



BEN AGUILAR
Attorney
Law Offices of Ben Aguilar



KIMBERLY AHRENS
Owner
Ahren Law APC



JASON ANDERSON
President and CEO
Cleantech San Diego



KEVIN ATTO
Broker/Realtor
Park Metro Realty



BRIDGETTE AUSTIN
Chief Executive Officer
B. Austin Consulting



EMILIANO AVILES
Senior Vice President;
Global Human Resources
Bank of America



MARCI BAIR
President
Bair Financial Planning



RYAN BEDROSIAN
Owner
Rich's San Diego



TODD CAZIN
Owner
Consolidated Concepts



ALBERTO CORTES
CEO
Mama's Kitchen



JOSH COYNE
Director of Government
Affairs
San Diego Downtown
Partnership



CARA DESSERT
Chief Executive Officer
The LGBT Community
Center



MAX DISPOSTI
Executive Director
North County LGBTQ
Resource Center



MOE GIRTON
Owner
Gossip Grill



DAVID GLANZER
Communications Chief and
Strategy Officer
San Diego Comic Con



ROBERT H. GLEASON
President and Chief
Executive Officer
Evans Hotels



KEN GRANDLUND
Senior Internal
Communications Specialist/
Inclusion & Diversity Leader
Cox Communications



SUSAN HARTMAN
Owner
Law Offices Of Susan L.
Hartman



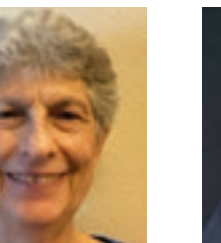
JAY HENSLEE
Vice President, District
Manager
U.S. Bank



NICHOLAS HOLMES
Vice President and Chief
Operating Officer
Rady Children's Hospital



KAREN KAUFMAN
President
San Diego Woman's Chorus



EDWARD KUTCH
Senior Catering and Sales
Manager
US Grant Hotel



FERNANDO LOPEZ
Executive Director
San Diego Pride



RYLAND MADISON
Director
Cox Communications



MATT MORROW
Executive Artistic Director
Diversitary Theatre

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**LEADERS
of INFLUENCE
LGBTQ+
TOP 50
2022**

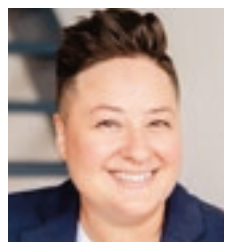
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Merrill Lynch



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National Sales Director
San Diego Tourism
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Management
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Company



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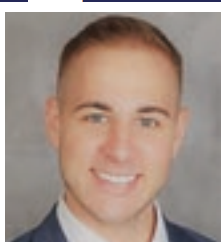
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Officer
California American Water



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CAMERON STACY
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ALLEN YOUNG
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JIMMY ZEMEL
Business Program and
Employee Experience
Manager
California Bank & Trust



BRIAN ZOTTI
Chief Operating Officer
Options For All

**BEN AGUILAR**

(he, him, his)

Owner, Founder

Law Offices of Ben Aguilar

Ben Aguilar is the owner and founder of the Law Offices of Ben Aguilar. His law practice, located in Downtown San Diego, focuses on family law cases. He also teaches family law at California Western School of Law.

Aguilar currently serves on the board of directors of American Civil Liberties Union NextGen and the San Diego Performing Arts League. He is the immediate past president of the San Diego La Raza Scholarship Foundation. He previously served as co-president of the Tom Homann LGBT Law Association and served on the board of directors of the National LGBT Bar Association and San Diego Democrats for Equality.

Aguilar was recognized by the National LGBT Bar Association and the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association as a best 40 attorney under 40 in 2016. In 2015, he received the Outstanding Community Service Award from the San Diego County Bar Association.

He can be reached at info@BenAguilarLaw.com or 619-752-0125

**KIMBERLY AHRENS**

(she, her, hers)

Owner

Ahrens Law APC

Kimberly Ahrens is owner and founder of Ahrens Law APC. She is an award-winning attorney and seasoned litigator recognized for her mastery of complex issues including litigation, employment and entertainment contracts.

Clients appreciate her superior service and breadth of experience and knowledge across a variety of areas of law. She is consistently recognized as a warrior for equality and is a firm believer in Bayard Rustin's idea that "we need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers," and tries to "get in good trouble, necessary trouble," at the advice of Rep. John Lewis, as much as possible.

Ahrens is also a San Diego Pride board member and a San Diego Superior Court Anti-Bias and Legal Equality Committee member. She previously served as co-president of the Tom Homann LGBT Law Association and as a member of the California LGBT Bar Judicial Coalition.

Ahrens Law APC

**JASON ANDERSON**

(he, him, his)

President & CEO

Cleantech San Diego

Jason Anderson is President and CEO of Cleantech San Diego, a business organization that positions the greater San Diego region as a global leader in the cleantech economy. Cleantech San Diego's members include more than 120 businesses, universities, governments and nonprofits committed to advancing sustainable solutions for the benefit of the economy, the environment and all members of the community.

Before joining Cleantech San Diego in 2010, Anderson was Vice President of Business Development for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Prior to joining EDC, he lived in Austin where he worked as Legislative Director for Texas State Senator Frank Madla.

Anderson serves on the boards of San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition, CONNECT, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and Equality California. He can be reached at jason@cleantechsandiego.org or 858-568-7777.

**KEVIN ATTO**

(he, him, his)

Realtor and Founder

Park Metro Realty.

Kevin Atto is a broker, realtor and founder of Park Metro Realty.

Before real estate, Atto taught high school mathematics for three years before leaving the workforce to be an entrepreneur. In 2004, he moved to San Diego where he started San Diego Pro Cleaning in 2007, built it to 25 team members and sold it in 2013. He then became a realtor, eventually opening Park Metro Realty in early 2020. His team of nine folks performs real estate sales and asset/property management services for commercial and residential clients.

Atto has volunteered at Mama's Kitchen since 2011 where he has served on the board and as president. He has volunteered for the Evans Scholars Foundation Southern California/Southern Nevada Alumni Association since 2013.

Atto is currently in the process of starting a non-profit supporting Middle Eastern LGBTQ+ community members who are in the coming out process.

