COLTON SUDBERRY****PRESIDENT & CEO, SUDBERRY PROPERTIES**

**WHY:** As Sudberry Properties President and CEO, Colton Sudberry has maintained the company's strategic direction focusing on mixed-use and town center developments with an emphasis on urban in-fill and master-planned communities. **NOTABLE:** Sudberry Properties has developed approximately 12.6 million square feet of commercial and residential property with a market value exceeding \$2.5 billion. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sudberry is a board member of the USC Lusk Center for Real Estate, the San Diego City College Foundation and Santa Fe Christian Schools.

**MATT SEMIC****PRESIDENT, LATITUDE 33 PLANNING & ENGINEERING**

**WHY:** Matt Semic has more than 20 years of civil engineering experience in land development, public works, and construction. **NOTABLE:** Semic has worked on such projects as the \$3.4 billion San Diego International Airport's new Terminal 1. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Semic is a founding member of the Design-Build Institute of America Western Pacific Region. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Leadership transcends titles; it's defined by one's actions, their capacity to make a meaningful impact, and their commitment to applauding the contributions of others."

**JOHN VORSHECK****SVP & DIVISION MANAGER, MARCUS & MILLICHAP**

**WHY:** John Vorsheck oversees the San Diego, Denver, Las Vegas and Phoenix offices of Marcus & Millichap. **NOTABLE:** Since Marcus & Millichap was founded in 1971, the firm has grown to more than 80 offices throughout the United States and Canada, including 12 offices here in Southern California. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Marcus & Millichap's William A. Millichap Fellowship Program is a two-year training program to prepare people for careers in commercial real estate. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Don't trade what you want in the moment for what you want long term."





TECHNOLOGY

**SORAYA ALEXANDER****COO, GOFUNDME**

**WHY:** Soraya Alexander is the COO of crowdfunding platform GoFundMe and the company's subsidiary Classy, a fundraising platform for nonprofits. **NOTABLE:** GoFundMe launched a Weather Resilience Fund to support low-income households and communities that have been affected by extreme weather events.

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** Soraya is a board member with San Diego Social Venture Partners. **QUOTABLE:** "The best leaders I have ever been able to work with are the ones that are deep in the trenches with you ..."

**CRISTIANO AMON****PRESIDENT & CEO, QUALCOMM, INC.**

**WHY:** Cristiano Amon is the leader of Qualcomm Inc. **NOTABLE:** In May, Qualcomm's stock price eclipsed \$200 per share for the first time in the company's history. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Amon is a supporter of the Milken Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan think tank focused on accelerating global progress. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We are now enabling the age of intelligent computing everywhere—redefining experiences across devices and industries."

**WHY:** Cristiano Amon is the leader of Qualcomm Inc. **NOTABLE:** In May, Qualcomm's stock price eclipsed \$200 per share for the first time in the company's history. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Amon is a supporter of the Milken Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan think tank focused on accelerating global progress. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We are now enabling the age of intelligent computing everywhere—redefining experiences across devices and industries."

**CHRIS ANTHONY****CO-CEO/FOUNDER, APTERA MOTORS**

**WHY:** Chris Anthony's Aptera produces solar-powered hybrid electric vehicles that do not require battery charging for daily use. **NOTABLE:** Aptera debuted its three-wheeled solar-powered vehicle at Monterey Car Week, with the goal of launching mass production of the vehicles in 2025. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Aptera's vehicles are more efficient than most electric vehicles and most drivers will never need to charge their vehicle because of the energy generated by their embedded solar panels. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Don't let perfect be the enemy of DONE."

**ASAF ASHKENAZI****CEO, VERIMATRIX**

**WHY:** Asaf Ashkenazi is the leader of Verimatrix's ongoing transformation of its business model, which centers on subscription-based revenue and the creation of new cybersecurity products and services. **NOTABLE:** Ashkenazi is a member of the Forbes Technology Council and the board of directors for Tech San Diego. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ashkenazi is also a member of the local nonprofit Cyber Center for Excellence. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe in securing experiences people love at the speed people live."

**SAM ATTISHA****SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & REGION MANAGER, WEST REGION, COX COMMUNICATIONS**

**WHY:** Sam Attisha oversees Cox Communications' operations in Arizona, California, Idaho and Nevada. **NOTABLE:** Attisha is on the management council for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and on the board of directors for the California Broadband & Video Association. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hundreds of Cox employees removed more than 800 pounds of litter and debris from Mission Beach and Mission Bay in June during the company's annual community cleanup event. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Always keep moving forward, learning and being curious."

**BRIAN BONAR****CEO & CHAIRMAN, DALRADA CORPORATION**

**WHY:** Brian Bonar is the CEO and board chair of Dalrada, a publicly traded clean energy, healthcare, manufacturing and tech company. **NOTABLE:** Bonar was named a CEO of the year in 2024 by the San Diego Business Journal. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Bonar is a board member for the Boys and Girls Club of Greater San Diego. **QUOTABLE:** "Above all, I enjoy creating things to give back – and that's the important thing."

**JOE BUDANO****CEO, INDYME SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Joe Budano has led Indyme Solutions, an in-store response and loss prevention company for retailers, since 2012. **NOTABLE:** Indyme's key product is the Freedom Case, which enables retail store customers to input their phone number to access merchandise locked inside display cases. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Budano sits on the board of advisors for the Loss Prevention Research Council, which seeks to advance the art of loss prevention. **QUOTABLE:** "We're in that kind of instant awareness business, and it lends itself to both customer engagement applications and loss prevention."



**CONGRATULATIONS ASAF ASHKENAZI**  
Chief Executive Officer, Verimatrix

The Verimatrix team and our global network of partners extend heartfelt congratulations on being recognized as one of San Diego's top business leaders for 2024. Your vision and leadership are truly inspiring, and we're honored to work alongside such a dedicated chief executive who keeps Verimatrix at the forefront of cybersecurity innovation.

[www.verimatrix.com](http://www.verimatrix.com)

**NICK BULCAO**

**CEO, AIRSPACE**

**WHY:** Nick Bulcao co-founded Airspace, which handles shipping and tracking logistics for time-sensitive items. **NOTABLE:** Airspace, which has operated in Europe and the U.S., expanded operations into Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore and now works with semiconductor firms like Qualcomm. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Airspace specializes in transporting items like human organs for transplant. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our mission has always been to empower shippers as they move their most critical packages."



**ROBERT DAWSON**

**CEO, RF INDUSTRIES**

**WHY:** Robert Dawson has served as RF Industries' CEO since 2017. The company manufactures wireless/wireline telecom, data communications and industrial interconnect products. **NOTABLE:** In March, the company promoted COO and former Radio Frequency Systems veteran executive Ray Bibisi to president in addition to his duties as COO. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dawson is a frequent keynote speaker on technology and sales topics. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I believe our business is at an inflection point where we can continue to deliver meaningful progress now and tap into even greater future potential."



**JAYE CONNOLLY**

**CHAIRMAN & CEO, RIPPLENAMI, INC.**

**WHY:** Jaye Connolly leads RippleNami, a blockchain-based company providing scalable, traceable and transparent web and mobile applications. **NOTABLE:** One of RippleNami's main goals is to deliver modernized technology solutions to unconnected parts of Africa. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Connolly is a volunteer member of several organizations, including Daughters of the American Revolution, 1 Million Women In STEM and Promises2Kids.



**MARITZA DIAZ**

**CEO, ITJUANA**

**WHY:** Maritza Diaz is the founder and CEO of ITJuana, which provides software solutions to life sciences, biotech and medical-device companies. **NOTABLE:** ITJuana was included in the Inc. 5000 list of the fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. for the second consecutive year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** ITJuana and UC San Diego Extended Studies opened a shared office space in Tijuana in March as part of a tech education and training partnership. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "ITJ is not only advancing life science but impacting lives."



**JULIET CORRENTI**

**CEO, RADEUS LABS, INC.**

**WHY:** Juliet Correnti has led Radeus Labs since 2015, when she purchased the computer system and satcom device manufacturing company from her parents. **NOTABLE:** The San Diego Business Journal honored Correnti as one of 21 Women of Influence in Engineering for 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Radeus hosts blood drives in partnership with the San Diego Blood Bank and holds food donation drives for the North County Food Bank. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Company culture means truly living our core values every day: community, integrity, and continuous learning."



**RON DUTT**

**CEO, FLUX POWER**

**WHY:** Ron Dutt has served as CEO of lithium-ion energy storage company Flux Power since 2014 and chairman of the company since 2019. **NOTABLE:** Flux Power's revenue increased to \$66.3 million in fiscal year 2023, up 57 percent compared to the previous year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Flux Power partnered with an undisclosed company to improve recycling of lithium-ion batteries at the end of their useful life. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Know that you can learn something from each person in the Company"



**LARRY COVAL**

**DIVISION VICE PRESIDENT, COX BUSINESS**

**WHY:** Larry Coval has served as Cox Business' division vice president since June 2021. **NOTABLE:** Cox Business agreed to a five-year contract with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority to provide telecommunications and Distributed Antenna System at the Las Vegas Convention Center. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Coval founded the Top Tech Awards in San Diego in 2008 to honor IT leaders in the business industry. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "San Diego is called America's Finest City not because of the climate or the vibrant, diverse business environment. It's because of the people."



**MATT ELLIS**

**CO-FOUNDER & CEO, MEASURABL**

**WHY:** Matt Ellis oversees Measurabl, the world's most widely used ESG (environmental, social and governance) data-management software for real estate. **NOTABLE:** Measurabl announced a partnership with FTSE Russell to improve the quality and availability of real estate sustainability data. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Ellis is a First Movers Fellow with the Aspen Institute's Business and Society Program. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Sustainability is a feature of any great business."



