

WD-40 Sees Record Growth During Pandemic

MANUFACTURING: Co. Says 'Isolation Renovation' Drives Gains

■ By FRED GRIER

In 2020, **WD-40** enjoyed its best year in the stock market since 2017. Its share price hit an all-time high, and its stock jumped 37% on revenue and earnings momentum.

The company reported \$124.6 million in the first-quarter revenues this year, up from \$98.5 million during that same period in 2020. That year-over-year increase was largely driven by increased demand for products linked to renovation trends associated with the pandemic.

WD-40's Chairman and Chief Executive **Garry Ridge** is optimistic 2021 will be another record-breaking year, as 'isolation renovation' will continue.

"We offer a variety of maintenance and cleaning products that have been in very high demand during these highly unusual times," said Ridge. "Our sales increased 26% compared to the first quarter of last year due primarily to increased demand for our products linked to renovation trends associated with the pandemic. We call this phenomenon 'isolation renovation' and we are experiencing it in nearly all of our direct markets around the world."



Garry Ridge
CEO
Chairman of the Board
WD-40

More notably, WD-40's market value surpassed \$4 billion for the first time and now trades at more than 9 times its estimated sales in fiscal 2021.

The lubricant and cleaning product manufacturer now has a bigger market value than iconic department store Macy's Inc. and a richer valuation than Shake Shack Inc., according to Bloomberg.

Wide Product line

Founded in 1953, The formula WD-40's product lineup was developed in 1953 by a fledgling enterprise called Rocket Chemical Company. It took 40 tries to get the water displacement (WD) formula right—hence its name.

Headquartered in Scripps Ranch and with roughly 525 employees globally, its products are currently available in more than 176 countries and territories worldwide. A publicly-traded company, shares of company



Roughly 83% of the company's revenue comes from the namesake product line.

stock trade on the Nasdaq under the symbol "WDFC."

Its flagship product, WD-40, is a renowned and useful lubricant and rust remover. But the namesake brand is not the company's sole product. It also sells well-known household and cleaning brands Spot Shot, 2000 Flushes, X-14, 1001, among others.

Selling Memories

Roughly 83% of the company's revenue comes from the namesake product line, according to Ridge, adding that the company offers a "wide variety" of maintenance and cleaning products which have been in very high demand throughout the pandemic.

WD-40 is the market leader, among its peers in the Chemicals-Specialty industry group. Other competitors in the space include **Koppers**, **Rayonier Advanced Materials** and **Albermarle**.

"For diehards, WD-40 is more than just a lubricant spray in a can — it's an essential item," said Ridge. "We're dedicated

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New President, COO for Sony

ELECTRONICS:

Mike Fasulo to Retire

■ By BRAD GRAVES

Neal Manowitz has been named president and chief operating officer of **Sony Electronics Inc. North America**, effective April 1. Sony Electronics — with its North American headquarters in Rancho Bernardo — made the announcement Feb. 2.

He will take the place of **Mike Fasulo**, who is retiring. Fasulo led Sony's multi-billion-dollar electronics operations in North America for the past seven years, and has been with the company for 37 years. Fasulo is credited for turning around the company, boosting sales and changing the company culture.

➔ **Sony page 6**

Co. Grows With ADUs

HOUSING: 2017 Law Heightens Demand

■ By RAY HUARD

A three-year-old La Mesa company — **Maxable** — is helping homeowners plan and build accessory dwelling units, also known as granny flats.

Demand for granny flats in California has skyrocketed since 2017, when the Legislature passed a law that allowed people who own single family



Caitlin Bigelow
Co-Founder and CEO
Maxable

➔ **Maxable page 35**

Leaders Making a Difference

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS: Week Two in Black History Month Celebration

■ By JAY HARN

This is the second week in the **San Diego Business Journal's** continuing celebration of Black History Month. Each week in February a special section is being published to celebrate the

San Diego region's Black entrepreneurs.

Each of these weekly sections this month will feature stories about local black entrepreneurs who have achieved much in their businesses and contributed to the San Diego community.

The ten additional businesses featured

this week are just a sample of what local Black-owned businesses have accomplished.

Kirby Brady is the city of San Diego's first Chief Innovation Officer. Her story may be found on page 8.

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CELEBRATING BLACK ENTREPRENEURS

Expanding Our Community of Business SEE PAGES 8-15



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New Mayor, New Position

CIVIC: Kirby Brady Appointed City of San Diego's First Chief Innovation Officer

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

With a newly-elected mayor for the City of San Diego came the appointment of Kirby Brady as the city's first Chief Innovation Officer (CIO). At the helm of the Performance and Analytics department, Brady is finding new ways to harness data and technology to create a more equitable community.

"Our team is really focused on taking the data that either we're producing, by way of all the services that we provide, kind of transactional data, and also combining that with other datasets and really trying to provide additional insight, doing analysis and making this data, useful for us to inform operations and ultimately make the city function better," Brady said.

Brady assumes a dual title of CIO and director of Performance and Analytics where she leads a small-but-mighty team of 15 people who interface with multiple facets of the city government. Mayor Todd Gloria touted Brady's passion for civic innovation and her experience as a key to her being the city's first CIO.

