

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

BUSINESS WOMEN

of the year awards 2019



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From left to right: Trindl Reeves, Carrie Stone, Jane Finley, Carrie Vilaplana, Carlee Harmonson, Patti Roscoe, Cheryl Goodman and Holly Smithson

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BUSINESS WOMEN

of the year awards 2019

Letter from the Publisher



There was extra energy in the room this year as the **San Diego Business Journal** presented its 26th Business Women of the Year Awards at **Hilton San Diego Bayfront** on Nov. 13.

The sense of accomplishment and change was electric as fifteen women from a variety of industries won awards. The winners' inspiring stories and many achievements can be found in the following pages.

The event also gave us an opportunity to hear from a distinguished panel of executives who addressed the topic of "Getting Women on Boards, Gaining Mentors and Becoming One."

The panelists were **Jane Finley** of **Kaiser Permanente**, **Cheryl Goodman** of **Sony Electronics**, **Carlee Harmonson** of **Union Bank** and **Trindl Reeves** of **Marsh & McLennan Agency**, and our panel moderator, **Holly Smithson** of **Athena**.

Thanks also to **Carrie Stone** of **cStone & Associates**, who offered insights on how women can position themselves to get on boards in her keynote address, "Building Your Value and Brand for Boards." Here and throughout the program, speakers encouraged the audience of more than 400 to develop their talents and make a more open and better world.

We were honored to present **Patti Roscoe** with a Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing her work in the hospitality industry and the San Diego community.

We received over 200 nominations for the Business Women of the Year Awards. A panel of six judges selected the 15 winners from the 100 finalists. Our thanks go out to judges **John Asdell** of **Robert Half**, **Teresa Contreras** of the **American Heart Association**, **Christina DeVaca** of the **Corporate Directors Forum**, **William Eigner** of **Procopio**, **Nancy Rohland** of **National University System** and **Debra Rosen** of the **North San Diego Business Chamber**.

Also, a special thanks to our sponsors, who made this event possible. They are **Kaiser Permanente**, **Marsh & McLennan Agency**, **Sony Electronics**, the **North Island Credit Union Amphitheatre**, **Southwest Airlines**, **Union Bank**, **GreenRope**. Our charity partner was the **American Heart Association**. They join us in congratulating all the finalists and winners.

Please reach out to those you met or might have wanted to meet at the event. It is this kind of momentum that can move mountains and make big changes.

Congratulations all.

Barb Chodos
President & Publisher

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Getting a Seat at the Table: How Women Can Position Themselves to Get on Boards

LEADERSHIP: Event Speaker Offers Pointers To Aspiring Directors

■ By BRAD GRAVES

The 26th annual Business Women of the Year Awards brought several speakers together to discuss membership on boards, including the boards of public and private companies.

A panel of local business leaders spent a good amount of time talking about the need to increase the number of women on boards. California's Senate Bill 826 requires corporations in the state to have a certain amount of women on their boards, panel moderator **Holly Smithson** noted while kicking off the discussion.

Following the panel, the talk turned to the more general subject of getting a board seat. North County resident **Carrie Stone** offered the audience of more than 400 people some detailed advice in her keynote speech, "Building Your Value and Personal Brand for Boards."

Stone is president of **cStone & Associates**, an international executive search firm offering comprehensive executive and board advisory and recruiting services.

Stone, a North County resident, made it clear that the process of getting a board seat is neither quick nor easy. For aspirants early in their careers, achieving the goal will require effort and a significant amount of preparation — yet the goal is within reach. Continuous learning and networking are both essential.

Financial acuity is a must, she said. Board

members must be able to read financial statements, understand them and ask the right questions.

Inventory and Superpowers

As a first step, Stone advised her listeners to look within, to know their motivations for serving on a board. Understanding their own motivations may give prospective board members a sense of what type of board they might serve on: nonprofit, public or private.

Stone encouraged her listeners to take inventory of their professional skills and experience; to understand what boards are looking for; to determine what value they might bring to a board and where they may need to develop and cultivate skills and experience to meet desired board criteria.

Stone told her listeners to identify their Board Superpowers. These include unique skills, experience, value-add and personal attributes.

Personal attributes are assessed of board candidates to evaluate whether the candidate will be a good cultural fit for a board, Stone told her audience. A member must have the proper emotional intelligence and

a sense of collegiality, as well as courage to go against "group think." Prospective board members must have "an insatiable thirst for knowledge."

A Four-Point Plan

The speaker offered potential board members in the audience a four-point plan for building their board value.

Training and education is the first action item.

Gaining experience is a second thing to do.

Serving on a large not-for-profit board with governance and on committees is a good place to start, she said.

Thirdly, Stone said potential board members need mentors. They need to identify a mentor serving on one board or multiple boards of interest. A good mentor will inspire a person to operate at their highest potential, she added.

The more technical aspects of board membership also deserve study. Stone advised listeners to develop committee expertise. Boards typically have audit, compensation, nominating and governance committees. A person can become familiar with this subject by reviewing public company charters.