**WIN CRAMER**

**CEO, JLAB**

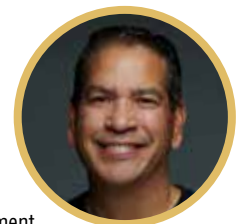
**WHY:** Win Cramer has served as CEO of the audio and accessories brand JLAB since 2011. **NOTABLE:** In April, JLAB launched a \$99 over-the-counter hearing aid with Bluetooth 5.3 connectivity and a battery life of up to 10 hours. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** JLAB's Hear OTC Hearing Aid is the lowest-priced hearing aid device on the market, as OTC devices normally cost between \$150 and \$2,500 per set. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The world is changing and people that need help hearing shouldn't be embarrassed."



**CESAR ENCISO**

**FOUNDER & CEO, EVOTEK, INC.**

**WHY:** Cesar Enciso is the founder and CEO of EVOTEK, an IT and business technology solutions provider. **NOTABLE:** EVOTEK was ranked 161st on Inc. Magazine's list of the Pacific Region's fastest-growing private companies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Enciso has been a board member for Junior Achievement of San Diego since 2017. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We provide a cohesive approach to digital initiatives while driving business impact."



**ZEB EVANS****FOUNDER & CEO, CLICKUP**

**WHY:** Zeb Evans co-founded the project management software company ClickUp in 2017 before moving its headquarters to San Diego in 2020.

**NOTABLE:** ClickUp launched a workplace chat system, ClickUp Chat, that is integrated into its existing project management system and includes AI-generated text suggestions and summaries. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Time is our most precious resource and we are passionate about giving it back to our customers."

**INGO HENTSCHEL****VP, SAN DIEGO MARKET, COX COMMUNICATIONS**

**WHY:** Ingo Hentschel has been the San Diego market vice president for Cox Communications since 2023.

**NOTABLE:** Hentschel first joined Cox in 1992 as a field technician in the Los Angeles suburb of Palos Verdes. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hentschel serves on the boards of the USS Midway Museum, Cal State San Marcos Foundation, HMM-165 Reunion Foundation and the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. **QUOTABLE:** "Very rarely do you spend a career transforming the world."

**STEVE FAMBRO****CO-CEO & FOUNDER, APTERA MOTORS**

**WHY:** Steve Fambro co-founded the solar-powered hybrid electric vehicle company Aptera Motors with Chris Anthony. **NOTABLE:** Fambro also co-founded the lithium battery tech company Flux Power with Anthony in the mid-2010s. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Aptera's vehicles are more efficient than most electric vehicles and most drivers will never need to charge their vehicle because of the energy generated by their embedded solar panels. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Aptera's mission has always been to push the boundaries of what solar mobility can achieve."

**GEORGE HERSHMAN****CEO, SOLV ENERGY**

**WHY:** George Hershman has led SOLV Energy for 10 years and has more than 30 years of experience in the construction industry. **NOTABLE:** SOLV passed 20 gigawatts of installed and awarded utility-scale solar and storage projects across the country. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hershman is an at-large member of the Solar Energy Industries Association Executive Committee. **QUOTABLE:** "We believe that good energy has a ripple effect. That is why we only take on projects that provide cleaner power, better jobs, greater education and a brighter future for our communities."

**JORDAN GLAZIER****FOUNDER & CEO, WILDFIRE SYSTEMS, INC.**

**WHY:** Jordan Glazier is the founder of Wildfire Systems, which enables companies to offer savings, cashback and coupon incentives to their customers. **NOTABLE:** Wildfire Systems' revenue has grown by more than 3,700% over the last three years. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Glazier has served as a member of the Forbes Technology Council since 2022 and a contributor with the Entrepreneur Leadership Network since 2021. **QUOTABLE:** "At the end of the day, we could only achieve this level of growth with our committed team."

**SAI HUDA****FOUNDER, CHAIRMAN & CEO, CYBERCATCH**

**WHY:** Sai Huda is the leader of CyberCatch, a cybersecurity company offering AI-powered solutions for compliance and online risk management. **NOTABLE:** CyberCatch announced in July that its customer count had increased 42% over the previous 12 months. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Huda is an expert consultant on cybersecurity risk management and a frequent keynote speaker at cybersecurity industry events. **QUOTABLE:** "... [We're] zeroing in on the root cause of the cyber security problem, and in our judgement the root cause is security holes."

**PAYMON HAMIDI****CEO, INFRACORE**

**WHY:** Paymon Hamidi co-founded Infracore in 2003 in an effort to provide IT services to organizations with a lack of IT experience or capacity. **NOTABLE:** Headquartered in San Diego, Infracore also has offices in 10 states across the country. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Hamidi is a Tech San Diego board member. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Smart people learn from their mistakes, wise ones learn from those of others."

**ALEX KATOUIZIAN****SVP & GROUP GM OF MOBILE, COMPUTE, XR, QUALCOMM**

**WHY:** Alex Katouzian oversees all program management and execution for the Qualcomm's Snapdragon platforms. **NOTABLE:** Qualcomm gained a significant foothold in artificial intelligence computing with its Snapdragon X Elite chip and Microsoft PC partnership. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Katouzian is a board member of the UC San Diego Rady School of Management Dean's Advisory Council. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "We're at the cusp of a new era of AI, and Snapdragon products from Qualcomm bring intelligent computing across smartphones, PCs and XR devices for extraordinary experiences globally."

**ADAM HARRIS****FOUNDER & CEO, CLOUDBEDS**

**WHY:** Adam Harris is the leader of Cloudbeds, a cloud-based hospitality management software company. **NOTABLE:** Cloudbeds announced strategic partnerships in 2024 with PXier, Mirai, SiteMinder, Cendyn, SHR, IDeaS and Amadeus iHotelier. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Harris is a mentor with Connect, serving as an advisor to local startups in San Diego County. **QUOTABLE:** "One of the things that I'm most proud about is we have surrounded ourselves with hundreds if not thousands of years of hotel experience in our team."

**CRIS KEIRN****CEO, TURTLE BEACH**

**WHY:** Cris Keirn leads the gaming headset and accessory company Turtle Beach. **NOTABLE:** Turtle Beach acquired rival video game controller and headset manufacturer PDP for \$118 million. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Keirn was promoted from interim CEO to permanent CEO in March 2024, previously serving as Turtle Beach's senior vice president for global sales. **QUOTABLE:** "I'm so fortunate to work with amazing people at Turtle Beach."



**AFIF KHOURY**

**CEO, SOCI**

**WHY:** Afif Khoury has served as chief executive of SOCI, a marketing platform for multi-location businesses, for more than 12 years and is a founder of two venture capital funds. **NOTABLE:** SOCI has been named to the Inc. 5,000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list seven times. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Khoury has invested in multiple industries including water reclamation, vertical farming and digitized healthcare. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “Mistakes are not failures. Rather they can represent opportunity if you are not afraid to pivot. It is fear of change that is the true failure.”



**ADAM MARKOWITZ**

**CO-FOUNDER & CEO, DRATA**

**WHY:** Adam Markowitz leads the security and compliance automation platform Drata, **NOTABLE:** Drata unveiled a platform at its annual customer conference to automate security questionnaires. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Markowitz has been a member of the Forbes Business Council since March 2024. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “May you always remember to enjoy the road, especially when it’s a hard one.” – *Kobe Bryant*



**MIKE KIJEWski**

**CEO, MEDCRYPT**

**WHY:** Mike Kijewski is the leader of MedCrypt, which specializes in ensuring connected medical devices are digitally secure. **NOTABLE:** MedCrypt received the Vulnerability Management Award at the 2024 Cybersecurity Excellence Awards in June. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** MedCrypt supports medical device research efforts at universities like Tufts and Kansas State. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** QUOTABLE: “We’re past the point of debating the need for improved healthcare cybersecurity and it’s exciting to see the industry putting more time and attention into addressing this issue.”



**ALEX MARTIN**

**CEO, CLEARSPEED**

**WHY:** Alex Martin’s Clearspeed analyzes voices via artificial intelligence to determine the risk of potential fraud. **NOTABLE:** Clearspeed was named to CNBC’s inaugural list of the World’s Top InsurTech Companies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Martin has been a Marines’ Memorial board member since September 2021 and a member of the Mt. Soledad National veterans Memorial board of trustees since March 2022. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “I’m tremendously excited to see our revolutionary risk assessment platform helping government and enterprise organizations we serve globally get to trust faster.”



**COLIN LAWLOR**

**CEO, SLEEPSCORE LABS**

**WHY:** Colin Lawlor’s SleepScore Labs uses personalized sleep insights to help people have more restful sleep. **NOTABLE:** SleepScore unveiled its Sleep API Suite in February, a SaaS offering that allows health and wellness apps to utilize sleep data and tailor coaching to users. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lawlor has been a member of the Forbes Business Council since 2021. **QUOTABLE:** “We are grateful to our partners for their commitment to developing superior solutions to help millions of people sleep better.”



**STEVE MCMILLAN**

**CEO, TERADATA**

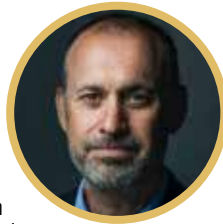
**WHY:** Steve McMillan leads Teradata, a cloud-based data analytics and AI company. **NOTABLE:** Over the last four years Teradata has built a greater than half a billion dollar cloud business whilst increasing shareholder return. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Teradata allows its employees to spend four days per year engaging in local volunteering efforts during normal work hours. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “We believe that people are empowered with trusted data and AI, and at Teradata we help companies get the most from their data, advanced analytics and AI solutions.”



**NEAL MANOWITZ**

**PRESIDENT AND COO, SONY ELECTRONICS**

**WHY:** Manowitz was named president and COO of the Rancho Bernardo based Sony unit in 2021. Sony serves consumer and professional markets with gear such as interchangeable lens cameras, high-resolution audio products and ultra-HD TVs. **NOTABLE:** Manowitz is an advisor to the North San Diego Business Chamber. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sony’s Create Action grant program makes long-lasting impacts for local social justice organizations and the communities they serve. **QUOTABLE:** “Celebrating emerging talent never gets old.”