"I couldn't be prouder to have Kirby Brady as San Diego's first chief innovation officer," Gloria said. "Kirby's unique experiences coupled with her creativity, drive and passion for civic innovation are



Kirby Brady
Chief Innovation Officer
City of San Diego

going to help our City harness the data and technology we need to stretch taxpayer dollars while providing world-class service for people in every neighborhood."

Defining Innovation

While more major American cities and companies adopt the role of CIO's into their structure, it starts with defining what "innovation" means for different industries or cities based on its resources. Brady said that innovation for the City of San Diego mainly tackles two things.

"It's really empowering our elected officials, really empowering our leadership at the city to make better decisions, through and with the use of data," Brady explained. "And the second piece of that I think is I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we're facing a pretty concerning and serious budget shortfall as a result of some of the fallouts in the pandemic."

With this in mind, Brady is optimistic that San Diego can come out better than before the pandemic as she is focused on finding ways to ensure that no citizen is

left behind by making sure underserved areas in the community are not overlooked.

"I think we understand that we are stronger when we are all really succeeding and achieving our economic potential," Brady said.

Working Toward Equity

One example of how her team does this is by combining publicly available data such as demographics and layering that with data gathered through city services such as the Get It Done app where citizens can report infrastructure issues in their neighborhood. This gives the city a better idea of how different communities and citizens face different issues.

Another instance is how her team analyzed library donations and made sure these resources were distributed equitably throughout the city.

As a kid, Brady wanted to be a paleontologist when she grew up. Although she's not professionally studying fossils, she found a passion during school for human geography and how people engage with their environment. Now, you could say she studies the "living breathing

organism" of the city as the head of the Performance and Analytics department.

She started as director of this department about a year ago, after serving four years as the director of Research for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and a little over six years at the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) as a research analyst.

Along with creating this new position in city hall, it shifts the governance structure so Brady's team informs not only the city's chief operations officer, but the mayor's office as well to help inform policy through data analysis.

"Kirby and her team have already proven to be invaluable as we take a data-driven approach to navigating a challenging budget season and exploring ways to increase employee engagement," Gloria said. "Kirby's deep understanding of the city's robust datasets and strong relationships throughout the organization are going to help us serve the public more effectively and make government more accessible for all of us."

Going forward Brady and her team also hope to leverage the tech community in San Diego and work with local groups to find the most innovative solutions for San Diego's citizens. ■

City of San Diego

INCORPORATED: March 27, 1850

MAYOR: Todd Gloria

POPULATION: 1.4 million (2019)

WEBSITE: sandiego.gov

CONTACT: KABrady@sandiego.gov

Overcoming Funding Barriers

FINANCE: Firm Has Helped More Than 300 Companies Increase Revenues

■ By FRED GRIER

Founders First Capital Partners co-founder and CEO **Kim Folsom** knows the challenges of growing a company. Folsom's interest in entrepreneurship was sparked by her father, a Navy officer who wanted to start a company after his retirement.

Folsom is a high-tech serial entrepreneur who has been founding and growing innovative companies for more than 25 years. She has raised more than \$30 million in venture capital, created over 500 premium wage jobs, and has founded or served as a key executive for multiple successful ventures.

It took Folsom eight years to build her first startup, **SeminarSource.com**, a platform providing continuing education online to physicians. The first funding she

brought into her company was traditional debt, which she was able to acquire because she had real estate assets. She closed her first round of venture capital funding after her company was profitable and generating more than \$1 million in revenue.

Folsom is dedicated to leveraging the power of market forces and sound business practices to address disparities in revenue and job growth among businesses led by underrepresented founders.

Her seventh venture, **Founders First**, is a way of helping other founders overcome the obstacles she faced when she was growing her first company.

"At Founders First, we are helping create a more inclusive supply chain. We help guide companies, we show them how to operationalize, and how to take actions that help benefit everyone."

KIM FOLSOM



Kim Folsom
Co-Founder and CEO
Founders First Capital Partners

"At Founders First, we are helping create a more inclusive supply chain," said Folsom. "We help guide companies, we show them how to operationalize, and how to take actions that help benefit everyone. While also being more inclusive."

Founded in 2015, the firm invests in early-stage startups led by underrepresented founders that are too small for a bank loan, and are outside of the sectors normally targeted by venture capital companies.

It focuses on partnering with employer-based, revenue generating small businesses to provide them with non-dilutive funding and expertise to achieve exponential growth.

In addition, Founders First offers

proprietary business accelerator programs, learning platforms, and growth methodologies to transform traditionally underserved service-based businesses into \$5 million to \$50 million recurring revenue companies.

Each year, the team works with hundreds of entrepreneurs and offers three cohort programs through its Founders Business Growth Bootcamp and 12 cohorts through its Fast Path Funding Growth Experience program.

To date, Founders First Capital Partners has helped more than 300 companies grow revenues in excess of \$130 million. More notably, companies that have graduated from its programs have raised over \$20 million in capital.

Operating a \$100 million fund, Founders First is the largest private capital provider of growth funding in the country for service-based businesses. The firm has offices in San Diego, Chicago, Dallas and Austin, Texas.

Founders First's long-term goal is to have a multi-billion dollar impact by helping 1,000 companies create 20 to 50 jobs.