“

Prospective board members must have
“an insatiable thirst for knowledge.”

CARRIE STONE



Photo by Bob Hoffman Photography
Keynote speaker, **Carrie Stone**, addresses the subject of getting a board seat.

National Association of Corporate Directors programs are helpful. Prospective board members can also learn from certified public accountants and compensation consultants.

“Read, read and read,” Stone told her audience.

Spreading the Word

As many board seats are acquired through a relationship or referral, Stone advised attendees to develop a strategy for their board pursuits and communicate it broadly.

Stone also advised that the most critical marketing tool a board aspirant needs is a “board bio” that speaks to skills and experience relevant to board governance. Boards are seeking stewards of the business, not managers. She shared that recruiters and board members may look them up on LinkedIn and that they should optimize their profiles to emphasize board-ready skills and experience.

The concept of “The Humblebrag” was introduced as a powerful way for women to pitch themselves in a story-like manner with pride and passion.

Be intentional about your search, Stone advised, and network like a champion. ■

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BUSINESS WOMEN of the year awards 2019

Patti Roscoe Leaves Her Mark in Business, Academic and Philanthropic Circles

AWARDS: Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Grew Tourism Industry

■ By BRAD GRAVES

A fixture in San Diego's civic life, a leader in the tourism industry and a benefactor to the community, **Patti Roscoe** was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award Nov. 13 during the 26th annual Business Women of the Year Awards luncheon.

Roscoe received a standing ovation as longtime friend **Joyce Gattas** introduced her.

"What a stunning honor this is," Roscoe said. She thanked the judges and all behind the awards ceremony and congratulated all of the afternoon's finalists and awardees. She thanked mentors, family members and business associates by name. They included **Denise Dornfeld**, her second in command at her business, "who stayed with me through thick and thin. She was my guiding star."

A Turning Point, a \$90,000 Loan

Roscoe did not start out wanting to work in tourism. She moved to the region from Buffalo, N.Y. in the 1960s. She learned the visitor business from an early boss and mentor, Martin Blatt, at Vacation Village.

Roscoe spent several years climbing the ladder in San Diego's tourism industry before opening PRA Destination Management. She went into business after finding herself unhappy in an existing destination

management job. She recalled two key clients telling her they would support her in her move. On hearing her plans, her boss told her he would "bury" her. Roscoe took out a \$90,000 Small Business Administration loan (at the time, the SBA considered women an underrepresented minority). Any profits went back to the bank, and Roscoe paid off her five-year loan in 14 months.

She went on to open 18 offices, franchise the business and ultimately sell it to a European company.

Looking back, Roscoe said that San Diego — once an afterthought in Southern California tourism — has come a long way. In an interview, however, she cautioned that the tourism market is extremely competitive and the community can't rest on its laurels.

"You just can't ever be off your game," she said.

On Campus, In the Community

Now retired, Roscoe is still active in the community. She volunteers with **San Diego State University**, supporting the hospitality and tourism management program she co-founded in 2001. She also supports musical theater, athletics and military veterans at the university. Roscoe has endowed scholarships (including those for women's basketball) and one professorship. She

chairs SDSU's Stewardship Committee. She received an honorary doctorate in 2014.

Patti Roscoe was also part of the effort to turn a retired aircraft carrier into the **USS Midway Museum** (making her, in Navy slang, a plank owner). She sits on the board of the **Balboa Park Conservancy** and was the second woman president of the **San Diego Rotary Club**. She is a past chair of the San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau and a supporter of many community organizations, including **Junior Achievement** and the **Girl Scouts**.

Roscoe and her partner, Jim Tiffany, live in Bankers Hill.

After the ceremony, Roscoe said she framed her acceptance speech for the many young women in the audience. Her intent, she said, was to tell the people just beginning their careers that "everything they do adds up in life." ■



Photo by Bob Hoffman Photography

 A professional headshot of Sandra Pelletier, a woman with short blonde hair, wearing a grey blazer over a black top. She is smiling slightly. The background is a dark grey gradient with decorative orange and blue oval patterns.

CONGRATULATIONS SAUNDRA PELLETIER CEO, Evofem Biosciences

2019 BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR

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Rising Star



Wynter Deagle

Managing Partner - San Diego Office
 Troutman Sanders LLP

Wynter Deagle is the managing partner for Troutman Sanders' office in San Diego, making her the only office managing partner under 40 for an Am Law 100 firm. Deagle is a trial attorney and a data privacy expert, helping clients handle data breaches, class-action lawsuits and proactively managing data security.

She has already notched some impressive victories in her career, including a big win for client CrossFit Inc., with the company's competitor dropping its defamation case.

Deagle received her J.D. at Northeastern University School of Law, beginning her career at the Middlesex District Attorney's Office and later working for Mintz Levin for 10 years.

"I've been blessed to have amazing mentors in my career," she said.

In her current role, she helps recruit and mentor women and underrepresented attorneys, adding five new attorneys firm since May of this year.