**LEE MILLS**

**CEO & CO-FOUNDER, PIXLY**

**WHY:** Lee Mills leads Pixly, a B2B SaaS startup enabling construction and facility professionals to share and collaborate on project photos and videos. **NOTABLE:** Pixly won the Veteran Fund’s \$100,000 Pitch Contest at the 2022 Military Influencer Conference. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Mills volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Diego County, the Surfrider Foundation and Habitat for Humanity. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** “We’re committed to improving the lives of our customers and their projects with the best visual documentation and collaboration platform on the market.”





**MICHAEL MO****CEO, KULR**

**WHY:** Michael Mo leads KULR, which offers thermal energy management technology for batteries and electronic systems. **NOTABLE:** In early 2024, KULR announced the execution of an exclusive worldwide license agreement for NASA's large format Fractional Thermal Runaway Calorimeter, a larger version of the space agency's 2023 Invention of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** KULR donates its SafeCASEs to help those affected by natural disasters. **QUOTEABLE:** "Our focus remains on delivering innovative solutions that meet the operational demands of our armed forces in the harshest environments."

**SANJIV PRABHAKARAN****PRESIDENT & CEO, BYTES, INC.**

**WHY:** Sanjiv Prabhakaran is CEO and founder of Bytes, Inc., developer of web and mobile business software. **NOTABLE:** Prabhakaran was named 2024 Small Business Leader of the Year by the North San Diego Business Chamber. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Prabhakaran is board member at Be Involved Act Now Champion Autism, Inc., a nonprofit established to champion children with autism spectrum disorders. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou

**LUIS MÜLLER****PRESIDENT & CEO, COHU**

**WHY:** Luis Müller has led Cohu, Inc., which provides test, automation, inspection & metrology products and services, since December 2014. **NOTABLE:** Müller has a track record of building high performance teams that delivered over 120% revenue growth through organic expansion and acquisitions in the U.S., Germany, Switzerland and Japan. Cohu's revenue reached \$636 million in 2023. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Cohu opened a new facility in the Philippines that was constructed with recycled rainwater, high-efficiency air conditioning systems and fully renewable solar energy.

**PAUL ROBINSON****CEO, ENSUNET TECHNOLOGY GROUP**

**WHY:** Paul Robinson is CEO and owner of IT services firm Ensunet. **NOTABLE:** Ensunet's portfolio includes providing \$20.6 billion in global IT merger-and-acquisition support by Fortune 1000 enterprises. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Robinson is a member of the board of directors at the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Have a vision, hire the best people, execute relentlessly with faith at your side."

**DERMOT O'SHEA****CEO, TAOGLAS**

**WHY:** Dermot O'Shea is the co-founder and CEO of Taoglas, an Ireland-based manufacturer of RF antennas, RF receivers, speakers and other hardware. **NOTABLE:** Taoglas is the world's leading IoT antenna and RF component solutions provider and celebrated its 20th anniversary in August 2024. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a member of Young Presidents Organization and sits on the Board of Trustees of La Jolla Country Day School. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Business is built around relationships and trust. Connections here in San Diego have been critical to Taoglas' success."

**JOE ROHNER****VP OF AI, BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON**

**WHY:** Joe Rohner helps Booz Allen's defense clients utilize artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced analytics to yield better mission outcomes. **NOTABLE:** 2025 will be Rohner's 20th year with Booz Allen Hamilton. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Booz Allen Hamilton was named one of America's Best Employers for Tech Workers by Forbes for its competitive salaries, professional development opportunities and workplace culture. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "AI presents a major opportunity, and finding success with AI starts by making it accessible."

**STEPHEN PARTRIDGE****PRESIDENT, COO, TECHNICAL FOUNDER, EVENTS.COM**

**WHY:** Stephen Partridge and CEO Mitch Thrower co-founded Events.com, a ticket sales and event management website. **NOTABLE:** In 2024, Events.com announced its intention to go public on the New York Stock Exchange via a business combination with Concord Acquisition Corp II. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Partridge sits on the advisory boards for TEDx La Jolla and the Canadian Endurance Sports Alliance. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "On a rocket ship you must cherish the bumpy ride because smooth sailing never teaches as much nor rises as high."

**KISHORE SEENDRIPU****CEO, MAXLINEAR**

**WHY:** Kishore Seendripu is a co-founder of and the chairman, president and CEO of MaxLinear, Inc., a more than \$1 billion market cap company that produces analog and mixed-signal semiconductor and software products. The company was recognized by Cisco with a 2024 Emerging Supplier of the Year Award. **NOTABLE:** Seendripu has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from UC Berkeley and an M.B.A. from the Wharton School. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2023, MaxLinear and its employees raised in excess of \$30,000 in donations and goods to charitable organizations.



**PETER SIBLEY**

**CEO, EDGATE HOLDINGS & JOURNEYS MAP, INC.**

**WHY:** Peter Sibley leads EdGate, which helps K-12 educators stay current with state, national and international standards. Sibley also led the development of Journeys, an interactive map that provides personalized career pathways for students and other learners. **NOTABLE:** Sibley was a finalist for the 2024 San Diego Business Journal Executive of the Year. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Sibley is a supporter of the Classroom of the Future Foundation, which unites business, community and educational leaders to create innovative public school learning environments. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Society demands the use of 21st-century technology to help people navigate complex career pathways for lifelong success."



**A.J. VAN DE VEN**

**CEO, CALSENSE**

**WHY:** A.J. van de Ven leads Calsense, which provides smart irrigation control systems for government entities. **NOTABLE:** Calsense announced "Cal," its AI-powered irrigation assistant that provides 24/7 support to Calsense Connect users. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** van de Ven is a board member with the Carlsbad Educational Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Innovate with purpose, and your work will always make a difference."



**JEREMY SWIFT**

**CEO, CORDIAL**

**WHY:** Jeremy Swift is founder and CEO of Cordial, a cross-channel marketing and data platform. **NOTABLE:** Cordial launched a strategic advisory board in February in an effort to accelerate growth and innovation. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Swift supports anti-human trafficking organizations in Africa and Europe. **QUOTEABLE:** "Many of us underestimate our capabilities, and successful people who claim they 'faked it' to the top often gloss over the immense effort they put in behind the scenes." – from October 2024 LinkedIn post



**LÂLE WHITE**

**EXECUTIVE CHAIR & CEO, XIFIN**

**WHY:** Since founding XiFin in 1997, Lâle White has helped diagnostic labs and health systems process more than 70 million lab visits per year, realizing more than \$3 billion in cumulative net cash collection gains. **NOTABLE:** White was named 2024 CEO of the Year by the San Diego Business Journal. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** XiFin supports nearly 75 percent of the largest public laboratories. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Great teams, united by the power to do good, can achieve the extraordinary."



**MITCH THROWER**

**FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, EVENTS.COM**

**WHY:** Mitch Thrower and COO Stephen Partridge co-founded Events.com, a ticket sales and event management website. **NOTABLE:** Events.com announced its intention to go public on the New York Stock Exchange via a business combination with Concord Acquisition Corp II. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Thrower is a co-producer of TEDxLaJolla, an independently organized event to present "ideas worth spreading." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Entrepreneurship is an endurance sport; success requires resilience, endless enthusiasm, and relentless follow-through."



**DOUG WINTER**

**CEO, SEISMIC SOFTWARE, INC.**

**WHY:** As founder and CEO of Seismic, Doug Winter leads one of the world's largest enablement software companies. **NOTABLE:** Seismic's annual revenue is approaching \$400 million less than three years after surpassing the \$200 million and \$300 million marks. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Seismic supports the service dog training organization Canine Companions, partnering with the organization at Seismic's annual customer conference. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Difficulty is what wakes up the genius" – Nassim Nicolas Taleb, author of the book *Antifragile*



**BRETT TURNER**

**FOUNDER & CEO, TROVATA**

**WHY:** Brett Turner is founder and CEO of Trovata, an AI-powered cash flow management company enabling businesses to automate cash reporting, forecasting and analysis. **NOTABLE:** Trovata launched its Multibank Connector in June, including the most extensive library of direct-to-bank APIs to power financial services. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Trovata collaborates with Swift to offer more corporate entities access to banking and liquidity data. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Great ideas and innovative tech are obviously important, but it's the people who build great companies."



**OREN ZASLANSKY**

**FOUNDER & CEO, FLOCK FREIGHT**

**WHY:** Oren Zaslansky founded Flock Freight in 2014 in an effort to make the supply chain greener by using technology to combine multiple shipments into one multi-stop shared truckload. **NOTABLE:** Flock Freight was named a winner at the 2024 Sustainability Awards by the Business Intelligence Group. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Flock Freight is a certified B Corp. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Reducing emissions isn't a zero sum game. It's a win-win-win for our customers, our carriers, and the environment."





**DOUGLAS AUSTIN**

**FOUNDER, CHAIRMAN, AVRP STUDIOS**

**WHY:** Chairing the design and construction task force for Petco Park (opened 2004) and Ballpark Village is one of many ways architect Douglas Austin has changed the face of San Diego. **IN THE NEWS:** Winner of more than 150 design awards. **SOCIAL**

**IMPACT:** He chairs YIGBY, Yes in God's Back Yard, which advocates building affordable housing on land occupied by houses of worship. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Nothing better we can do than providing mankind a good place to live."



**DOUGLAS BARNHART**

**CHAIRMAN, BARNHART-REESE CONSTRUCTION INC.**

**WHY:** Long a figure in San Diego's construction industry, Douglas Barnhart chairs the San Diego County Planning Commission. In October, Nice Guys of San Diego honored Barnhart with its Nice Guy of the Year Award for 2024. **NOTABLE:** Many of San Diego's notable public spaces, including Petco Park and the airport's Terminal 2, were built by Barnhart's firm. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is why so few people do it." – Henry Ford



**AL BALDWIN**

**CHAIRMAN, BALDWIN & SONS**

**WHY:** Homebuilder Al Baldwin has put roofs over many Southern California residents' heads. Baldwin & Sons' developments include Otay Ranch, a 5,300-acre planned community in South County. **NOTABLE:** Baldwin was once a partner in the San Diego Padres.