"If underrepresented founders can get the right type of support these businesses can grow three to five times and add anywhere from five to 20 jobs into the community. We need to take action today and have outcomes that are going to help improve economic justice for a wider group of people. When we do that — everyone wins," said Folsom. ■

Founders First Capital Partners

FOUNDED: 2015

CEO: Kim Folsom

HEADQUARTERS: Sorrento Valley

BUSINESS: Revenue-based financier and accelerator program

EMPLOYEES: 10

WEBSITE: www.foundersfirstcapitalpartners.com

NOTABLE: Folsom founded her company with a goal of helping 1,000 businesses

CONTACT: (858) 264-4102

Telling Stories That Matter

MEDIA: Black SD Magazine is the First Printed African American Publication in San Diego

■ By MARIEL CONCEPCION

Black SD Magazine LLC, a quarterly publication that highlights Black culture and lifestyle, was founded in 2020.

It is also the first African American magazine published in San Diego County, according to owner and publisher **Michael Cox**. Just last year, to commemorate the historical fete, Cox received a proclamation from former Mayor **Kevin Faulconer** and Councilmember **Chris Ward** for being the first Black printed magazine in S.D., he said.

Now, Black SD Magazine, with Cox at the helm, is on a mission to provide representation for the local Black community by telling the stories that matter the most.

Black Culture

"It actually started in 2019," said Cox, originally from Los Angeles and with a background in public relations. "I had a lot of friends in different groups talking about Black representation in San Diego and expressing their concern. I thought, 'we need a vehicle that kind of celebrates and talks about Black culture in different ways.' So, I just started reaching out to people about sharing their stories, about topics like the afro-Latina experience and the black LGBTQ experience. 'There is a way we can do this and also provide resources through partnerships and such,' I thought. Now, I love the fact that I can use this tool to encourage, motivate, educate and empower others."

For Cox, it is important Black SD Magazine doesn't only highlight African American stories from San Diego County, but more so explore topics that are important to the local Black community in general. As the sole contributor of the publication, he's interviewed the likes of artist **Adina Howard** about female empowerment, reality star **Amara la Negra** about colorism and **Michael Keith** from R&B group **112**, among others. He's also written about lifestyle trends that he believes are of interest to African Americans, like the top hiking trails in San Diego and top murals to visit in the city.

So far through presales, Black SD Magazine prints and sells roughly 500 publications a quarter for \$20/piece, said Cox.

Headquartered in East Village, Black SD



Michael Cox
Owner/Publisher
Black SD Magazine



Johnnie Anthony Perry
Co-Owner/Director of
Veteran Affairs
Black SD Magazine



Photo Courtesy of Black SD Magazine LLC

Black SD Magazine LLC recently interviewed Dominican and Afro-Latina Amara La Negra, a reality TV star, TV host and artist, about colorism.

Magazine has a team of six and is completely self-funded, said Cox, with each new print edition paid for through sales from the previous quarter. Part of the business model is to not include ads in the magazine, he said, just a full 64 pages of editorial. With this storytelling approach in mind, Cox doesn't put the Black SD Magazine name or logo on the front cover, he said. Instead, his front-page subject and respective company is what readers first see, said Cox, for a more personalized experience.

Johnnie Anthony Perry, Cox's husband and co-owner and director of veteran affairs at Black SD Magazine as well as a chief in the **United States Navy**, said he couldn't think of a better time for an African American-focused publication to drop in San Diego.

"San Diego has a lot to offer in black culture, businesses and things that interest our community," he said, adding that while focused on the Black community, the publication is all-inclusive. "I always had people ask, 'where can I get great food or where are the Black-owned businesses?' I tell them there are many Black-owned businesses here. So, we decided to highlight them with Black SD Magazine. During this COVID time, most people are home (but) they still want to know what's going on in the city. It seems like the best time to get this started."

Future Growth

To continue to grow its reach, Black SD Magazine promotes via social media and a newsletter as well as through partnerships

with the likes of **San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation** and the **San Diego Tourism Authority**.

In the future, Cox said he hopes to increase quarterly presales from 500 to even 5,000 through partnerships with local businesses and subscriptions. He also expects to expand **The Catalyst Black Academy**, a recently registered nonprofit to advance the African American community and businesses through programming and mentorship, hosted by Black SD Magazine.

Additionally, Cox plans to create Black SD Magazine renditions in other cities starting in 2022, including his hometown of Los Angeles, Houston, Texas, Atlanta, Georgia and Jacksonville, Florida. ■

Black SD Magazine LLC

FOUNDED: 2020

OWNER/PUBLISHER: Michael Cox

HEADQUARTERS: East Village

BUSINESS: quarterly publication focused on Black culture

EMPLOYEES: six

WEBSITE: www.blacksdmagazine.com

NOTABLE: received a proclamation from the city for The Catalyst Black Academy.

CONTACT: Michael@BlackSDMagazine.com

Using Data For Good

TECH: San Diego Tech Hub Aims to Increase Diversity Pipeline, Community in Tech



Data For Good: Screenshot of tech experts during the Data Science For Good virtual workshop.

Photo Courtesy SDTH.

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Claude Jones says there is more to diversity than just numbers and hiring demographics. But he is making use of data through his work with **San Diego Tech Hub (SDTH)** to create a cultural shift that will lead to a more inclusive tech community.

Jones founded San Diego Tech Hub in 2018 with a vision to make San Diego's tech community a collaborative and diverse group of professionals that improve the city through acts of social good.

