

2023 ^{IDAHO} BUSINESS REVIEW

women
of the year





congratulations!

We believe achievements that have a positive impact on people and the community should always be recognized.

Thank you, IBR Women of the Year Recipients, for your dedication, and congratulations on receiving this honor. Your commitment to others is inspiring.

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SENIOR GROUP PUBLISHER

Lisa Blossman
lblossman@nopg.com

PUBLISHER

Cindy Suffa
csuffa@idahobusinessreview.com

**MULTIMEDIA SALES
EXECUTIVES**

Autumn Kersey
akersey@idahobusinessreview.com

Jeanette Trompczynski
jtrompczynski@idahobusinessreview.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Stefanie Kalina-Metzger, Ryan Lowery,
Paige Lyman, Hayden Seder and Brooke
Strickland

**EVENTS MANAGER/
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Laura Clements
lbutler@idahobusinessreview.com

For advertising rates or copies of
Women of the Year magazine, contact:
P.O. Box 8866 Boise, ID 83707
4696 W. Overland Rd., Suite 180,
Boise, ID 83705
Phone: 208-336-3768
info@idahobusinessreview.com

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* **Woman of the Year**

**Denotes former Idaho Women of the Year
honorees now in the Circle of Excellence.



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From the Editor

As I was editing the profiles of each of this year's 50 Women of the Year honorees I was struck at the commitment to volunteerism that positively affects so many throughout Idaho.

Through the program, now in year 18, these honorees are selected by a committee that considers accomplishments in four categories: professional achievement, leadership, mentorship and community service; many of these individuals stand out in multiple categories. In addition to the many people who submitted nominations and women who completed applications for consideration, we also appreciate the time and effort put forth by the panel of judges made up of past Women of the Year honorees.

These individuals demonstrate exceptional leadership, mentorship, volunteerism and contribution to their respective industries. This publication and awards event by the Idaho Business Review is an opportunity to recognize these standouts

women from across the state, some nominated for this award for the first time, others returning for another year — though with new accomplishments to highlight; all are supported by coworkers and/or peers in their communities.

May reading about each of these honorees inspire you to make a difference in your community. We hope you enjoy another year of reading the stories of talented, accomplished and motivating women.

Jason Thomas is interim editor of Idaho Business Review

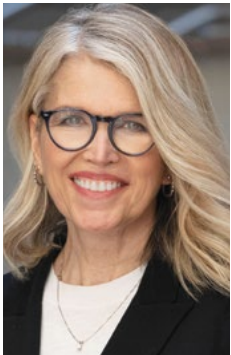


Keynote Speaker

IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW PRESENTS

LISA A. GROW

President and CEO, IDACORP and Idaho Power



Lisa Grow was appointed president and chief executive officer of IDACORP and Idaho Power in June 2020 and a director of IDACORP and Idaho Power Board of Directors in February 2020.

Lisa has dedicated her entire 36-year career to Idaho Power. She was the company's second female engineer and is the first female CEO. Lisa's career is grounded in

operations. In addition to her history of designing, building

and maintaining the grid, she's also focused on caring for employees and leading the company through the beginnings of its transition to 100% clean energy.

Respected across the energy industry and beyond, Lisa has helped influence regional policies, grid reliability and the development of regional energy markets. She serves on the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco's Salt Lake City Branch Board of Directors.

Lisa holds a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from the University of Idaho and a Master of Business Administration from Boise State University. Lisa and her husband live in Boise, Idaho, and have two adult children.

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Our legacy of pursuing newer and better ways of serving our members is unmatched within our industry – as it should be for a company with such deep Idaho roots. Being part of an Idaho business community that produced innovations ranging from television technology and generation of the world’s first usable amount of electricity from nuclear power to the first ski area chair lift, we, too, have been driven to constantly look around the curve to see what’s next.

That’s what motivated us to develop our market-leading health care shopping tool back in 2008, the first comprehensive palliative care benefit in 2014, the first prescription drug comparison tool in 2016, and an uncommonly well-integrated resource that places health care tracking, scheduling, shopping and care coordination in the palms of our members’ hands in the early 2020s.

KeyCorp’s roots trace back nearly 200 years to Albany, New York. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, Key is one of the nation’s largest bank-based financial services companies. Key provides deposit, lending, cash management, and investment services to individuals and businesses under the name KeyBank National Association through a network of 1,000 branches and approximately 1,300 ATMs. Key also provides a broad range of sophisticated corporate and investment banking products, such as merger and acquisition advice, public and private debt and equity, syndications and derivatives to middle market companies in selected industries throughout the United States

Regence As dedicated collaborators, we’ve long understood our responsibility to go beyond easing the health care concerns of our members – to lock arms with like-minded individuals and organizations in pursuit of community betterment and economic vitality and opportunity. Our employees and corporate foundation quietly roll up their sleeves to support our neighbors in all stages of their lives.

We’ve walked the talk when it comes to buying in Idaho and supporting our home state. We do that by making nearly 90 percent of our operations and capital expenditures with other Idaho companies. As a result of our Idaho-first business focus, economists note every million dollars spent by Regence supports another \$800,000 in spending across the state. They also point out that every 10 direct jobs at Regence are linked to another 5 jobs elsewhere in Idaho.

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Most importantly, Key is committed to helping communities thrive. To that end, working with community leaders and organizations to develop comprehensive solutions to the pressing issues of economic disparity, economic inclusion and climate change in each market it serves.

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Reylene Abbott

she got through it with flying colors and was accepted to her top three Ivy League institutions, while she, in her own words, “kicked cancer’s behind!”

Abbott recognizes the importance of giving back to her community and has made history as the youngest Twin Falls County Fair board member since its inception in 1916.

As the Head Cheerleading Coach at CSI, Abbott is again making history by coaching a national team to a semi-final win and this season they are heading back to nationals again. In her second year as the head cheerleading coach, history was once again made when the team became the first Idaho collegiate cheerleading program to claim a national championship title.

During Abbott’s time at the CSI Foundation, she managed \$50 million in assets, enabling the Foundation to award scholarships to students from all walks of life. Abbott has also written and received grants for the Walker Center, Idaho’s premier treatment center for drug and alcohol addiction and concurring mental health issues.

Program Director, Julie Wright-Leggett said that the cheerleading program was on the verge of being cut until Reylene came along. “Because of her work ethic, the program has grown in size and talent,” she said.

The company Abbott most recently started began as Cheerleading is for every BODY, a clothing line/social campaign to promote inclusivity and body positivity in the industry.

“In the first month, we received more than 700 applications for ambassadors throughout the United States and sold more than 2,000 products during the grand opening,” she said, adding that the success of the line inspired her to expand to Fitness is for every BODY, a clothing line/social campaign to prove that individuals should never be intimidated or bullied out of pursuing their fitness journey due to their size. As part of this initiative, Abbott spends time doing outreach at schools, clubs and social events.

Her goal now is to make an impact in the lives that she touches. “My late grandmother believed that we were all put here for a purpose and that is to make people feel loved and valued, which is what I am striving to do — to make people feel empowered and loved,” she said.



CEO

Fitness is for every BODY

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Reylene Abbott has been described by her peers as embodying a champion mindset. Abbott recognized early on that the pursuit of excellence begins with a good foundation in education. After high school, she went on to graduate with an Associate of Arts Degree, College of Southern Idaho in 2015. The hardworking student then pursued her bachelor of arts degree at Whitworth University in 2017 and later earn her International Law Research Certificate, Harvard Law School, in 2018.

Abbott now serves as the CEO of Fitness is for every BODY, while working as a head cheerleading coach at the College of Southern Idaho (CSI). She is also the founder of Coaching through Chaos.

Abbott has proven that nothing can stand in her way once she makes up her mind to accomplish a goal.

“Over my career, I have had many personal and professional accomplishments, however, my greatest accomplishment would be graduating from Whitworth University after being diagnosed with stage IV uterine cancer, which consumed my last two semesters where I was captain of my speech and debate team, enrolled with 22 credits and serving on various campus leadership teams,” said Abbott, explaining that treatment and law school prep were challenging, but

Empowering Women, Strengthening Communities

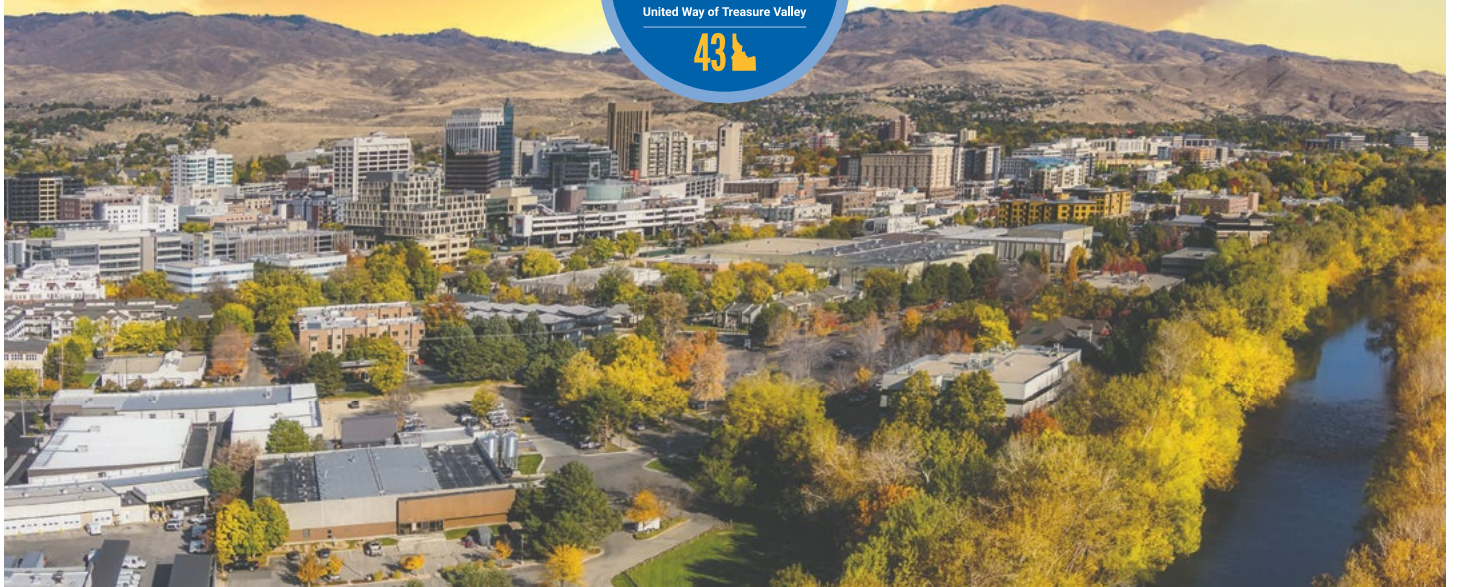
— *United Way Applauds Idaho's Women of the Year* —

United Way of Treasure Valley is proud to honor the Idaho Business Review's Woman of the Year awardees. Every year, these are the women in our community who are shaping Idaho's economic and societal well-being through their outstanding leadership, mentoring efforts, and community involvement.

With Women of the Year, we're making a difference together for many in the Treasure Valley.



United Way of Treasure Valley





Mindi Anderson

Founding executive director, Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Owner, Maximize Solutions Consulting and Coaching Services LLC

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Mindi Anderson is the founding executive director of the Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce, and owner of Maximize Solutions Consulting and Coaching Services LLC. In her position as consultant, she helps tackle community and corporate problems in organizational management, strategic planning and executive leadership development. Anderson leverages her educational background and military experience to help others and has embarked on a number of successful endeavors focused on community assistance.

Anderson counts her extensive education among her many accomplishments. AShe earned her associate degree in Allied Health Science/Info Systems and Medical Laboratory, USAF, AL. She then went on to attend Park University in Missouri, where she earned a bachelor’s in social psychology and a master’s in Healthcare Administration, Leadership and Management. Not content to stop there, she added yet another degree to her impressive resume: a doctorate in Healthcare Administration, Capella University.

The 23-year United States Airforce veteran has grown the

Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce to 1,700 members in less than two years. In less than one year, she secured \$457,000 in federal and state funds for the organization. Today, a team of seven full and part-time staff helps hundreds of community members get connected to resources through collaboration and connection.

Anderson, seeing a need, also created the Cascade Fire Community Fund, which provides burnout, education and outreach support to underserved residents and businesses in Valley County.

Jennifer Mauk, Executive Director, Buy Idaho, Inc., remarks on Anderson’s ability to be an inspiration to others.

“She has fostered an environment where businesses thrive, making a significant positive impact on the local economy,” she said.

Jessica Gruver Koefed, Board Chair, Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce, agrees.

“Mindi established the Idaho Veterans Chamber as a navigation network hub deeply rooted in the Idaho community to bridge the gaps between the Idaho and military communities. In a short time, she established referral partnerships with many agencies, organizations and employers and successfully established a laser focus on hiring veterans.”

Anderson has been recognized for her many accomplishments with numerous awards, including being named Leader of the Year, GIVENT Executive Network in 2020 and Senior Non-commissioned Officer of the Year, 124th Fighter Wing Staff in 2021.

As a visionary, innovative and transformational servant leader, Anderson considers learning, developing and growing within the organizations she serves both as a philanthropist and business leader across the state of Idaho. Anderson has thrived, despite growing up in the foster care system

“I have chosen not to be a victim, but a victor. I’ve achieved a great deal of education and sought out every opportunity to be a leader within the military and civilian community to always have the health of the larger ecosystem in Idaho at the heart of all I do,” she said.

CELEBRATING

Idaho Women of the Year Honorees from the University of Idaho



Chandra Zenner Ford

Office of the President
and Center Executive Officer,
Boise and Southwestern Idaho



Liz Bryant

North Idaho AHEC Director,
WWAMI Medical Education Program

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Founder, Coach, Owner

The Truth Teachers

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Stacy Bahrenfuss is founder, coach and owner of The Truth Teachers, a foundation established in 2020 to help young women entrepreneurs achieve their dreams, while recognizing that accomplishments don't always come without stress.

"The goal of my organization is to help leaders transform stress and struggle into true internal power," she said. Evidently the message has resonated throughout the business community. Through her leadership, the foundation has raised seven figures in the first 11 months.

Ryann Dowdy, Founder of Be in the Room and The Connection Agency, is a client of The Truth Teachers and reports that she always feels valued, challenged, and well supported.

"Stacy and her team make client service and satisfaction a priority in everything they do. You can tell that she cares about her clients and her team and making a positive impact in the world," she said.

Jennifer Harvey, eCommerce Director at Premier Nutrition, has known Bahrenfuss for 10 years said that she is always striving to make an impact.

Stacy Bahrenfuss

"She was not born with any special advantages and has blazed her own trail. Her journey and the challenges she overcame make her even more credible and insightful as a coach and founder of The Truth Teachers," she said.

Bahrenfuss is also founder and CEO of Catalyst Group Real Estate and Konnection Real Estate Investments. She began her career in real estate at age 19 and grew it into a seven-figure business where her team rose to third place in the state of Idaho. In 2020, Bahrenfuss was recognized as the Gold Winner of the Stevie Award for Women in Business in Consumer Services with 10 or fewer employees.

During the pandemic, Bahrenfuss stayed busy, using the time to personally finance, fund and build an 11-home subdivision in Eagle in nine months, while leading her real estate company to achieve \$20+ million in sales.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Bahrenfuss went on to begin an Airbnb business where she has assets in both Texas and Arizona.

Bahrenfuss understands the importance of leadership and in 2023 founded the Legendary Leaders Advisory, which is known as the first and only women-led and owned leadership community that contributes a portion of its membership fees to fund and inspire the next generation of leaders through scholarship and mentorship opportunities.

Bahrenfuss is also a member and a certified speaker for Entrepreneurs' Organization, a community for entrepreneurs, by entrepreneurs, to help guide individuals on their path to success. Bahrenfuss' personal philosophy is that of empowerment.

"I remind people that we are the creator of everything in our lives, so it is important to create consciously; our self-perception is the only thing that holds us back. We can do anything we put our mind to," she said. This philosophy extends to her vision and goals for her companies. "Awakening leaders to the truth that anything is possible enables them to exponentially influence and impact others," she said.

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Shannon Stoeger

on your well-deserved
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Associate Attorney

VF Law

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Brittany Bones grew up in Eagle, Idaho, where her family has lived for generations. The friendliness of her hometown community informs her work as an associate attorney to this day, shaping her approach to connecting with clients in her legal work.

An associate attorney at VF Law in Meridian, she attended the College of Idaho, earning her bachelor's degree in international economy in 2017. During her college career, she immersed herself in as many extracurricular activities as possible, from serving as a student ambassador as the face of the College of Idaho, to working as a Senate representative in the Student Government Association, and as a PEAK mentor, where she helped organize alumni and business events. Bones went on to later earn her law degree from Lewis and Clark Law School in 2020, where she graduated with the highest academic standing of summa cum laude.

Bones' passion for community involvement continued beyond college. She has been a member of Community Association Institute (CAI) for several years, serving as vice chair for the Legislative Action Committee. In this role, she

Brittany Bones

monitors state legislation, educates lawmakers and protects the interest of people living and working in Idaho, while striving to uplift her community and ensure sound initiatives are in place to support needed legislative change. She is a frequent speaker at CAI events to help further educate and inform fellow professionals in the legal industry.

Her civic engagement continued with her volunteer work at The Rock Bottom Foundation where she served meals to the homeless every holiday season. Additional volunteerism include coordinating Buddy Walks for the Treasure Valley Down Syndrome Association and helping to organize fundraising events for Girls on the Run, which promotes physical and mental strength in girls 8-13.

Bones' talents have been recognized by the Lewis and Clark Law School where she received the Larry Kressel Memorial Scholarship as an outstanding student in the area of land-use law. In addition, her superior writing skills have earned her an International Law Writing Award from Davis Wright Tremaine (DWT) in 2020.

T. Beau Ellis, Managing Partner at VF Law, said that Bones consistently presents tools and feedback to uplift those around her, while demonstrating her optimism and leadership qualities.

"Bones is an extraordinary individual, whose exceptional leadership abilities, connection to the community, mentoring skills and philosophy to pursue something greater than herself sets her apart from her peers," he said.