Rising Star



Tara Hammond

Director of Community Development
 Sullivan Solar Power

Tara Hammond, director of community development for Sullivan Solar Power, said her selection as a rising star is an honor she shares with her community development team – "nine incredible women in a male dominated industry."

"I feel fortunate to hold leadership roles where I am able to mentor other women, guiding them to find their purpose and succeed in their careers," Hammond said. She urged other women "to take risks to set the example and break the glass ceiling."

"The Harvard Business Review recently did a study that proved women who have an inner circle of close female contacts are more likely to land executive positions with greater authority and higher pay – build that network ladies," Hammond said.

In nominating Hammond, Sullivan Solar Community Development Manager Taylor Mark said Hammond "truly leads by example with her passion for clean energy," adding that Hammond helped make the company "one of the largest privately-held solar companies" in the nation.

Rising Star



Brittany Merrill Yeng

Co-founder
 Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey

Since being founded in 2017, Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey has attained approximately 400 accounts in San Diego alone. In September, co-founder Brittany Merrill Yeng, along with partner and husband Steven Yeng, took their peanut butter-flavored liquor nationwide. As of October, Skrewball products are in all 50 states, according to the company. And now, Merrill Yeng has been named as one of San Diego Business Journal's 15 Women of the Year for 2019.

"I'm so honored to be among these amazing women," said Merrill Yeng about receiving the honor. "Like most women, the days often feel too short and I have so much more I want to accomplish. It is a great reminder to take a step back and fuel yourself and those around you in what we have already accomplished."



Congratulations Nikki Carlson & Kailynn Bowling

Congratulations to the Founders of **ChicExecs PR & Retail Strategy Firm**. They brought to life this thriving PR and Retail Strategy Firm through their experiences promoting their own product line, ChicBuds.

As entrepreneurs, they saw the need for an agency that focuses on all areas of a brand from product launch to retail strategy to press coverage. With inspirational quotes adorning the walls and vision boards scattered throughout, each day is filled with a reminder of the true passion and purpose of the company. ChicExecs is now rapidly in a growth phase as they continue to service more clients and employ even more qualified women. With more than 50 females on staff, Nikki and Kailynn pride themselves on providing mentorship to young women.

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Betsy Brennan

President & CEO, Downtown San Diego Partnership

Betsy Brennan said it was “really cool and humbling and an honor” to be chosen one of 15 Business Women of the Year.

“I took a very nontraditional path to get here,” said Brennan, president and CEO of the **Downtown San Diego Partnership**.

“I would say to people, to women, do things that interest you and that you’re passionate about. I’m a California licensed attorney but I never practiced law. What interested me was the built environment and how people interact with it,” Brennan said.

Brennan said she started her career working as an unpaid intern for U.S. Rep. **Scott Peters**, D-San Diego, when Peters was the first San Diego City Council president.

She has a bachelor’s degree in international politics and Spanish from the **University of Richmond** and a law degree with a specialization in land use from the **University of San Diego**.

Brennan was appointed president and CEO of the Downtown Partnership in 2018 after serving as chief of staff to former San Diego State University President **Stephen L.**

Weber and president and development of stewardship for the **Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina**.

“I was a single mom with two young children when I took this job and didn’t have a lot of family support here in San Diego but the (Partnership) board was understanding. We’ve made it work and it’s been amazing,” Brennan said. “You might think you can’t do it, but you can.”

She also met her husband, pediatric anesthesiologist **Eli Ohanyon**, through the Downtown Partnership after returning to San Diego “and he is amazing.”

In nominating Brennan for the award, **Sumeet Parekh**, board chairman of the Downtown Partnership, wrote that “Betsy has driven efforts to enhance the unique identity of downtown’s distinct neighborhoods through beautification, activation and place-making, recapturing parks and open spaces.”

“Betsy remains clearly focused on the mission of the partnership to promote an economically prosperous and vibrant urban center,” wrote Parekh, managing partner of HP Investors.



Crystal Browning

Founder, Baggage Nanny

Being recognized by my community and the SDBJ as (one of the) Business Women of the Year is such a great honor,” said **Crystal Browning**, founder and owner of **Baggage Nanny LLC**, about being one of 15 women chosen this year by a panel of contest judges. “Baggage Nanny is the result of hard work and dedication not just by me, but my father Todd, my boyfriend Kyle, who were both our first Baggage Nannies and many strong businesswomen who have mentored me along the way.”

Baggage Nanny was the first female-founded business to be accepted into the **San Diego Airport Innovation Lab**. Baggage Nanny then became the first female-led company to be offered a contract to operate within **San Diego International Airport** in August. Located in Terminal 1, Baggage Nanny is a first-of-its-kind, on-demand concierge service that aims to further accommodate travelers’ cargo

needs. Prior to Baggage Nanny, Browning founded and established a successful vacation rental management and cleaning business in 2015.