**BRIDGETTE AUSTIN**

(she, her, hers)

Founder & CEO

B. Austin Consulting

Bridgette Austin is Founder and CEO of B. Austin Consulting – a company dedicated to educating the workforce and community by providing mandatory anti-harassment training programs with an emphasis on understanding the full spectrum of harassment and eliminating biases that come with the LGBTQ image and assumed intent.

Austin holds a Master of Business for Veterans from the University of Southern California and has over 23 years of military service. She earned the Combat Action Ribbon for multiple tours in various areas of conflict.

Austin has served as director on boards including the San Diego Veterans Coalition, Veteran Chamber of Commerce, US4Warriors and as a Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Advisory Council member for the California Department of Veteran Affairs.

She can be reached at bridgette@baustinconsultingllc.com or 619-786-5843.

**EMILIANO "EMO" AVILES**

(he, him, his)

Senior Vice President, Global Human Resources Bank of America

Emiliano "Emo" Aviles is Senior Vice President of Global Human Resources at Bank of America. In his role, he acts as a manager excellence consultant, coaching over 150 mid-level managers across the company on how to navigate challenging workplace needs, leadership development, professional growth and DEI.

Aviles helped establish and grow Bank of America's LGBTQ+ Pride Employee Network in San Diego, later advised Pride chapters across California, Nevada and Oregon and has worked on national initiatives, including helping develop of the bank's global Ally program which today has over 35,000 members. He previously led the bank's employee volunteer network in San Diego, which annually has logged over 15,000 employee volunteer hours with nonprofits, many focused on LGBTQ+ DEI, including Aids Walk, Pride Parade and Dining Out for Life events. He is also an Out At Work mentor for LGBTQ+ colleagues.

Aviles is a two-time recipient of the U.S. President's Volunteer Service Award.

He can be reached at emiliano.aviles@bofa.com or 619-515-5538

**MARCI BAIR**

(she, her, hers)

President

Bair Financial Planning

Marci Bair is President of Bair Financial Planning. She is a native of San Diego and a Certified Financial Planner with more than 30 years of experience working with women in leadership, LGBTQ+ families and progressive business owners. She believes that as an LGBTQ+ business owner it is important to be active in organizations and build relationships across different communities.

Bair started her financial planning company at age 25 when there were very few women or LGBTQ+ people in the financial planning and investment industry. She believes that conscious business leaders can make a positive impact through environmental sustainability, social responsibility and corporate governance, which is why Bair Financial Planning created High Impact Investment Portfolios to allow clients to align their money with their values. She can be reached at Marci@BairFinancialPlanning.com or 619-546-6160.

**RYAN BEDROSIAN**

(he/him, his)

Owner

Rich's San Diego

Ryan Bedrosian is owner of Rich's San Diego nightclub. He is a well-known business leader, philanthropist and activist in the local LGBTQ community.

Born in New Jersey, Bedrosian was raised in San Diego and has deep family roots in town.

He has been a part of Rich's since 2008 when he became general manager, and took the reigns as owner in early 2020 – just before the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns began. During the pandemic, he creatively pivoted the business into a safe, outdoor "Day Lounge" when bars and nightclubs could not operate in their traditional fashion.

In the community, Bedrosian serves as an officer of the Hillcrest Business Association, and as a member of both the San Diego Police Department's Chief's LGBTQ Advisory Board, and Mayor Todd Gloria's LGBTQ Advisory Board.

**TODD CAZIN**

(he, him, his)

Owner

Consolidated Concepts

Todd Cazin is owner of Consolidated Concepts. He founded the company in 2000 to help customers manage all aspects of great commercial print and promotional products. Consolidated Concepts is certified through the NGLCC (National LGBT Chamber of Commerce) as a certified LGBTQ-owned business and the company helps provide printing for multiple LGBTQ focused businesses and nonprofits in San Diego.

In addition to his over 20 years in the printing business, he has been a member of the San Diego Equality Business Association since 2008 and has volunteered for the LGBTQ Center, Mama's Kitchen and Rob Benzon Foundation. He also is a member of the Hillcrest Business Association and College Area Business District.

Cazin's current project is working to create the first LGBTQ-focused co-working space dedicated to promoting business creation and providing a safe space for LGBTQ entrepreneurs.

He can be reached at todd@ytpr.com or 858-945-1375.

**ALBERTO CORTES**

(he, him, his)

CEO

Mama's Kitchen

Alberto Cortes is Chief Executive Officer of Mama's Kitchen. He was born and raised in New York City is very proud of his Puerto Rican heritage. He moved to San Diego in 1983, after four years of service in the United States Navy, Submarine force. Soon after arriving, he started volunteering with the San Diego AIDS Information Line.

Cortes has been in the nonprofit arena for over 32 years and has been leading Mama's Kitchen since 2002. Mama's Kitchen services people with critical illnesses, including HIV, cancer, congestive heart failure and diabetes. Over 10 million meals have been delivered to San Diego County residents.

Cortes serves on the San Diego County HIV Health Services Planning Group, is a founding member of the LGBT Community Leadership Council and joined the board of San Diego Pride in February of 2019.

Cortes earned a BA from National University and an MBA from San Diego State University.



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Congratulations to
Kimberly Ahrens
on her recognition as a 2022
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We appreciate your fierce
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of harassment and
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JOSH COYNE
(he, him, his)

Director of Government Affairs
Downtown San Diego Partnership

Josh Coyne is Director of Government Affairs for the Downtown San Diego Partnership. He began his professional journey in San Diego at the University of San Diego where he advised and supervised different aspects of on-campus student life.

In addition to his full-time work at USD, Coyne volunteered for five years as a digital crisis counselor with The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention services and suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ young people, eventually becoming co-chair of the San Diego Chapter of The Trevor Project volunteer group to coordinate outreach and fund-raising events.

Coyne worked to infuse The Trevor Project into San Diego LGBT Pride after-school youth programs, Youth Leadership Academy and in the creation of a Youth Zone within the Pride festival. He is now a board member for San Diego LGBT Pride.