**IN THE NEWS:** Baldwin & Sons is pursuing the 448-unit Quail Meadows apartment complex in Encinitas. **AN ACHIEVEMENT:** He has seen the construction of over 23,000 homes, apartments, hotels and retail spaces.



**PHIL BLAIR**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MANPOWER SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Blair has co-owned Manpower San Diego for nearly 50 years. He also writes about the world of work, taking up timeless topics (the job search) and current events (return to office mandates). **NOTABLE:** Gov. Newsom named Blair to the Del Mar Fairgrounds board in 2024. Blair has been part of several other civic and business organizations, including the USO and San Diego Rotary Club 33. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Lead, follow or get the hell out of the way."



**Congratulations**

**We celebrate Burnham Center for Community Advancement Co-Founders Malin Burnham and Tad Seth Parzen on being recognized among San Diego Business Journal's 500 Most Influential People in San Diego!**



**Co-Founder, Board Chair Emeritus Malin Burnham**

**Co-Founder, President and CEO Tad Seth Parzen**



Established in 2021, the Burnham Center for Community Advancement (BCCA) is a "think-and-do tank" dedicated to moving our cross-border region forward. We recognize that meaningful impact requires more than good ideas and are steadfast in our commitment to decisive action.

We invite you to learn more at [www.burnhamcenter.org](http://www.burnhamcenter.org)



**KEN & MARGIE BLANCHARD**  
**CO-FOUNDERS, BLANCHARD**

**WHY:** Ken and Margie Blanchard think, write and speak about management consulting. They rebranded their business as Blanchard in 2023. **NOTABLE:** Ken Blanchard and co-author Spencer Johnson published "The One Minute Manager" in 1982. The book has sold 15 million copies. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Blanchard Institute offers leadership training to middle and high school students. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I think the reason most people are unhappy is because they're doing something they don't love to do." – Ken Blanchard



**LINDEN S. BLUE**  
**VICE CHAIRMAN, GENERAL ATOMICS**

**WHY:** Linden S. Blue owns General Atomics with brother Neal. GA and its affiliates are significant employers in the San Diego region. **NOTABLE:** GA frequently puts its own funds behind new technologies that it takes to market. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Linden S. Blue is a trustee of the Hudson Institute think tank. **IN THE NEWS:** The new class of U.S. aircraft carriers uses GA's launch and recovery tech. France selected the same equipment for a carrier it expects to be delivered by 2038.



**JAMES NEAL BLUE**  
**CHAIRMAN AND CEO, GENERAL ATOMICS**


**WHY:** J. Neal Blue is chairman and CEO of defense contractor General Atomics – a business the family acquired in 1986. General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI) produced the Predator, a groundbreaking unmanned aircraft system it continues to develop. **NOTABLE:** GA provided components for history-making nuclear fusion demonstrations at Lawrence Livermore National Lab. **IN THE NEWS:** GA-ASI was inducted into the hall of fame of the San Diego Air & Space Museum in 2023.



**CHARLES BRANDES**  
**FOUNDER, BRANDES INVESTMENT PARTNERS LP**

**WHY:** Brandes found his career direction in the "value investing" approach of Benjamin Graham. The business he founded in 1974 is based near UTC and is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Brandes retired from Brandes Investment Partners in 2018. **NOTABLE:** Four years later UC San Diego's Rady School of Management stood up the Brandes Center, with a focus on value investing. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Through the Manzanita Foundation of New York, Brandes has supported many good causes.






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**MALIN BURNHAM**  
**PRESIDENT, THE BURNHAM FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** The Burnham family has long been involved in insurance, real estate and philanthropy. In 2023, Malin and Roberta Burnham put \$20 million into the Burnham Center for Community Advancement (BCCA). **NOTABLE:** Born in San Diego in 1927, Burnham takes the long view of San Diego. **IN THE NEWS:** BCCA helped put on 2024's World Design Capital events in San Diego and Tijuana. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I've never accomplished anything alone. It is always with a team. It is all about the team."



**GORDON CARRIER**  
**OWNER, CHAIRMAN AND DESIGN PRINCIPAL, CARRIER JOHNSON + CULTURE**

**WHY:** Gordon Carrier leads a firm that continues to design signature buildings for San Diego. These include a chapel and science center at Point Loma Nazarene University and the attention-grabbing Shift apartment building in East Village. **IN THE NEWS:** In September Carrier Johnson announced a merger with a Seattle landscape architecture firm, Communita | Atelier. In March, the firm opened an office in Atlanta. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Design curiosity is my passion, and I'm grateful to San Diegans for their warm acceptance."



**CONSTANCE CARROLL**  
**CHANCELLOR EMERITA, SAN DIEGO**  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**



**WHY:** Constance Carroll retired from the chancellor's job at San Diego Community College District in 2021 then successfully pushed for change as head of the California Community College Baccalaureate Association. **NOTABLE:** She joined pop culture luminaries Lady Gaga, George Clooney and others when she was named to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in 2023. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." — *Maya Angelou*

**LESLEY & DAVID COHN**  
**CO-FOUNDERS, COHN RESTAURANT**  
**GROUP**



**WHY:** David and Lesley Cohn maintain a restaurant empire with two dozen outlets. San Diego County hosts most of them; the exceptions are in Long Beach and Lahaina, Maui. **NOTABLE:** When the Gaslamp Quarter was more of an idea and much less than a tourist draw, the Cohns saw promise in the neighborhood and opened a business. **IN THE NEWS:** Nation's Restaurant News named the business one of America's Top 25 Restaurant Groups in 2023.

**GENEVIEVE CRAIG**  
**FOUNDER, JENNY CRAIG**



**WHY:** Jenny Craig brought her up and coming weight loss business to North County in 1985 and made it a success. Nestlé bought the business in 2006. **IN THE NEWS:** Jenny and her husband Sid Craig funded the Jenny Craig Pavilion gym at the University of San Diego, opened in 2000. A new gift from the Craig family let USD renovate the center with state of the art videoboards, lights and speakers as well as facility improvements.

**STANLEY CROOKE**  
**FOUNDER, N-LOREM FOUNDATION**



**WHY:** The founder of Ionis Pharmaceuticals and its CEO until 2020, Crooke is now focused on the non-profit organization he founded, n-Lorem Foundation. **NOTABLE:** The foundation provides free individualized antisense treatments to patients living with ultra-rare diseases. **IN THE NEWS:** As of October 2024, n-Lorem received approximately 300 applications for treatment with approximately 150 nano-rare patients approved. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The biomedical community in San Diego is an important contributor to human health. ... I have appreciated the opportunity afforded by this community."

**STEPHEN CUSHMAN**  
**PRESIDENT, CUSH ENTERPRISES**



**WHY:** Cushman's family came to San Diego in the 1860s. The fourth-generation San Diegan has spent a career in auto sales and real estate (his family is part owner of Grossmont Center). He is a fixture in local politics, having served on more than 70 boards and commissions. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Cushman family helped revive the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank. **IN THE NEWS:** The City Council confirmed Cushman's appointment to the San Diego Housing Commission in early 2024.

**MARK DANKBERG**  
**CHAIRMAN, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER,**  
**VIASAT**



**WHY:** Dankberg co-founded Viasat Inc. in 1986 and has been CEO for most of that time. Viasat grew recently by acquiring London-based Inmarsat. **NOTABLE:** Viasat was one of several companies launched out of Linkabit; Qualcomm was another. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Dankberg has repeatedly voiced concerns about space debris and equitable access to space. **IN THE NEWS:** The satellite industry faces a "quantum period of change," Dankberg said at a 2024 meeting in Paris, as reported by Via Satellite. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "As an entrepreneurial business, we have experience imagining the undiscovered and leaning in to innovate ahead of evolving markets."

**JOAN EMBERY**  
**FOUNDER, EMBERY INSTITUTE FOR**  
**WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**



**WHY:** Embery represented the San Diego Zoo during more than 100 appearances on "The Tonight Show." **NOTABLE:** Embery remains a voice for conservation, locally and internationally. **IN THE NEWS:** Embery appeared on local television to discuss panda conservation with the summer 2024 arrival of two pandas at the San Diego Zoo.

**ANNE EVANS**  
**CHAIR EMERITUS, EVANS HOTELS**



**WHY:** Family-run Evans Hotels dates back to 1953 and employs more than 1,200 people. **NOTABLE:** During her 30 years of active leadership as chair, Evans grew the company properties to include the Bahia Resort Hotel, the Catamaran and The Lodge at Torrey Pines. **IN THE NEWS:** Evans was inducted into the San Diego County Women's Hall of Fame in 2024. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Keep your knees bent.... It's a skiing thing. You have to be prepared for the slalom course."

**PETER FARRELL**  
**FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN EMERITUS,**  
**RESMED**



**WHY:** Farrell founded ResMed (NYSE: RMD), serving as chairman and CEO. He retains a seat on the company board. The business serves people with sleep apnea, COPD and other diseases, offering digital health tech and cloud-connected medical devices. **NOTABLE:** He sits on the board of directors of Arcturus Therapeutics, previously sat on the boards of NuVasive and Evolus, and guides several university programs.

**MICHAEL FASULO**  
**RETIRED PRESIDENT AND COO, SONY**  
**ELECTRONICS**



**WHY:** Michael Fasulo retired as president and COO of Sony Electronics in 2021 after overseeing a strategic turnaround of the business in North America. Fasulo delivered record results, cutting the number of products and emphasizing Sony's status as a premium brand. **NOTABLE:** In 2023, Fasulo co-founded PhotonFi. Specializing in technology called LiFi, the company provides wireless local area network connectivity harnessing the power of invisible light. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Respect one another; you see the same people on the way down that you did on the way up."