For Bones, she says it's always been in her nature to aim for excellence, while giving back.

"My father always emphasized the importance of striving for something greater than yourself," she said, adding that she brings this philosophy to her personal and professional life to ensure that her work positively impacts her community. "I want those around me to achieve success and collaborate with others for a rising tide where everyone reaches their best potential and focuses on positive growth," she said.



Bishop Kelly congratulates Dr. Sarah Quilici on this well deserved honor. Sarah is a skilled educator, who mentors and supports her staff and colleagues here at Bishop Kelly every day. She is always thinking of creative ways to help our students achieve their best in the classroom, and to help our community grow in faith. We are blessed to have Sarah's leadership here at Bishop Kelly High School, and proud to have her representing BK in this impressive group of honorees.



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Congratulations!

**Janell
Zuckerman**

Director of Provider Network Development - Idaho



Idaho Business Review 2023 **Women of the Year** Awards



Vice President, Executive Recruiting
Talent Spark

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Allison Bruce has spent her career honing her skills in the recruiting industry. Bruce majored in communication at the University of Colorado, graduating cum laude before embarking on her professional journey in the field of recruitment.

Her background in recruiting began with Qwest Communications, a 35,000-employee telecommunications company, then continued to CH2M Hill, a global 40,000-employee engineering firm. She later worked at St. Luke's Health System, comprised of eight hospitals and 13,000 employees, then at Shire, a 30,000-employee global biotechnology company focused on rare diseases. Her most recent position is vice president, executive recruiting at TalentSpark, an award-winning, women-owned recruiting firm focused on direct placements in Idaho and SLC.

By now, it must be evident that Bruce has an extensive background in recruiting, having done everything from sourcing, to screening, interviewing, developing strategies to attract top candidates, managing social media, budget management, promotion, onboarding and more.

Her success in working with so many well-respected companies led her to TalentSpark, where she serves as President and owner. The full-service recruiting firm specializes in facilitating

Allison Bruce

placements in finance, accounting, marketing, communications, human resources, sales and legal and other professional-level roles across the state of Idaho.

While at TalentSpark, Bruce has grown business an average of 27% year over year to reach approximately 1.5 million in revenue, an accomplishment for which Bruce is extremely proud.

“Less than four percent of women-owned businesses generate more than one percent in annual revenue,” she said.

Bruce also acknowledges the importance of community engagement and is currently Vice President of the American Association of Finance and Accounting, a role she has filled since 2021. She is also on the human resources board of the Idaho Youth Ranch and is currently in the process of facilitating the hiring of 100 employees for the Hays House, a shelter created for youth aged 9-17 who are runaways, homeless, victims of abuse, neglect, or just need a place to stay.

Bruce's volunteer work also includes working with the Denver Young Professionals from 2008-10 where she helped to create opportunities for networking, education and mentorship.

Bruce's passion for recruitment has extended to the Boise Valley Economic Partnership where she assists in keeping, growing and attracting jobs to the region.

TJ Huestis, Sr. Director, Talent Acquisition, Truckstop.com, lauds Bruce's talents.

“It has been a pleasure to watch Allison grow TalentSpark from a start-up, to a team of over 10 in just four years. TalentSpark is the first firm I call when I need local help,” he said.

Bruce said that she strives to be a valued contributor to her community through her work as a small business owner, board member, friend and mother.

“I feel grateful to get to match companies and candidates so that our local businesses can get the talent they need to thrive and so candidates can find jobs to help them improve their lives,” she said, adding that she understands and values the importance of her staff as well and is happy to be a part of their lives and dreams. “I want them to feel valued as their authentic selves,” she said.

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MICHELLE CHOATE

KEYNOTE SPEAKER, LEADERSHIP AND TEAM COACH, OD CONSULTANT

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Director

North Idaho Area Health Education Center

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Liz Bryant serves as director, North Idaho Area Health Education Center. Bryant understands the important foundation that education provides and earned her bachelor’s degree in Sociology, Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Idaho, before continuing on to earn her master’s in Adult/Organizational Learning and Leadership at the University of Idaho.

Additional roles include time spent as a pre-health professions program coordinator at the University of Idaho, group home administrator/QIDP and Nursing Department coordinator at Milestone Decisions, research assistant at the University of Idaho and probation services assistant at Latah County Youth Services.

Bryant has earned awards throughout her career, including a Staff Excellence in Advising Award at the University of Idaho, and Outstanding New Advisor Certificate of Merit Award at NACADA Global, a New Advisor Certificate of Merit Regional Award, NACADA Region 8 and a Golden Joe Award for Faculty Involvement, University of Idaho.

Bryant is currently a member of the Idaho Rural Healthcare Association, the National Area Health Education

Liz Bryant

Center Organization and is chair of the Latah County Board of Community Guardians.

Bryant said that when she joined the University of Idaho WWAMI Medical Education team in 2019, the North Idaho Health Education Center was a relatively new program.

“I’m proud of its growth during the past four years, particularly considering that the bulk of the groundwork was accomplished during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic,” she said.

Bryant reports that one of her passions is helping youth find their path forward in healthcare. “I worked with WWAMI medical students to develop a STEM Youth Outreach service-learning group and am very proud of their impact, from panel presentations, to full-day career exploration events such as ‘Doc for a Day’ and ‘Hands on Healthcare,’ she said.

Valerie Cutshall, owner/administrator, C&R Inc., who serves as Vice Chair at the Latah County Board of Community Guardians, has known Zuckerman for 20 years and attests to her servant leader philosophy.

“Liz continues to be a model for leadership by leading by example. I think her competence, sense of humor, knowledge base, interest in mentoring others and resourcefulness shine so brightly that she is the natural choice as new opportunities open above her current positions.”

Brad Martin, director of development, Idaho WWAMI Medical Education, said, “Liz is a talented professional: smart, affable, calm under pressure and obtains stellar results in every undertaking. She is dedicated and loyal like few others; an impact player that everyone fights to get on their team.”

For Bryant, it all started at the knee of her grandmother. “She was one of the strongest, most courageous women I have ever known and she lived her life with the belief that the secret to fulfillment is putting your time and energy into helping others, rather than dwelling on your own perceived shortcomings.”

Honoring women called to hope and healing.

Saint Alphonus is proud to celebrate our 2023 Women of the Year honoree.



Rebecca Lemmons
Regional Director,
Community Health &
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Owner

Molly Maid of Boise and the Treasure Valley

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Stephanie Camarillo is the owner of Molly Maid of Boise and the Treasure Valley, a trusted name in top-quality house cleaning services. She is a fourth-generation Idahoan whose leadership streak emerged early as a Boise High graduate serving in student government before working as a page in the Idaho State Legislature in the 1980s. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Literature at the University of Puget Sound and her Masters of Arts in Literature from Boise State University.

Camarillo was later appointed, under Governor Dirk Kempthorne, to work for Commerce Director Gary Mahn as Administrator for the Division of International Business where she organized trade delegations and facilitated diplomatic relations for the State of Idaho. In addition, she managed trade offices in Asia and Mexico and expanded the state’s reach and influence by opening offices in Japan and India.

Fifteen years ago, the wife and mother of two daughters became an entrepreneur when she purchased Molly Maid of

Stephanie Camarillo

Boise and the Treasure Valley with her husband Enrique. Company revenues have increased 10-fold in her time at the helm. Over the years, Camarillo’s business has won national and regional awards, including a National Franchise Marketing Award, an Angi’s List Customer Service Award and a Boise Best Cleaning Service Award. Camarillo has also been recognized multiple times as a Top Woman-Owned Business through the Idaho Business Review and was voted as the City’s Best Cleaning Service. Camarillo is also proud of the fact that one half of the housecleaners in her company own their own homes.

An active civic and community leader, Camarillo currently serves as Regional Program Expert for the Entrepreneurs’ Organization where she is globally certified as a speaker on behalf of the organization. She also helped increase female membership to new heights. Camarillo also serves as Leadership Council Chair at the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) and has served on the board of the Downtown Rotary Club, the City Club, Boise Schools Partners in Education and the Boise City Arts Commission, to name a few.

Camarillo is also an author and helped co-author a best-selling book titled: “Lead like a Woman: Audacity.” In addition, she is an owner, motivational speaker and consultant at SHINE LLC.

Due to the success of her company and her and her husband’s hard work, the family was able to purchase properties in Tuscany and Oaxaca. Camarillo strives to be an example to her daughters and other women who are seeking to achieve their dreams.



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Academic Section Chief, Pulmonary/Critical Care/
Sleep Medicine Director, Intensive Care and
Professor of Medicine

University of Washington

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Dr. Paula Carvalho views her position as Academic Section Chief, Pulmonary/Critical Care/Sleep Medicine Director, Intensive Care and Professor of Medicine, University of Washington, as one of a servant leader.

“I am honored to have the privilege of teaching, mentoring and contributing to the education of individuals who pursue the profession of medicine and who subsequently provide medical expertise to the state of Idaho,” said Carvalho, adding that she also considers it a privilege to contribute to the medical care of Idaho veterans.

Carvalho earned her bachelor’s degree in Zoology from the University of Washington and her master’s at the University of Washington School of Medicine. Carvalho realized in high school and college it was impossible to obtain firsthand experience in the medical field outside of volunteer work, which didn’t allow close proximity to clinicians and patients.

“For that reason, I have opened our ICU for the education of students who are considering a career in medicine so they can observe what we do up close as members of our team,” she said.

With the University of Washington’s support, Carvalho started a satellite simulation lab at the United States Department of Veterans

Dr. Paula Carvalho

Affairs Hospital and trained many medical students, medical residents and practicing physicians in emergency response management of cardiopulmonary arrest and other medical procedures. Carvalho has also extended her simulation course to local Ukrainian medical students whose training has been interrupted due to the war.

In 2016, Carvalho was asked to join an effort to create a multidisciplinary clinic for the care of patients with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) at the VA.

“It’s been a privilege to take care of these patients and I have learned more from them, with their extraordinary resilience, generosity and courage than perhaps at any other point of my training,” she said.

Carvalho’s philosophy is to give back at least as much as she’s been given. Her family, who immigrated to the United States from Portugal when she was in junior high school, inculcated in her a thankful mindset. “I chose to practice in the VA system as that was the best way to give back to this country, which became our home,” she said.

Part of giving back also includes contributing her expertise to civic and non-profit organizations like the John Butler Lung Foundation for Idaho Education in Pulmonary Medicine, the ALS Association, the DaVinci International Society for the Study of Airway Circulation and more.

Dr. Mary Barinaga, Assistance Clinical Dean for Regional Affairs, Idaho WWAMI, said that she has worked with physicians, healthcare leaders, and trainees throughout Idaho and the nation and describes Carvalho as “the cream of the crop.”

“Paula publishes her research in world-class medical journals and she lectures internationally,” said Barinaga, adding that medical students and other learners are lucky to be able to spend time with Carvalho in the ICU and simulation lab and she can be viewed as a trailblazer for women in medicine.

“In my position, I hope to convey to the students the degree of fulfillment that medicine can provide. As a result, it has given me great pleasure to see some of these students subsequently apply to medical school, train in Idaho as part of the University of Washington’s WWAMI program and ultimately become my physician colleagues who practice in our community,” Carvalho said.



Michelle L. Choate

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Michelle L. Choate, as president and sole proprietor of ML Choate Inc., takes a deep interest in others and helps them reach their full potential as part of her coaching and advisory firm. Clients with jobs in healthcare, nonprofits, technology, government, and higher education seek out Michelle to conceptualize solutions to help build on strengths and develop skills that reflect individual and team purpose.

Choate received her bachelor's in Communications Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara and her master's in Interdisciplinary Studies. She received a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Management from Boise State University and is a certified Transitions and Executive Coach, to name just a few of her qualifications.

Among the accolades Choate has received are a WCA TWIN (Tribute to Women & Industry) Award, which recognizes those who excel in their field and Woman of the Year 2014 (St. Luke's Healthy System) Idaho Business Review.

Choate said that she took a big step this year, applying her coaching philosophies to her own personal development.

"I have been an effective public speaker for years in the work areas where I have expertise, but decided this year to tell my own story of personal challenge and growth at a public speaking event called Ovation. It was a vulnerable space that grew me as a person and re-ignited my passion for public speaking," she said.

Choate said that branching out on her own has enabled her to grow in ways she couldn't anticipate.

"At the beginning of COVID, when I lost all my clients in the first four months, I had to dig in and fight through to keep my business going," she said. Choate said that she was also honored to participate in the transformative leadership development program at Ascension, the nation's largest Catholic non-for-profit health system where she was the Senior



President, Sole Proprietor

ML Choate Inc.

Director of Associate Engagement.

Katrina McDaniel, Chief Human Resources Officer, Healthwise, Inc., said, "Michelle leads by example, demonstrates integrity, authenticity and has a genuine passion for helping others succeed." McDaniel goes on to say that Choate's coaching program has helped senior leaders improve their leadership skills, enhance their decision-making capabilities and increase their confidence in their roles.

Megan McCaleb, ImprovTeamCulture.com, attests to Choate's superior communication skills.

"She is able to articulate complex ideas in a clear and concise manner that transcends the business space, as well as the stage." McCaleb goes on to remark on personality traits that help Choate excel in her field. "She is the embodiment of curiosity, empathy, and conviction and she infuses goodness into this world one client, one conversation at a time," she said.

For Choate, it's all part of a day's work.

"There are a lot of people who do the work I do and I think we all are here to make a difference. This generative thinking has led me to partnerships that have increased my ability to influence leaders across the region in service of those who serve and I'm very proud to provide this to leaders in organizations in these complex times," she said.



Community Development Officer

Idaho Central Credit Union

By Brooke Strickland

Rachel Cossel's life and career are marked by two things: a commitment to excellence in all she does and a heart for people. This combination has allowed her to be both a servant leader, but a top performer in her job.

In her role as Community Development Officer for Idaho Central Credit Union, she loves being able to teach financial education all around the Treasure Valley. During her time there, she has worked with non-profits, private businesses, community groups, and individuals from all walks of life to instill good financial habits that will last a lifetime.

"It's my hope that this work will lead to better financial strength in our community for generations," she shares.

That community perspective is also what makes Cossel stand out as a visionary and leader. She has helped rebuild the board of directors at Advocates Against Family Violence, and having served as the president, she has been able to help establish the organization's vision, and dramatically improve relationships with the board and staff.

Laura Smith, Vice President of Community Development for Idaho Central Credit Union shares this about Cossel in her letter of recommendation.

"Rachel brings a very high level of energy and passion

Rachel M. Cossel

to her job every day and she looks for ways to go above and beyond to improve processes and serve those around her. Rachel is the kind of person you can count on to get things done and to give her all in every situation."

Cossel shares that throughout her life, she has always held herself to a high standard. She was a straight A student, the valedictorian of her high school, and graduated Summa Cum Laude from college. She's also been a top performer in every job she's held. While these are all notable accomplishments, she recognizes that serving others is really what it's all about, and she gives credit to those around her that have helped shape who she is.

She says that her parents are some of her biggest role models. Her mother, who holds a Ph.D., two master's degrees, and had a 20-year career as a professor, showed her what it means to love people.

"She taught me that excellence means taking care of others, not just being the best, Cossel said. "A top performer may have the best numbers, but to be the best means also being a team player and a good person."

Cossel explained that her father, who had a 30-year career in weapons technology, also demonstrated what reliability was and how that simple commitment to working hard makes a lasting impact on those around you.

"He was known for being the person everyone could count on and the person who would always get something done. He was a brilliant man who was known for his work, but he will be remembered for his dedication to helping others."

Cossel shares that she is excited about what the future holds. Her long-term goals are to travel more, teach others about communication, culture, and leadership, and continue to serve as a resource to nonprofits in Idaho.

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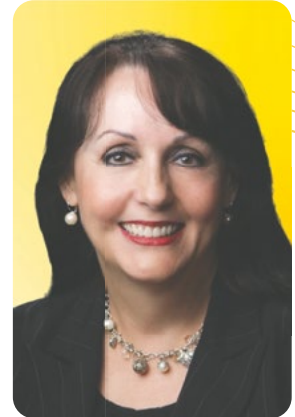
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Owner

Desert Creative Group

By Brooke Strickland

As the founder and CEO of Desert Creative Group and creator of the Main Street Wheelhouse business accelerator in Twin Falls, Janeale Dean is known as a powerhouse resource for marketing coaching. When she founded her company six years ago, she set out to empower clients – both big and small – with processes that help them shift to methodical, purpose-driving, and proactive business practices that lead to sustainable growth. Her success allowed her to receive the ‘2023 Woman-Owned Small Business Person of the Year’ designation by The U.S. Small Business

Administration’s Boise, Idaho District.

She is also an active volunteer as one of two Idaho-based Leadership Council Members for the National Small Business Association. There, she is integrally involved in connecting small businesses to national policy makers to ensure they are heard.

Dean also recognizes the power of education and amid the pandemic, she volunteered bi-monthly as an instructor for MDM Global Consulting’s MDM Nonprofit Academy

Janeale Dean

program, where she specialized in teaching marketing and business skills. For her, it was an honor to be able to provide free training sessions for entrepreneurs, nonprofits, social enterprises, and startups, helping them grow and find their footing in a volatile economy and business landscape.

However, her commitment to education doesn’t end there. Dean regularly welcomes student interns at Desert Creative Group, helping them develop their skills. She also reviews their student portfolios, biannually reviews curriculum, and has helped establish a student mentor program at the company.

In tandem with her role at Desert Creative Group, Dean has volunteered as a Commissioner for the City of Twin Falls Public Art Commission since July of 2020. She’s also a committee member for the Northwest College of Art and Design Professional Advisory Committee Board.

Bryan Matsuoka, Regional Director for Idaho SBDC says, “Her kind and civic-minded approach to business is second to none. Her overt benefit is a very approachable demeanor that is professional and adaptive to the specific person; be it friends, customers, or peers within the marketing industry. Janeale is pleasant and confident in her communication style. She understands the complex ecosystems of a business and the roles that sales, operations, logistics, customer support, and marketing take on to work together in harmony.”