CAROLINE "CARA" DESSERT
(she, her, hers)

CEO
The Center

Caroline "Cara" Dessert is Chief Executive Officer of The Center. She is an attorney and executive with nearly 20 years in non-profit and social justice leadership. Previously, she was executive director of Immigration Equality, a national organization focused on LGBTQ immigrant rights. She worked closely with the Obama Administration and organizations at the intersection of rights of LGBTQ and immigrant communities. Prior to joining The Center as CEO, Dessert served in the state's Office of the Attorney General as a Deputy Attorney General under then-California Attorney General Kamala Harris' executive team. During her first year as CEO, Dessert led The Center through a phenomenal growth phase. Under her leadership, The Center increased its budget from \$6 million to \$10.2 million annually, and service visits to more than 80,000 annually. Along with The Center's team and Board of Directors, in 2019 The Center engaged in an in-depth community-driven strategic planning process with the participation of over 2,000 community members.



MAX DISPOSTI
(he, him, his)

Executive Director
North County LGBTQ Resource Center

Max Disposti is founder and Executive Director of the North County LGBTQ Resource Center. He founded the Resource Center in 2008 as the North County LGBT Coalition. In 2011, the Coalition rebranded as the North County LGBTQ Resource Center and currently serves over 10,000 LGBT families and individuals per year. He is also founder of Pride by the Beach, an annual festival that has grown to be the only Pride experience in the North San Diego County region.

In addition to his executive role with the Resource Center, Disposti is active in the San Diego community at large and an advocate for reducing the gaps and increase access to mental health and is a California Senate appointee and President of the board at the California Board of Behavioral Science. Disposti also serves on the San Diego Leadership Council, the San Diego Sheriff LGBT Advisory Council and the San Diego County Board of Education LGBT Advisory Committee.



MOE GIRTON
(she, her, hers)

General Manager, Partner
Gossip Grill

Moe Girtton is General Manager and Partner at Gossip Grill, the successful woman-forward bar, restaurant and nightclub in San Diego's Hillcrest neighborhood.

She started her career in 2000, where she started as a door girl/security and bar back at The Flame; eventually working her way up to bartender and manager. The Flame sold in 2004, and she transitioned to be a part of the opening team with Baja Betty's. Over the years, she grew within the company and eventually opened up the Gossip Grill, becoming a partner in the MO's Universe Restaurant Group and a pillar for the community. In 2019, Gossip won the Nicky Award for Bar of the Year, the first time for a Women's Bar. Girtton competed in and won on reality contest show "Barmageddon."

Girtton, along with business partners, are currently opening another female-forward space – Barrel & Board, a next-level restaurant and bar.



DAVID GLANZER
(he, him, his)

Chief Communications and Strategy Officer
San Diego Comic Convention

David Glanzer is Chief Communications and Strategy Officer for San Diego Comic Convention, parent company of Comic-Con, WonderCon and the Comic-Con Museum. Comic-Con, held annually in San Diego, is the premier event of its kind in the world and features major comics publishers, game companies, television and movie studios. GLanzer oversees all advertising, sponsorship, promotional associations and over 3,500 domestic and international media; as well as being the spokesperson for the organization and is responsible for Comic-Con's public image of the organization.

Additionally, Glanzer served as communications director for a California State Assembly campaign and later as press secretary. He has been a featured presenter at TEDx, given testimony to the California Assembly Select Committee on San Diego Trade, Tourism and Job Creation, and has been a featured lecturer at the International Conference of the Public Relations Society of America, and TPEC, the Television Publicity Executives Committee.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



The San Diego Equality Business Association
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ROBERT H. GLEASON
(he, him, his)
President & CEO
Evans Hotels

Robert H. Gleason is President and CEO of Evans Hotels. He oversees the business strategy and daily operations of three iconic San Diego properties – The Lodge at Torrey Pines in La Jolla, as well as the Bahia Resort Hotel and Catamaran Resort Hotel & Spa on Mission Bay. Having started in the reservations department at age 17, Gleason has dedicated nearly 40 years to the company, becoming the first CEO from outside the founding family.

Outside of work, Gleason has previously chaired the boards of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, Los Angeles Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Francis Parker School, San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and San Diego LGBT Community Center.

Gleason received an economics degree from Princeton University and a law degree from the University of San Diego School of Law.

He and his husband, Marc Matys, are raising two teenage boys.



KEN GRANDLUND
(he, him, his)
Senior Internal Communications
Specialist and Diversity Leader
Cox Communications

Ken Grandlund (he/him) is a Senior Internal Communications Specialist and Diversity Leader at Cox Communications. He is the proud parent of a transgender person and is a self-identified queer professional.

Grandlund has been a member of the Cox One Pride Employee Resource Group since 2016, beginning as a local ambassador before serving in roles as National Ambassador Lead, National Operations Lead and currently, National Co-Chair of the ERG's enterprise leadership team. During this time, he led a successful effort to add gender confirmation surgeries to the corporate benefit plan, initiated conversations about intersectionality and allyship, helped combine divisional Pride ERGs across the country into a single organization and advises his company's international Pride ERG teams.

Grandlund also serves as a board member at the North County LGBTQ Resource Center.



SUSAN HARTMAN
(they, them, theirs)
Attorney, Founder
The Law Offices of Susan Hartman

Susan Hartman is attorney and founder of The Law Offices of Susan Hartman – an accessible, aggressive, exclusively DUI defense firm serving all San Diego courts and the DMV.

They are a Connecticut native who earned their BA in Criminology, with a minor in Sociology, at the University of New Mexico. They moved to San Diego to pursue their Juris Doctor degree from Thomas Jefferson School of Law, graduating Cum Laude in 2002.

Following law school, Hartman opened a law office with a focus on estate planning. A few years later they accepted a position as a Deputy Public Defender in Orange County, where they practiced as a trial attorney. In 2010, they reopened their practice, focusing exclusively on defending individuals accused of DUI in San Diego and the surrounding area.

Hartman also serves as co-chair on the board of directors of San Diego Pride.



JAY HENSLEE
(he, him, his)
Vice President, District Manager
U.S. Bank

Jay Henslee is a Vice President and District Manager for U.S. Bank, where he oversees branch operations for a number of banking centers in San Diego. He has held several roles with U.S. Bank and was instrumental in the expansion of the bank throughout California.