**JAY FLATLEY****FORMER CHAIR AND CEO, ILLUMINA**

**WHY:** Flatley grew Illumina from 30 employees to 7,800, making the publicly traded genomics specialist a force to be reckoned with. **NOTABLE:** The cost of sequencing a genome, once in the millions, is now a few hundred dollars. **IN THE NEWS:** Flatley continues to push boundaries in science and technology. He is chairman of Wellcome Leap Fund, Cellanome and Iridia. He is a board member at the Salk Institute, automaker Rivian and Denali Therapeutics.

**ERNIE HAHN****CHAIRMAN, DREAM HAHN**

**WHY:** Marketing, music and sports: Ernie Hahn works in all three. The Wonderfront Festival last brought music to the bayfront in May 2024. **NOTABLE:** Until recently, Hahn's career was tied closely to Pechanga Arena (aka San Diego Sports Arena). Hahn was GM of the venue from 1996-2021. **IN THE NEWS:** The 2024 CaddyHack Golf Festival raised \$225,000 for Boys to Men Mentoring Network.

**DELINDA FORSYTHE****FOUNDER, ICE**

**WHY:** Forsythe is a vocal advocate for Conscious Capitalism, a global nonprofit movement. Previously she was CEO of ICE, short for Innovative Commercial Environments. **NOTABLE:** Forsythe's 2021 book, "Inspiring Generational Leadership," has racked up 5-star ratings on Amazon. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2023, Forsythe received the Lifetime Achievement Award in the San Diego Business Journal Business Women of the Year Awards. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Doing well and doing good need not and should not be mutually exclusive."

**DAVID HALE****CEO, HALE BIOPHARMA VENTURES**

**WHY:** Hale joined a pioneering company called Hybritech in 1982. The intervening years saw him co-found and lead several successful ventures. Today he is credited as the father of biotech in San Diego. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is chairman of Rady Children's Institute for Genomic Medicine. **IN THE NEWS:** Hale was honored at the 2024 American Cancer Society San Diego Golf Classic.

**RON FOWLER****CHAIRMAN AND CEO, LIQUID INVESTMENTS**

**WHY:** Ron Fowler leads beer distributor Liquid Investments Inc. He was previously co-owner of the San Diego Padres and onetime owner of the San Diego Sockers. **NOTABLE:** In 2016, Fowler and his wife, Alexis, gave \$25 million to San Diego State University's business school. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2024, BBC reported that Liquid Investments took a 12.6% stake in the Lincoln City football club, or soccer team in American vernacular.

**GUY HALGREN****CHAIR EMERITUS, SHEPPARD MULLIN**

**WHY:** Guy Halgren served as Sheppard Mullin's chairman from 2001-21. During his tenure, the firm grew from 290 attorneys to more than 1,000 across the globe. Sheppard Mullin named its diversity fellowship after Halgren. **NOTABLE:** Spouse Laura Halgren retired from her job as a Superior Court judge in 2023. **IN THE NEWS:** In another tribute, Sheppard Mullin opened the Guy Halgren café as part of its 2024 office remodel. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Keep your eyes on the prize and hold on!"

**STEVE GAMES****FOUNDER, THE GAMES GROUP**

**WHY:** Games is one of the top luxury residential real estate agents in the San Diego market. Based in Rancho Santa Fe, the Games Group operates under Coldwell Banker West. **NOTABLE:** Games is past CEO of Pacific Sotheby's International Realty and grew three residential real estate firms to among the tops in the market. **PASSION:** He is a Vietnam veteran who started his career marketing to his military connections.

**JOE HARPER****PRESIDENT AND CEO, DEL MAR THOROUGHBRED CLUB**

**WHY:** Harper joined the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club in 1977 and became president and CEO of the historic track in 1990. **ECONOMIC IMPACT:** The recently revived fall racing season boosts the local economy during a slow part of the tourist season. **NOTABLE:** Harper is a trustee of the Cecil B. deMille Foundation. He had bit parts in his grandfather Cecil B. deMille's movies "The Ten Commandments" and "The Greatest Show on Earth."

**ALAN GOLD****CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, BIOMED REALTY**

**WHY:** Gold is executive chairman of San Diego-based Innovative Industrial Properties (NYSE: IIPR), which serves the regulated cannabis industry. He was chairman, president and CEO of BioMed Realty Trust prior to its sale to Blackstone. Gold is also executive chairman of IQHQ, which owns a portfolio of properties in life science centers. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** In 2023, Alan and Debbie Gold donated an additional \$100,000 to Neighborhood Healthcare's Gold Family Health Center in Poway.

**KAREN HAYNES****FORMER PRESIDENT, CAL STATE SAN MARCOS**

**WHY:** Haynes was president of California State University San Marcos from 2004 until her retirement in 2019. **NOTABLE:** Haynes came on the scene when the college was 15 years old and greatly expanded its campus footprint and student population. **PUBLISHED:** She is the author of "A Dream and a Plan: a Woman's Path to Leadership in Human Services," and co-author with Jim Mickelson of "Affecting Change: Social Workers in the Political Arena."



**T.W. (BILL) HOEHN III**

**PRESIDENT, HOEHN MOTORS**

**WHY:** Three generations of Hoehns have sold automobiles. Bill Hoehn succeeds his grandfather, Theodore W. Hoehn, and his father, Theodore W. "Bill" Hoehn Jr. **NOTABLE:** The Hoehn family has made a local impact by backing numerous charities through the years. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2024, Hoehn Honda donated two vehicles to YMCA San Diego County to support upkeep of the organization's 42 swimming pools.



**BARRY JANTZ**

**RETIRED CEO, GROSSMONT HOSPITAL DISTRICT**

**WHY:** Jantz served as CEO of Grossmont Healthcare District from 2004 until 2021. He served four terms on the La Mesa City Council. **NOTABLE:** He runs Jantz Communications, which specializes in Community Affairs, Strategic Planning, and Workforce Development. **IN THE NEWS:** Jantz has remained active in community issues and local politics. He is chairman of the San Diego County Health Services Advisory Board. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "My passion is partnering with WorkforceConnect, providing career pathways to students, veterans and underserved communities."



**BILL & TINA HOWE**

**PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT, BILL HOWE FAMILY OF COMPANIES**

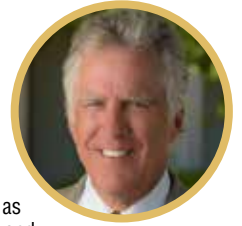
**WHY:** The business has been family-owned and operated for 44 years. The Howes' three daughters now manage day-to-day operations. **NOTABLE:** Bill Howe started the business out of an apartment in Pacific Beach. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Howes support San Diego Food Bank and other charities. **IN THE NEWS:** The business acquired Specialized Pipe Technologies, a pipe lining and rehab business, in 2022.



**STATH KARRAS**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BURNHAM-MOORES CENTER FOR REAL ESTATE**

**WHY:** Karras is an established figure in commercial real estate. He currently leads the Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate at the University of San Diego's Knauss School of Business. **NOTABLE:** Karras served as executive managing director at Cushman & Wakefield and was CEO of Burnham Real Estate Services. **CIVIC MINDED:** He has held board seats at Connect, the Economic Development Corporation, LEAD San Diego and San Diego Military Advisory Council.



**SELWYN ISAKOW**

**CHAIRMAN, CALPRIVATE BANK**

**WHY:** Isakow is founder and chairman of Cal Private Bank and founder, chairman and CEO of the Oxford Investment Group Inc. The latter is a private equity, real estate and venture investment firm behind 80 companies in 17 countries. **NOTABLE:** He served as an officer in the South African Air Force. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is past chair of City of Hope and founder of the Kindness Initiative and Hebrew Free Loan of San Diego.



**MEL KATZ**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CO-OWNER, MANPOWER SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Del Mar resident Mel Katz and Phil Blair bought San Diego's Manpower franchise in 1977 and built it into the largest in the nation. **CIVIC MINDED:** Katz has been active with many local organizations. His term on the San Diego County Water Authority board runs to 2029. He is a board member of San Diego Foundation and the Regional Policy and Innovation Center. **NOTABLE:** He is an alum of the University of Nevada Las Vegas. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Optimism is the lens through which we see possibilities instead of obstacles."



**JO DEE JACOB**

**FORMER CEO, GIRL SCOUTS SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Jacob made a career as a U.S. Navy officer when there were few other women in the service. She retired as a captain and served 15 years as CEO of Girl Scouts San Diego, retiring in 2016. She is past president of Rotary Club 33. **NOTABLE:** Jacob had the unique background that let her organize Operation Thin Mint, an effort that has sent millions of Girl Scout Cookies to military overseas.



**JOHN D. KLINEDINST**

**FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, KLINEDINST PC**

**WHY:** Klinedinst has served the legal needs of San Diego businesses through his firm, Klinedinst PC, since the early 1980s. The law firm is now in seven West Coast cities. **NOTABLE:** Klinedinst, a specialist in business litigation, has tried dozens of cases in federal and state courts, including professional liability and IP disputes. **IN THE NEWS:** He is among 18 firm members named to Thomson Reuters' San Diego Super Lawyers in 2024.



**IRWIN JACOBS**

**CO-FOUNDER, QUALCOMM INC.**

**WHY:** Jacobs co-founded Qualcomm Inc., which has developed several generations of wireless communications technology and is one of the world's leading chip makers. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Irwin Jacobs with his late wife Joan Jacobs, is the region's most generous philanthropist. **IN THE NEWS:** The public is now able to enjoy the latest arts venue funded by Jacobses' bequests: the rebuilt Jacobs Music Center (former Fox Theatre) downtown.



**JESSIE KNIGHT JR.**

**FORMER CEO AND CHAIRMAN, SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC**

**WHY:** Knight's leadership has included service on the California Public Utilities Commission and the Regional Chamber of Commerce. He was CEO of SDG&E and held roles with parent Sempra. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Knight is managing director of Knight Angels, a private equity fund supporting grassroots leaders. He is chairman of the Timken Museum of Art. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2022 he joined the board of the Hudson Institute think tank.