“I would like to thank **Flossie Hall** (CEO and founder of **FJHall Media**), **Melisa Celikel** (CEO of **Make SHT Happen**) and **Silvia Mah** (president of **CONNECT**) for being so supportive of me on this journey, especially during the ups and downs,” said Browning. “Being an entrepreneur can be overwhelming and isolating, so, I’m very grateful to the strong women who have stood beside me and encouraged me to keep pushing. I’m excited to see what city we bring our service to next. 2020 is going to be a busy year!”

Recently, Baggage Nanny opened at Terminal 2 and, by the second quarter of next year, Browning hopes to launch in five more airports across the U.S., she said.



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We are also working with community leaders to implement heart health programs and provide life-saving skills. Improving the heart health of our communities is a collaborative effort, and we are excited to be working with organizations and volunteers from across the region. Together, we are positively impacting San Diego's heart health.

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Photo courtesy of the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association trained 131,014 community members in CPR last year.

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By The Numbers

We trained 131,014 San Diego students and community members to save a life with Hands-Only CPR® last year. There is still a lot to be done, and we are collaborating with volunteers and sponsors across the region to do it.

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Kelly DuFord

Founder & Managing Partner, DuFord Law

Kelly DuFord founded her firm with her husband, Craig, in 2017. In the past three years, DuFord Law has grown to three offices and more than 20 employees, and is on track to bring in between \$1.5 million and \$2 million in revenue this year.

Her firm focuses on employment litigation services, as well as providing legal services for small businesses and corporations. For example, for small businesses that might not be able to afford an in-house counsel, DuFord Law allows them to access the firm's services for a flat monthly fee.

Born and raised in Ireland, Kelly saw the lasting effect of the Marriage Bar, a law that was lifted in 1973 that had prevented women from serving in the public sector and some private roles after marriage. This fueled DuFord's lifelong goal to help women.

At DuFord law, 18 of the firm's 23 employees are women. Many of them

also have families. DuFord and her husband have three kids between ages 5 and 8.

"At DuFord Law, we really strive to create an environment where women feel empowered and where lawyers can still have careers and still be moms," DuFord said.

DuFord pursued her undergraduate studies at the **University of San Diego**. She got her juris doctor at **California Western Law School**.

She started her career as a law clerk in the San Diego District Attorney's office and as a Deputy District Attorney in Las Vegas before serving as a litigation attorney for a private practice. She then went on to co-found her own firm.

In her free time, DuFord volunteers with the California Western School of Law's Community Law Project. She also provides legal workshops and classes for entrepreneurs.



Carolyn Kissick

Executive Vice President, San Diego County Credit Union

Award winner Carolyn Kissick is executive vice president of enterprise risk management and Chief Risk Officer at **San Diego County Credit Union**—the largest locally owned financial institution in San Diego.

"I am incredibly honored to receive this award, especially among San Diego's most accomplished and esteemed women in business," Kissick said. "As I mentioned, I am not used to being in the spotlight as much of my work is behind the scenes, which made this acknowledgement a real surprise and honor."

Kissick's work is sensitive and at times, highly confidential. She leads all credit union efforts to minimize business risks that could threaten the organization's productivity and profitability. Her focus includes compliance, Bank Secrecy Act, quality control, records management, information security and credit risk. Among other things, she leads efforts to ensure SDCCU's data from customers, vendors or other parties is kept confidential and secure. Additionally, she works with authorities at

all levels to thwart and catch bad actors posing as qualified new account holders with stolen data and information.

Teresa Campbell, the credit union's chief executive, called Kissick "an unsung hero."

With 25 years of experience in credit union management, Kissick joined SDCU as senior vice president of operations in 2014. She was promoted to EVP of operations and enterprise risk management in 2017 and landed her current role earlier this year. She has a BS/BM in business administration and management with a minor in finance from University of Phoenix.

During the ceremony, Kissick thanked her team.

"I have an amazing team that is dedicated to ensuring all decisions are balanced with potential technical, regulatory and competitive risks — and that effective policies and procedures are established to manage operational risks and regulatory requirements are met on local, state and federal levels," she explained later. "This work is incredibly important because ultimately, it protects our customers' security."



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Congratulations
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Business Woman of the Year 2019

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Betzy Lynch

CEO, Lawrence Family JCC | JACOBS FAMILY CAMPUS

Betzy Lynch — the CEO of the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, Jacobs Family Campus in La Jolla — relished her win at the Business Woman of the Year awards.

“I was pleasantly surprised and really honored to be within a group of incredible women who are empowering other women to be the best versions of themselves in the business world,” Lynch said.

From 2013 through August 2017 she served as the executive director of the Levite JCC in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to that, she held the role as assistant executive director of the JCC in Memphis, Tennessee.

Lynch has had multiple leadership experiences with the JCC Maccabi Games of 2012 and 2017, serving as Maccabi Games director and host. The games integrate sports and the arts with Jewish identity and values. San Diego is host for the games in 2020.