"What we're trying to do is give back to others without expecting anything in return," Jones said. "How do we leverage the community to help drive that instead of operating in silos?"

Jones is the senior director of Software Engineering at **Walmart Labs** in Carlsbad where he leads teams that improve the operational efficiency of software development and content delivery. The **San Diego State University** alum, explained that SDTH is a way for him to bring people together in his industry and discuss how to make it better for everyone.

San Diego Tech Hub



FOUNDED: 2018

FOUNDER: Claude Jones

HEADQUARTERS: Carlsbad

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION: San Diego Tech Hub connects businesses, non-profits, and educators to technology professionals through creating events and digital products and services. SDTH helps build authentic relationships within the community to drive positive change.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 4,000+ Conduits

WEBSITE: sandiegotechhub.com

CONTACT: contact@sandiegotechhub.com

As more companies lean into efforts to increase diversity and inclusion (D&I) in their respective industries, Jones said that it's a change in mindset that won't happen overnight. SDTH's approach to catalyzing meaningful conversations about D&I is through sharing information.

For Good

One of the ways SDTH is making actionable efforts is through its "for good" initiative.

In collaboration with the **University of San Diego, Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering**, SD Tech Hub launched its first "For Good" project in October called "Data Science For Good" — a free data science course taught virtually by industry experts.

Jones said USD approached SDTH to help provide opportunities to people who want to learn a new skill and give back to the community amid the pandemic.

The strategy is to "give prospective students the opportunity to experience what it's like to be a data scientist, and break the stigma that it's too hard to attain expertise."



Claude Jones
Founder, CEO
San Diego Tech Hub

Jones said he is self-taught when it comes to data science, and he gained most of his knowledge by borrowing books from friends and at the local library during college.

The ultimate goal of the guided three-part virtual workshop is to build data science skills, advance careers and drive social change. The program uses publicly available datasets that highlight real issues, such as systematic racism and the national

opioid crisis.

"The other part of that for good is that, you know, we want to focus on topics that are controversial in our society today, and allow people to be informed and come up to their own conclusions to help spark change," Jones said.

For example, students looked at police stops by race in San Diego County and at the end of the course, "data analysis illuminated that black community accounted for 20% of police stops, but only 6% of population." Jones said that by allowing people to analyze this information, it ultimately leads

“What we’re trying to do is give back to others without expecting anything in return. How do we leverage the community to help drive that instead of operating in silos?”

CLAUDE JONES

to a person analyzing their own choices and response to injustice.

"Now that people have that knowledge, you're no longer ignorant and they either have to accept or deny facts at that point," Jones explained. "So now the accountability has shifted. I don't have to do anything, it's on them now that they have to make the choice on what they're going to do with the information of what's going on. And when you get down to that level, you know, you have to do some soul searching — if you're exposed to information, you have a choice to respond or not to respond."

Companies Finding the "Right Fit"

For companies focused on D&I, there is a similar shift in accountability, Jones said that must happen in hiring. Jones explained that when companies are hiring, there is a difference between the "right fit" and the "perfect fit."

"You have to have companies that have a change in mindset, you know, and looking for this the right fit mentality," Jones said.

When it comes to companies looking for the "right fit," Jones said it is a matter of investing in an individual beyond their resume qualifications and in turn, building relationships that can lead to the next opportunity.

That's where San Diego Tech Hub's newest tool, The Hub, comes in. Jones said that The Hub, which launched in a beta version, is an online platform aimed at improving recruiting "fits" and offering a streamlined pipeline of diverse talent.

"When we think about companies, we can't control who companies hire and what's going on," Jones said. "But what we can do is help educate companies about the type of talent that we have, why things are important, what's going on, and there has to be a way of doing that — that's what I can control." ■

Closing The Word Gap

EDUCATION: San Diego Company Uses Music to Expand Students' Literacy Skills

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Students these days are studying to the beat of Beyoncé, Drake and Kendrick Lamar — not just for background music. **Rhymes with Reason** is using popular music to teach students literacy skills through an online platform and ultimately create equity in education.

The company founder and CEO, **Austin Martin** explained that focusing on literacy education at an early age can help close the word gap and the language gap that stratifies social classes in society.

"This is connected to education it's connected to workforce development it's connected to financial literacy — all of these things that kind of equate to upward social mobility in America," Martin said.

The idea started in 2014 during his freshman year at **Brown University** and in his early research, he found that of the top 100 words that appeared on the SAT — 67 of them showed up in popular, hip-hop songs.

The San Diego-native developed the online platform throughout his undergraduate



Diagram of the Rhymes with Reason method for teaching vocabulary through music. Graphic from Rhymes with Reason website.

career and ultimately brought Rhymes with Reason to market in 2017.

The way it works is the Rhymes with Reason team customizes each curriculum, or "playlist," to meet the needs of the students and the partner organization. From there, they find vocabulary related to a topic, such as college prep words, and select the most accurate usage in popular lyrics by relevant artists that students are already listening to.

Since the company's launch, Martin has

been named a 2019 Echoing Green Fellow for social innovation and in 2020 he was named to **Forbes** 30 Under 30 list of top entrepreneurs in the education category.

The small business has collaborated with local groups like **The Blue Heart Foundation**, a nonprofit that offers opportunities to boys in South East San Diego, and even **Chance The Rapper's** foundation **Socialworks**, to create **The Chicago Learning Playlist** for students.