**BOB LEONE****RETIRED CEO AND PRESIDENT, MRC  
SMART TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS**

**WHY:** Leone is the founder and former CEO of MRC, a Xerox Company. In July 2021, he retired after 48 years. During his tenure, he transformed the business from a single San Diego office to multiple locations in Southern and Northern California. **NOTABLE:** He is part of NuFund Venture Group and is an executive coach. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Leone has volunteered with multiple homeless service agencies.

**DARLENE MARCOS SHILEY****CHAIR EMERITA, BOARD OF TRUSTEES,  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO**

**WHY:** Shiley serves on USD's board of trustees and was chair from 2007-2010. **NOTABLE:** Shiley and her late husband, Donald, a pioneer in the medical device field, have helped various community efforts for decades. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She and Donald Shiley have supported the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering at USD, the Shiley Eye Institute at UC San Diego and Shiley Haynes Institute for Palliative Care at CSUSM. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "To love is nothing. To be loved is something. To love and be loved is everything."

**SUSAN LEW****FOUNDER AND CEO, S. LEW &  
ASSOCIATES INC.**

**WHY:** Susan Lew's real estate firm is approaching its 50th anniversary. Since 1978, Lew has overseen the acquisition of more than \$1 billion of multifamily and commercial investments. **NOTABLE:** Lew served two terms on the Board of Port Commissioners. **HOSPITALITY VENTURE:** The businesswoman founded Emerald Chinese Seafood Restaurant, a mainstay of the bustling Convoy pan-Asian district, as well as Pearl Chinese Cuisine.

**LIDIA S. MARTINEZ****MANAGER OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
(RET.), SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**

**WHY:** She sits on the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority board and advises the leaders of several nonprofits. For 30 years, she built goodwill for Southwest Airlines. **NOTABLE:** Her career trajectory took her from the border town of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico (her mother was a housekeeper in neighboring El Paso) to the halls of corporate power. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Through empathy and genuine leadership, we create pathways for future leaders and inclusive, thriving communities."

**KURT LISTUG****CO-FOUNDER, TAYLOR GUITARS**

**WHY:** In 2024, Listug is marking the 50th year of the company that he and Bob Taylor founded: Taylor Guitars. **NOTABLE:** The El Cajon business is one of the world's leading manufacturers of high-quality acoustic guitars, serving artists such as Taylor Swift. The company has a maquiladora (twin plant) in Tecate, Mexico. **IN THE NEWS:** Taylor Guitars' efforts to sustainably source wood continue to make headlines.

**ARMON MILLS****DIRECTOR, CBIZ**

**WHY:** Mills joined CBIZ in 2017 after retiring as publisher of the San Diego Business Journal. He retains the title Publisher Emeritus. Mills began his career in public accounting, which is his current focus. He is on the finance committee of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and is a life committee member of Sports San Diego. **NOTABLE:** He spent 25 years in publishing, starting and acquiring local Business Journals nationwide. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "You only get one chance to make a good first impression."

**SEAN MAHONEY****REGIONAL CEO, AMERICAN RED CROSS  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION**

**WHY:** Sean Mahoney is regional CEO of the American Red Cross in San Diego, Imperial, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. **NOTABLE:** He spent 27 years in the U.S. Coast Guard, retiring as a captain. His military work included hurricane relief. **IN THE NEWS:** In January 2024, Mahoney and nearly 200 Red Cross volunteers provided relief work in San Diego, aiding flood victims after heavy rain hit the area. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Our local Red Cross team provides a beacon of hope when help can't wait."

**STEVE MOLLENKOPF****CHAIRMAN, BOEING**

**WHY:** Following his retirement from Qualcomm in 2021, Mollenkopf has continued his work on corporate boards. He was named chairman of Boeing in 2024. Mollenkopf joined Qualcomm in 1994 and was CEO for seven years, growing the firm to \$33.6 billion in revenue. **NOTABLE:** He successfully navigated several crises, including a hostile takeover attempt by Broadcom. **IN THE NEWS:** Mollenkopf has been working to turn Boeing around and led the effort to recruit a new CEO in 2024.

**DOUG MANCHESTER****CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, MANCHESTER  
FINANCIAL GROUP**

**WHY:** Manchester is a developer and philanthropist, responsible for several projects that revitalized downtown San Diego over the course of several decades. **NOTABLE:** He is known by the sobriquet Papa Doug. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2024, Manchester Financial Group entered negotiations with the U.S. Navy to redevelop the 70.3-acre NAVWAR property in Old Town. The Navy floated a concept for high-density, mixed-use development there. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Live life like it's the Super Bowl every day, with no time-outs or instant replays."

**JOHN MOORES****PRINCIPAL, JMI SERVICES INC.**

**WHY:** Sports, software, venture capital and real estate: John Moores has made a splash in all of those arenas. His companies include JMI Equity, JMI Realty and JMI Sports. **NOTABLE:** The one-time owner of the Padres was a key figure in building Petco Park and redeveloping East Village. **IN THE NEWS:** JMI Sports, which deals in media rights and venue development, inked deals with UCLA and San Diego State. Separately, Moores made headlines by selling his Pebble Beach home for a record \$45 million.



**JERRY NAVARRA**

**CHAIRMAN, JEROME'S FURNITURE**

**WHY:** Navarra has long been the public face of the family business, having been in 4,000-plus television commercials. Navarra's father founded Jerome's Furniture in 1954 and Navarra became president in 1974. Today multiple generations of family run stores throughout Southern California. **NOTABLE:** Reclining leather couch seats at home plate at Petco Park are part of the company's promotional strategy. **IN THE NEWS:** The business marked its 70th anniversary in 2024.



**ERNEST RADY**

**FOUNDER & CEO, AMERICAN ASSETS TRUST INC.**

**WHY:** Rady founded American Assets Trust Inc., a full service, vertically integrated REIT (real estate investment trust) in 1967. Rady plans to transition into the role of executive chairman in January 2025, with Adam Wyll becoming CEO. **NOTABLE:** The Rady family has been very generous to the San Diego, supporting the arts, education, medicine, poverty alleviation and more. **IN THE NEWS:** As 2024 dawned, Rady Children's Hospital announced plans to merge with Children's Hospital of Orange County.



**JOE PANETTA**

**PRESIDENT AND CEO, BIOCORN CALIFORNIA**

**WHY:** Panetta has led Biocom California since 1999, becoming the face of the state's biotech and life science industry. **NOTABLE:** During his tenure, Panetta grew the organization from a new San Diego-based association into one of the most influential life science trade associations in the world, counting more than 1,800 organizations as members. **IN THE NEWS:** Panetta will become president emeritus when Tim Scott, current board chair, assumes the top executive role in January 2025.



**DEBRA REED-KLAGES**

**FORMER CHAIRMAN & CEO, SEMPRA ENERGY**

**WHY:** Caterpillar, Chevron and Lockheed Martin – Debra Reed-Klages sits on the board of these three Fortune 100 companies. Experience as a top executive with San Diego-based Sempra (and its subsidiary utilities) positioned her for her current work. **NOTABLE:** Reed-Klages is a graduate of USC's Viterbi School of Engineering. She served as Sempra's CEO from 2011 until 2018 and retired as executive chairman in December of that year.



**MICHAEL PERSALL**

**FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, C3 BANK, ABP CAPITAL**

**WHY:** Persall is founder and chairman of ABP Capital and owner and chairman of C3Bank. **NOTABLE:** Persall is a lead investor and board member for athletic company Vuori and a founder of Blooma. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** A 2002 graduate of the University of San Diego (accounting), Persall sits on the university board of trustees. **IN THE NEWS:** C3 Bank opened an office in "The Gulch" in downtown Nashville in 2024 after landing in the market for 10 years.



**GARRY RIDGE**

**CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, WD-40 CO.**

**WHY:** Executives look to Garry Ridge for guidance. Ridge was CEO of WD-40 Co. from 1997 to 2022. During that time he refined his philosophy of positive corporate culture. His consulting business is called The Learning Moment. **NOTABLE:** Ridge encourages employees to see themselves as a tribe and warns of the danger in being "a soul-sucking CEO." **IN THE NEWS:** "Any Dumb-Ass Can Do It" is his book set for release in March 2025. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I help leaders build cultures of belonging where love, forgiveness, and learning inspire a happier, more connected world."



**ROBERT E. PRICE**

**CO-FOUNDER, CHAIRMAN AND INTERIM CEO, PRICESMART INC.**

**WHY:** Robert Price runs PriceSmart, which has 54 warehouse stores, mainly in Central America. The business reported \$4.8 billion in revenue in the 12 months ended October 2024. **NOTABLE:** Retail runs in the Price family's veins. Robert Price and father Sol Price started Price Club in 1974, selling it to Costco in 1993. **IN THE NEWS:** Since 1994, Price Philanthropies has invested in the youth and families of San Diego's City Heights neighborhood, opening 135 affordable homes there in 2024.



**PATTI ROSCOE**

**OWNER, ROSCOE & ASSOCIATES**

**WHY:** Patti Roscoe has the long view of San Diego tourism. The Buffalo, N.Y. native was well established in the hospitality sector when she formed her destination management company in 1981. She franchised it to 19 offices nationwide and sold it in 2007. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Now retired, she supports local organizations including San Diego State University. **COMIX AND CULTURE:** She helped open the Comic-Con Museum in Balboa Park.



**ROB QUIGLEY**

**PRINCIPAL, ROB WELLINGTON QUIGLEY, FAIA**

**WHY:** Quigley, who founded his firm in 1978, is a San Diego original who approaches the built environment with his own signature style. Recent works include Ocean Discovery Institute's Living Lab and San Diego Fire Stations No. 2 and No. 5. **NOTABLE:** Quigley's landmark project is the \$185 million Central Library in East Village. **IN THE NEWS:** Architect Jim Brown designed an 8,600 square foot expansion for Quigley's New Children's Museum, a work from 2008.