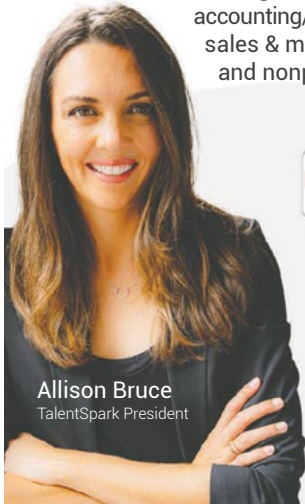
While her journey as a business owner has been full of surprises, Dean knows it was worth the risk.

“I took a big leap of faith and decided to start my entrepreneurial journey by founding Desert Creative Group. I knew it would be one of the hardest things I’d ever do, and I was right about that, but my drive for freedom and flexibility for myself and the desire to provide that to others has given me the ultimate reason to continue when things get tough. I’m just myself, unwaveringly. Sometimes that makes me different and sometimes it doesn’t, but I am always proud that I continue growing in a way I can be continue being authentic.”

Congratulations, Allison and 2023 Women of the Year Awardees!

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IWBC East director

Idaho Women Business Center

By Brooke Strickland

Vicky Fajardo is driven by her strong work ethic and dependability. As a program director at Idaho Women Business Center for the last two years, she supervises staff assigned to federal grant programs, and ensures all events, training, workshops, and social media efforts are aligned with the organization's mission. She also works closely with clients to create business plans, marketing strategies, branding kits, and more, while supporting the executive director with budget creation and management.

One of her most notable accomplishments, however, is creating a Spanish curriculum for business start-ups, financial workshops, and digital literacy workshops. This has been a tremendous help for entrepreneurs to learn in their native language and give them a leg up in their business journey. Her ultimate goal: to bridge the gap for people in the most vulnerable communities, while simultaneously building up Idaho's economy with jobs and thriving businesses.

"I consistently strive for excellence by combining my innovative thinking with a relentless commitment to achieving

Vicky Fajardo

results, ensuring that I invest, learn, and create positive and effective work processes for myself," Fajardo explained. "With my ability to build meaningful connections and leverage collaborative opportunities, I am known for delivering impactful solutions and maintaining healthy and transparent working relationships."

Fajardo's volunteer experience is also vast having worked as an advisory board member for Twin Falls Unity Alliance, executive group member for the city of Twin Falls Latino Advisory Group, and as a scholarship application reader for the Hispanic Youth Symposium. She also partnered and coordinated events with Idaho Community Action Network, which encouraged and educated the community about voting rights. Fajardo also serves on the board for United Alliance of Southern Idaho, an organization that promotes the understanding of the value of all immigrants and their contributions to the local workforce and community at large.

Fajardo holds three degrees – an Associate of Arts in bilingual education from the College of Southern Idaho, a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Boise State University, and a Master of Science in adult organizational learning and leadership from the University of Idaho. She leverages her education and experience to pour into others, helping them create thriving, successful businesses that have the resources they need for long-term business growth.

Jesus Jara, HR manager – Jefferson County, Oregon says, "Her ambition and perseverance to chase personal development always come with a directional attribute. How do I help others along the way? Her selflessness and desire to serve community members are hard to measure. She continues to seek roles that leave lasting social changes. Ms. Fajardo has blossomed into an exemplary role model, a true professional that doesn't hesitate to create a welcoming atmosphere. I have worked with several great people in my career – Vicky is the finest example I had the privilege of working with."



Lana Graybeal

By Brooke Strickland

Lana Graybeal knows what it's like to overcome hardship and begin a new life in a new country. She and her family arrived in the United States as refugees in the winter of 1990, landing in south Los Angeles just a few months before the race riots began. Living amid chaos and hurt helped shape her to who she is and instilled something deep within her: the drive to fight discrimination with compassion, cultivate authentic relationships, and stand up for the rights of the marginalized.

Today, Graybeal works as the City of Boise's Senior Manager of Community Outreach, where she oversees the city's public engagement strategy for traditional underrepresented groups, such as immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ residents, lower income and houseless individuals and families, and other groups. Each day, she is making a difference in advocating for others, while building opportunities for residents to connect with the local government.

She said, "While my path has had significant obstacles – from arriving to the U.S. as a refugee and learning a new language, culture, and way of life, to living with a father who suffered from severe mental health issues – I have always been committed to focusing on the positive, serving my community, and uplifting others. I am driven by service and advocacy, and lead with compassion and empathy."

Graybeal's commitment to equality, justice, and truly caring for people from all walks of life is also demonstrated in her board involvement, where she serves with the Idaho Justice Project, the Idaho Museum of International Diaspora, and the Good Samaritan Home. She's a graduate of the University of Washington, where she earned her undergraduate degree in communications, law, societies, and justice. This year, she earned her human rights certification through Wassmuth Center for Human Rights.



Senior Manager, Community Outreach

City of Boise

In a letter of recommendation, Kathy Griesmyer, government affairs director for the City of Boise shared, "Lana's skills in communication and outreach are deeply impressive. From her time in the private communication and PR sector, to her roles at the city of Boise, she has an incredible ability to translate complex issues – whether its property tax or housing protections – and turn them into understandable conversations that invite our Boise residents to be a key part in tackling our community's needs. Most notable to me, however, is how Lana leads with her heart and conviction to bring a voice to the underrepresented. She is kind, genuine, justice-minded and seeks to create a space that has room for all voices to be heard."

Graybeal has made it clear – both in her personal life and professional career – that her enthusiasm for people is what drives her. By fiercely committing to give them a voice to share their unique stories, she is helping propel Idaho's future forward. But her ultimate goal is to instill her values to her two young children, teaching them that it's their responsibility to offer a hand to others.

"I will continue to seek ways to lift up our residents, the heart of this wonderful city," she said.



Donna Guillen

Distinguished Researcher, INL Materials Science & Engineering Department

Idaho National Laboratory

By Brooke Strickland

In a male-dominated field, Donna Guillen is a leader that has demonstrated proficiency and ingenuity in her role as group lead for the Idaho National Laboratory for the last three decades. In this position, she serves as the principal investigator and project lead that is responsible for planning and directing multidisciplinary research activities.

Guillen began her career in the aerospace and defense industry as an aeronautical engineer after she graduated from the California Institute of Technology with a Master of Science in Aeronautics. While working and raising a family, she quickly learned new skills related to nuclear and non-nuclear systems, earning a Ph.D. in Engineering and Applied Science at Idaho State University. When she joined INL in 1993, she jumped into her role, ultimately making huge strides in energy generating systems.

Amid the challenges during the pandemic, Guillen didn't slow down. She led an advanced manufacturing project that helped create an improved oxygen delivery system, and she continued to serve in leadership on various technical committees. She holds several patents, has published books,

numerous conference papers and peer-reviewed journal articles, and has authored many technical reports.

While her professional accomplishments are many, her commitment to advocating for women and minorities in the engineering and science fields is notable. She is also passionate about helping raise up the next generation of talented leaders, having served as a mentor to 50 interns and graduate students from all over the country. She has been active in higher education, having served as an Adjunct Professor of Nuclear Engineering for Idaho State University, as an Advisory Board Member for Northwest Nazarene University, and was on the M.S. Committee at Boise State University. Currently, she is on the Ph.D. Committee for Northwestern University where she will serve until 2025.

In a letter of recommendation for Dr. Guillen, Jagoda Urban-Klaehn, Ph.D. shares, "Donna is not only an excellent researcher with prolific accomplishments, but her activities go beyond just doing science, reaching the community, and helping people, especially the disadvantaged. She is a role model. She makes sure that she helps other women and minorities to succeed in the field."

Outside of work, Guillen is part of The Minerals, Metals, and Materials Society (TMS) Nominating Committee, and for the last 11 years, she has served as a co-organizer, paper reviewer, and session chair for the Energy Technologies and Carbon Dioxide Management symposia.

G.O. Ilevbare, Ph.D., Guillen's manager at INL explains that her contribution to Idaho and specifically the clean energy revolution is unmatched.

"She is an integral part of INL's team working on advanced next-generation nuclear reactors, including microreactors that can be deployed to generate electricity during natural disasters, for humanitarian missions or at military-forward operating bases...these new reactors are being developed to save the lives of men and women...she has established herself as a thought leader and a mentor in the field of advancing clean energy solutions."

IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

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Erica Hermesen

income families, allowing children to experience the benefits of being out in nature.

In her recommendation letter for Hermesen, Lori Fascilla, executive director for Giraffe Laugh Early Learning Center says, “Erica has created an innovative educational model that solves many of the issues we see today in our early childhood programs. By getting children out of desks, off screens, and connected to nature and their wider community, I have no doubt our region will soon reap the benefits of a more engaged, resilient, empathetic, and capable population of youth. Erica’s efforts to share her proven educational model with the masses have the potential to inspire countless conventional programs to adopt nature-based teaching practices, which may well be one of the largest contributing factors to the resuscitation of the floundering educational system.”

Outside of this work, Hermesen serves on the board of directors and membership committee chair for Idaho Environmental Education Association. She is also an educational consultant for the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children.

Prior to her role as an educator and entrepreneur, Hermesen served as a leader in the environmental field through my contributions to conservation, education, and research. She worked nearly two years for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, where she managed the laboratory’s Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC), Underground Storage Tank (UST), and Wastewater Discharge compliance programs, and provided regulatory guidance to over 7,000 laboratory employees. Further, for nine years, she was a senior scientist and project manager at APTIM Environmental and Infrastructure, where she managed over 25 environmental compliance programs across the country with total contract values of more than \$1.5 million.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in environmental education from Western Washington University and a Master of Science degree in conservation biology from Antioch University New England.

Founder and Director

EverWild Forest School

By Brooke Strickland

From a young age growing up around the rustic beauty of the Cascade Mountains, Erica Hermesen has always loved and connected deeply with nature. Her inherent curiosity, love for the outdoors, and willingness to think outside the box when it comes to traditional education, is what has allowed her to confidently step out into her entrepreneurial journey.

After becoming a parent in 2015, Hermesen recognized a calling to drive change within the educational system through unconventional, yet evidence-based approaches. So, in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, she went out on a limb and founded EverWild Forest School, a nature-based educational nonprofit that offers play-based, child-led outdoor programs for toddlers to 12-year-olds. Today, the organization provides ‘education without walls’ and has since benefited hundreds of families and young people around Idaho with unique, hands-on outdoor learning opportunities. Under her leadership, the school has helped turn the tide on the educational scene in the Treasure Valley and has become one of the largest of its kind in the United States. Hermesen also established a robust tuition assistance program and comprehensive ‘gear library’ for low-



Jennifer Jones Hooft

By Brooke Strickland

Jennifer Jones Hooft loves people and has made it part of her life mission to bring equality to the world and encourage a sense of belonging among people.

From a young age, it was apparent that not everyone had the same privileges or felt inclusion. As she grew up and chose her career path in human resources, she made an effort to make each workplace a space where people could uniquely contribute their gifts and talents and flourish. Today, she has more than 25 years of experience spanning multiple industries and is known for building healthy and respectful work cultures. Some of her most notable roles include working as the Vice President of Human Resources for Citigroup, Vice President of Human Resources for CradlePoint, and Global Director of Human Resources for ECCO Group.

For the last decade, Hooft has worked as the CEO of Higher Resources, where she coaches executives and early career managers to improve leadership effectiveness. She also offers broad-based human resources and management expertise to clients, assists in audits and investigations, and aids in designing compensation and benefits plans. Hooft is also a well-known keynote speaker and trainer on topics related to emotional intelligence, leading with empathy, inclusive leadership, bullying and anti-harassment prevention, and many more important topics.

Hooft's successful career and accomplishments along the way are noteworthy, but for her, she recognizes the contributions that others have made to help her get to this place in life. Her personal influences included her father, who encouraged her to reach for the stars and assured her that she had the power and determination



President and CEO

Higher Resources

to do whatever she wanted. Her maternal grandmother was also someone who modeled unwavering kindness, compassion, and patience. Professionally, there are many people that have come alongside her and help support her mission to lead with love.

She shared, "Having astoundingly remarkable peers, whether they be other HR professionals or entrepreneurs, I would say I do not stand out from my peers; rather, I stand in a circle with them, linking arms, collectively working to make a positive difference. We need each other to be our best and I rejoice in the interdependence."

In a letter of recommendation for Hooft, Carol Arriola, founder and president of PortaPros says, "Jennifer is one of those special people who consistently makes a positive impact on those around her. She does this in our professional dealings as well as social environments and it extends to all areas of her life. Jennifer couples her expertise in HR with her passion and empathy with people. While she is direct and forthright with her communication, her effectiveness is multiplied by her genuine concern and care for the people we are working with."



President, Attorney

Idaho Employment Lawyers PLLC

By Brooke Strickland

Pam Howland is no stranger to thinking outside the box and her commitment for the last seven years to build a ‘non-traditional’ boutique defense/management-side employment law firm is a testament to that. Her goal: to help Idaho businesses of all sizes thrive and prosper in a growing community.

She left an extremely successful career as Partner at Holland & Hart to step out into her own entrepreneurial journey and so far, she and her team at Idaho Employment Lawyers have worked hard to break out of the mold and offer unique law firm services. Howland also loves the marketing side of her business and enjoys providing employers around the Gem State with cutting-edge tools and content to keep them out of trouble and out of the court room. No matter what, they aim to act with their hearts and show integrity. One of her most significant accomplishments there is developing and rolling out a training program called Law for Leaders that is designed to teach them basic employment law concepts that help them comply with the law and avoid claims or lawsuits.

Pam S. Howland

“Believe it or not, in Idaho, there are not a lot of training resources for business leaders, business owners, HR professionals, or even employees functioning as managers/supervisors, and it is our goal to fill that void by providing training curriculum and coaching,” Howland explained. “These are not traditional services provided by law firms and we have a lot of fun coming up with creative ways to help Idaho employers to proactively avoid claims and litigation.”

When it comes to community involvement, Howland’s positive impact on the lives of people around the Treasure Valley is unmatched. For the last four years, she’s been on the board of Entrepreneurs Organization of Idaho and currently works as the mentorship chair, helping place mentors and mentees together. She’s also a board member and internal affairs committee member for Wassmuth Center for Human Rights and for the last two years has been a board member of the Idaho Dietetic Licensure Board. She also raised over \$50,000 to cure Type 1 diabetes through the ‘Ride to Cure and Walk to Cure’ spanning nearly a decade of participation.

Stephanie Camarillo, owner of Molly Maid of Boise and the Treasure Valley said, “I’ve worked with a lot of business owners over the years, and Pam is one of a few that has been able to balance technical strength and business acumen. Pam is not afraid to tackle tough problems, both legally and in her business. She is honest, fair, clear and she has courage to stand up for what is right. When she encounters conflict, she manages it with grace. Pam is a meticulously adept and well-respected lawyer. I have seen Pam’s leadership, service, and professional accomplishments firsthand. She is, without a doubt, a capable, influential, inspiring, and aspiring leader in our community.”



Shawnda Huffman

By Brooke Strickland

Shawnda Huffman is a gifted communicator, proven business leader, and woman of integrity that has inspired and impacted many over the course of her career.

“I believe everything starts with connection and getting to know people around you,” she said.

Her ability to build relationships has been part of her recipe for success in each role she’s held, ranging from being a prominent radio and television host in major markets, to working as the director of communications at a local supplement company, where because of her efforts in communication strategies, helped increase company valuation from \$3 million to \$270 million. Huffman’s most recent role has allowed her to step into a new area of business: entrepreneurship. This year, she launched her own business, Tuuti Creative Communications Agency in downtown Boise.

Huffman is a leader in mentoring and coaching employees to optimize performance, maximize business results, and create a sustainable future for their organizations. She is exceptional in identifying talent and supporting professional growth, building teams that deliver best-in-class results, and building workplace cultures that fuel growth. Her primary goal right now is to make an impact in the Boise economy by establishing partnerships that help strengthen her agency, but also allow other businesses to tap into the resources needed to skyrocket their growth.

She also has a long history of working in and around the community. In 2011, she created an internship program between SouthCentral Media and the University of Southern Indiana which boasted a 72% hiring rate. Then, after a personal struggle with endometriosis, she founded a nonprofit organization called Braave to help others grappling with the same diagnosis. In total, the organization helped more than 5,000 women in a five-year span. Her next big adventure came in 2020, when she partnered with



CEO

Tuuti Agency

Boise State University to create a successful internship program, allowing her to mentor and provide unique learning and business opportunities for the next generation. This is something she is still actively involved with and finds inspiration in.

Huffman is also a member of the Meridian Chamber Executive Round Table, is an event organizer and regular MC for Dry Creek Historical Society and is a co-organizer of the Morley Nelson Holiday Dinner.

Ryan Riley, former CEO of Microbe Formulas and CellCore Biosciences and co-founder of Fifth Hammer said, “Integrity and character are the cornerstones of Shawnda’s persona. She is a person of her word, consistently following through on her commitments and surpassing expectations. Shawnda’s unwavering dedication to ethical practices, transparency, and accountability sets her apart from her peers. Her integrity is not just evident in her professional endeavors but permeates every aspect of her life, making her an exceptional role model for aspiring leaders. Shawnda’s remarkable achievements and contributions to the community are a testament to her ability to inspire and make a lasting impact.”

In her spare time, Huffman can be found exploring Boise and spending time with her 15-year-old Howie, two dogs, and rabbit.



Eastern Idaho Region President

Zions Bank

By Brooke Strickland

Merri Johnson has more than four decades of experience in the world of banking and finance. Her love of people and interest in supporting her clients with education and advice makes her stand out. When she was held hostage in a bank robbery in 1998, she knew that it was a moment that could make or break her career. She chose to not become a victim and persevered; she came out stronger and continued to hone her leadership skills, ultimately getting to where she is today.

In her position as Eastern Idaho Region president at Zions Bank, she manages 15 branches in East Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah. Amid the chaos during the pandemic – especially when working to learn the innerworkings of the Paycheck Protection Program – Johnson and her team were able to process and receive more than 2,200 loans in Idaho, which preserved payrolls for more than 30,000 Idahoans.