Expanding Literacy

Recently, Rhymes with Reason collaborated with local Black-Owned accelerator and investment firm **Founder's First Capital Partners** to create a

"CEO Playlist" that highlights terms related to entrepreneurship.

"Our goal really is to change lives," Martin said. "Of course we want to change educational outcomes, but we also want to make it so that even for students who don't go to college, 'hey, let's learn some terminology that is going to help you get a job.' I want to give you a resource that is going to improve the quality of your life and increase your chances of success in America."

Martin explained that the platform seeks to expand student's literacy in more ways than one, including financial literacy.

Since 2017, Rhymes with Reason has worked with more than 150 schools across the country and Martin said they have big plans to work with 60 new schools in 2021.

When the pandemic shifted schools online, Martin said he's seen an increased demand in people looking for alternative education tools like his platform to keep students engaged. By encouraging students to expand their vocabulary with something they love, Martin believes this is one way he can create a social change in how we deliver education. ■



Austin Martin
Founder, CEO
Rhymes with Reason

Rhymes with Reason

FOUNDED: 2017

FOUNDER: Austin Martin

HEADQUARTERS: San Diego

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION: Rhymes with Reason empowers students to build their literacy skills in a variety of subjects through an online platform centered on teaching through music lyrics.

EMPLOYEES: 10

WEBSITE: rhymeswithreason.co

CONTACT: rhymeswreason@gmail.com

Living Her Dream

LAW: Navy Veteran Starts Own Law Firm

■ By RAY HUARD

Frustrated when she couldn't get the job she wanted with an established firm, Navy veteran **Maresa Martin Talbert** formed her own law firm.

"When I was coming out of law school, which was in 2017, I knew I wanted to practice intellectual property law and most of the jobs that I had been applying to, they wanted someone with the senior range with five to 10 years of experience or they wanted hard science people with patent law experience," Talbert said. "I wasn't finding the jobs in law that I wanted in my experience level. It was a really trying time of not getting any traction in applying for jobs, which was the first time I ever experienced that."

For a time, Talbert worked under contract for other lawyers.

"I realized that the work I was doing for

those other attorneys, I could be doing for myself," Talbert said.

Talbert's family and her mentors at **California Western School of Law** encouraged her to try going solo.

In April 2018, Talbert formed **Talbert Law Office**.

"It was supposed to be a temporary thing until I found work at an established firm," Talbert said, but "the success came."

Her first client came from one of her school professors.

Growing

"Slowly but surely, it just kind of grew from there," Talbert said. "Now, it's a thriving practice."

For now, her law firm is herself, two law clerks and a paralegal with about 50 clients, but Talbert said she's planning to expand the firm by the end of 2021, taking on more attorneys and paralegals.

She said she will always remain a boutique law firm.

"I don't want to be huge. I always want my clients to feel that they have access to me," Talbert said.

Diane Mas is one of those clients.

Mas said Talbert is helping her put together the legal framework to expand **Project New Village**, a nonprofit organization created to make healthy food more available in underserved neighborhoods in what Mas called Greater Southeast San Diego.

"She is helping us put together all kinds of policies and procedures so we're at a point where we can grow," Mas said. "She lives in the neighborhood we serve, so she gets it."

It's been wonderful working with her."

Growing up in the small Texas town of Copperas Cove near Fort Hood, Talbert said that she wanted to be a lawyer since she was a child and watched how lawyers were portrayed on television and in movies.

"It was like a very prestigious title, Talbert said. "My friends and my family, they all heard me for years from about the age of eight wanting to be a lawyer."

Initially, Talbert wanted to be a criminal lawyer.

In law school, "I realized that wasn't my passion at all," Talbert said. "Then I started learning about business and this intellectual property, which is not a new thing but is a new term that really started sparking my attention."

Great Path

Talbert's parents were in the military, and they encouraged her to enlist so she could use the benefits she earned there to pay for law school.

"It's a great path I don't regret," Talbert said. "If I had taken on debt that would have been very burdensome right now."

She joined the Navy in 2010 and served nearly five years as a surface warfare officer, and still serves in the **Navy Reserves** as an Executive Officer, where she oversees the operation, maintenance, and training for Littoral Command Ships Squadron One, Mine Countermeasures.

She also is a board member of the **National Naval Officers Association** and the **California Western School of Law Alumni Association** and secretary of the **Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association**.

She also is a member of the Executive Board of the **San Diego Bar Intellectual Property Section**.

Her husband, **Sharef Talbert**, is a Navy Information Professional Officer.

Before joining the Navy, Talbert served as a legislative aide in the Texas state Senate, and thinks she may run for office herself one day.

"I am very much interested in the political space, I love policy and being able to make a difference," she said. "I get asked so much from community members if I'm going to run."

Talbert said she never felt that her race held her back in her career and may play to her advantage.

"There's not a lot of Black attorneys in intellectual property," Talbert said.

Still, she said that "With everything I do, I feel I have to go the extra mile."

Talbert said she would encourage Black youths to consider law as a career.