Throughout her career, Lynch has demonstrated a proven ability to provide

cross-functional team leadership, development of staff, program enhancement and an ability to create initiatives to engage community and build collaborative partnerships. She has led her organizations through organizational change, and also taken them from deficit budgets to positive.

She created a project, called Binah (meaning Wisdom), designed to take female volunteer nonprofit leaders and help them to elevate their profiles. The curriculum is rooted in Jewish learning, including the work of many women throughout history and their impact on the broader community.

She also served on the board of Planned Parenthood, bringing its programming to the Jewish community, and advocating on behalf of women’s health and reproductive rights in Washington D.C. Additionally, she served on a cross-cultural advisory board for the National Conflict Resolution Center.



Penny Maus

Department Manager, Port of San Diego

Since joining the Port of San Diego as department manager of real estate, Penny Maus has been instrumental in assuring San Diegans, as well as visitors, have equitable access to the San Diego Bay through her endless efforts in reimagining and reinvigorating the waterfront. This year, Maus had led the most notable project statewide to achieve this goal.

At the top of the year, Maus spearheaded the request for proposal (RFP) process for both the development and operations of a lower-cost overnight accommodations project. In May, Maus and her team brought the port commissioners a proposal to build a new micro hotel on Pacific Highway in downtown that would contain hundreds of sleeping pods, which won the board’s unanimous support. Maus also led the RFP process for a major Chula Vista Bayfront project that, after years of planning and approvals, broke ground in September.

These are just a few of Maus’ latest

accomplishments and some of the many reasons why she was selected as one of 15 Business Women of the Year.

“I was humbled to have been nominated by CREW San Diego for my work with the Port of San Diego in transforming San Diego Bay’s waterfront,” said Maus. “This year, my efforts towards providing unique and affordable hospitality offerings for San Diegans and its visitors was especially rewarding so I am thankful to the judges and the San Diego Business Journal for this honor.”

Outside of her work at the Port of San Diego, Maus is a dedicated animal-rescue volunteer. After recently adopting a dog from San Diego-based California Labradors, Retrievers and More, Maus began volunteering there and assisting with special events and fundraisers. Additionally, Maus is an avid supporter of her alma mater, Northern Illinois University, starting the first regional alumni group to be formed outside of Illinois in 2019.

J
JEN SINGER EVENTS

**Congratulations to Jen Singer
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**CONGRATULATIONS!
NANCY L. SASAKI**

Congratulations to our CEO and President, Nancy L. Sasaki, for being selected as a finalist for the San Diego Business Journal Business Women of the Year award!

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United Way of San Diego County

show your heart on

CSUSM GIVING DAY

DECEMBER 3, 2019



Join Dr. Patricia Prado-Olmos and Give with the Heart of a Cougar

CSUSM Giving Day, held each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, is a day for people to support what they love about the university, from student scholarships to important initiatives. In only four years of existence at CSUSM (home of the Cougars), Giving Day has grown by leaps and bounds, capped by a 24-hour period last year in which the university raised \$448,955, an astounding increase of 2,877% over the inaugural event. Now that's some real heart!

From the Alliance to Accelerate Excellence in Education to scholarships to programs that fuel student success, Giving Day is a chance to fund what you love. Join Patricia on Dec. 3 in helping CSUSM and our students thrive.

[CSUSM.EDU/GIVINGDAY](https://www.csusm.edu/givingday) | [#HEARTOFOUCOUGAR](https://twitter.com/HEARTOFOUCOUGAR)



HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS

California State University San Marcos congratulates Dr. Patricia Prado-Olmos, vice president of Community Engagement, on being named a 2019 Businesswoman of the Year by the San Diego Business Journal.

Dr. Prado-Olmos has been part of the CSUSM family for more than two decades, joining the university as an assistant professor of education in 1997. She has led CSUSM's division of Community Engagement since 2015, helping to build a stronger and more vibrant region by connecting the university to surrounding communities in mutually beneficial ways. In her role as vice president, Dr. Prado-Olmos leads CSUSM's activities related to a guaranteed admission program with partner school districts, tribal initiatives, community-engaged scholarship, civic engagement, service-learning internships and economic development.

Like the majority of CSUSM's students, Dr. Prado-Olmos was a first-generation college student, and she works each day to make connections between students and the community to ensure that students are able to realize their potential.

It is through the commitment and passion of people like Dr. Prado-Olmos that CSUSM is transforming the lives of our students as well as our region.



California State University
SAN MARCOS



Sandra Pelletier

CEO, Evofem Biosciences Inc.

Sandra Pelletier has led Evofem through a pivotal stage. San Diego-based Evofem will soon ask the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to approve amphora, its contraceptive gel.

To get to this point, she worked tirelessly to pull in clinical development funding, built out the company's manufacturing and supply chains to prepare for possible commercialization, and got past a regulatory snag.

She did this all while battling stage III breast cancer. Diagnosed in August 2018, Sandra continued to lead the company while undergoing a double mastectomy, aggressive chemotherapy, an oophorectomy and a hysterectomy.