Henslee grew up in a small town in Northern California where his exposure to LGBTQ+ culture and influential role models was limited. This inspired him to be a visible leader and foster a culture where employees can be their authentic selves.

Henslee serves as the Advisor for the U.S. Bank Spectrum LGBTQ+ employee resources group, and also serves on the board of directors for the San Diego Performing Arts League, Diversionary Theatre, City Ballet, Horton Plaza Theatres Foundation and Rebuilding Together. He is also the co-chair of the 2022 San Diego Human Rights Campaign Dinner on August 13 at the US Grant.



NICHOLAS HOLMES
(he, him, his)
SVP and Chief Operating Officer
Rady Children's Hospital San Diego

Nicholas Holmes is Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Rady Children's Hospital San Diego (RCHSD).

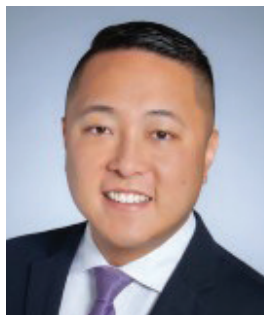
He served for 15 years in U.S. Navy as an officer in the Medical Corps. In addition, he was the head urologist of the Navy serving as the Specialty Advisor to the Navy Surgeon General. In this role, he was instrumental in assisting in shaping urology health care policy, manpower and graduate medical education.

At RCHSD, Holmes has served in physician leader roles as Chief of Pediatric Urology, acting Surgeon-in-Chief and medical director for Surgical Services. During his tenure as Division Chief, the Pediatric Urology Division had been named one of the top 30 programs by U.S. News and World Report.

Dr. Holmes was honored to receive the County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce's (CSDBBC) William Jones Lifetime Leadership Award in 2018. He presently serves on CSDBBC's Board of Directors as the Vice-Chair.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



Allen Young



Ryland Madison



Ken Grandlund



Congratulations to Cox Communications' Ryland Madison, Allen Young and Ken Grandlund and their fellow honorees of the San Diego Business Journal's 2022 Top 50 Leaders of Influence LGBTQ+.

Thank you for all your contributions and dedication to the LGBTQ+ community and promoting equality in the workplace.



KAREN KAUFMAN

(she, her, hers)
President

San Diego Women's Chorus

Karen Kaufman is President of the San Diego Women's Chorus. She joined the San Diego Women's Chorus in 1987 as a second soprano then later switched to being first alto. In 2015, Kaufman became the alto one section manager and in 2020 she joined the board of directors and shortly thereafter was elected secretary. In 2022, the board elected her to be president.

Throughout her involvement, the San Diego Women's Chorus grew from a chorus with about 15 singers gathered around a piano to a thriving community with over 150 diverse members who believe in the power of music, power of women and power of marginalized voices performing a variety of events throughout the year. The chorus has performed across North America in venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, Denver Performing Arts Center and the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami.

Before retiring in 2012, Kaufman was a software engineer in the defense industry.



ED KUTCH

(he, him, his)

Senior Catering Sales Manager
U.S. Grant Hotel

Ed Kutch is Senior Catering Sales Manager at the U.S. Grant Hotel, where he has worked for 18 years. He has worked for Marriott for over 27 years, starting as a banquet captain opening up the Princeton Forrester Village Marriott.

Kutch is a key contributor to the U.S. Grant team and has a deep understanding of the local market and continues to foster relationships. He also recently achieved Marriott's "Sales Star" status by over performing his sales goal by 155%.

He personally took on the task in the early days of the pandemic of arranging specific rooms that he found that he was showing on a regular basis to be set in Covid guidelines and worked with vendors to secure product so the brides and grooms could visual the room with upgraded linens, chairs, chargers, etc.

Kutch was also recently named Sales Associate of the Year by the San Diego County Lodging Association.



THE US GRANT
HOTEL



FERNANDO Z. LOPEZ

(they, their, theirs)
Executive Director

San Diego Pride

Fernando Z. Lopez is the first Latinx, first nonbinary Executive Director for San Diego Pride. They moved to San Diego in 1999 as a homeless youth and has since become a prominent LGBTQ community leader through their work with organizations such as Equality California and Marriage Equality USA, and the National LGBTQ Task Force advocating for the rights of LGBTQ individuals, couples, and families.

In their time with San Diego Pride, Fernando oversaw the creation and growth of the organization's education, advocacy, arts, and philanthropic programs – quintupling the size of the organization's budget and tripling the size of its staff. Lopez has expanded LGBTQ voter outreach and engagement; founded and funded multiple QTBIPOC coalitions and organizations; and increased San Diego Pride's international relations work by meeting with 500 delegates from 134 countries around the world.



RYLAND MADISON

(he, him, his)
Director

Cox Communications

Ryland Madison is Director at Cox Communications. He is a leader in the telecommunication and technology sector with over 25 years of experience across multiple disciplines including product marketing, product development, business operations and engineering. He has overseen national product marketing, and lead development of go-to-market strategies for the successful launch and growth of multimillion dollar products and services. Currently, he oversees marketing strategy for Cox Business small and medium business segments.

Madison has served on the executive boards of both the San Diego LGBT Center and the New Children's Museum. His passion for helping homeless youth is driven by his own experience as a homeless child. He has helped to place over 300 foster children through his work. In 2020, he and his adopted son Max were recognized and inducted into the Library of Congress for their efforts in child education through the arts.



MATT MORROW

(he, her, they)

Executive Artistic Director
Diversionary Theatre.

Matt Morrow is Executive Artistic Director of Diversionary Theatre. Since joining Diversionary in 2014, they helped to grow the theater's operating budget by 100%. Under their leadership the theatre has been nominated for 29 San Diego Critics Circle Awards, winning two Outstanding New Play Awards in 2017 and 2019. Alongside Diversionary's Board of Trustees, Morrow led the Securing Our Future campaign – a \$2.7 million renovation project for the theater's home in University Heights, which re-opened fall 2021.