"The profession of law, I love it," Talbert said. "I feel like I'm living my dream right now." ■



Maresa Martin Talbert
Talbert Law Office
Founding attorney

Talbert Law Office

FOUNDED: 2018

FOUNDING ATTORNEY: Maresa Martin Talbert

HEADQUARTERS: Mission Valley

BUSINESS: law firm

EMPLOYEES: 4

WEBSITE: www.talbertlawoffice.com

NOTABLE: Talbert served more than four years on active duty in the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer and serves on the Navy Reserves.

CONTACT: maresa@talbertlawoffice.com

A Living, Breathing Resource

NONPROFIT: DETOUR Mentors, Empowers Black Girls

■ By RAY HUARD

Tinesia Conwright founded the non-profit **DETOUR** in 2009 partly as a result of her own experience with foster care children that were part of her family.

The agency mentors Black girls between the ages of 11 and 17.

The group's name stands for Depositing Empowerment Through Outreach and Urban Development.

"I grew up with six foster sisters who were all younger than me," Conwright said. "I started to meet with them informally, taking them to breakfast and talking to them about teen topics. That turned into a more formal setting."

With a staff of nine, DETOUR is based at the Jacobs Center in Encanto and meets at the Skyline recreation center.

The group also has a mentor program for girls in Juvenile Hall.

DETOUR



FOUNDED: 2009

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT: Tinesia Conwright

HEADQUARTERS: Encanto

BUSINESS: nonprofit mentoring program

EMPLOYEES: 9

WEBSITE: www.detourempowers.org

NOTABLE: DETOUR has awarded scholarships totaling close to \$18,000.

CONTACT: 619-750-1180

"I was raised in Southeastern San Diego and it was really important for me to provide additional opportunities for the girls who were coming from a neighborhood I was coming from," Conwright said. "As I networked outside my community, I learned about new and different opportunities that often people outside of Southeastern San Diego weren't aware of."

One of the things that DETOUR stresses is the importance of education, a lesson Conwright teaches through example.

She earned a bachelor's degree in public administration from San Diego State University in 2004 and a master's degree in 2011.

"I had the success, I decided this is what I wanted to do so I went back to school to learn how to do it efficiently and effectively," Conwright said.



Tinesia Conwright
Founder and
Executive Director
DETOUR

In 2013, Conwright formed the Leadership Academy as part of DETOUR, offering the program at the **Jackie Robinson YMCA, O'Farrell Charter School, Steele Canyon High School** and the **San Diego SOAR Academy**, according to DETOUR's website.

"We meet every Monday with the girls and that has continued throughout the pandemic. We're meeting on Zoom," Conwright said.

All of the girls who went through the program have gone on to four-year colleges and universities, Conwright said.

The group focuses on team building activities and college preparation.

"Before the pandemic, we were able to go snowboarding and we've been camping, just giving the girls to connect, not only here, but to get away for a couple of days. Many of the girls hadn't been snowboarding before or camping before."

Conwright said it's important for Black girls to see people like her as role models.

"When I was in college and entered corporate America, I didn't see many women who looked like me," Conwright said. "That's what I like most about what we do, exposing them to women who look like them, who came from where they came from and are doing great things and letting them know they can do the same."

Each year, DETOUR has an exposition – **FANCY (Focused And Naturally Confident Youth)** where girls meet successful women of color.

STEAM

DETOUR also works with the **Elementary Institute of Science** in Chollas View to encourage an interest in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) careers.

"We know that girls of color are underrepresented in the STEAM field," Conwright said. "What we try to do is get them connected to women of color who are in the STEAM world to let them know that it is possible, that they can prepare and what avenues to follow."

DETOUR also has an internship program and in August gave backpacks to 100 girls and gives out annual scholarships of \$500.

Since 2011, Conwright said DETOUR has awarded close to \$18,000 in scholarships.

"I believe in empowering people and giving them the tools they need to succeed. Sometimes they don't know those tools and where to find them," Conwright said. They just need a person to show them how to use the tools and guide them moving forward."

Conwright said her goal now is to see DETOUR continue to grow.

"It is important to me to have a legacy and leave an organization that can grow beyond myself," Conwright said. "Even though I started it, it is my goal not to finish it but to have it as a living, breathing resource long after I'm gone." ■

Role Model

In addition to leading DETOUR, Conwright works full-time for the **San Diego Housing Commission** as a Youth Workforce Development Specialist and Community Outreach Coordinator.

She has a background in housing, having worked in the business as her first job out of college until the market collapsed leading into the Great Recession.

Making It Work

LIFESTYLE: The Formula Skin Lab Finds New Ways to Reach Customers and Grow During Pandemic

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Stephanie J. opened her spa, **The Formula Skin Lab** in 2020. Then she closed shop again. Then she reopened it again, after hiring a contractor to build two decks in the backyard of her storefront so she could give facials and cosmetic services to her customers outdoors, as public health restrictions permitted.

"So we did that and the day that the project was completed — and quite a few thousands of dollars spent getting this stuff built — the governor announces that we could go back inside," Stephanie J. said.

On Jan. 25, Gov. **Gavin Newsom** announced that he was ending California's regional stay-at-home order which meant businesses such as restaurants and salons, which were previously restricted to outdoor operations only, could now operate indoors based on each region's public health orders.



Photo Courtesy of Stephanie J.

The Formula Skin Lab is San Diego's first full-service spa created to fill a void for men and women of color.