For this, Pelletier won one of the San Diego Business Journal's 15 Business Women of the Year awards.

"2019 was a very challenging year for me as a female leader. I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer but fortunately was able to conquer cancer," Pelletier said.

"To be recognized as a female leader

having worked through my treatment, raised \$80 million in capital and on the precipice of launching the biggest innovation in women's health in decades, I am humbled and honored. Thank you SDBJ."

Pelletier took over as CEO in 2015. The role brought unanticipated challenges, like having to redesign a phase 3 clinical trial after discovering data that didn't sit well with the FDA.

Results of the reworked trial came out this summer and put the company in position for regulatory approval. Evofem is striving to disrupt a market that's long been dominated by the birth control pill and condoms.

Phase 3 results have found the company's gel — which regulates vaginal pH in a range that's inhospitable to sperm — is about as effective as other birth control methods when used as directed.

Unlike the pill, amphora doesn't have hormones.

Pelletier has 25 years of experience in the pharmaceutical, drug and medical device industries.



Patricia Prado-Olmos

VP - Community Engagement, California State University San Marcos

Patricia Prado-Olmos has this advice for young women just starting their careers: do your research.

Learn all you can about an institution or company before going to work for them "to find a place that aligns with your principles and passions," said Prado-Olmos, vice president of community engagement at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM).

"It is a tremendous honor to be recognized among such strong women as the other recipients," Prado-Olmos said. "We come from such diverse careers and it is truly a privilege to have my work in creating and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships between CSUSM and regional community partners recognized."

Along with doing their research, Prado-Olmos advises women to put aside their fears.

"Fear of failing is real and know you will make an error and sometimes fail spectacularly. Still, the true measure of grace is to learn from your mistakes. Be open to grace."

It was that kind of attitude that prompted CSUSM President Ellen Neufeldt to nominate Prado-Olmos for the award.

Neufeldt wrote that Prado-Olmos was "a true trailblazer," adding that Prado-Olmos "believes wholeheartedly in public higher education's ability to transform families and regions, and she works each day according to this belief."

CSUSM is the only California State University system to have a division of community engagement.

"For more than five years, Patricia has led the division to new heights, doubling the number of employees and budget and adding critical programs that further the community engagement mission," Neufeldt wrote.

Prado-Olmos has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Pomona College and a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of California Santa Barbara.

She served on the faculty at the University of Houston Clear Lake and Pomona College before joining the CSUSM faculty in the College of Education in 1997.

She was associate dean and interim dean in the College of Education, Health and Human Services at CSUSM before becoming vice president of community engagement.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

BUSINESS WOMEN
 of the year awards finalist


MARY LOCKWOOD
 MANAGING DIRECTOR, U.S.



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Tricia Mercer (left) sailing on an after-hours People & Culture team outing.

Congratulations

TRICIA MERCER

Vice President of People & Culture, Sentek Global
 2019 Business Women of the Year Awards Finalist

Tricia has led the development of a culture that empowers, energizes and motivates employees to take action.

She makes a point to get to know all employees on a personal level and has built a People & Culture department that truly earns its name. Tricia and her team are champions of every employee's personal and professional success and this passion reverberates throughout all levels in the organization.

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Karen Possemato

Vice President, Illumina Inc.

Karen Possemato often serves as the face of **Illumina**, a genomics titan based in San Diego.

She is the company's vice president of corporate marketing and communications, leading a marketing ecosystem that spans regions, core and clinical businesses. Her work covers Illumina's philanthropy mission, too.

Possemato was among the **San Diego Business Journal's** 15 Business Women of the Year.

"It was such a surprise and an honor to be recognized in this way. Being nominated by my colleagues and then being acknowledged in my community for the work that I do every day is humbling," said Possemato in an email.

"I am very proud to represent my industry (genomics), my craft (communications) and my peers (amazing women leaders) in this context. Many thanks to San Diego Business Journal for creating community around our women business leaders!"

Possemato's accomplishments include establishing a formal corporate communications channel, which integrated reputa-

tion management, communications strategy and programming across employees, investors, media and the general public.

Not to mention, she's part of community science efforts, like **FACES for the Future San Diego**, which prepares at-risk high school students from City Heights for careers that offer livable wages and upward mobility. And since 2014 she has chaired the **Biocom** advisory board for the Biocom Institute Festival of Science and Engineering, a 10-day event to build skills in science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – among kids and families.

Not to mention, Possemato co-founded the Illumina Women's Leadership Network, which promotes professional growth and supports Illumina's leaders globally.

"She believes that the connection between education, industry and the community is essential to innovation, and invests significant time in activities supporting that connection," said **Amy McCourt**, Illumina's director of intellectual property and commercial litigation, who submitted the application.



Nancy Sasaki

President & CEO, United Way of San Diego

In her first year as president and CEO of the **United Way of San Diego County**, **Nancy Sasaki** has led the nonprofit through a re-branding and built its presence in the local community. Sasaki is the second female CEO and the first Japanese-American CEO in the organization's 100-year history.