Morrow was honored with the inaugural Larry T. Baza Arts & Culture Award from San Diego Pride and was a Creative Catalyst Fellow with The San Diego Foundation and La Jolla Playhouse. He has developed new work with The Sundance Theatre Institute, The Old Globe, The Banff Centre, Center Theatre Group, American Conservatory Theater, Lincoln Center, PlayPenn, and Page 73 Productions in residence at the Yale School of Drama.

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SCOTT ORTES
(he, him, his)
Vice President
Suna Solutions

Scott Ortés is Vice President of Suna Solutions. He has been critical at establishing and growing the company's strategic services division which has grown exponentially in the last two years and now exceeds \$40 million in annual spend under management.

Ortés has developed key strategic partnerships with two emerging technology platforms – VNDLY and Utmost – that has developed into a great relationship. Under his leadership, Suna's strategic group has expanded globally. The company is currently in the process of establishing a Private Limited operation in India to support its RPO solution.

He is an essential contributor to developing Suna's internal Supplier Diversity initiatives and plays a critical role in the company's mentoring relationship with Pride Resources, a small, LGBTQ+ company based in San Diego. He is currently working with Suna's external clients to develop Diversity Equity and Inclusion initiatives as part of their talent acquisition process.




VICKY PASCHE
(she, her, hers)
Co-founder & CEO
Dapper Boi, Inc.

Vicky Pasche is the co-founder and CEO of Dapper Boi, Inc. Within five years of starting her online gender-neutral clothing brand, it is now a seven-figure company on a mission to revolutionize the gender-neutral fashion movement.

Pasche has always had a passion for compassion and believes that so many of us do not fit in today's binary norms in the retail world. By creating a body-positive, accepting community, we can all build confidence within ourselves and within each other to create a world we can all fit into.

In addition to Dapper Boi, Pasche is also President of Pasche Management where she provides marketing management, direction, and support to small businesses for all aspects of marketing, including strategic planning, direct marketing, advertising, new media, market research, training and team building.




PARIS QUION
(she, her, hers)
General Manager
insideOUT

Paris Quion is General Manager of insideOUT, a Hillcrest restaurant that is part of the MO's Universe Group. She is also a drag entertainer, nightlife personality, community activist and business owner. Quion believes that InsideOUT as a business is one that gives back as much love as it has been given.

Quion was born and raised in San Diego and is proud to boast about the impact the Hillcrest community has had in her upbringing and their important role in who she is today. As a drag entertainer she is able to combine her talents as a trained dancer with her passion and formal education in fashion design – one of her custom costumes is featured in the San Diego History Museum.

In recent years, she has also been given the honor of headlining the San Diego Pride festival with her high production show featuring San Diego based guest entertainers for the True Colors Revue.




DAVID A. REICKS
(he, him, his)
Assistant Vice President, Senior Financial Advisor
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management

David A. Reicks is Assistant Vice President and Senior Financial Advisor at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management. With more than 40 years in financial services, he specializes in helping LGBTQ+ owned businesses, their employees and families grow wealth and prepare for retirement. With clients in San Diego and across eight states, he grew revenues by over 30% last year and he regularly receives perfect 10 out of 10 client satisfaction scores.

Reicks has earned his CPFA certification, Series 3, 7, 9, 10, 63 and 65 FINRA registrations, and Life/Health, Annuity and Long Term Care Insurance Licenses.

He is a former board member of St Paul's Foundation and Sports for Exceptional Athletes, a current board member with San Diego Equality Business Association and a former head figure skating coach for the Special Olympics World Games. As an ice dancing gold medalist and a triathlete, Reicks understands the need for commitment and dedication in achieving goals.

He can be reached at David.reicks@ml.com or 619-699-3759.




VERONICA RIVERA
(she, her, hers)
National Sales Director
San Diego Tourism Authority

Veronica Rivera is National Sales Director at San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA). She has forged her 13-year career in the hospitality and tourism industry in San Diego.

Rivera's path to joining the team at the SDTA began at the San Diego State University L. Robert Payne School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. There she earned a Bachelor of Science with an Emphasis in Meeting & Event Operation Management. Rivera has grown her career from operations into sales, where she has worked at select service properties to resort and convention hotels spanning from Del Mar to Downtown. Her primary goal is to offer complimentary, unbiased, expert destination information to customers while being their liaison to over 130 San Diego hotels, venues, and attractions.



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With gratitude, Team Rady



Nicholas Holmes, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President
and Chief Operating Officer,
Rady Children's Hospital





WARREN RUIS

(he, him, his)

*Director of Supply Management,
Supplier Diversity and Logistics
San Diego Gas & Electric*

Warren Ruis is Director of Supply Management, Supplier Diversity and Logistics for San Diego Gas & Electric. In this role, he oversees \$2 billion of marketable procurement spend with business partners of the energy delivery company.

His supplier diversity team works hard to ensure that spend is intentionally inclusive, with nearly 40% of those dollars going to woman, minority, veteran and LGBTQ-owned businesses.

Ruis has been with the Sempra family of companies for more than 16 years. He holds a Bachelor of Business from USD and a Master of Business from Pepperdine University.

Ruis is a native San Diegan, former board member for the LGBT Center and wish granter with Make A Wish of San Diego. He and his much cuter husband Sip have two wild but adorable kiddos, Wyatt and Savannah.



STEPHEN RUSSELL

(he, him, his)

*Executive Director
San Diego Housing Federation*

Stephen Russell is the Executive Director of the San Diego Housing Federation.

Russell has a 20-year history working in community and economic development in the Mid-City region of San Diego. He served as Executive Director of the El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement District, where he was responsible for implementing an economic development strategy for an aging commercial district. He later served as an advisor to then-San Diego City Councilmember Toni Atkins on issues related to redevelopment, infrastructure financing, small business support and the city's general plan. Russell later served as volunteer board member and President of the City Heights Community Development Corporation.

Prior to joining the Federation as its Executive Director, Russell was a member of the firm Platt/Whitelaw Architects, Inc., a full-service architecture firm specializing in sustainable design.



BRIAN SHEN

(he, him, his)

*Head of Product Management
ClickUp*

Brian Shen is Head of Product Management at ClickUp. He solidified himself as one of the most innovative product minds in the project management and productivity space. A results-driven product manager, Shen leverages his prior experience as a customer experience consultant and data research analyst to deliver inventive solutions to save people time by making the world more productive.