"And when I tell you that I just like went through it because I spent all of that money, and then now we can go back inside," Stephanie J. said.

The Formula Skin Lab is San Diego's first full-service spa created to fill a void for men and women of color, Stephanie J. said. It specializes in skin correction, such as acne and hyperpigmentation and also offers beauty services such as nails, makeup, and waxing.

Since Jan. 28, Stephanie J. said she has been busy coordinating client's appointments and making sure everything works for indoor services.

Despite the rollercoaster of restrictions for local businesses like hers, during the pandemic, Stephanie J. has made the best of the stressful situation and found ways to

deliver her services to customers in house and through online retail.

Making it work

The Formula Skin Lab's storefront, located on the border of Hillcrest and Banker's Hill officially opened for business in July 2020 and has experienced the whiplash of multiple openings and closings due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Before she opened her full-service spa last year, Stephanie J. was working as a solo esthetician and she didn't envision opening a spa when she enrolled at **Bellus Academy** to become an esthetician. Last year she was awarded the Best Esthetician in San Diego by **Black SD Magazine** and this is something that reminded her that she had something unique to offer the community.

"I think that I've known for a few years, but when it really solidified it was getting that award last year," Stephanie J. said. "It was kind of like, okay, having the people vote, you know, really meant a lot and that's when I was like okay we can really take this thing to a new level."

When you walk through the doors of The Formula Skin Lab, you're greeted with the sound of soul music, and the smell of incense. She shared that one of her clients told her it feels like she is at home, which is just what she was aiming for when designing the 6-room space.

The spa also includes a gentlemen's room which is dedicated just for men visiting the spa. Stephanie J. said she knew this place would be hub in the community so she wanted to create a spa experience that was unlike anywhere else.

"A lot of times when our clients come to us, they don't wear a lot of makeup or, you know, they're still filtering their photos," Stephanie J. said. "It almost seems like once we start making changes in their skin, when they walk through the door, we've seen tears, we've received hugs. It's like there's a new level of confidence in them. So for me, I feel like just knowing that I'm helping someone feel better about themselves and their overall like self-worth and self-value, it means a lot to me." ■



Stephanie J.
Founder
The Formula Skin Lab

The Formula Skin Lab



FOUNDED: 2015

FOUNDER: Stephanie J.

LOCATION: Border of Banker's Hill/Hillcrest

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION: The Formula Skin Lab is San Diego's first full-service spa created to fill a void for men and women of color. It specializes in skin correction, such as acne and hyperpigmentation and also offers beauty services such as nails, makeup, and waxing.

NOTABLE: Stephanie J. was awarded the Best Esthetician in San Diego by Black SD Magazine.

EMPLOYEES: 6

CONTACT: 619-728-4410, stephstyles@gmail.com, [stephstyles.com](https://www.stephstyles.com) Instagram: @formulaskinlab Facebook: The Formula Skin Lab

Empowering A Community

NONPROFIT: Black San Diego Hosts Networking Events, Workshops for Black Business Owners



Photo Courtesy of Black San Diego Empowering Our Community

Black San Diego Empowering Our Community, a local non-profit group, hosts networking events and workshops geared toward the Black community.

■ By MARIEL CONCEPCION

If you ask Founders **Tinicia Smith** and **Sheri Jones**, **Black San Diego Empowering the Community**, a local non-profit group, came to be out of pure necessity.

“Tinicia and I have been friends since the age of 11 when we used to run track,” said Jones, a native San Diegan and realtor. “She posted on Facebook one day looking for Black-owned businesses in San Diego and at the same time I was trying to grow my real estate business. I made a comment on the original post and then we met at her house. I threw an idea out there to create a networking event just for our community because every time I attended real estate events, I was the only person of color and it always made me feel some sort of way.”

Weeks later, Smith and Jones hosted their first event and over 100 people showed up, said Jones. Inspired by the turn out, what started as a one-off idea in 2016 has turned into a continuous effort that focuses on empowering and strengthening the local Black community.

Today, Black San Diego hosts at least four events a year, said Jones, through which the county’s Black residents can network with other entrepreneurs and



Tinicia Smith
Co-founder
Black San Diego
Empowering Our
Community

“I threw an idea out there to create a networking event just for our community because every time I attended real estate events, I was the only person of color and it always makes me feel some sort of way.”

SHERI JONES

learn about resources available to them, among other perks. It has a board made up of three prominent African American San Diegans, including **San Diego State University** Hall of Famer **Gregory Tolver**, owner of **J.R. Tolver State Farm** in Mira Mesa, and **Lance Growth**, a real estate attorney and CEO of **Growth 1031**. And, as of last year, Black San Diego went from being only an LLC (a limited liability company) to an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization as well.

36,000 Members

Black San Diego’s main avenue for reaching the local Black community continues to be via social media, said Smith.

On Facebook, Black San Diego has over 36,000 members and its newsletter goes out to close to 1,000 subscribers, she said, most of which learn about the group via word of mouth. Black San

Diego has a strong military population, Smith added, and frequently gets testimonials from business owners around town about how the organization has helped them.

“One Black-owned beauty supply store, **Berlen’s Beauty Supply** (in National City), said once it started to share on our page, the company experienced a 30% growth in business,” said Smith. “After we posted about **Eden San Diego** (a Black-owned plant nursery in University Heights) on our **Instagram** page, there was a line out the door the next day of people that heard about the company through us wanting to buy plants from them. And once a waitress at **Louisiana Purchase** (a restaurant in North Park) came up to us and said she was employed there off a post we put up on Black San Diego. It literally only takes one post.”