Being a mentor is something else that defines Johnson. One of her biggest contributions in that area has been through her participation in Zions Bank’s Mentor Program. To date, she

Merri Johnson

has mentored six employees for six months and an additional employee for nine months. She is also committed to mentoring and training the 15 branch managers that report to her around the country.

Johnson said, “I’ve had an incredible banking career by putting people first and striving to set a strong example of service, resilience, and perseverance. I know I have been successful when my employees mature into outstanding leaders who inspire others with a shared vision. I’ve always believed that the harder you work, the luckier you get. I knew if I came to work and worked hard, opportunity would come.”

When she’s not at the bank, you can find Johnson out and about in the community serving as a volunteer. She is currently the executive director of the Regional Economic Development for Eastern Idaho (REDI) and a board member for the Idaho Bankers Association and Bear Lake County Farm Bureau. Johnson also enjoys education and community outreach activities, including teaching school age kids about farm to table practices.

Chad Dilley, senior vice president and Director of Retail Branch Banking for Zions Bank says that Johnson is one of the most hardworking and passionate individuals he’s ever worked with.

“As a leader, Merri consistently takes initiative, sets clear goals, and effectively communicates expectations to her team,” he shared. “Her ability to inspire and motivate her direct and indirect reports has resulted in significant improvements in productivity, collaboration, and overall morale. Merri is patient, approachable, and always willing to go the extra mile to support those on her team, and those looking to advance their career.”



Rebecca Lemmons

By Paige Lyman

Rebecca Lemmons lives a life that is led by her commitment to advocacy, be that in her personal life as a mother, community leader, and neighbor or in her career of over 17 years. As a seasoned public health professional, Lemmons has been working to drive the development of both public and community health policies and programs throughout her career, no matter the organization she was working with.

With a Masters of Health Sciences from Boise State University, Lemmons began her career right in Boise at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare in 2008 as a program specialist in the Division of Public Health. Lemmons would go on to work with other organizations such as United Way of Treasure Valley and the Central District Health Department over the years until she accepted a role as a grant development specialist with the Saint Alphonsus Health Department in 2017. Since then, Lemmons has been with the Saint Alphonsus Health Department where she now serves as the director of community health and well-being.

In her role as director, Lemmons serves as the organizational lead of all community health and well-being strategy and programmatic oversight across both Idaho and Oregon for Saint Alphonsus. “My daily work includes the oversight of 9 amazing direct reports and nearly 50 talented and committed humans whose job is to live out the Saint Alphonsus mission in community every day to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve,” Lemmons says on her work. “I lead the health system and other community organizations in deep community learning and engagement through our Community Health Needs Assessment processes every three years, which identifies the leading challenges experienced in our communities.”

“I have also led Saint Alphonsus in the development of signature projects, or long term strategies to address the need identified in our assessments such as housing, childcare,



Director of Community Health and Well-Being

Saint Alphonsus Health Department

transportation, and access to healthcare that is culturally and linguistically appropriate,” Lemmons shares. She also regularly shares her wisdom and guidance with other hospitals in the national Trinity Health System network as well.

Lemmons’ advocacy continues elsewhere outside of her career. She is a parent volunteer at Pioneer Elementary School and she serves as the vice chair of the Boise Public Library. “I led the board in advocacy activities during the 2023 Idaho legislative session to protect the rights of Idaho libraries to provide free and equitable access to materials for all community members,” Lemmons says. “This included volunteering my time to attend an EveryLibrary training in Spokane on the first and fourteenth amendment freedoms of libraries and connected with other library staff and board members to share advocacy opportunities in Idaho and Washington.”

Lemmons also notes that she grew up with her grandmother and mother, who showed her the importance of hard work. “Upon their example, I have sought mentorship, guidance, and support from the women who I’ve worked for and with to learn how I can be both a strong leader and mother to my own children.”



Tara Malek

Co-Owner, Attorney

Smith + Malek, PLLC

By Paige Lyman

Tara Malek is an experienced attorney based in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho who practices in both business and commercial litigation at a state and federal level. While she was born in England, Malek grew up in both Washington and Arizona, and moved to Idaho in 2008. Malek has over a decade of experience as an attorney following her graduation from the University of Idaho College of Law in 2011 where she served as vice president and co-founder of the Business Law Association. Her early law career included a clerkship with the Hon. Steve Verby in 2010 and as both serving as an associate attorney at James, Vernon & Weeks, P.A. from 2011 to 2012.

Following her start in law, Malek's legal career has seen her working in a number of different capacities, including serving as one of the youngest assistant U.S. Attorneys to serve in Idaho under former U.S. Attorney Bart Davis from 2015 to 2018. While with the United States Attorney's Office, District of Idaho, Malek also served as the district's opioid coordinator. Her work has led to her becoming a widely respected former

state and federal prosecutor, including work on a reversal of a jury verdict in federal court that is now on appeal at the Ninth Circuit.

Now Malek serves as both attorney and co-owner of Smith + Malek, PLLC, a business law firm that she helped co-found in 2018. Malek has helped to grow the law firm from a team of ten attorneys in 2019, to a multi-city serving team of more than 20 that serves clients in Coeur d'Alene, Boise, and Spokane. Known for her mentorship among colleagues, she also helped to create a structured mentorship program within the firm where she regularly works to help advance lawyers within the field of law.

"I'm proud that Smith + Malek intentionally structured our firm with equitable practices that help support all team members: we eliminated the partner track, introduced a profit-sharing model, eliminated origination bonuses, implemented benefits that support parents, and actively prevent harassment and discrimination in our workplace," Malek shares.

"My personal "why," the thing that drives me, is the pursuit of justice. I try to intentionally live with that "why" in mind and structure both my personal life as well as my professional life to align with that driving idea," Malek says on what her own personal philosophy is. That philosophy carries on into Malek's major goals that include wanting to continue changing the status quo on how women and parents are treated by working to remove arbitrary barriers that stand in the way of their success in the professional sphere and to encourage more women to both enter politics and to become judges.

Previous awards and honors that Malek has received have included being named on the Idaho Business Review's 2019 Leaders in Law list and the 2021 Accomplished Under 40 list. She and her firm have also been recognized by Boise Young Professionals as a 2022 Best Next Generation Workplace.



Samantha Martinet

By Paige Lyman

Samantha Martinet has had a long and successful career that has seen her through 13 years with the United States Marines before she transitioned into serving as an accomplished program manager upon her departure from active duty. With an extensive background in community development, program management, and organizational leadership, Martinet has established herself as a trusted leader.

Martinet's career began back in October 1999 when she joined the Marines. After completing her initial military and job specialty training, she went on to serve as a traffic management specialist in three different locations. "Being raised by parents who both served 20+ years in the military made my choice to do the same an easy one," Martinet says on her decision to join. Her work as a traffic management specialist saw Martinet processing government payments for local civilian contracts and counseling military members and their families throughout the moving processes that related to Permanent Change of Station (PCS). During her time in the Marines, she served in a few different capacities, including as a traffic management supervisor at MCB Camp Butler and as the assistant program coordinator for the University of Colorado's NROTC from 2007 to 2012.

During her service, Martinet received a number of awards and honors in recognition of her work such as the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Writing Award in 2004. She was also awarded the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal on four separate occasions. Martinet would eventually leave her 13 year career with the Marines in 2012 with an honorable discharge.

Following the end of her service, Martinet would eventually move to Moscow, Idaho with her family where she began settling into the local community and civilian life.



Executive Director

Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center

She began working with the University of Idaho where she would eventually serve as the associate director of corporate foundation relations.

Martinet's ability to connect with others along with her background as an experienced leader eventually led to her current role as executive director of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center — a role she has held since early 2021. In her role, Martinet has helped to place Moscow on the map by leading, developing, and launching a total brand refresh, building a team who are just as passionate about Moscow as she is, and putting on events to help bring the local community together. Martinet works to foster and support diversity, equity, and inclusion while also bringing a strong dedication to mentoring her staff — be that through coaching or advocating for her employees.

"My journey became my inspiration. I am passionate about my family, my community, and growing the 'good,'" Martinet says on her move to Moscow and the life she has built since. "It is easy in life to get distracted by the things that scare us and all the things we cannot change, and those distractions are easier to avoid when we intentionally focus our energy on all the "good", we want to grow."

2023

woman of the year

Nikeela Abrams



Owner

Abrams Law PLLC and Idaho Mediation Center

Former jockey and thriving attorney Nikeela Abrams back in the saddle after suffering injury

By Lauren Bonneau

An accomplished attorney, mediator, and business owner of Abrams Law, PLLC and Idaho Mediation Center, Nikeela Abrams is no stranger to achieving big wins. During her illustrious 14-year career riding as a professional racehorse jockey, she continually took home large purses and had the highest win percentage of any North American jockey with 500-plus mounts.

Today, Nikeela balances multiple priorities: she is focused on building up her mediation clientele — with a specialty in co-parent coaching; she and her husband Lee run the A Arrow Ranch in Caldwell, where they maintain a 20-acre equine facility; and this year, she founded a nonprofit called Idaho For All.

The pinnacle of Nikeela's recent accomplishments was the birth of her daughter, Callie, last April. The arrival was a true blessing,

considering that in September 2018, she was involved in a horse racing accident where she suffered a spinal cord injury that paralyzed her from the chest down.

"In high school, when I had a tough day at the races, a bad loss, or life was just hard, my racehorse trainer always used to say: 'Every day, you get up in the morning, put your pants on, and go to work.' That has always stuck with me and got me through many dark moments in life," Nikeela shared. "I firmly adhere to the principle that every experience, whether joyful or challenging, presents an opportunity for self-discovery and personal development."

Now, four-and-a-half years since her accident, she is progressing in all aspects of her life. She is enjoying a thriving mediation business, the positive impact her co-parent coaching has on people, a healthy and happy family, and opportunities for self-growth.

Jockeying first, law second

Growing up on a small farm in Kennewick, Washington, Nikeela



always had horses around and credits her very dedicated mom with developing her passion for horse racing.

“She had me on the back of a horse before I could walk, and when I was about 14, she gave me a book in the Thoroughbred series about a girl who becomes a jockey,” she said. “After reading it, I just knew that’s what I was going to do.”

Nikeela started galloping at the local track when she was 16, got her jockey’s license at 18, and promptly received her first pair of jock boots from her grandma — whom she later learned had ridden horse races in Washington, not even knowing that jockeying was in the family genes.

For her undergrad, Nikeela attended Eastern Washington University and majored in psychology. She said, “When I graduated, I had no plans to apply my degree in anything like counseling. I just wanted to race.” She rode horses during her college summers and was successful enough that her passion paid for her schooling.

Nikeela’s first job in the legal field was working for Kolleen Ledgerwood, a practicing family-law attorney.

“Kolleen always held my work to a high standard and was patient with me while learning how to be a paralegal. I appreciate the example she set for me as a female attorney,” she said. “After attending a couple mediations with her for clients, I discovered a desire to help people navigate the process outside of court with some dignity. The negotiation part of mediation fascinated me as a better option than trial.”

Continuing to race during the summers, Nikeela attended law school at University of Idaho, graduating in 2013, and received her certification from the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine University later that year.

After graduation, Nikeela took a job with a racing barn in Jerome and also worked in Gooding at Capitol Law Group, which had an office in Boise, where she eventually transitioned. This put her closer to Les Bois Park, which was one of her favorite tracks to ride.

“I was very clear that I was a jockey first, and I would need time to gallop every day,” Nikeela said. “They were very generous and gave me time to work around my racing schedule and travel.”

After passing the bar in February 2012, Nikeela started practicing as an associate attorney at Arkoosh Law Offices in Boise, where she worked for four years, becoming a partner after only two. During this time, she met and married Lee, whom she said has since played a huge part in her happiness and success.

“My quality-of-life post-accident is what it is because of all he does to make my life as easy as possible,” she doted. “He always supports my personal growth and my business ventures.”

After much encouragement from Lee, Nikeela opened her own practice in July 2018 — just a couple months before she suffered her racing accident.

“I chose to take a year break from practicing law while I recovered, earned my health and life coaching certification, had a saddle made to allow me to continue riding horses, and adjusted to life

in a wheelchair,” she said.

Getting back on the horse

Nikeela’s love of riding and her determination drove her to get back on the horse, literally. During her post-accident physical rehabilitation at Craig Hospital in Colorado, someone had donated a mechanical horse that jockeys use to practice riding.

“They helped me on the saddle, and we’d go riding around the hallways,” she said recalling how frustrating and uncomfortable those times were. But she always knew she would ride again; she just had to find the right horse.

That horse ending up being a mare named Legal Diva, which Nikeela had previously ridden but had never raced. The first time she strapped into her modified saddle and mounted Diva, the horse never moved. “She stood there perfectly still. She is so good and laid back with me,” Nikeela said. “We just have a special connection.”

Since 2020, Nikeela has found another way to remain involved in horse racing, having been appointed to the Idaho State Racing Commission, which oversees all horse racing scheduling and funding in the state.

Championing accessibility causes

This year, Nikeela graduated from the Idaho Academy of Leadership for Lawyers program with a small group of attorneys from across the state, where each class member had to complete a legacy project.

In choosing her project, Nikeela thought about how much she always loved hiking outdoors and enjoying the great parks in Idaho and recalled an outing she went on in an all-terrain track chair during her post-accident rehab. She decided to create a similar program in Idaho and set up a nonprofit foundation called “Idaho For All” intended to raise money for the purchase of accessibility devices. The chairs, which will be available at no cost, need to be housed in a dry location, plugged in, and have a ranger or park official available to meet individuals who reserve them.

The first step for the nonprofit is partnering with the state parks — with the goal of expanding the program to private parks, national parks, or any partners willing to house and provide the devices. “Idaho for All has so much potential of helping with accessibility and awareness in many different areas,” said Nikeela, who has already performed preliminary scouting—touring various state parks—to see what type of equipment would make the most sense in each. “The all-terrain ones are heavy and bulky and are great for hiking, but I am also interested in offering some lighter, more nimble options that would be good for riding on the green belt, for example.”

In the coming year, Nikeela will be busy getting her legacy project funded and launched. So far, she has filed the Articles of Incorporation, drafted Bylaws, appointed directors, and has another hiking trip planned to scout Cascades State Park Trail.



Program Director

South Central Idaho Hispanic Chamber of
Commerce

By Paige Lyman

Martha Martinez has lived in Idaho since she was 10 years old, where she grew up in Wendell. She would go on to complete an Associate's degree in General Business at the College of Southern Idaho in 2014, before moving to the Treasure Valley to attend Boise State University. Martinez is currently completing her Bachelor's of Business Administration in Human Resource Management.

Martinez' professional work has seen her in a number of roles, including working as a paralegal for seven years at the law offices of Nicole R Derden, where she assisted attorneys with office tasks and handled management and submissions of legal cases. In 2021, Martinez shifted from work as a paralegal to that of a payroll specialist. And while her field may have shifted, her roles have always been aligned with her dedication and passion to serving and helping her community. That dedication and passion eventually led Martinez to her current role as program director for the South Central Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

In her work as program director, Martinez brings a level of dedication and commitment to each project that she has

Martha Martinez Tapia

overseen, including spearheading several successful projects after stepping into the role. She has quickly become an integral part of the team and has worked to reach out to and connect with businesses, providing them with her valuable and unique services. As director, she serves local rural communities by working to identify entrepreneurs and business owners who need services like counseling, mentoring, assistance and outreach services. She also serves as director for the South Central Connect.

Martinez' colleagues note that her magnetic personality and drive help her to see the best in people, but especially in her clients. She engages with entrepreneurs and works to help them overcome barriers they are facing.

"My philosophy is to inspire people to have faith in themselves and their mission. "By inspiring them and showing them what it means to do their best," Martinez says when asked about her own philosophies and goals. "My goal is to guide, to encourage people to fulfill their greatest potential, and to be someone that is available for those who need guidance and help."

But Martinez's goal doesn't just end at wanting to be someone who can offer guidance and help to others. "One of my major goals in life is to create a nonprofit to mentor our youth, specifically our Hispanic youth, to become leaders in their communities," Martinez says on what she would like to do in the future. "I want to create and have a space for our youth to meet and learn from each other and learn leadership skills."

Martinez's dedication to guidance and helping others extends beyond her professional work with the South Central Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and her own future goals. She also serves on the advisory board with the Idaho Women's Business Center, an organization that works to serve "all women, cultures, and communities" as they work to achieve their professional, educational, and entrepreneurial goals.



Savana Maxon

By Paige Lyman

Savana Maxon’s career has seen her in a number of roles, from working as an office administrator all the way to her current role as Head of Operations with Lucro Consulting. Maxon, who is currently attending Western Governors University and is expected to graduate in 2024 with a degree in Human Resources and Business Management, has become known for her exemplary leadership, commitment to mentorship, and a strong dedication to her work throughout her career.

As head of operations with Lucro Consulting, Maxon is responsible for shaping the organization’s strategic direction, creating and maintaining vendor relationships and partnerships, and establishing the organization’s overall foundation. With her effective decision-making and clear direction, Maxon has built and fostered a high-performing team since she started with Lucro Consulting in 2022. She offers mentorship to all those on her team, where she takes the time to guide and support each team member by working to understand the aspirations and strengths of each individual.

Maxon’s dedication to her organization and team have established her as an outstanding professional, but she also points to a pivotal moment in her life that had a lasting impact on her. “In my professional life, one of the pivotal moments came when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. This life-altering event forced me to confront my mortality and reevaluate my priorities,” Maxon says. “With unwavering courage, I tackled my treatment head-on, determined not only to overcome the disease but also to emerge stronger than ever. This journey of resilience and perseverance encouraged my personal growth and fearlessness to learn and grow from my position aggressively into a leadership role.”

Maxon notes that her journey has helped to shape her goals, both personally and professionally, which include her drive to create a ripple effect of positivity and support. “I believe that



Head of Operations

Lucro Consulting

by sharing our stories, vulnerabilities, and triumphs we can inspire and uplift others, creating a ripple effect that extends far beyond our immediate circles,” Maxon says.