Since joining ClickUp in 2020, Shen has been instrumental in not only growing ClickUp's platform to one of the leading productivity tools, but also expanding ClickUp's user base from just 200,000 teams at the start of 2021 to more than 800,000 teams today. This growth is attributed to many factors, starting with Shen's leadership in nearly tripling the size of ClickUp's product team.

Shen has helped drive the strategy and development of more than 43 product releases in just two years, including industry-leading solutions like ClickUp Docs and Whiteboards.



EDWARD SIMON, II

(he, him, his)

*Inclusion and Diversity Officer
California American Water*

*Co-Founder and Chief Operating
Officer
The Diversity Advisors*

Edward Simon, II is Inclusion and Diversity Officer for California Water. His leadership roles within the utility industry resulted in a 48% supplier diversity spend and substantial improvements in organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. His career accomplishments are punctuated by over 20 years in various leadership roles including project management, operational coordination of strategic customer service projects, operational implementation of critical performance monitoring infrastructures, and supplier and workforce diversity programs.

Simon is also co-founder and chief operating officer of The Diversity Advisors. The Diversity Advisors partners with their clients to build organizational cultures and supplier diversity strategies that fosters inclusion, belonging, diversity, and equity.



JULIE SOLOMAN

(she, her, hers)

*Vice President, Senior Client Manager
City National Bank*

Julie Soloman is Vice President and Senior Client Manager at City National Bank.

Prior to her position at City Nations, Soloman worked at Citi where she was Vice President and Branch Manager. Other past employers include Covance where she was case manager and program specialist, and Union Bank where she served in numerous roles including Vice President, Branch Manager, Financial Services Manager and Financial Services officer.

Soloman has a Bachelor of Science degree in Financial Management from National University.

Outside of work, Soloman volunteers for Junior Achievement and supports San Diego Pride. While at Union Bank, she led the bank's first ever employee march in the Pride parade in 2013. She is also very involved with Employee Resource Groups, writing articles and advocating for support for her LGBTQ+ colleagues.



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The San Diego Equality Business Association promotes LGBTQ influence through business ownership, workforce equality and active consumerism, creating prosperity to support equality, diversity and inclusion.



Jeremy Wilson (He/Him/His)

President & CEO

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o 619 296-4543

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P.O. Box 33848

San Diego, CA 92163

come join us

sdeba.org





ROD SPEER

(he, him, his)
Senior Group Sales Manager
Westgate Hotel

Rod Speer is Senior Group Sales Manager at Westgate Hotel. He is an LGBTQ+ activist/advocate who recently returned to San Diego in Fall 2019 after spending several years in Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Over the last five years, Speer spent time as chairperson of three chapters of Marriott's ERG, ONE Marriott. His first leadership role was chair of the Atlanta Chapter, then later Los Angeles before founding and becoming chair of the San Diego Chapter. In his roles at ONE, Speer and his colleagues spend countless hours volunteering for LGBTQ+ causes and getting the hotel properties he represents to donate to in kind donation and trade. Speer was recognized for his achievements as ONE Marriott Member of the Year in 2019 out of 3,000 members.

After moving on from ONE Marriott in 2022, Speer is now advocating for LGBTQ+ causes through the Westgate Hotel and as a board member of SDEBA. He can be reached at rod.speer@westgate-hotel.com or 619-381-7892.



CAMERON STACY

(he, him, his)
Assistant Vice President, Digital Project Manager
U.S. Bank

Cameron Stacy is Assistant Vice President and Digital Project Manager at U.S. Bank where he is a top performer and continues to excel in his positions. He was one of the youngest to garner the position of Vice President in the organization. He continues to accelerate through the organization through achievement of continual promotions of growth within U.S. Bank.

Stacy also currently serves on the San Diego Equality Business Association Board as the Treasurer. He has been an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community dating back to his time attending SDSU. He was on the executive board of the queer fraternity at SDSU/UCSD and currently is serving on San Diego States Exec. Business Management board tasked to engage students of all different backgrounds to prepare for life after school.

Stacy is an excellent example of bringing his authentic self to everything he does in life and makes a difference with everyone he meets.



MARK STUART

(he, him, his)
President & CEO
San Diego Foundation

Mark Stuart is President and CEO of the San Diego Foundation. He reports to and collaborates with the Board of Governors and is responsible for developing and managing relationships with a wide range of stakeholders as well as for the operating health of The Foundation. He is a fundraising and community building professional with nearly 30 years of experience in all aspects of operations and leadership.

Prior to joining The Foundation, Stuart managed a staff of 64 and a budget of \$14 million at San Diego Zoo Global (SDZG), including development, membership, and government and community relations. Under his leadership, SDZG raised \$530 million in its first-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign.

Stuart also serves on the McDaniel College Board of Trustees and the Certified Fundraising Executives International Board of Directors.



DANIEL SZPAK

(he, him, his)
Founder, Organizer & CIO
Scoop San Diego

Daniel Szpak is founder, organizer and Chief Ice Cream Officer of Scoop San Diego, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization who's mission is to celebrate the love of ice cream as a catalyst for social change. Scoop raises money for local non-profit organizations that provide services to San Diego's most vulnerable communities.

Before founding Scoop, Szpak co-founded Hammond's Gourmet Ice Cream in North Park in 2014 and eventually sold his share in the company, but his passion for ice cream continued. In 2019, he turned that passion into purpose (and also more ice cream) by creating Scoop San Diego to celebrate people's shared love of ice cream as a catalyst for social connection and human compassion. Inspired to make a difference, Szpak is fulfilling his dream of bringing the best local ice cream and gelato shops together in one place for San Diego's original and only ice cream festival.



KEVIN TILDEN

(he, him, his)
President
California and Hawaii American Water

Kevin Tilden is President of California and Hawaii Water. In his various roles over 20 years, he has overseen community and government relations, public and stakeholder outreach, business development, business performance, conservation and customer service for California and Hawaii American Water.

Tilden is past chair of the Governance Committee for the California Utilities Diversity Council and served on the board of the National Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund as well as the Public Affairs Council for the California Chamber of Commerce.