**IVOR ROYSTON**

**FOUNDING MANAGING MEMBER, FORWARD VENTURES**

**WHY:** Ivor Royston, founding managing member of Forward Ventures, was present at the creation of San Diego's biotech scene. He co-founded biotech pioneer Hybritech Inc. **NOTABLE:** Royston is a noted oncologist, researcher, scientist, entrepreneur and venture capitalist. When Eli Lilly bought Hybritech in 1986, Royston founded and invested in dozens of biotech firms. **IN THE NEWS:** He remains on the board of Viracta Therapeutics after stepping down from the CEO's job in 2022.



**RALPH RUBIO****CO-FOUNDER, RUBIO'S RESTAURANTS INC.**

**WHY:** Rubio hooked stateside consumers on the idea of the fish taco, something he encountered on a spring break surfing trip to San Felipe, Mexico. The business, which recently changed ownership, has sold an estimated 270 million fish tacos since the opening of the first restaurant in Pacific Beach in 1983. **NOTABLE:** The brand is powerful. Rubio's says it is No. 1 in fish tacos. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Son, if you ever get a chance to own your own business, you should go for it because it sure beats working for someone else." — *Ray Rubio (Ralph's father)*

**DAN SHEA****BOARD MEMBER, LUCKY DUCK FOUNDATION**

**WHY:** Shea is a civic leader with extensive experience in restaurants, notably Paradigm Investment Group. **NOTABLE:** He is a board member of the Lucky Duck Foundation and a core member of the Tuesday Group of civic and business leaders seeking solutions for San Diego's homeless issue. **CONVENOR:** Shea and the late Peter Seidler are credited for hosting more than 50 symposiums on the issue. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "True change begins with action, not words. Let's start helping, one life at a time."

**SUSAN SALKA****RETIRED CEO, PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR, AMN HEALTHCARE**

**WHY:** From 2005 to 2022, Salka led AMN Healthcare, the leader and innovator in total talent solutions for healthcare organizations across the United States. **NOTABLE:** She has served as honorary consul to Guatemala. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Salka is a vocal proponent of promoting women to leadership roles and prioritized gender equity at AMN. **IN THE NEWS:** Parexel, a North Carolina-based CRO (clinical research organization), named Salka to its board in 2024.

**JUDI SHEPPARD MISSETT****FOUNDER, JAZZERCISE**

**WHY:** She founded Jazzercise, "the Original Dance Party Workout," which goes back to a dance fitness class she taught in Chicago in 1969. **NOTABLE:** Daughter Shanna Nelson is currently CEO of the Carlsbad based, family-owned company. Jazzercise reported 1,600 global franchise locations in 2024 and \$77 million in system-wide sales in 2023. **IN THE NEWS:** Jazzercise Japan celebrated 40 years in November.

**JERRY SANDERS****PRESIDENT & CEO, SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**WHY:** Sanders has led several San Diego organizations. He was chief of police during the 1990s. Voters later made him mayor. Since 2012 he has been CEO at the San Diego chamber. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He has also steered the local chapters of the American Red Cross and the United Way. **IN THE NEWS:** Sanders recently led a binational delegation to Mexico City to meet the new administration and discuss the future of the Cali-Baja region. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I've always found the key to great leadership is surrounding yourself with a great team."

**THOMAS SADBERRY****CHAIRMAN, SADBERRY PROPERTIES**

**WHY:** Sudberry has developed a good number of acres in San Diego County and elsewhere, including greater Las Vegas. He founded Sudberry Properties in 1979. **NOTABLE:** He developed Civita in Mission Valley, El Corazon in Oceanside and Otay River Business Park in the southern part of the county. **AN AVIATION BUFF:** Sudberry was a naval aviator and is a director at the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

**JIM SCHMID****FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN, CHELSEA INVESTMENT CORP.**

**WHY:** Affordable housing is Jim Schmid's stock-in-trade. He has focused on such developments in multiple cities since 1992. Schmid turned over the CEO's job at Chelsea Investment Corp. to his son, Charles, in the spring of 2023. **NOTABLE:** Chelsea continues work on its \$233.5 million, 404-unit Mount Etna affordable housing campus in Clairemont. **IN THE NEWS:** The San Diego Housing Federation gave Schmid its Lifetime Achievement Award from in June. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "The heart and soul of Chelsea is more than building affordable housing, it's about changing lives."

**ROBERT S. SULLIVAN****FOUNDING DEAN AND PROFESSOR EMERITUS, RADY SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

**WHY:** Sullivan was founding dean of UC San Diego's Rady School of Management from 2003 to 2019. During his tenure he recruited world-class faculty and built the school's philanthropic foundation. **SPECIALTIES:** Sullivan is an expert on entrepreneurship, knowledge management and operations management. **NOTABLE:** Sullivan was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia from 1968 to 1970. He lectured on production management at the university in Addis Ababa. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "For all organizations, including the Rady School of Management, Never stop starting up."

**K. BARRY SHARPLESS****PROFESSOR, SCRIPPS RESEARCH**

**WHY:** Sharpless has won two Nobel Prizes. **NOTABLE:** His research has centered around "click chemistry," in which smaller molecules snap together like Lego bricks to create larger molecules. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2024, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York hosted a symposium honoring Sharpless and exploring the future of click chemistry. Sharpless was presented with a custom guitar with fretboard inlays the shape of molecular structures.

**DEBORAH SZEKELY****FOUNDER, GOLDEN DOOR & RANCHO LA PUERTA**

**WHY:** Szekely put North County and Tecate on the map as top luxury travel destinations. The fact that she reached 102 speaks well for her healthy lifestyle choices. **NOTABLE:** In 1940, she opened Rancho La Puerta, a wellness camp in Mexico. **IN THE NEWS:** In a recent SDBJ interview, Szekely attributed her longevity to not worrying. "I don't do anything I have to worry about. I only do things that I think I can do to help, where they wouldn't frustrate me." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Your best investment is in your health. Nothing pays more dividends."



**BOB TAYLOR**

**CO-FOUNDER, TAYLOR GUITARS**

**WHY:** Even if Taylor Guitars was not celebrating 50 years, Taylor would be on the 500 for making a quality product and creating jobs on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border. **NOTABLE:** The business, founded by Taylor and Kurt Listug, made the jump to employee ownership in 2021. **IN THE NEWS:** For decades, Taylor and his associates have been in the news discussing sustainable sources for the wood in Taylor Guitars.



**ROBERT WATKINS**

**PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN, R.J. WATKINS & CO. LTD.**

**WHY:** Watkins created his executive search company in 1980. Since then, he has identified and placed more than 1,000 senior executives at local corporations, government agencies, educational institutions and nonprofits. **NOTABLE:** He is chairman of the board at the San Diego History Center, and has served on a variety of corporate, nonprofit and civic boards. **LOVES A GOOD SCRUM:** He is a director of the U.S. Rugby Foundation.



**J. CRAIG VENTER**

**CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, J. CRAIG VENTER INSTITUTE**

**WHY:** Venter is a world-renowned figure in genetics and genomics. **NOTABLE:** The biotechnologist, businessman and founder of Celera Genomics is best known for his role in mapping the human genome. **IN THE NEWS:** In October, the JCVI announced it received a five-year, \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to lead the Center for Innovative Recycling and Circular Economy, aka CIRCLE.



**GARY & MARY WEST**

**FOUNDERS, WEST CORP., WEST HEALTH INSTITUTE**

**WHY:** Pioneers in the telemarketing industry, Gary and Mary West received \$1.45 billion from the 2006 sale of their stake in West Corp. They have used their wealth to fund healthcare initiatives for vulnerable seniors. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** The Gary and Mary West Foundation has given more than \$500 million to successful aging initiatives. **IN THE NEWS:** The Wests are horse owners. Equibase reports lifetime earnings of \$46 million as of October 2024.



**ANDREW VITERBI**

**CO-FOUNDER, QUALCOMM INC.**

**WHY:** Viterbi co-founded two iconic San Diego tech companies, Linkabit and Qualcomm. **NOTABLE:** An electrical engineer, Viterbi invented the Viterbi algorithm, which is used in most digital cellular phones, digital satellite receivers and other technology. **IN THE NEWS:** The University of Southern California announced a \$10 million gift from Viterbi in the fall. His gift will help hire faculty at the new USC School of Advanced Computing.



**ALISON WHITELAW**

**RETIRED FOUNDER, PLATT/WHITELAW ARCHITECTS**

**WHY:** A principal in Platt/Whitelaw Architects, she broke barriers for women in architecture during her career. **NOTABLE:** Whitelaw was a co-founder of the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture, a group of architects and neuroscientists who looked at the relationship between the built environment and the human brain. **IN THE NEWS:** Platt/Whitelaw designed the renovations for the 109-year-old Botanical Building in Balboa Park.



**MARY WALSHOK**

**RETIRED DEAN, UC SAN DIEGO EXTENDED STUDIES**

**WHY:** After almost 50 years in administration at UC San Diego, Walshok now sits on several important boards (Conrad Prebys Foundation, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Opera, among others). **NOTABLE:** She built UC San Diego's extension program and, more recently, spearheaded the opening of its downtown center at Park and Market. **IN THE NEWS:** In 2024, she received the Blaisdell Distinguished Alumni Award from Pomona College.