“One of my primary goals is to continue using my platform to advocate for those who have faced adversity and may still be in the process of healing. By amplifying their voices, shedding light on their experiences, and working towards systemic change, I aim to contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate society,” Maxon says in her hopes to empower others. “Moreover, I am committed to mentorship and empowering the next generation of leaders. I firmly believe in the power of mentorship to ignite growth and facilitate personal and professional development. By sharing my knowledge, experiences, and insights, I hope to equip others with the tools they need to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.:

“As I embark on the next chapter of my journey, I am determined to expand my reach, deepen my impact, and foster a community of support and empowerment,” Maxon says, looking to her future. “By embodying my philosophy, pursuing my goals, and drawing inspiration from influential figures, I strive to leave a lasting legacy that inspires and uplifts generations to come.”



Vice President, Social Media Manager

Zions Bank

.By Paige Lyman

Nicola McIntosh is an experienced and award-winning professional with 27 years of experience within the communications industry. Her career has seen her working in a number of communications areas including journalism, marketing, public relations, and social media. With dual B.S. degrees in Magazine Journalism and English from Syracuse University, McIntosh has served in a number of roles including as an associate editor and content manager with Paperloop Inc. in San Francisco and as owner, president, and publisher of Kuna Melba News, a weekly newspaper where McIntosh oversaw everything from design to customer service.

In 2012, McIntosh joined Zions Bank as both vice president and public relations officer. At the time, she worked as the bank’s only public relations professional in Idaho. She was ultimately responsible for media relations and communicating the bank’s expanding presence in Idaho as both a supporter of the community and a top SBA lender in the Boise District.

McIntosh currently continues to serve as Zions Bank’s vice president and social media manager, as of 2016. In her current

Nicola McIntosh

role, she manages and optimizes the Zions Bank’s social media presence by overseeing the editorial calendar, creating daily social media posts, and serving as the voice of Zions Bank online to help address customer concerns and questions. For her leadership in social media, McIntosh was awarded a Golden Spike Award from the Public Relations Society of America’s Utah Chapter for a social media campaign from Zions Bank that helped to highlight the stories of businesses that were impacted by the Paycheck Protection Program during the COVID-19 pandemic. With McIntosh’s oversight, Zions Bank has reached millions of clients and prospects, seeing a substantial growth in social media followers across platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn.

McIntosh also works to provide mentorship to others. “As someone who’s benefitted from the mentorship of others, it’s always been important to share my knowledge and support by giving back to those around me,” McIntosh says.

McIntosh works with Zions Banks college student interns each summer. She coaches them in social media strategies and projects. She also meets with individuals in the community to teach and share best practices for social media and public relations.

A great deal of McIntosh’s community involvement is connected to organizations where her family is involved in some manner. Her son attends the United States Naval Academy, so McIntosh felt the importance of being involved with the Academy’s Parents Club of Idaho, where she has served as president since 2020. “I also serve as president of a related organization, the Idaho Association of Service Academy Parents, which hosts an annual ball for all service academy cadets and midshipmen, alumni, families, and community members,” McIntosh says.

McIntosh’s major goals in life include raising both of her sons, enjoying a healthy marriage, giving back to her community, and to continue to grow as a respected leader in her professional life.

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AVP Marketing Manager
Westmark Credit Union

By Paige Lyman

Heather D. McMillan is an Idaho native who has had a successful career in the communications and digital marketing space over the course of her professional life. Completing a degree in Communications at Idaho State University, McMillan went on to work with multiple organizations in different capacities.

From 2014 to 2015, McMillan served as an account executive right here at Idaho Business Review. And from 2015 to 2020, she served as a senior account executive at Illia Media Group where she was responsible for working with all departments to provide their client base with care and service. She now works full-time as the AVP Marketing Manager at Westmark Credit Union and as a residential realtor with Genesis Real Estate.

“In late 2019, I was experiencing the need to make drastic changes in the direction of my career. I was heavily considering moving away from B2B sales and consulting on advertising and marketing but I was torn,” McMillan says on her move to the financial industry. “I very much enjoy what I do and it gives me a great sense of pride, but I wanted to focus more on helping others and supporting more meaningful

Heather D. McMillan

causes.”

“I’m so fortunate to have strong, long-term relations that afforded me the opportunity to do both. Westmark Credit Union were my clients long before they became my employer,” McMillan says. “I knew that being a not-for-profit Credit Union and one that has a true culture of giving back to their communities, I could continue to do what I love and would have the flexibility to make meaningful change in the lives of the community around me.”

As AVP Marketing Manager, McMillan handles a wide number of responsibilities including managing all of the Credit Union’s digital assets, creating and managing all of their email correspondence to staff and members, and coordination of community events. Thanks to her dedication, creativity, and work ethic, McMillan has quickly become known within the local banking industry as someone to watch.

When asked about some of the biggest influences in her life, McMillan credits them to be a blend of family and those she looks up to. Maya Angelou, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, her mother, Sandra Dee Martin, and her husband, Michael McMillan, all serve as influential figures in her life. And when it comes to her own philosophies, McMillan shares, “I want to give more than I get. Never stop learning and never run out of time to read. Lead with kindness, always.”

Outside of her professional work, she also serves on the State Board of Directors for the American Cancer Society of Idaho and as secretary for the Idaho Financial Literacy Coalition. McMillan also hosts a small annual book club that anyone can join. “We have a 12 month outline that helps the group focus on choosing different genre of book each month,” McMillan says. “It has been so incredibly enjoyable to have a shared experience with other like minded individuals that will experience the same book through completely different lenses and perspectives.”



Ann Munroe

By Paige Lyman

Originally from Belgium where she completed a B.S. degree in Economics, Ann Munroe has built a strong and notable career within Idaho over the last 20+ years. She completed graduate college at the University of Idaho, before moving into her professional work that would see her in numerous roles with organizations like Hawkeye Forest Company and Capital Matrix, Inc.

Munroe began working at Capital Matrix Inc. as a credit analyst in 1996. Since then, she has remained with the company over the last 20-plus years. She advanced into other roles such as commercial loan officer and vice president, which saw her managing company financials and supporting the company through a variety of assigned projects. In 2016, she stepped into the role of president and has since led and managed the entire organization. Her primary responsibilities have included providing oversight for Capital Matrix, Inc. In her time as president, she has led the organization to reach the highest loan and financial performance in Capital Matrix, Inc's 40 year history while working to expand the company's overall territory.

Munroe's colleagues speak highly of her work, particularly of the fact that she is excellent to work with and displays a great deal of professionalism and leadership. In her work at Capital Matrix, she is known to be an out-of-the-box thinker who actively invites customers to participate in discussions — allowing her and her team for immediate, impactful feedback. Munroe's ambition and strong leadership have helped to establish herself as a strong figure within the business community.

Munroe attributes a heavy influence in her career and personal life to how her parents raised her. "My parents taught me to work hard, give 100% at all times, always say please and thank, be grateful for what life has to offer you," she says. "And



President

Capital Matrix Inc.

be patient and kind. I follow their advice in every aspect of my personal and professional life."

When asked about what sets her apart from her peers, Munroe is happy to point out two major points in her life. "Coming to the USA with two suitcases and barely speaking the language required me to have courage, humility, and perseverance," she shares. "Raising three successful children on my own took lots of strength, patience, a positive outlook, and amazing organization skills."

Munroe's personal and professional life have led to a multitude of significant contributions, both to her family and career. But she also has contributed much to the larger community of Idaho through both civic affiliations and board involvement. She previously served with the Idaho Rush Soccer Club as treasurer from 2010 to 2016 and served as an ambassador with the Boise Chamber of Commerce from 2013-15.

Munroe also serves as a current board member with Stage Coach Theatre, the National Association of Certified Development Cos., and the Robert Morrison Association and Interior Systems Inc.



Owner, Educator

Metamorphosis Performing Arts Studio

By Paige Lyman

Leta Harris Neustaedter's career spans across three different spaces: the performing arts, interpersonal development, and mental health. Originally completing a BA in Psychology at the Occidental College in California, Neustaedter would go on to complete a Master's of Social Work at Boise State University in 1998. She has found a way to blend her primary areas of expertise throughout her career in numerous ways, including founding her own studio, Metamorphosis Performing Arts Studio, in 2010.

Her early career saw her working as a social worker with the Ada County Juvenile Court in Boise, Idaho before moving into private practice as a licensed clinical social worker in 2007 — where she provides counseling service to both children and adults to this day. Neustaedter also served as a teaching artist at the YMCA and Treasure Valley Institute for Children's Arts for five years where she taught art education, dance classes, and directed children's music theater productions.

In 2010, Neustaedter opened her own studio. With over 20 years of therapeutic experience under her belt, she understood both the emotional and social benefits that could come from the

Leta Harris Neustaedter

performing arts. As both owner and arts educator at Metamorphosis Performing Arts Studio, Neustaedter oversees numerous elements of the studio. She teaches a range of classes, including vocal lessons, acting classes, and public speaking workshops. She also develops and facilitates different educational tours for the Boise Mayor's office.

"I am an arts educator, performer, and social worker, and I mix all those skills into my own special sauce that elevates and informs every activity I do," Neustaedter says of her work. "My path has not brought me promotions or prestige, but I regularly get feedback from people throughout the community expressing gratitude because something I did inspired or challenged or comforted them, and that is a life well lived."

One of Neustaedter's main philosophies in life stems from her ability to be vulnerable.

"On June 2, 2020 I stood before 7,000 people gathered at the Capitol for the Black Lives Candlelight Vigil and I used my voice to unite the community in song and galvanize us into action. 7,000 people, but you could hear a pin drop," she says. "I am finally stepping into my power and I know that the key for me is vulnerability. Vulnerability is my superpower. As a performer, as a healer, as an educator I am willing to be vulnerable and speak my truth and make mistakes and express my fears and doubts, and people can feel my authenticity and therefore deeper connections are made, deeper impacts. It happens in lessons, at gigs, at workshops."

Alongside her work as a performing artist and social worker, Neustaedter is also a strong community leader with organizational affiliations such as with Opera Idaho and Idaho Antiracism Coalition for Arts Culture and History Organizations. She has been a member of the Boise Philharmonic Master Chorale since 2008 and currently serves as DEI consultant with the Morrison Center for the Performing Arts.



Wendy J. Olson

By Paige Lyman

Wendy J. Olson is an attorney with over two decades of experience prosecuting white-collar crime cases alongside child sexual exploitation cases, criminal civil rights violations, and Idaho's only federal death penalty case. Initially completing her education at Stanford Law School in 1990, Olson would go on to begin her career by serving as a trial attorney in the criminal section of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

"I investigated and prosecuted dozens of cases involving hate crimes, police misconduct and human trafficking in federal jurisdictions all over the country," Olson says of her early years with the Department of Justice. "My work at the Civil Rights Division shaped me as a lawyer and has driven my enduring commitment to public service and pro bono work."

"I have a fundamental belief in the rule of law, fairness, and making our criminal and civil justice system work for everyone, and not just for those who can afford it," Olson shares. "It is my good fortune to have been able to make these principles the keystone to a long and successful career and that my commitment to the rule of law has been borne out repeatedly in my practice, to the greater benefit of my clients and the justice system."

Following her early career, Olson would go on to join the U.S. Attorney's Office, where she served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and as U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho. Olson came to be known as a strong, fair, and dependable leader, both for those she worked directly with and even for opposing counsel.

Now, Olson serves as a partner with Stoel Rives, LLP. Her areas of service include government investigations, civil litigation, and white-collar criminal defense. She has taken on a number of cases in her time with Stoel Rives, including



Partner

Stoel Rives, LLP

representing Idaho businesses and professionals in regulatory investigations and handling both public interest and pro bono cases. "Pro bono service is [a] vital part of my legal practice, as is public interest service, in which I represent individuals and nonprofits or other community organizations with limited means or on issues of public interest," Olson says of her work. "I view pro bono service as a moral and professional obligation for lawyers, as it ensures access to justice for individuals and organizations without the means to pay for legal representation and it ensures that important social justice and constitutional issues can be resolved through our justice system."

Olson's successful career in law comes as no surprise, given her background. "I am from a legal family. My father, William D. Olson, instilled in his children the importance of the rule of law, the honor of representing the traditionally unrepresented and the principle of zealously representing clients. As a second-generation Idaho lawyer, I have adopted each of those principles and it has been my goal to have the daily honor of working as a lawyer and a citizen with the responsibility to help others understand the rule of law," Olson says.



Development Director

Idaho Botanical Garden

By Hayden Seder

In her role as Development Director at the Idaho Botanical Garden (IBG), Jennifer Dunmire Parks brings 17 years of experience in the non-profit field and a desire to enhance her local community by connecting people, plants, and nature.

After being hired on to the IBG in 2007 as a temporary Administrative Specialist, Jennifer was promoted to Membership Manager in 2008, then to Development Manager in 2014, and finally to her current position in 2016. After working with the IBG for so many years, Jennifer was happy to step up when the pandemic brought uncertainty in the nonprofit industry and resulted in losing a quarter of the organization's staff and a third of its revenue.

"Despite high emotions and unprecedented issues, many stepped up to help," says Jennifer. "I took on the full duties of my department to raise more than \$400,000, allowing us to continue serving the community as a safe space to gather and learn. Today, I am supporting their largest-ever expansion campaign and look forward to watching this beloved organization and resource grow!"

Her passion for the organization she has grown along with is clear to those who work alongside her, including

Jennifer Dunmire Parks

Executive Director Erin Anderson, who explains Jennifer's role as connecting with donors and supporters in the community and using that funding to implement programming that serves children, adults, and families in the community, especially those who are underserved and within at-risk populations.

"Through this work, Jennifer is truly changing the landscape both literally and figuratively of the Treasure Valley," says Anderson.

Part of Jennifer's personal philosophy is that in order to live in a place to feel proud of, you must actively support your community. In addition to supporting the community through her work at IBG, Jennifer is heavily involved with the Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation (IWCF), which she joined in 2017 and immediately became involved with as a volunteer, sitting on both the marketing and grants committees. As she became aware of the needs of the community and how the collective time and donations from IWCF members made such a big, positive impact, she knew she could dedicate more of her own time and skills to the organization, helping to raise awareness, gain more support, and leading nonprofits to apply for funding.

"Contributing, whether time or financially, makes a significant impact on the 'livability' and quality of where you reside," says Jennifer. "As I participate and collaborate with more and more organizations in the Treasure Valley, I am reminded that there are so many wonderful, generous, individuals who are always working to better our community, create a sense of place and belonging, and prepare for a future of growth."

Since joining the organization, she has helped them to better organize and implement communication strategies, including creating a new website, managing social media, and writing the organization's "This Week" newsletter.

Jennifer also works with several other local organizations including the Golden Eagle Audubon Society's Development Committee and as a member of the Boise Young Professionals.



Alison Patt

By Hayden Seder

Though Alison Patt has only been in Idaho and her current position for three years, she has already made an impact on and showed her dedication to her community, sharing her infectious passion and vision for food, food service, people, and how she sees the world. Alison moved to Idaho in 2020 to become president, CEO and board member of Thomas Cuisine at just 34 years old.

As president and CEO, Alison leads, manages, and oversees 1,400-plus team members across twelve states. Her philosophy for leading was entrenched in her from an early age, when she watched her father lead with integrity, often being the first in the office and the last to leave, all while making time for his family. Her mother would also remind her to never say anything that could be repeated over the loudspeaker at school

“It was these reminders that build my leadership philosophy: be a person that others can count on; show up and work hard to bring about change in the world; care for those around you; and make sure you can lay your head down at night knowing you did the right thing.”

As CEO, she is also a role model for others in the industry or those who aspire to be in leadership position.

“It is always a blessing and true joy to find other female CEOs that are passionate about leadership and have the courage to lead complex organizations and value the investment in building a culture of accountability of trust,” says Connie Miller, CEO of Credible Advantage. “Alison is one of those people.”

Alison recognizes that she couldn’t have made it to where she is in her career without the help of those who invested in her and helped her find her place along the way and is committed to paying that same experience forward, helping



President and CEO, Board Member

Thomas Cuisine

carve a path for others in her field, particularly women. She has served as a classroom volunteer for Junior Achievement, a financial education platform for students, and as a board member for the College of Western Idaho Foundation.

In her role at Thomas Cuisine, a wellness-driven foodservice management provider that serves over 22 million meals a year, she is leading the company into the next chapter, using her vision to elevate the concept of food as medicine within the healthcare and senior living communities. “She has done this with razor-sharp precision, holding onto the culture and origins of the company but also upleveling the performance and strategic direction of the company,” says Andrew Mitchell, President of Hayden Beverage Company.

In addition to being a leader in the industry and community, Alison is a passionate parent to her non-verbal son with autism, working to advance resources through her work with the Autism Alliance. She is also a volunteer with the Idaho Food Bank and recently ran her first marathon, proving that she is truly thriving after just three short years in the Treasure Valley.



Health Strategist, Program Manager

Central District Health and
Southwest District Health

By Hayden Seder

Through several positions she holds in the community, Alexis Pickering is truly committed to improving the lives of Idahoans for generations to come. Her passion for learning and using her education to provide for others started when she became a first-generation college student in her family and then went on to achieve a graduate degree in health policy that would support her commitment to public health. She is now a health strategist and program manager of Central District Health (CDH) and Southwest District Health (SWDH).

In this position, she established and now leads the Western Idaho Community Health Collaborative (WICHHC), the first ever ten county, private-public partnership aligning healthcare, public health, and social services to address the social influencers of health. Through this position, Alexis has fostered groundbreaking health and housing partnerships across the region, aligned partners throughout the pandemic, and continues to facilitate innovative collaborations to address barriers to health.

“My philosophy on life is to give back, serve my

Alexis Pickering

community, and maximize the life I have to see the change I wish to see in the world,” says Alexis. “I have an incredible ability to convene folks from all backgrounds and successfully navigate and translate our shared goals to drive solutions that will improve the lives of Idahoans for years to come.”

Alexis is also a member of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Public Health Law Workgroup, where she provides policy expertise to national public health policy experts and shares lessons learned from across the country with Idaho.

While working full-time for CDH and SWDH and mothering a newborn, in 2020, Alexis ran an ambitious campaign for Ada County Highway District (ACHD) Commissioner, clinching the win by just a handful of votes and becoming the ACHD’s youngest commissioner and commission president in the organization’s 52-year history. In this position, she oversees the ACHD’s annual operating budget and puts forward innovative transportation policy to help improve and save lives.