"I can't believe I'm standing here," Sasaki said, while accepting the award. "Really what it's all about—it's putting your head down and saying, 'I'm doing the best I can for the people I care about.' Our goal is to make sure our kids feel like they have every opportunity."

Since September of 2018, Sasaki has worked to develop United Way's strategic communications plan and to build out partnerships with local governments, community leaders and schools. So far, she has helped the nonprofit secure two major contracts.

Next year, as part of the state of California's CountMe 2020 initiative, United Way will provide education and outreach to hard-to-count populations for the 2020 Census. United Way will also work with the **San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp.** and other groups to support

JP Morgan's \$3 million Advancing San Diego initiative, intended to create jobs and economic opportunity across the region. As part of Advancing San Diego, United Way will help evaluate the most effective methods to develop a high-skilled workforce in San Diego, including providing internships in high-demand industries to college students.

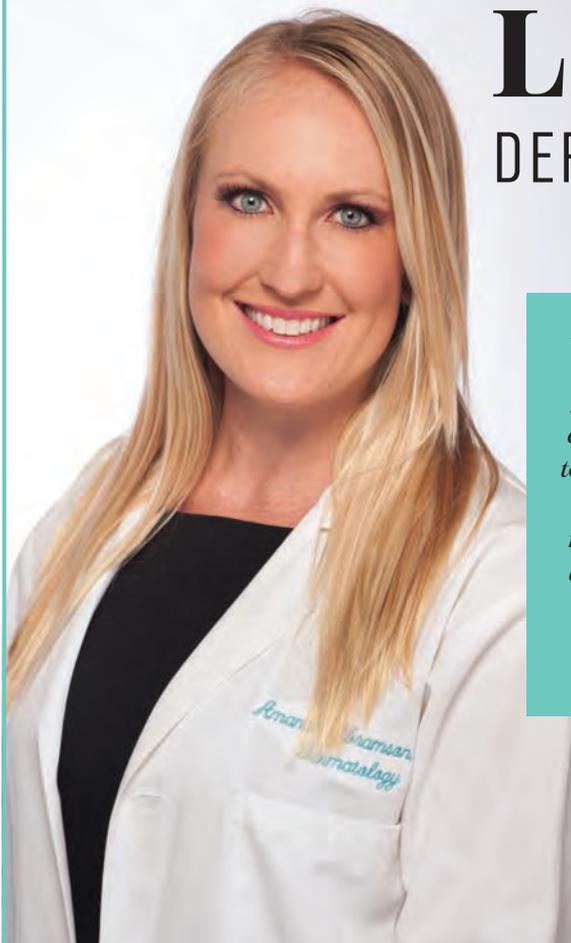
Sasaki had more than 30 years of experience in the nonprofit sector before joining United Way. Most recently, she served as executive director of the **Alliance Healthcare Foundation** for seven years, where she worked with the board to distribute \$2.5 million annually through initiatives and grants.

Prior to that, she led **Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles** for more than five years, where she helped increase the organization's annual revenue from \$10 million to \$20 million.

She has a master's in community health from the **University of Texas at Austin**, and a bachelor's in education with a teaching certificate. Sasaki also serves on the boards of **2-1-1 San Diego**, the **San Diego Impact Investors Network** and the **Regional Task Force on the Homeless San Diego County**.

DR. AMANDA LLOYD

DERMATOLOGIST



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SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL **BUSINESS WOMEN** of the year awards **2019**

Congratulations to all of the winners & finalists.

*Thank you for supporting
 the dynamic women who are
 shaping the San Diego
 business community.*

#BusinessWomen2019 #SDBJEvents

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



Holly Smithson
 CEO, Athena

Holly Smithson leads a professional association that fastracks women in the science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – workforce through leadership development, community investment and market research.

Smithson joined **Athena** as CEO in 2017, having previously served as vice president of business strategy at the **California Life Sciences Association**.

She was among the **San Diego Business Journal's** 15 Business Women of the Year.

"Nothing fuels my fire more than celebrating with high impact female leaders aligned to make San Diego a destination for diversity," said Smithson in an email. "This winner's circle is uniquely comprised of an inclusive community that values gender equality and the advancement of women leaders as a means to drive corporate performance."

Prior to getting into the science sectors, Smithson was the president & chief operating officer at Cleantech San Diego.

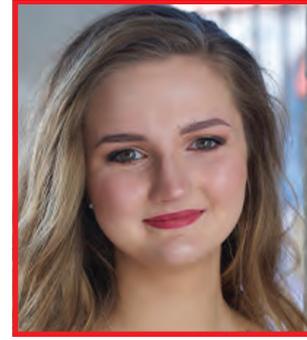
Before this, she worked in broadcast jour-

nalism as a news director and anchor for several television and talk-radio stations. Smithson also worked in public policy for a decade as a presidential appointee at several federal agencies and as a registered lobbyist in Washington, D.C.