He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the California Water Association and the California Chamber of Commerce, as well as the American Water Charitable Foundation and the California American Water Employee Political Action Committee. Locally, Tilden has served on the board of the San Diego LGBT Community Center and Diverisary Theatre. In 2019, he was awarded with the prestigious Pride Honoree award by the California Legislature's LGBT caucus.



Increasing access to Educational Opportunity

By supporting educational opportunities like after-school programs, summer camps, and increased access to college, San Diego Foundation is preparing our next generation for life and work.



**DANA TOPPEL**

(she, her, hers)

Chief Operating Officer
Jewish Family Service of San Diego

Dana Toppel is Chief Operating Officer at Jewish Family Service of San Diego. She provides overall leadership for the impact-driven, multi-service organization with the bold vision of building a stronger, healthier, more resilient San Diego. Toppel joined JFS in 2009 as Director of Older Adult Services and served as Divisional Director of Clinical Services as well as Chief Program Officer prior to assuming the role of COO in 2015.

Toppel is dedicated to advancing equity and participates in local, regional and national conversations to advance efforts related to inclusive leadership, professional training and ensuring access to opportunity for all. She also serves as chair of San Diego for Every Child, as a commissioner on the California Commission of Aging and is the founder of Make Work Work For Moms.

In March of 2019 and 2020, Toppel was recognized by Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins as a Women's History Month Honoree and Woman of the District.

**AMY TRUONG**

(she, her, hers)

Founder
PARU

Amy Truong is the founder of PARU, a specialty loose leaf tea and matcha company comprising two shops in San Diego and a digital storefront (paru-tea.com). As the company's primary tea blender and sourcing manager, Truong has established direct relationships with farmers and producers in China and Japan as well as underrepresented tea-producing countries such as Thailand and Vietnam.

PARU was named "Best Tea" in San Diego in 2018 and 2019. Prior to PARU, Truong earned a B.A. in International Business from the University of California, Irvine, studied International Studies at Meiji Gakuin University in Yokohama, and worked in consulting and operations for premium food delivery services throughout California.

In 2017, she was selected as a recipient of a "Coming Out Tokyo" contest by VICE and Airbnb, who sponsored her trip to Japan that would later turn into PARU's first official sourcing trip.

PARU

**NICOLE VERDES**

(she, they)

Board President
Lambda Archives

Nicole Verdes is the Board President of Lambda Archives. She is the first nonbinary person to hold this position. At Lambda Archives, she has been successful in using her passion for social justice, arts and culture, and cultural preservation to create policies that center equity and access to the arts.

For over 30 years, the mission of the Lambda Archives of San Diego has been to collect, preserve and share the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in San Diego, Northern Baja California and the Imperial County region.

In addition to her role at Lambda Archives, Verdes currently serves on the Steering Committee for Rising Arts Leaders San Diego and has served on a grant panel for the California Arts Council's Administrators of Color Fellowship program.

**ALEX VILLAFUERTE**

(he, him, his)

Director of Communications & Membership
Asian Business Association San Diego

Alex Villafuerte is the Director of Communications and Membership of the Asian Business Association San Diego (ABASD). He comes to ABASD with 11 years of experience in eCommerce and marketing strategy as well as five years in event and community organizing for San Diego's largest civic event, the San Diego Pride parade. At San Diego Pride, where he serves as Marketing and Communications Manager, Villafuerte spearheaded a number of new programs and events including the Youth Art Show. He also helped in the creation of the San Diego Queer APIMEDA Coalition in 2018 with the goal of creating a safe and welcoming space designed to foster meaningful discussions and capacity for those living at that intersection.

Villafuerte also serves on the County of San Diego Leon L. Williams Human Relations Commission, the co-chair of the San Diego API Coalition, and a board member of the ABC 10News Community Advisory Board.

**DAVID WHITTAKER**

(he, him, his)

Staff Engineer / Board Chair
Qualcomm / SD:IN

David Whittaker is Staff Engineer at Qualcomm where he develops automation tooling for Qualcomm's product security team. He helps ensure that the company's products are protected against hacking by discovering, fixing and preventing security vulnerabilities. Prior to that, he worked as a program manager in the diversity and inclusion department.

Whittaker started his career as a high school math teacher, worked up to a college professor and then went on to work in software development. He received his bachelor's degree from Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Deaf Education, and a master's degree in Mathematics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Whittaker is currently president of the Qualcomm Equality Employee Network; serves as Chair on the board for SD:IN, San Diego's corporate inclusion network; and volunteers his time at the San Diego Deaf Community Services center. He can be reached at david.whittaker@gmail.com or 858-213-9357.



CONGRATULATIONS ALEX VILLAFUERTE!



On behalf of the Asian Business Association San Diego,
we congratulate Alex Villafuerte for being named one of
SDBJ's 2022 LGBTQ+ Leaders of Influence!



BRAVO TO JIMMY ZEMEL

AVP, BUSINESS PROGRAM MANAGER CALIFORNIA BANK & TRUST

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PRIDE MONTH

The San Diego Business Journal and the
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LGBTQ+ Pride Month.



Putting the “Real” in Realtor

Tamara Zyhylij Has Been Ready for Real Estate For Decades

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Tamara Zyhylij’s father was 9 years old when he arrived at Ellis Island in New York City’s harbor with his mother and step-father. Zyhylij’s dad’s father was killed in a train station bombing, and her grandmother and her young son were run out of their home in Ukraine by the German militia that burned their village to the ground.

The family endured much hardship in their travels, Zyhylij says, and her grandmother eventually married a man she met on the road for protection. The man she would later marry had a horse and a wagon so they wouldn’t have to walk any longer.

After journeying across several countries, they eventually found their way to the United States.

“My step grandfather never learned to speak much English, but he learned real estate was a great way to improve his income,” said Zyhylij, who owns **Tamara Z Real Estate** in San Diego. “Not by selling, but by buying a home, fixing it up while he lived in it, then selling it a few years later and buying another. This was my first introduction to the power of investing in real estate.”

Now Zyhylij, who was born in Minnesota but grew up in central California, runs a thriving San Diego-based real estate company under the **Compass** brokerage umbrella.