“Her clarity of seeing various social determinants of health as part of a shared system explains Alexis’s successful pursuit of an elected position on the ACHD Commission,” says Boise Bicycle Project Executive Director Jimmy Hallyburton. “Alexis is uniquely positioned to ensure transportation conversations are now informed by public health understanding.”

Alexis’s third role in her community is as adjunct professor at Boise State University, teaching Public Health Partnerships and Collective Impact to students working toward a Master of Public Health. This position is yet another avenue for Alexis to have a positive effect on the next generation of Idahoans and to preserve the place she calls home.

“We cannot expect others to save the day if we aren’t willing to get our hands dirty and jump in ourselves,” she says. “Protecting what makes living in Idaho special, the open space and mountains, clean water, kind community, and shared resolve to work through the complex challenges of life, are what make me so excited and honored to live in Boise and do the work I do.”



Lindsay Pretty Weasel

By Hayden Seder

Lindsay Pretty Weasel, vice president and regional manager at Washington Trust Bank, has been with the bank for 17 years, steadily learning and growing with the bank as she was promoted to new positions over the years. In 2006 she started as a financial concierge, a “jack of all trades” position in the words of Andy Beitia, Commercial Banking Director & Southern Idaho Regional President at the bank. She was promoted to vice president and regional sales team lead/branch manager in 2021 and to her current position in 2022 where she has 20 direct reports and manages 19 branches across Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Lindsay’s role at Washington Trust Bank is one with far-reaching impacts on the local business community and that of the broader community. She has personally opened two of the bank’s branches — soon to be three — and has established relationships within all of her communities, often traveling for two or three weeks each month to foster those connections through one-on-one meetings with team members to learn more about their goals and needs and to provide meaningful support. She also prides herself on the connections she has made with her teams of direct reports and their teammates.

“I often say that my colleagues are the best part of my job, and I constantly aspire to make a difference in their lives,” says Lindsay.

In addition to her regular day-to-day responsibilities, Lindsay prides herself on influencing the bank’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) programs. She authored a DEI statement for the bank, and she continually develops initiatives to show support for the LBTQIA+ community. Her role at Washington Trust Bank has allowed her to make a difference to so many members of



Vice President and Regional Manager

Washington Trust Bank

her local community, like teaching with Junior Achievement, serving on an internal Women in Business panel, and supporting Toys for Tots and the Women & Children’s Alliance this past holiday season, when Lindsay and her colleagues purchased 120 items for donation for each of the nonprofits. Through her two bank branch openings, she was also able to spearhead efforts to support local food banks and inspire her teams through the bank’s signature “Random Acts of Awesome,” where bank employees surprised community members with coffee and gas gift cards and delivered donuts to area police and fire stations.

Becky Sechler, SVP and Director of Retail Banking & Client Delivery for Washington Trust, as well as Lindsay’s mentor, says it is gratifying to see Lindsay paying it forward on a daily basis, doing her regular duties but also serving on boards, spearheading projects, and serving as a mentor herself to those coming up in the industry.

“Whether she is counseling mentees, her team members or her clients, she always gives her undivided attention and treats each individual with kindness, honesty and respect,” says Sechler. “Lindsay makes a positive impact on everyone she comes in contact with, and her workplace, her community and her family are all stronger for it.”



Vice Principal/Principal
Bishop Kelly High School

By Hayden Seder

Sarah Quilici is a leader in the field of Catholic education, having worked in the field for 15 years at a range of schools in the Treasure Valley and beyond, including Idaho Catholic Schools, St. Joseph's Catholic School, Timberline High School, Boise High School, Boise State University, Centennial High School, Northwest Nazarene University, and with the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance. She is currently the vice principal at Bishop Kelly High School and will be the principal when school resumes in the fall.

In her time at Bishop Kelly, Quilici has shown her exceptional ability to lead and inspire both students and faculty. Mike Caldwell, the departing principal of Bishop Kelly, says she was instrumental in bringing blended learning to the school in 2008, helped formalize student support services and hired the first Student Coordinator in 2011, and is currently leading the school's six-year accreditation process.

Dr. Sarah Quilici

“Driven by an unyielding passion for educational excellence and guided by a deep-rooted belief in the power of Catholic education, she has quickly earned the respect and admiration of all those associated with her,” says Caldwell.

One of her priorities in her career, and likely one of the reasons she is so beloved in her roles in schools, is getting to know every student's name, something her mentor, Dave Lachiondo, taught her. “This has been a priority and focus for me over my career,” says Quilici. “Every person is important. Every person has value.”

Another valuable lesson that Quilici applies to her career is staying calm in the face of challenging situations. Growing up in Idaho on a peppermint farm, she was taught to stay calm, even when it looks like the weather may impact your crops, and she applies that lesson to all aspects of her career.

Prior to coming to Bishop Kelly, one of the roles that Quilici held was superintendent of Idaho Catholic Schools, where she had a profound impact on the Catholic education system in Idaho, advocating for the advancement of Catholic education, collaborating with administrators, educators, and diocesan leadership to ensure the delivery of exceptional education rooted in faith, character formation, and academic excellence.

Quilici earned her PhD in 2011, with a research study on online education. This topic would prove invaluable during the pandemic when she took on the role of online principal for the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance from 2020–2022.

Quilici and her husband are raising four children. She is also an avid runner, running the Boston Marathon in 2016 and virtually in 2020 and the New York Marathon in 2017.



Mari Ramos

By Hayden Seder

Serving and uplifting the local community, particularly the Hispanic community of the Treasure Valley, is at the core of everything Maribel (Mari) Ramos does, from her position as Director of Operations for the Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to the many organizations in the area that she is a part of.

At the Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Mari serves as a liaison between the Hispanic community and other entities, working toward economic, educational, and social equity and bridging the gap between communities. In just over a year working with the Hispanic Chamber, Mari has helped the organization achieve unprecedented growth, tripling its membership size since her tenure began. Her remarkable set of strengths, from building effective programs to securing fundraising support to developing and maintaining positive relationships within the community, all contribute to her success and ability to drive change for the betterment of Idahoans.

“Mari is the definition of a servant leader and not only that, she works tirelessly without expecting credit,” says Vanessa Tovar, one of Mari’s nominators for Woman of the Year. “She works to promote the advancement and economic growth of all business in Idaho, especially small, and Hispanic owned businesses and to provide leadership and training opportunities to the Hispanic community in general, whether as employees in their current positions or as entrepreneurs.”

In addition to her work with the Hispanic Chamber and pursuing a degree in communications, Mari is active in many parts of the local community. She has been a speaker and presenter at several statewide and national conferences and established the first Family Community Resource Center within the Nampa School District, successfully expanding the program to a total of five centers. She is the vice president of Nampa Rotary, the co-chair of food access for Healthy Impact Nampa, and serves on the boards of the Museum



Director of Operations

Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

of International Diaspora, the Idaho Food Bank, the Idaho History Foundation, Boise Nice, 2C Kids Succeed, and the Idaho Resiliency Project. She was also recently appointed to serve as a Selective Service Board Director by the President of the United States.

Out of all of these roles, though, Mari says the one she is proudest of is mother to her two adult children. Mari’s daughter traveled and then served in the Peace Corp, living all over the world teaching, volunteering, and making the world a better place. Her son, who lives with her, is autistic, and teaches Mari to see the world in a different way. “They both teach me so much about resiliency, strength, perseverance, and drive me to do my best in everything I do.”

It is through her kindness and drive that Mari can make such a difference.

“It goes without question that Mari’s passion and commitment has truly touched the hearts of so many lives in one way or another,” says Chris Irizarry, program manager at the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare. “Whether it’s walking a few more steps to deliver a food box to a family in need or helping a group of children try on their first pair of new shoes that fit, Mari will inevitably cultivate happiness in everything she does.”



Founder/Executive Director

Toby's Place, Inc

By Hayden Seder

Suzie Rohnert has been essential to the fabric of her community of McCall, between creating and operating two businesses as well as forming a non-profit to empower people with disabilities. She is the founder and executive director of Toby's Place, Inc, which provides an integrated living community that addresses the residential, vocational, educational, social, and recreational needs of persons with developmental disabilities.

She opened Toby's Place in 2018, along with Toby's Place Thrift Shop, which employs 12 people with disabilities and gives them the skills necessary to get jobs in other local businesses. She also started a baking program to teach individuals with disabilities important kitchen skills while creating dog biscuits and selling them at the thrift shop and farmers' markets. In August 2022, she opened a shared housing option for young adults with disabilities to have independence.

Before starting Toby's Place and its associated businesses and programs, Suzie worked for the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center and the Kidz Cove Childcare and Learning Center. She has been a licensed foster parent

Suzie Rohnert

with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare since 2008 and in that time has fostered many children with various special needs. She also has nine adult children through birth, adoption, and guardianship, giving her personal experience and knowledge that she has funneled into her work with Toby's Place.

"Her personal experience and knowledge are a great benefit not only to the children in her care; but additionally, to those in the community who reach out to her for support and advice," says Monique Layton in her nomination of Suzie for Woman of the Year.

"She is always kind and helpful; and I have observed her willingness to come alongside parents and foster parents who need encouragement and guidance. She has a beautifully kind demeanor and love for all people."

Suzie first shared her vision for Toby's Place with Layton in 2008; that dream became a reality ten years later, and since then it only continues to grow. As she takes on more and more at Toby's Place, Suzie continues to grow as well, learning about grant writing, business management, and other aspects necessary to operate her non-profit successfully. Suzie's dedication to those with disabilities extends beyond Toby's Place and into actively promoting awareness and advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities; organizing community events, workshops, and support groups; and creating platforms for parents, caregivers, and educators to come together and learn from one another.

Suzie is also a house mom/foster parent for Shepherd's Home, a nonprofit that supports children in foster care in McCall.

"Suzie is an exceptional role model," says Children's Therapy Place CEO Sondra McMindes. "Her dedication and passion for the well-being of children and those with special needs is evident in every interaction and initiative she undertakes. Her contributions have made a significant impact on the lives of countless young individuals, their families, and the community at large."



Reagan Rossi

By Hayden Seder

The College of Idaho in Caldwell owes much of its athletic legacy to Reagan Rossi, vice president of athletics for the college, where she has worked for over 20 years in various positions.

Reagan started her career at College of Idaho as Assistant Coach of Women's Basketball from 1995–97 and returned in 2001 as the women's basketball team coach, leading them to play five NAIA national championship appearances, earn three conference titles, and have several Players of the Year and CoSIDA Academic recipients. In 2010, she took on the duties of the Associate Athletic Director and in 2011 added Title IX Coordinator to her role. In 2016 she transitioned to Athletic Director, where she was Cascade Conference Athletic Director of the Year three times in a row from 2018-22 and in 2021 won the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics-Athletic Directors Association (NAIA-ADA) National Athletics Director of the Year. After 22 years at the College of Idaho, Reagan is now the vice president of athletics, a position that allows her to work closely with the mayor, city council, the police department, the fire department, and the Caldwell Housing Authority, and others to shape her beloved community.

Reagan's tremendous track record speaks volumes, particularly since the school, with 21 sports and more than 450 student athletes, has more athletes on campus than any school in Idaho. With a much smaller staff than similar Division I schools, the College of Idaho's athletics still stands out, thanks in large part to the culture Reagan has personally built.

"She knows the vast majority of the student-athletes on campus and her coaches care about these students as people first, and it shows in their leadership on campus and in the classroom," says Jim Everett, co-president of the College of Idaho. "Under Reagan's extraordinary leadership our student-athletes and coaches shape our campus culture and go on to graduate on time, with many at the top of the class and on to med



Vice President of Athletics

The College of Idaho

schools, grad school and into great careers. By any measure,

Reagan has built a culture that we would not trade with any school in the country."

Reagan has personally shaped her community of Caldwell, not only through the athletics at College of Idaho but also through serving on the board of Destination Caldwell since its inception in 2014. The non-profit organization has been instrumental in the revitalization of downtown Caldwell through the combined forces of local citizens, property owners, and business owners.

Her leadership on the Destination Caldwell board of directors has helped reshape Caldwell and transform the City of Caldwell into the vibrant, safe, family- and business-friendly environment that Caldwell enjoys today, says Mayor of Caldwell Garret Nacolas.

"Her ability to bring people together has reshaped and strengthened the relationship between the College and other partners. Her commitment to success is unmatched and unmistakable!"

"The Caldwell community has always been near and dear to my heart," says Reagan. "Being able to serve our community in this role is truly an honor."



CEO

Good Samaritan League of America

By Hayden Seder

Danielle Sanders’s best friend describes her as “a master at building and maintaining relationships, a bleeding-heart broke philanthropist, an underrated comedian, a passionate human rights activist, and a hell of a best friend,” a description that helps begin to paint a picture of the kind of person she is.

As CEO of the Good Samaritan League of America, Sanders works to prevent homelessness and provide safe and affordable housing to the community.

From working as a volunteer firefighter and EMT at University of Idaho (where she once helped deliver a baby at a stoplight) to getting her MBA, Danielle has proved time and again her tenacity. Danielle wanted to drop out of business school many times, hating the constant drive for money and her peers’ lack of awareness for others and the planet, but her professors wouldn’t let her quit, telling her that they needed more people like her and that she would change the world. It was while competing in Australia for \$1 million in seed money for an idea to reduce poverty through the company HULT, which leverages ideas from young people to sustainably solve

Danielle Sanders

the world’s most critical social challenges, that she shifted her perspective. While her team didn’t win, Danielle realized that her professors were right.

“I had the power, grit, and endurance to change the world.”

Danielle started working with the state of Idaho in the areas of drug overdose and suicide prevention but realized that, of all those who struggled with addiction and mental health, un-housed people were by far the most likely to die, inspiring her to move into the world of housing to effect more change. She became a volunteer and member of the Boise/Ada County Homeless Coalition and started in her role of Executive Director of the Good Samaritan League of Idaho in 2020, which provides affordable housing to seniors, veterans, adults with disabilities, and independent adults of all ages who may have low or fixed incomes.

Danielle came into her position in the depths of the pandemic, a difficult time even for those with consistent housing. She rose to the occasion, meeting needs with grace and maintaining a home for forty-five of Idaho’s most fragile residents. Were it not for her vision and perseverance, members of the organization agree that the Good Samaritan Home (GSH), a staple in Boise for nearly 80 years, could have easily closed. With the pandemic in the rearview for the most part, Danielle now devotes her energy to making and keeping GSH a safe, affordable, and quality place for its residents, whether that’s finding grant money, preparing meals in the kitchen, or increasing community outreach programs.

She is also working to fund research with Boise State University and the Urban Land Institute to show the impact of GSH and ultimately replace the building, triple capacity, and show how the organization works so that it can be implemented in cities across the country.

“I intend to spend each year working toward ending homelessness, promoting sobriety, self-worth, sustainability, and kindness in this country,” she says.



Janice Stevenor Dale

By Hayden Seder

In her over 40 years working in interior design, Janice Stevenor Dale has received numerous accolades for her work and made a name for herself with her nationally recognized design firm, J S D A Inc. Since founding her namesake company in 1991, she has led her firm in three locations—Los Angeles, Chicago, and Boise — and worked with clients like Boeing, BMW, LADWP, Nova Development, and Morrison & Foerster.

Her commitment to the highest standards of aesthetics, practicing excellence, championing the relationship between designer and artisan, and planning for climate challenges have all made her one of the most respected interior designers in the country.

Working across offices, states, and cities means that Janice gets to play a role in the design of so many types of buildings and businesses, from helping successful Fortune 100 and 500 companies relocate into a new workspace to preserving over eight significant historic buildings. Her work has been recognized with many awards, including a nomination for the National Cooper Hewitt Design Awards, multiple International Interior Design Association (IIDA) awards for national graphics and interior design competitions, and several from the Calibre Awards, an industry-wide awards program she founded in California in 1988. In addition to founding Calibre, Janice is also responsible for founding the Boise City Center chapter of the IIDA; the CCIDC, an independent public-private partnership to certify interior designers in California; and an initiative at Preservation Idaho to honor historic interiors.

As an interior designer recognized for her vision and forward thinking, Janice is helping guide the interior design business into a more sustainable future. Her firm is a B



President

JSDA Inc

Corp., a certification only given to businesses that have social and environmental best practices for the good of all people, communities, and the planet. As far back as 1994, she was the Eco Expo Sustainable Design Winner for designs built in LA and Boston. She is LEED-certified and WELL-certified, which focus on designing for sustainability and thoughtfulness and intentionality in spaces, respectively. By using the latest, evidence-based research and sustainable design practices, Janice uses her work to propel other companies and their spaces into the future. “As a native Idahoan, I feel blessed to have people like Janice join our community as she propels organizations into the future while keeping the current and upcoming climate challenges in mind,” says Thea Jordan, Program Director of the Idaho Women’s Business Center.

Despite her firm’s headquarters being located in LA, Janice finds time to devote to her community of Boise, volunteering and serving on boards. Janice is a board member of the

GFWC Boise Columbian Club and the Idaho Women’s Charitable Foundation, president of the Fort Boise Questers, and member of the Boise Art Museum, YMCA Buildings and Facilities Committee, and Idaho Business Women’s Center.



Chief Credit Officer

Idaho First Bank

By Ryan Lowery

Shannon Stoeger began her banking career more than three decades ago when she went to work as a teller, a position that placed her on a career path that allowed her to learn the banking industry from every angle.

Early in her career, Stoeger was promoted to branch manager at Farmers & Merchants State Bank. There, she not only oversaw the largest and fastest-growing branch in the system, but was the first woman to be named a branch manager in the company.

Since breaking that barrier, Stoeger has been leading teams in retail and commercial lending, private banking, cash management, human resources, marketing, development and risk management. She's also positioned herself to be able to mentor other women along the way.

Stacey Divine, the Chief Marketing Officer for Idaho First Bank, says Stoeger mentors other young professionals not only when she has the time, but whenever they need it.

"Trust me. Her schedule is incredibly busy. That's never an excuse for her to not mentor someone else," Divine says.