Workshop Program

Moving forward, Smith and Jones said they want to launch a workshop program that will provide Black San Diego-based business owners the necessary tools to continue to grow their business.

The three main areas of focus will be “start”, “develop” and “sustain”, said Jones, adding that it would cost about \$500 per business to go through the workshop program. To fund the effort, Smith said they’ve created sponsorship packets with tiered pricing options, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, that can be found via Black San Diego’s official website: OurBSD.com. ■



Sheri Jones
Co-founder
Black San Diego
Empowering Our
Community

Black San Diego Empowering Our Community



FOUNDED: 2016

FOUNDERS: Tinicia Smith, Sheri Jones

HEADQUARTERS: Southeast San Diego

BUSINESS: non-profit focused on empowering the Black community

EMPLOYEES: five

WEBSITE: www.OurBSD.com

NOTABLE: holds 30 seconds elevated pitches during networking events.

CONTACT: info@ourblacksd.com

Meeting A Need

HEALTHCARE: Father, Son Business Helps Patients Stay Mobile

■ By FRED GRIER

In 1996, **Allen Newsome** founded **Senior Mobility Aids** after spending more than a decade of his career developing medical products for leading companies such as **Pfizer** and **American Hospital Supply**.

“Senior Mobility Aids was formed after I noticed that many of the patients that we were assisting didn’t have a wheelchair and all the other things that they should have,” said **Allen Newsome**, president at Senior Mobility Aids. “When I saw that there was this huge unmet need in the healthcare industry, I thought — this is a perfect opportunity to make a real impact.”

The Carlsbad-based company is one of the few Black family-owned businesses in the region and provides durable medical equipment rentals such as wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and hospital beds. In addition, it also provides a full line of Orthotic Braces designed for pain management and relief.

Senior Mobility Aids



FOUNDED: 1996

CEO: Allen Newsome

HEADQUARTERS: Carlsbad

BUSINESS: Provider of mobility-disabled equipment

EMPLOYEES: 16

WEBSITE: www.seniormobilityaids.net

NOTABLE: One of the few Black family-owned business in San Diego.

CONTACT: (760) 599-8800



Photo courtesy of Allen Newsome
Father Allen Newsome and his son Lafayette Newsome at a San Diego Padres game in 2019.

“Just because someone wears a size eight doesn’t mean, you can wear a size eight. The story is different for every patient,” said Allen Newsome. “Our goal to work with the patient to help them meet their goal, effectively.”

Father-Son Duo

A family-operated business, Allen Newsome runs the business with his son **Lafayette Newsome**, who runs business development and marketing operations.

“Globally, the need for wheelchairs is about 200 million,” said Lafayette Newsome. “As a country, we spend about \$50 billion annually on wheelchairs alone. We

have a real opportunity not only to service the patient in need, but also to reduce the costs in our community and as a nation.”

Focused on serving patients of all ages, the company works with individuals to identify and better understand their Medicare, Tricare Prime, and other insurance coverages.

On the business side, Senior Mobility Aids partners with hospitals, local healthcare organizations, and large medical providers which also use its products.

Some notable clients include working with **UC San Diego**, **Community Health Group**, **Blue Shield**, as well as several insurance agencies.

Leveraging San Diego

In terms of building a business in San Diego, Allen Newsome said it can be a competitive market but also sees the competition as a benefit.

“There are more doctors per capita here, because many people want to retire here. There’s also a number of medical systems which have created a great abundance of resources in the region. There’s a great infrastructure here in San Diego.”

Before the pandemic hit, the company reported bringing in between \$3 and \$4 million, although business has since slowed, Allen expects those numbers to bounce back once state-at-home orders are lifted. This year, the company also plans to grow its business by providing its products to Senior living facilities, among other verticals.

Maintaining Ownership

Allen Newsome said he would love to see his son take ownership of the business in the near future, adding that he was fortunate to have training from **Fortune 500** companies which help him understand how to put systems in place to get things done.

“Being able to work alongside my dad in a family business brings a sense of pride of ownership. Especially being a small minority business,” said Lafayette Newsome. “We’re truly making an impact within the community and we’re doing our part on multiple levels.”

The company employs 12, and sells products throughout Southern California. ■

CELEBRATING

BLACK BUSINESS

ENTREPRENEURS

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

BLACK

BUSINESSES

MATTER

IN SAN DIEGO AWARDS 2021

Virtual Event

February 25, 2021

2 pm - 3:30 pm

Preview Publication: February 22, 2021

Event Recap: March 8, 2021

In Association With



Central San Diego
SDBCC
Black Chamber of Commerce

In celebration of Black History Month, we are honoring the achievements of Black Owned Businesses in our community. We will be hosting a CEO panel discussion that will share best practices in inclusive leadership and how companies can support Black-Owned Businesses.

Register Today!

This event is generously brought to you by our sponsors. Registration is required.

www.sdbj.com/bizevents/

For more information and sponsorships, please contact Shelley Barry, 858-277-6359 or email sbarry@sdbj.com

In honor of Black History Month,
The Community of Business celebrates