"She has demonstrated to achieve performance excellence with a deep understanding of sales and marketing cycle, experiential marketing design, inspired team building, fundraising and community engagement," said **David Crean**, a managing director at **Objective Capital Partners**, and who submitted the application.

"Holly has a successful track record in mastering inspirational narrative, messaging and positioning, defining strategy, relentlessly executing on plan while remaining consistently connected to the heart of the mission."

Athena pushes to transform female scientists and technologists into corporate leaders, with a goal of advancing 1 million women leading in STEM by 2030.



Jeweliet Tangen
 CEO, The Strategy Loft Inc.

The story of **Jeweliet Tangen** is one of resilience.

Tangen grew up in foster care and suffered abuse and neglect until she was about 6 years old.

She was adopted. However, that arrangement did not last. Her new mother passed away and she was alone again by age 15.

Despite all of her challenges, Tangen started her first million-dollar business at 16 years old.

Now in her early 20s, she is the CEO of a consulting business called **The Strategy Loft**. Tangen and her team are located in Downtown San Diego.

The Strategy Loft got its start by helping entrepreneurs scale their online coaching programs to \$1 million to \$5 million in revenue. It is also a full-service consulting firm with a focus on marketing and sales.

The Strategy Loft points to the success of client **Paul Spurlock** of **Advisor Train-**

ing Systems. The North Carolina business trains financial advisers to move their practices online. The client had \$1.5 million in revenue. According to The Strategy Loft, he produced \$500,000 in additional revenue in the first month after working with the consulting firm.

Tangen was among 15 dynamic women who received honors during the Business Woman of the Year Awards.

"Thank you so much for this honor," Tangen said later by email. "I'm grateful to be named alongside other female entrepreneurs who are as committed and passionate as I am. I sincerely believe none of my success in business would have been possible without my guiding philosophy that the more you give, the more you will make."

To lead by example, Tangen donates hundreds of thousands of dollars to charities that help sexually abused and hungry children every year.

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An inspiring panel of speakers, judges, and awards recipients at the Business Women of the Year Awards.



Roger Dougherty (Kaiser Permanente).



William Eigner (Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP).



Barb Chodos (San Diego Business Journal).



Cheryl Goodman (Sony Electronics).



Trindl Reeves (Marsh & McLennan Agency) and Carlee Harmonson (Union Bank).



Jane Finley (Kaiser Permanente).



Carrie Stone (cStone & Associates).



Cindy Marten (San Diego Unified School District).



Joyce Gattas (San Diego State University).



Christina DeVaca (Corporate Directors Forum).



Sara Napoli (San Diego Police Foundation) and AnnMarie Gabaldon (San Diego Business Journal).



Patti Roscoe with her Lifetime Achievement Award.



Carrie Vilaplana (Union Bank).



Sarah Bilyeu, Nathan Schmidt, and Heather Diamond (San Diego County Credit Union).



John Asdell (Robert Half).



A captivated audience listens to the speaker panel at the 2019 Business Women of the Year Awards.



Karen Possemato and Christina Lim (Illumina).



Peter Callstrom (San Diego Workforce Partnership), Nancy Rohland (National University System), and Phil Ginsburg (Lawrence Family JCC | Jacobs Family Campus).



Teresa Contreras (American Heart Association).



Mary Murray, Negin Banaei, and Kathleen Medina (Union Bank).



Michele Weakland and Kris Norby-Moseman (Morgan Stanley).



Starr Keichler (American Heart Association), Laura Josh (Gregor & Associates) and Chelsy Clark (American Heart Association).



Debra Rosen (North San Diego Business Chamber).



Jelena Arnold, Cynthia Sener, Adriana Purro, Carly O'Connor, and Coua Phang (Chatmeter).



Sarah Davis and Cass Wilson (Thrivent Financial).



Jane Finley and Roger Dougherty (Kaiser Permanente).

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL BUSINESS WOMEN of the year awards 2019



Winners of the 2019 Business Women of the Year celebrating.



Heather Henderson and Jen Singer (Jen Singer Events).



Megan Lacy, Vanessa Kretzchmar, Tara and Justin Hammond (Sullivan Solar Power).



Nancy Sasaki (United Way of San Diego).



Robert Browning and Crystal Browning (Baggage Nanny).



Penny Maus (Port of San Diego).



Sandra Pelletier (Evoform Biosciences, Inc.), Holly Smithson (Athena), Karen Possemato (Illumina).



Carolyn Kissick (San Diego County Credit Union).



Eli Ohayon and Betsy Brennan (Downtown San Diego Partnership).



Wynter Deagle (Troutman Sanders LLP).



Patricia Prado-Olmos (California State University San Marcos).



Todd Allen, Betzy Lynch and Phil Ginsburg (Lawrence Family JCC | Jacobs Family Campus).



Laura Naviaux Sturr (Robot Cache).



Christina Lim, Karen Possemato, Robin Duffy and Jenna Youngkin (Illumina).



Torrie Dunlap (Kids Included Together) and Brian Taggart (BDO).