Ann Munroe, president of Capital Matrix Inc. says Stoeger

Shannon Stoeger

embodies all the characteristics needed to be successful, and her willingness to lend time to others is one of her strongest assets.

"Shannon has volunteered on the Capital Matrix Board since 2016 and has demonstrated a commitment to our company," Munroe says. "She successfully led Capital Matrix through a management transition in 2016. During that time, I have come to depend on her support and critical feedback."

Today, Stoeger is chief credit officer at Idaho First Bank. She is also a charter member and peer group leader for the Society of Bank Executives, and her board service extends to seats on the boards of the Saint Alphonsus Foundation, the Idaho Community Bankers Association and Capital Matrix.

She holds an MBA and a bachelor's in business administration from Boise State University, and she was previously an adjunct faculty member at Treasure Valley Community College and Boise State.

Stoeger's previous awards include the 2018 Impact Award from the Boys and Girls Club, along with the organization's 2015 National Service to Youth Award. She was named a 2010 Women of Today and Tomorrow honoree from the Girl Scouts, and was a Women's and Children's Alliance TWIN honoree in 2004. Additionally, Stoeger was a 2016 Idaho Business Review Woman of the Year honoree, and was named to IBR's Accomplished Under 40 in 2007.

Stoeger has been married to her husband Rich for more than 27 years, and they have two grown children, Karlee and Braden. These personal accomplishments are just as important as her professional ones, according to Todd Cooper, president and CEO of Idaho First Bank.

"She effectively balances her professional success and community involvement while putting her family first and serving as an example for younger leaders," Cooper says. "A recognized leader in every sense who successfully balances the many demands for her time, Shannon is certainly deserving of her nomination for the Women of the Year."



Amanda L. Stone

By Ryan Lowery

Amanda L. Stone credits her mother and father with shaping her life and putting her on a path to success. Stone calls her mother her “rock” and her best friend, and says her father taught her how to enjoy life and tackle problems head-on.

Through her role as the executive director for Camp River Run, Stone is able to tackle problems by creating a space where medically fragile children from various economic backgrounds can experience the joys and challenges of camp.

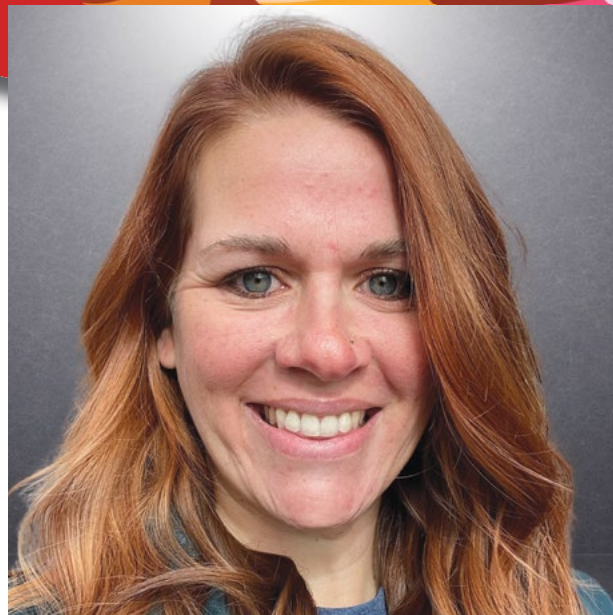
“My goal is to ensure these children feel included and experience the simple magic of being a kid,” she says. “Serving others is a cornerstone of my life.”

Stone’s colleague Cheree Pruitt says that even with the demands of being a mother, working a full-time job and attending school as a full-time student, Stone is still able to find balance and success.

“In between all her responsibilities in her personal and work life, she finds time to organize, run and participate in a nonprofit organization helping special needs children go to camp,” she says. “Recently she has led this group to branch out of the Boise area and into the Twin Falls area, adding more kids and a lot more work to this organization.”

Elizabeth Lizberg is the CEO and executive director for Camp Rainbow Gold at Hidden Paradise. She says Stone has made a huge difference in the lives of countless children.

“She wears many hats — overseeing volunteers, programming, fundraising, marketing, (and) everything that goes into running a business,” Lizberg says. “But the minute camp begins, all of that takes a back seat as she steps into the role of dream maker, making sure every medically fragile child who comes to camp feels loved, included, valued and safe.



Executive Director

Camp River Run

Stone holds a certification as a master health coach from Dr. Sears Wellness Institute and is currently earning a bachelor’s degree in nonprofit management from Colorado Christian University where she made the Dean’s List for the spring semester.

She is a member of the Boise Metro Chamber and the Idaho Nonprofit Center, and she was a liaison for Idaho Gives in 2022 and 2023. Stone was also named a Rising Leader by the Idaho Nonprofit Center in 2020.

Camp River Run provides a four-day summer camp at Hidden Paradise for kids from 7 to 17 who are coping with life-threatening illness or disabling medical conditions. The goal is to allow these children to experience nature and camping without compromising their medical needs.

Stone says one of her favorite things about Camp River Run is seeing children step out of their comfort zones and discover new possibilities through encouragement and friendship.

“Through my role as executive director of Camp River Run and my past volunteering experiences, I have realized that I find fulfillment in helping others, particularly children who may be medically fragile or feel left out,” Stone says.



Educational Talent Search Director
Boise State University

By Ryan Lowery

Petya Stoyanova Johnson is the program director for Boise State University's TRIO Educational Talent Search, a federally funded program that assists pre-college students from across the Treasure Valley enroll in colleges and universities.

A native of Bulgaria, Stoyanova Johnson first came to the United States in 2003 as part of an exchange program. She soon decided to call Boise home and went on to earn a master's in business administration from Boise State, where she's currently pursuing a doctorate degree in education, part of her goal to follow her true calling: education and helping students find their calling.

"I see our return on investment all over our community," she says. "It has been a privilege to see students find their calling — lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, mechanics (and) social justice advocates."

Jenni Kimball, the College and Career Access Program Manager for the Idaho State Board of Education, calls Stoyanova Johnson a "fierce advocate" for underserved students and says she's an incredible mentor and leader in

Petya Stoyanova Johnson

the community.

"In her role as director, Petya is constantly mentoring her staff; training them to be advocates for students and partners in education," Kimball says. "She is a role model for not only her staff but also the 1,500 students whom her program serves."

Caldwell School District teacher and STEM Coordinator Dr. Melyssa Ferro calls Stoyanova Johnson's commitment to helping underserved students "tireless" and says her efforts have been instrumental in advancing and promoting equity and excellence in education.

"She has facilitated invaluable opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning experiences, develop critical thinking skills and explore their interests and passions," Ferro says. "Her community involvement has been exemplary. She has been a champion of diversity and inclusion, creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their backgrounds."

Stoyanova Johnson was previously awarded the 2017 Higher Education Advocate award from the Idaho Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and she was named one of the Idaho Business Review's Accomplished Under 40 in 2019.

Stoyanova Johnson says her philosophy draws inspiration from nature, and that while individual drive and success are great motivators, she believes that a truly thriving community requires equitable and inclusive practices for all its members.

"I am moved by kindness, compassion and humanity; there is nothing more beautiful in the world. Growing up in a post-communist country and witnessing injustice throughout the years have instilled the urge to speak up because someone has to," she says. "I try to lead with my heart and let reason guide the steps. I know I have more learning to do, but I continue to grow and adapt when I face an obstacle or make a mistake. I see them as wisdom scars."



Charlene Taylor

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Charlene Taylor, as vice president of consulting services at RDA Consulting, SPC, earned a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice at Washington State University, a Master's of Science in Criminal Justice and a Doctorate in Philosophy, University of Cincinnati.

Community service is important to Taylor, as evidenced by her current volunteer work at Brown Like Me and the Democratic Black Caucus of Idaho. She also serves on the founding board of directors at Bare Roots Collective. Past civic engagement includes her work as a member of board of directors for the Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy and Planned Parenthood. Additional positions include work as a founding vice president of the African-American Chamber of Commerce and a consultant to the Idaho Commission of Pardons and Parole.

Taylor was awarded an Albert C. Yeats Fellowship, University of Cincinnati in 1997, 1998 and 1999 and was the recipient of the student-nominated Outstanding Teacher Award, California State Bakersfield in 2011. Taylor also includes among her achievements a Gubernatorial appointment to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Advisory Committee, state of Oregon, Evaluation Subcommittee Chairperson.

Taylor's personal philosophy is to approach life with humble curiosity.

"All behavior makes sense with enough information, so if I am confused about something, it means I need to ask more questions," she said.

Taylor also states that it's important to lead with love and authenticity--priorities which come into play often and which also extend to her own family.

"My mother was a role model for the type of woman and mother I wanted to be. She became the first woman of color to manage Human Resources for one of the regional offices of the Federal Aviation Administration and was the only person to ever hold that position without a college degree. My most important goal is to raise my son to be an empathetic and



Vice President of Consulting

RDA Consulting, SPC

compassionate person who understands his responsibility to his community," she said, adding that she hopes he remembers her when he looks back on his life. "I want him to remember me as a person who cared about people and someone who worked to make the world better, both for the larger community and also for our little corner of the world," she said.

Taylor said that part of her success in business and life in general is her dedication to approaching situations and people authentically, always endeavoring to keep kindness, empathy and joy at her center.

Steven Zurich, actor, writer and script consultant at Improvised Scene Productions, has known Taylor for a decade and describes her as a "larger-than-life figure with a gigantic heart, a loving nature, a passion for the communities of which she is part and a dependably caring friend who cares deeply about people," he said.

Taylor's future plans are to start her own nonprofit organization to continue her work in the criminal justice reform arena by providing programming and community supports for people returning to the community from prison.

"I am deeply committed to improving the criminal justice system and minimizing its damaging effects on the people who are impacted by it," she said.



Wealth Advisor/Principal

RW Investment Management

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

As a child, Raleigh Ann Vachek dreamed about coaching, or working in a career where she could help others, but it wasn't always clear to her what direction she should take to accomplish this goal.

"I just knew that I wanted to help others achieve their own definition of success," she said.

This mindset helped her manifest her dreams to become the successful Wealth Advisor that she is today.

As a wealth advisor/principal of RW Investment Management, Vachek has helped clients through many transitions in their lives, whether they be positive, or challenging.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is sharing the successes of others when they achieve their life goals, but the most impactful part happens during difficult life transitions — loss of a loved one, divorce, or any unplanned stressful event," said Vachek, adding that if she is able to help someone during their saddest, sometimes darkest day, it is a day well spent.

Vachek said that founding the firm was centered around the three RW's: Real Wisdom, which includes empowering clients to make good decisions during times of uncertainty and self-doubt, Real Wealth to help clients achieve their objectives and Real Worth,

Raleigh Ann Vachek

to allow clients to discover joy, purpose and peace.

"As a Wealth Advisor, I take care of people, not portfolios. At the root of everything I do, there is a human connection," she said.

Part of that human connection is giving back to the community. The wife and mother of two daughters is a member of the Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation and served as co-chair of the Symposium. She is also a board member of the Boise Public School's Education Foundation (BPSEF) and a member of the BPSEF Investment Committee.

Jennifer Henderson, Executive Director of the BPSEF said, "With her expertise and support, the BPSEF has created and maintained successful financial practices and investment policies that have allowed us to provide support to programs and projects that have impacted tens of thousands of Boise Schools students."

Vachek has also served the Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council as a board member and as a member of the Investment Committee.

Over the years she's been recognized by the Idaho Business Review (IBR) as an Excellence in Finance Honoree, an IBR 40 under 40 honoree and was given a Women of Today and Tomorrow Award by the Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council.

Vachek has also made strides in the running world as a three-time Race to Robie Creek half-marathon finisher, a two-time Zeitgeist half-marathon finisher and a two-time Sawtooth Relay finisher, to name just a few. Vachek remarks on her running accomplishments.

Jan Salisbury, President, Leaders Who Coach, said that it's not about being the biggest, it's about the values that guide Vachek: honesty, caring, outstanding financial expertise and service and commitment to her clients and her team. Vachek said that it's all part of what she strives to be.

"I want to be a role model and mentor for young women. I want to serve our clients and community with respect and compassion, while giving generously of my time talent and treasure to worthy causes," she said.



Irma Valdivia

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Irma Valdivia, as owner of Jalepenos Bar and Grill in Nampa and Boise, understands the importance of working hard, while giving back to the community.

Among her civic engagement is her work with the Saint Alphonsus Medical Center as a member of their Advisory Board and their Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

Valdivia's dedication to the well-being of children also shines through with her work on the Board of Directors and the executive committee of the Canyon County Boys & Girls Club, not to mention her work within the school system as a public speaker to help motivate students. Additional activities include serving on the Board of Directors and on the Health and Education Committee for the Nampa Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Healthy Impact Nampa Coalition.

Over the years, Valdivia has won awards and recognitions from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, City of Nampa and is the proud recipient of the Ohtli Award given by the Mexican government to those who work in the United States and other countries who have given assistance to Mexicans, or promoted their culture.

Jessica DeLeon-Salinas, manager, Jalepenos, said that she has worked with Irma for 16 years and has witnessed her strong work ethic and the ability to solve problems.

"Her vision for a better tomorrow for all is contagious as she has a gift to motivate others to join her in her efforts of community building," said DeLeon-Salinas, adding that where others' character may falter due to their struggles, Irma has used hers to grow and thrive.

Clint Child, president, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center, Nampa, said that, as a member of their board, Irma is called upon to help support Saint Alphonsus' many initiatives to improve and enhance the well-being of patients, their



Owner

Jalepenos Bar and Grill

families and the local community.

"Valdivia's hand is always the first one raised whenever the Board members are asked to attend and support one of our colleagues, or community events," said Child, adding that Valdivia can be counted on to generously share her time, talents, funds and expertise. "And she has often helped others with a kind word, a friendly shoulder to lean on, a monetary gift, or a community connection—lifting up others for the betterment of our community as a whole," he said.

Matt Davison, publisher and president, Idaho Press, said that he is consistently impressed by Valdivia's dedication to her community and her commitment to helping others.

"Irma is highly passionate about helping others in need and she has a unique ability to motivate those around her to achieve more than they ever thought they could," he said.

Valdivia states that her goal is to be the best version of herself and to spread love and kindness wherever she can.

"I believe that God has given me the platform to serve him, helping our community become healthier and helping the most in need. I am surrounded everyday by amazing mentors, friends and co-workers that inspire me," she said.



Patricia Walker

CEO/Founder

Idaho Community Alliance

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

As the CEO/founder of the Idaho Black Community Alliance, Trish Walker oversees a nonprofit organization for the promotion and preservation of the African-American culture and community by identifying, engaging and empowering youth and adults through education and connections.

Walker also serves as President and Co-Director of Brown Like Me, a volunteer-driven nonprofit with the mission of connecting black children and their families to African-American culture and community in the Treasure Valley.

Walker earned her bachelor's degree in multicultural studies, with a minor in dispute resolution at Boise State University and is widely recognized for her many accomplishments both professionally and as a community leader. She has been named among the top 50 Business Leaders at the Idaho Business Review and as a businesswoman she understands the importance of giving back to the community. One of her goals is to be a role model for others.

Not only was Walker responsible for assisting in the creation of the Boise Soul Food Festival Organization, but she also went on to serve as Event and Sponsorship Director,

spokesperson and Operations Manager of the Festival. She is proud of the fact that this fun and educational event is attended by 20,000-plus people each year. Walker has also used her expertise to serve as a community organizer for events like Black History Month, Juneteenth Holiday, MLK events and more.

Walker's concern for those around her, especially students, is evident in her civic engagement. She acts as a liaison for the Boise State Black Student Alliance helping communities collaborate with students and is also a Diversity Advocate Liaison to assist youth who are experiencing bias in local schools.

Walker also serves as an Advisory Board member for the American Cancer Society and the Idaho Women's Business Center.

Inspiring others is important to Walker, as is focusing on the youth of today to help them become the leaders which we're proud of tomorrow. Each year, Walker takes 10 black teens to Washington, D.C., to attend a national civic education youth conference. She also enjoys her work with the Entrepreneur's Association to assist in supporting hundreds of entrepreneurs to make the world a better place in which to live.

Diane Bevan, Idaho Women's Business Center executive director, describes Walker as a woman whose passion drives her as a champion for change. When it comes to working with others, Bevan recognizes Walker as a true servant leader who works tirelessly for her community.

"She is an amazing mom, grandma, friend and advocate who stands up for what she believes," said Bevan.

Walker's philosophy is summed up in a quote that dates back to 1959 by civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King who advised others to "make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in."



Faye White

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Faye White, as executive director of Building Hope Today, oversees an organization which lists among its goals the following: to play a part in ending the child sexual abuse epidemic in our country. According to White, this work is important because one in four girls and one in 13 boys experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday.

White graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in International Management & Modern Languages, University of Bath (England) and a Master of Public Administration, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

White understands the importance of giving back to her community and is involved with the Boise Metro Chamber as a Leadership Boise member, ambassador, non-profit council member and Small Business Advisory Council member. She also belongs to the Association of Fundraising Professionals and is a member of the Executive Director Network, Idaho Nonprofit Center.

White's previous positions at non-profit organizations exemplify her dedication to work that benefits the community. At Create Common Good in Boise, she worked as an Impact Programs Lead where she fostered collaborative partnerships with private, public and non-profit organizations, including universities.

White considers her highest career achievement to be the time she spent as the Executive Director at Faces of Hope Foundation which provided a safety net of crisis services to people experiencing interpersonal violence. She helped guide the nonprofit and Board of Directors from its start-up phases to a sustainable, high-growth community powerhouse, supporting over 800 adults and 1,000 children with wrap-around services annually. White looks forward to achieving the same success for Building Hope Today by expanding the tactical training and technical assistance program for multidisciplinary teams tasked with investigating and prosecuting child sexual abuse crimes across Idaho.

White is a proud military spouse and a mother of two and says that her children play an important role in her drive to create safer communities. White also credits her father for influencing what she does today.



Executive Director

Building Hope Today

“He taught me that I could achieve anything I set my mind to and my mother taught me the importance of treating everyone with kindness, dignity and respect,” she said.