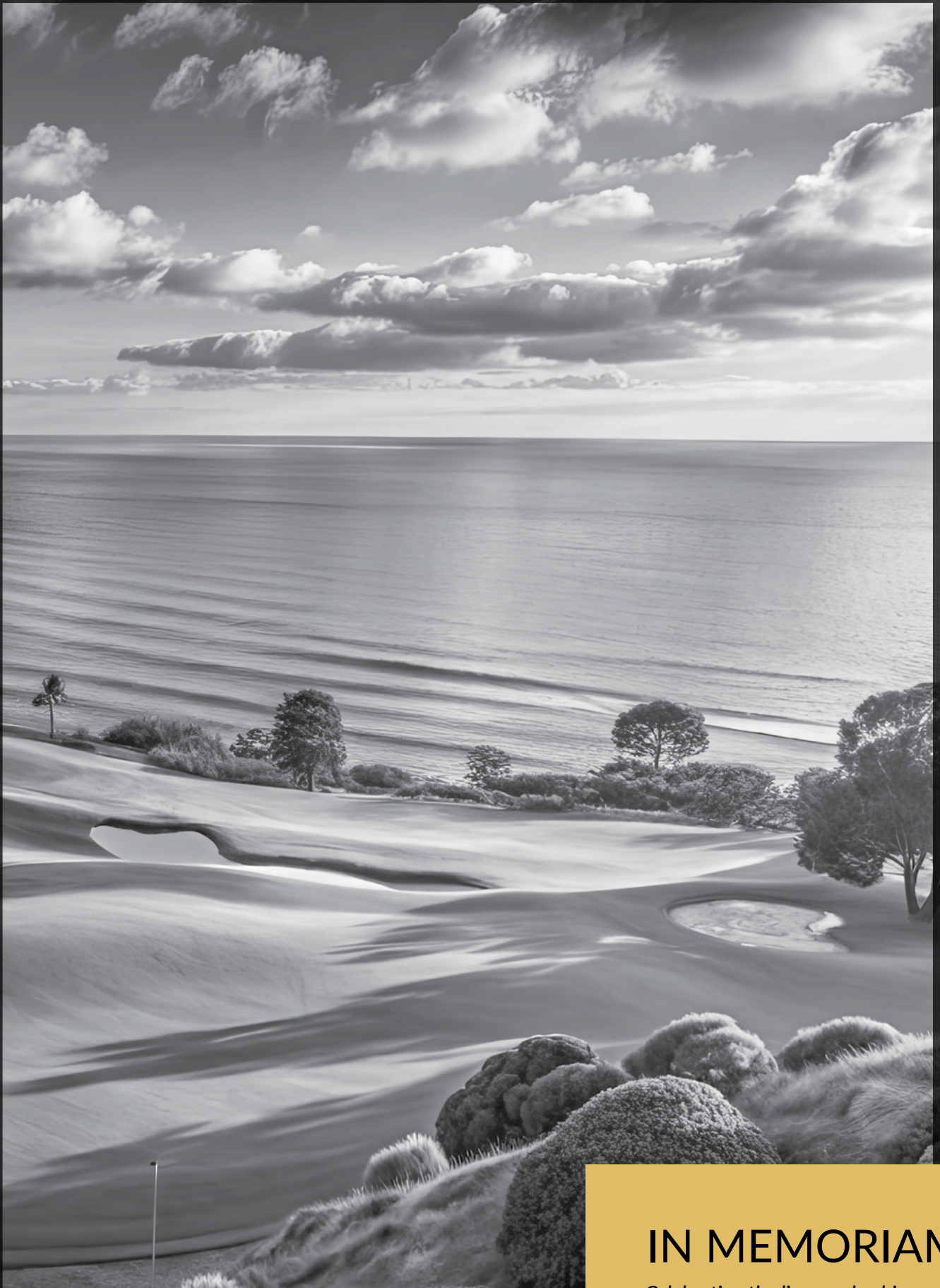


**THOMAS WORNHAM**

**DIRECTOR, CALPRIVATE BANK**

**WHY:** After four decades with Wells Fargo, Wornham pivoted to be CEO of San Diego Private Bank, and later, CalPrivate Bank. Since retiring, he continues to serve on the board of its parent, Private Bancorp of America. **NOTABLE:** He is past president of the Century Club, which produces the Farmers Insurance Open. **GO BEARS:** Wornham is a native San Diegan who received his bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Be honest, open, considerate and use small words."





SAN DIEGO 500

## IN MEMORIAM

*Celebrating the lives and achievements  
of recently passed iconic San Diegans*

**JOHN D. ALESSIO****1969-2024****MANAGING PARTNER, PROCOPIO**

John D. Alessio was a fourth-generation San Diegan who stayed active in the community throughout his lifetime. A University of San Diego business administration graduate and USD School of Law alumnus, Alessio was first elected a Managing Partner at Procopio in the fall of 2017 and was re-elected twice. He was involved in myriad groups, including Entrepreneurs Organization and PEERS San Diego. He served as a Director for the World Design Capital San Diego-Tijuana and was a founder of Red Autism, a nonprofit in Los Cabos caring for children with autism. He was recognized by the San Diego Business Journal on its San Diego 500 list of Most Influential Business Leaders in San Diego for seven years and was recognized by Super Lawyers since 2012.

**FREDERICK W. PIERCE IV****1963-2024****PRESIDENT & CEO, PIERCE EDUCATION PROPERTIES**

Fred Pierce was president and CEO of Pierce Education Properties, a national student housing investment and operating company. He gave generously to San Diego State University, his alma mater, where he earned a degree in finance and an MBA in Real Estate finance. He founded PEP in the mid-1990s as master developer of the College Community Redevelopment Project at SDSU, together with the SDSU Foundation. He played a key role in the passage of Measure G, which allowed SDSU to buy land for SDSU Mission Valley and Snapdragon Stadium. His early career included positions in finance and real estate for Platt Companies, Price Waterhouse and KPMG Peat Marwick/Goodkin Group. Twice he was included among leaders in San Diego Business Journal's SD 500.

**MARK BALMERT****1954-2024****PRESIDENT & CEO, SDMAC**

Mark Balmert served in the U.S. Navy more than 30 years, rising to the rank of rear admiral before exiting the service in 2008. Following a career in defense contracting, Balmert led the nonprofit San Diego Military Advisory Council (SDMAC) from 2018 until his retirement in May 2024. Balmert told the Business Journal that he was particularly happy with his work leading SDMAC's efforts to support military spouses, as well as SDMAC's work producing its annual economic impact reports. Balmert was a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and received a commission as an ensign through the Navy ROTC program. His Navy career included command of the destroyer USS Chandler and Destroyer Squadron 7. A budget specialist, Balmert earned a master's degree in financial management from the Naval Postgraduate School.

**DR. LYNN REASER****1947-2024****ECONOMIST**

Dr. Lynn Reaser was a top economist and professor, widely recognized for her role as chief economist at Point Loma Nazarene University's Fermanian Business & Economic Institute, where she began her teaching career in 2009. During her career, Reaser shared deep economic insights that influenced business and policy decisions in San Diego and beyond. An expert in economic forecasting and public policy analysis, she focused on making economic analysis accessible and relevant to real-world challenges, and addressed housing, public infrastructure and cost-of-living issues in Southern California. She was a past president of the National Association for Business Economics. Knowledgeable about the nuances of the global economy, PLNU established the Dr. Lynn Reaser Endowed Scholarship to ensure her legacy of advancing business education continues.

**DAVID DIAMOND****1950-2023****MANAGING DIRECTOR, CBIZ**

David Diamond, a certified CPA in California, Connecticut and Israel, and a chartered accountant in South Africa, had a broad-based background. Integral in taking myriad regional companies public, he was the managing director of CBIZ MHM San Diego, and was also MHM's National Life Sciences & Technology Practice Leader. With more than four decades of experience in public accounting, life sciences and technology, Diamond was an expert in public, private and venture funded biotech companies. He was also on the board of the San Diego World Trade Center, part of the World Affairs Council, Biocom California and was a founder of the UC San Diego Connect Technology Financial Forum. He was recognized by the San Diego Business Journal in its SD 500 lists three years in a row.

**PETER SEIDLER****1960-2023****OWNER, SAN DIEGO PADRES**

Peter Seidler was the owner of the San Diego Padres from 2012-2023. His leadership transcended the world of baseball and the San Diego community. After purchasing the Padres in 2012, Seidler became chairman in 2020, and achieved milestones that included playoff wins in 2020 and 2022. Seidler was respected nationwide for his advocacy on social issues, particularly homelessness. Through the Padres Foundation, he expanded support for underprivileged communities, multiplying donations to local causes. He was also an executive committee member of the Lucky Duck Foundation, which addresses issues of those experiencing homelessness. In business dealings, Seidler in 1992 founded and was a managing partner in Seidler Equity Partners, a private equity firm, in Marina del Rey. He also survived two bouts with non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

**JOAN JACOBS****1933-2024****PHILANTHROPIST AND CIVIC LEADER**

Born Joan Klein, Jacobs was a prominent philanthropist who was married to Qualcomm co-founder Irwin Jacobs for nearly 70 years. Joan Jacobs was dedicated, generous and impactful to San Diego's cultural, educational, healthcare, scientific and arts communities. She played a vital role in developing the San Diego Symphony's Rady Shell at Jacobs Park and the Jacobs Medical Center. She met her husband while earning a degree in nutritional sciences from Cornell University and they later moved from New York to La Jolla. She helped launch Salk's Innovation Grants Program, encouraging pioneering research in various scientific fields. In 2013, she contributed \$133 million to establish the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute in New York City, a hub for technology and innovation.

**BILL WALTON****1952-2024****EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, SAN DIEGO SPORT INNOVATORS**

Always asking to be known as "Billy from La Mesa," William Theodore Walton III was a larger-than-life presence in the community, beyond his 6-foot-11-inch frame. A National Basketball Association standout center from 1974-1988, and Hall of Famer since 1993, Walton was a longtime NBA broadcaster, known for his insight, enthusiasm, humor and colorful commentary. He was also the NCAA Player of the Year three times in the 1970s at UCLA. He had a penchant for music, especially the Grateful Dead, and was known to show up for concerts as well as for cycling along local bike paths. He gave motivational speeches on physical and mental health, and turned out for local fundraisers, including Challenged Athletes Foundation, and was executive chairman of the board of San Diego Sport Innovators.



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