Jean Fisher, JD, met Faye in 2016 as the Ada County Deputy Prosecutor and Special Crimes Unit Chief.

“Faye wrote grants, helped ground the new Board of Directors, spear-headed the Faces of Hope fundraisers, created new programs and recruited new employees. When she left the organization to move to England with her husband’s U.S. Air Force assignment, she left Faces far better than she found it,” said Fisher.

Courtney Liddiard, Chief Executive Officer, Ball Ventures, LLC, said that Faye has become a distinguished leader in creating safety nets for the vulnerable.

“Under her leadership, Building Hope Today has spearheaded an innovative approach to transforming and improving how child sexual abuse cases are handled across Idaho, by providing tactical training to the multidisciplinary teams tasked with identifying, investigating and prosecuting these crimes,” she said.

For White, it’s all part of her purpose-driven goal as a nonprofit professional and parent.

“I am taking a lead role in ensuring that our community is better for the next generation, just as the generation before did for mine,” she said.



Chandra Zenner Ford

CEO

SW Idaho and Office of the President,
University of Idaho

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

Chandra Zenner Ford, CEO, SW Idaho and Office of the President, University of Idaho, has been responsible for leading projects that have changed lives through scholarship support and enhancing educational opportunities for the citizens of Idaho.

Ford earned her bachelor's degree in Organizational Communications and her master's in Adult Education at the University of Idaho and has worked in higher education throughout her career

"Make no mistake, my professional life story is only what it is because I have served great leaders and worked with amazing and devoted teams," she said.

Ford said that higher education changed her life for the better and that the past four years have been full of victories and some unprecedented challenges.

"Leading through tough times has tested my leadership skills, but I know I am better for it. President Green has asked me to lead and support all of the teams we have put together to push his strategic initiatives forward. This includes a new budget model to address a financially stressed institution, a new approach to our online

offerings, a capital campaign plan, a strategy to reach R1 research status and an analysis of our priorities in the Magic Valley Region."

Ford understands the importance of giving back to the community and is a current board member at the Boise Valley Economic Partnership (BVEP), a member of the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce Board of Advisors and a past Vice President and current member of the Board of Directors, Learning Lab.

In addition to being recognized among the "Top 40 under 40," by the Idaho Business Review, Ford has also been a TWIN (Tribute to Women & Industry) honoree for those who have excelled in their fields and made significant contributions to industry in executive, managerial and professional roles.

The mother of two sons, who are college graduates, credits her parents for being influential in her success today.

"My father is a pioneer in the world of sustainable farming and he continues to be a thought leader, despite being almost 80. My mother was his business partner, while managing the First Security Bank branch in Genesee," she said.

C. Scott Green, president, University of Idaho, said: "Chandra exhibits strength in establishing mutually beneficial relationships between industry and education. Her work has had a direct impact on our state's economic and community well-being through her efforts to enhance educational opportunities and outcomes for University of Idaho students."

Michael J. Ballantyne, managing partner, Tok Commercial, said that Ford's hard work has been focused on making Idaho a better place for its citizens, from helping raise \$12 million for a new library, to helping with the recent turnaround of the University of Idaho.

Ford's key to success is what the older generations may have referred to as "stick-to-it-ive-ness."

"Sticking with it matters and with 30 years devoted to higher education, it has given me a chance to build upon each experience and leadership role to improve my own ability to focus on what matters," she said.



Janell Zuckerman

By Stefanie Kalina-Metzger

As the SelectHealth Director of Provider Network Development, Janell Zuckerman serves as the strategic and operational leader for provider network contracting, development and relations across commercial and Medicare lines of business for the state of Idaho.

Zuckerman earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Tufts University, before going on to graduate from the Institute of Culinary Education where she had a James Beard scholarship. She later earned a master's in Health Administration at Ohio University.

Prior to her job at SelectHealth, Zuckerman worked at St. Luke's Health System as Regional Director, Care Continuum, where she played a leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic, serving on Incident Command and as Administrator on Call at St. Luke's Boise Medical Center.

Zuckerman's concern for children also led her to grow the Treasure Valley Family YMCA Safe Routes to School program from 10 pilot schools to coverage across three school districts and she secured over \$450,000 in grant dollars to support Safe Routes to School.

Zuckerman has been an asset to every organization she has been affiliated with by focusing on building trust across teams and creating information networks to get things done.

"I am able to move between big-picture thinking and the details, advocating for team members closest to the work to have awareness and feedback as part of the planning and execution process," she said.

Zuckerman understands the importance of using her leadership skills to make a difference in her community. She currently serves on the Board of Directors, Board Development Committee, and on the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee for Opera Idaho. Zuckerman is a past member of the Board of Directors, The Cancer Connection.

Ed Castledine, SelectHealth Market President, Idaho, said, "Janell is a strong operational leader who is tactical in



SelectHealth Director of Provider Network Development

State of Idaho

her approach to business, but she really enjoys finding creative solutions to challenging problems. She is humble and smart, a strategic thinker with a positive attitude who can see what is possible and what is needed to be successful."

David Bishop, CEO Idaho Urologic Institute and Surgery Center of Idaho adds that Zuckerman strives to find purpose in all she does.

"She has an amazing amount of energy and is enthusiastic and has excellent interpersonal skills that allow her to build strong relationships to accomplish her tasks and goals," he said. Bishop mentions his role as the COO of the St. Luke Boise Hospital during the height of COVID. "During this time, Janell was an integral part of our team and I was grateful to have her by my side at that time," he said.

For Zuckerman, it comes naturally.

"My personal philosophy is that the more you understand about people, the better you can collaborate for outcomes, even across typically antagonistic teams, or industries," she said, adding that she seeks to understand various perspectives and create a common language so that semantics don't get in the way of empathy. Her aim is to lead teams, work for constant improvement and have fun doing it along the way.



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The eighth annual Meet and Greet reception brought together honorees. *Photos by Jeanette Trompczynski*

Celebrating being 'Stronger Together'

By Chloe Baul

cbaul@idahobusinessreview.com

The 8th annual Women of the Year Meet and Greet reception at the Arid Club in Boise brought together past and current honorees, encouraging connections, reconnections, and the establishment of new friendships.

The 2023 Women of the Year awards at the Boise Centre celebrated a theme of “Stronger Together.”

Presenting sponsor of the event was Idaho First Bank. Supporting sponsors were Arid Club and Regence.

Simultaneously with the Meet and Greet, the inaugural Circle of Excellence panel also took place. This panel is a special platform for women who have received the Woman of the Year honor more than once, marking their induction into the Circle of Excellence.

Under the thematic segment “Stronger Together,” the discourse emphasized the value of forging meaningful connections, distinct from conventional networking practices. Several key takeaways emerged:

- The synergy derived from collaborative efforts
- The empowerment of voices through interpersonal ties



- The importance of seeking assistance without reservations
- The serendipitous outcomes of forging interpersonal connections
- The distinction between mentorship and leadership, with an emphasis on their empowering effects
- The sharing of wisdom and the art of navigating challenges
- The role of individuals as connectors, bridging gaps within networks
- The attributes that define effective leadership, including purpose-driven guidance
- The transformative potential of failure as a stepping stone to growth
- The celebration of minor accomplishments along the journey
- The embrace of vulnerability as a means to foster authenticity

In essence, the panel conversation traversed the spectrum of personal journeys, collaborative dynamics, mentorship, leadership, the art of embracing challenges, and the diverse interpretations of success.

The Circle of Excellence Leadership panel will become a new tradition as part of the annual Women of the Year meet and greet reception.

“I want to thank you all for sharing your stories, experiences, and wisdom today,” Idaho Review Publisher Cindy Suffa said. “I look forward to this panel being a new addition for the Meet and Greet Tradition for years to come.”



Networking took place at the 8th annual Meet and Greet reception.

THIS YEAR'S PANELISTS:

Nikeela Abrams

Attorney/Mediator, Abrams Law and Idaho Mediation Center

Diane Bevan

Founder and CEO of the National Women's Business Community Network and NWBCN Foundation

Beth Oppenheimer

Executive Director, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children 2014

Dr. Catherine Riddle

Senior Research Scientist, Idaho National Laboratory

Shannon Stoeger

Executive Vice President, Chief Credit Officer, Idaho First Bank



Past Honorees

2022

Sanya Allmaras, Sunwest Bank

Julie Amador, University of Idaho

Carol Barkes,*
NeuroMediation Group LLC

Adina Bielenberg,
Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories

Sara Brady, AbbVie

Johanna Brown, Kootenai Health

Christina Cernansky,
NAMI Idaho

Jenifer Dellgard, First Interstate Bank

Jody DiPalma, Delta Dental of Idaho

Sabrina Durtschi, KB Home

Leslie Eldridge, Water, Civil, and Environmental Inc.

Stacy Ennis, Creatively LLC

Rialin Flores,
Conservation Voters for Idaho

Sharon Glover,* BRJ Distributing

Valerie Goebel, KeyBank
Leslie Goemaere Hayes,
Office of the Attorney General

Lisa Grow, Idaho Power

Angela Hemingway,
T-Mobile

Cherie Hoeger, Saalt
Morgan Hoffman, JPAR
Live Local

Mallisa Jackson-Vogel,
Colliers International/ MJ
Vogelinspire

Teresa Jorgensen,*
Fisher's Technology

Heather Keen,* Marimn Health

Elizabeth Langley,
Echelon Group

Laura Lantz, Idaho Society of CPAs

Ann Lima, Clearwater Valley Health

Jennifer Mauk, Buy Idaho

Sherry Maupin, Valley County Commission

Savana Maxon, Zennify
Marni McDowell, Micron Technology

Tressa McLaughlin, SOLV
Lynda Murphy Freeman,
University of Idaho

Frances Nagashima, Your Health Idaho

Christine Neuhoff,* St. Luke's Health System

Dana Olson Reid, Hawley Troxell

Beth Oppenheimer,*
Idaho Association for



Idaho Business Review's 2022 Women of the Year event, held at Boise Centre. Photos by Pro Image Photography

the Education of Young Children

Johanna Oxstrand, Idaho National Laboratory/
Battelle Energy Alliance

Jodi Peterson-Stigers,*
Interfaith Sanctuary

Ruth Pierce, Ruth S Pierce CPA Chtd

Mindy Plumlee, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Idaho

Susie Rios, Idaho Women's Business Center

Ruth Romero,* Ruth Romero Personal Stylist LLC

Klaudia Saric, Jannus Economic Opportunity
Erica Shull, Jackson Jet Center

Sherri Smith,* Tasty

Touches Catering

Gwen Swain, Waterstone Mortgage Corporation

Jagoda Urban-Klaehn,
Idaho National Laboratory

Jodi Vanderpool,* St. Luke's Health System

Paige Wiscombe, Idaho Connect Community Navigators

Linda Wright Hartgen,
Idaho State Legislature

2021

Camille Andersen

Mindi Anderson

Shari Baber

Georganne Benjamin

Odette Bolano ***

Lindsey Bowshier

Mary Beth Chandler



Past Honorees

Colette Chester
 Andrea Christopher
 Robin Collins
 Caitlin Cople Masingill
 Sarah Cortez
 Sarah Cunningham
 Elaine Damschen
 Betsy Davies
 Becky Fowers
 Maria Alicia Garza
 Meg Glasgow **
 Lisa Holland
 Kathy Hurley
 Cheryl Hutchinson
 Toni Karlsson
 Jamie Kinshella **
 Elizabeth Lizberg **
 Christina Lords
 Brinnon Garrett Mandel
 Shannon McGuire

Meghan McInerney
 Marcella Medor
 Lisa Mesenko
 Cari Miller
 Jayme Mullaney
 Alecia Murray
 Christine Neuhoff **
 Keisha Oxendine **
 Kelley Packer
 Christa Rowland
 Sophie Sestero **
 Bonnie Shelton
 Lindsay Shrum
 Carrie Sullivan
 Teri Thaemert **
 Marlene Tromp
 Deanna Turner
 Christina Ward
 Katrina Wehr
 Michelle Wooten

Mandi Wright
 Stephanie Young
 Jennifer Zielinski **

2020

Rhea Allen
 Mary Ann Arnold
 Liyah Babayan
 Mary Barinaga
 Hope A. Benedict
 Sarah Bettwieser
 Diane Bevan
 Dana Briggs
 Shavonna Case
 Gretchen Caserotti
 Rebecca Casper
 Aimee Christensen
 Winnie M. Christensen
 Elaine Clegg
 Muffy Davis
 Tammy de Weerd

Molly Deckart
 Melissa Dilley
 Maya Duratovic
 Becky Enrico Crum
 Amy Evans
 Brooke Green
 Kate Holgate
 Danielle Horras
 Betsy Hunsicker
 Rebecca Hupp
 Kim Kaine
 Stacey Katseanes
 Satterlee
 Heather Keen
 Rachele Klein
 Jennifer Lastra
 Abby Lee
 Debra Leithauser
 Kelci Lucier
 Payton McGriff



The 2022 Women of the Year honorees.



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Keisha Oxendine
 Trillitye Paullin
 Paula Phelps
 Trina Finley Ponce
 Jessica Rolph
 Leahann Romero
 Sonya Rosario
 Leanne Marie Rousseau
 Dawn M. Scates
 Linda Swanstrom
 Maria Walker
 Rebecca Watkins
 Claudia Weathermon
 Maggie Williams
 Luci B. Willits

2019

Reylene Abbott
 Misty Amarena
 Nichoel Baird Spencer
 Carol Barks
 Penny Beach
 Diane Bevan
 Odette Bolano
 Cherie Buckner-Webb
 Shavonna Case
 Toni Coleman Carter
 Janet Gallimore
 Christi Garcia
 Sheli Gartman
 Rebekah Harvey
 Suzanne Hawkins
 Erika Heeren
 HannaLore Hein

Emilie Jackson-Edney
 Eve Knudtsen
 Debi Lane
 Megan Marie Leatherman
 Debra Leithauser
 Molly Lenty Dickson
 Jessica Letus
 Jacy Nary
 Kate Nelson
 Christine Neuhoff
 Ann Marie Peters
 Jodi Peterson
 Jennifer Quinn,
 Heather Quisel
 Sarah Reed
 Catherine Riddle
 Jessi Roberts
 Liza Roeser Atwood
 Megan Ronk
 Monica Rozier
 Kelly Ryan
 Lisa Sánchez
 Jen Schneider
 Jessica Shaw
 Sunny Shaw
 Tonya Smith
 Shannon Stith
 Kimberly Stutzman
 Corey Surber
 Adrienne Swain Smith
 Carrie Tucker
 Jennifer Wallace
 Jennifer Zielinski



Idaho Business Review publisher Cindy Suffa, 2022 Woman of the Year Linda A. Grow and 2021 Woman of the Year Odette Bodano.

2018

Ariel Agenbroad
 Donna M. Allen
 Sandy Anderson
 Emma L. Atchley
 Renee Bade
 Ysabel Bilbao
 Lynn Bradescu
 Krystal Chanda
 Linda Clark
 Debbie Cleverley
 Ronda S. Conger
 Tammy de Weerd
 Anna E. Eberlin
 Mandy G. Evans
 Carey Farmer
 Sheli Gartman
 Celia Gould
 Andrea "Red" Guerri

Suzie Hall
 Loraine Hand
 Jaime Hansen
 Angela Hemingway
 Lynn Hightower
 Heather Hill
 Stephanie Mathias Hilpert
 Shiloh Holmes
 Heidi J. Jarvis-Grimes
 Heather Kimmett
 Jennifer Landhuis
 Toni Lawson
 Twyla Lehto
 Amy Little
 Carol MacGregor
 Tara Malek
 Elizabeth Montgomery
 Jean Mutchie
 Christine E. Nicholas
 Susan Olson



Past Honorees

Beth Oppenheimer
 Diane Josephy Peavey
 MaryAnna Huong Peavey
 Kayla-Leah Rich
 Jan Rogers
 Lynn Schmidt
 Laura Smith
 Tracey Stone
 Gloria Totoricagüena
 Leslie J. Webb
 Christine Wilcox
 Crystal Wilson

2017

Kristin Armstrong Savola
 Laurie Bell
 Jan M. Bennetts
 Dyan Bevins
 Carlyn Blake
 Nicole A. Bradshaw
 Megan Bryant
 Christy Calhoun
 Janet Callahan
 Laura Cobb
 Debbie Critchfield
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 Finia Dinh
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 Jackie Flowers
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 Farhana Hibbert
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 Danielle Horras
 Ann O. Hubbert
 Terri Hughes
 Billie Johnson
 Erica M. Kallin
 Danae Klimes
 Debbie Kling
 Amy Lientz
 Cathy Light
 Amy Little
 Sue Linja
 Kelly McMurry
 Rhea Morrison
 Kimberly Ouwehand
 Lori Otter
 Sue Paul
 Amy Pence-Brown
 Mary C. Reiman
 Catherine Riddle
 Megan Ronk
 Sophie Sestero
 Susan E. Shadle

Caile E. Spear
 Denise L. Stephens
 Rhonda VanOrder
 Cindi Wilde
 Cynthia Yee-Wallace

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 Renee Avram
 Nora J. Carpenter
 Erin Cave
 Karen Echeverria
 Colleen Asumendi
 Fillmore
 Charlotte G. Borst
 Catherine Chertudi
 Winnie Christensen
 Julie M. Fogerson
 Ashley Ford-Squyres
 Janice E. Fulkerson
 Brandie Garlitz
 Erin Guerricabeitia
 Johanna (Joey) C. L. Hale
 Carolyn Holly
 Beth Ineck
 Sarah (Xiaoye) Jin
 Katherine Johnson
 Autumn Kersey
 Dana Boothe Kirkham
 Diana Lachiondo

Marcia T. Liebich
 Brooke Linville
 Barbara Zanzig Lock
 Corinne (Cori) Mantle-Bromley
 Deneen May
 Molly Mettler
 Amy J. Moll
 Terri Muse
 Nancy K. Napier
 Mary (M.C.) Niland
 Rebecca L. Noah Casper
 Patricia M. Olsson
 Julia Rundberg
 SeAnne Safaii-Waite
 Carole Skinner
 Stacie States
 Shannon Stoeger
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 Olga Tijerina-Menchaca
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