Tamara Zyhylij
Owner
Tamara Z Real Estate

Zyhylij has been working in real estate since 2003. Formerly with Coldwell Banker West, she has been with **Compass** since 2020.

COVID-19 A Very Rough Ride for Real Estate

Zyhylij said she has weathered some tough times -- the early years when she still had much to learn about the real estate business, 2006 when the recession started “just as I was starting to get some traction,” and most recently in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Going through COVID and all the requirements was very challenging,” Zyhylij said. “We were sanitizing, and people didn’t want to go in. Buyers wanted to go see properties but nobody wanted to let people into their homes. Even when the buyer was motivated, the state of California and OSHA had constant requirements -- booties, gloves and masks, you had to wash your hands all the time and not touch anything. It was not easy.”

The market has changed in San Diego, with home prices skyrocketing in recent months and years.

“In the beginning of 2020, it wasn’t difficult to find a home for \$600,000 in San Diego,” she said. “And that’s still a lot but now you’re lucky to find a home for \$800,000 or \$900,000 in that same neighborhood. It’s supply and demand. And now with [higher] interest rates, demand has slacked off.”

Zyhylij said during her nearly 20 years in real estate, she has “seen the market turn on a dime,” and has learned to stash away cash when she can. She is also working on her broker’s license and said she is more than halfway done with the necessary coursework.

Zyhylij was recognized as a 2020 Five Star real estate professional. The Five Star Real Estate Agent award recognizes professionals who excel in client satisfaction, chosen after client nominations and evaluations, regulatory requirements, and a review by an industry Blue Ribbon Panel.

Zyhylij started working at an early age and said she had “many, many odd jobs to pick up a few dollars.”

“(I had a) paper route, selling fruit door-to-door, working at a childcare center, sweeping the hallways after classes at my middle school, picking fruit and doing odd jobs for my grandmother’s friends, detailing semi-trucks and helping my dad unload the cargo from semitrailers,” Zyhylij said.

The First ‘Real Job’

Her first “real job when I was 15½ was with a major retailer within walking distance from home,” Zyhylij said.

She said she’s been working ever since. Before real estate, she worked in operations management and product development and management.

Zyhylij worked for **Fotomat** while she was attending community college and worked her way up to area supervisor. Fotomat was a San Diego-founded company that had drive-up kiosks where people would leave rolls of film to be developed. It has long been shuttered.

She later worked for **Copy Net**, **SAIC** and **Mailboxes, Etc.**, but found her true calling in the real estate world.

She is a current member **San Diego Association of Realtors** Professional Standards Committee, the hearing body for Realtor code of ethics violations, and with the San Diego Association of Realtors, Zyhylij is past vice chair and the chair of the Grievance Committee, which looks at Realtor code of ethics complaints.

While work in home buying and selling keeps her busy, Zyhylij said she believes “it is important for everyone to contribute to the community” and so she stays active and involved through various volunteering efforts throughout San Diego County.

Among her volunteering, she has been part of **Mama’s Kitchen** food delivery for HIV and other ill and disadvantaged persons for the past 10 years. Zyhylij also served on the board of “**FilmOut San Diego**” for five years and is the Business Networking Group facilitator for the **San Diego Equality Business Association**. ■

Tamara Z Real Estate



FOUNDED: 2003

OWNER: Tamara Zyhylij

HEADQUARTERS: San Diego

BUSINESS: Real Estate

WEBSITE: www.tamarazrealestate.com

CONTACT: (619) 865-1389

NOTABLE: Tamara Zyhylij pronounces her Ukrainian-heritage last name Za-Haley.

Ensuring and Insuring an Equality Mindset

Click2bind Aims To Make Insurance More Accessible

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

With nearly 25 years in the insurance business as an underwriter, team manager and producer, **Arthur Hopkins** said people call him “the insurance encyclopedia.”

Now vice president at **Click2Bind Insurance Services**, the San Diego-based company that connects people to various insurance needs, Hopkins said he is also called the local “insurance nerd.”

And that’s OK with him, because he sees the big picture of the company and where its headed. Hopkins has been in the insurance business since 1998 and with Click2Bind since 2021. The San Diego-based insurance company was founded in 2017.

Hopkins has taken an interesting path to insurance. He had been working for two years at the **Walmart** in Santee, near where he grew up, but left to try out a job in the Carroll Canyon area, at a call center for reservations for a local airline, one where his aunt worked as a stewardess.

Hopkins, now 43, soon realized call center work wasn’t his future, especially since he was required to wear full business clothing, of which he wasn’t a fan.

“I wasn’t feeling the passion at the call center,” Hopkins said. “We were next door to **Geico**, so I knew about them already. Then **Geico** moved to a new location in Poway. When I realized they had a relaxed business casual dress code and I wouldn’t have to wear a shirt and tie, that was it. I got a job working there.”

Hopkins said **Geico** offered him “the best foundation training for insurance,” and not long after he started, he got promoted to an underwriter position, “without a degree.”

From Geico to Farmers to Click2Bind

He later left **Geico** and moved to a **Farmers Insurance** agency in Mission Valley, where he worked for 15 years, before eventually touching down at Click2Bind.

He says he still enjoys the challenge of real estate and large projects and especially “the challenge of gathering and pre-underwriting accurate data to negotiate with an insurance carrier, and then presenting the end result to a current or prospective client.”

During his journey to Click2Bind, Hopkins has a long list of successes along the way, among them receiving the Community Associations Institute San Diego’s “Rising Star Business Partner” award.

He said he is proud of having insured new senior housing apartment communities from the ground up, has insured national mortgage company **OneTrust** home loans for all lines of business -- liability, property, workers compensation and mortgage bonding in all states and U.S. territories, and has insured several retail gasoline stations, condominium

management companies and condominium communities in Southern California.

“I really do envision the full plan, of bringing on independent insurance producers in all 50 states and its territories to oversee their service and production as their sales leader,” Hopkins said.

“To teach others to perform insurance services the way I have been trained and to meet and exceed those client expectations on every level, and to remain active with my own book of insurance business for my many friends, clients and more as an insurance educate and top-producing agent.”

Hopkins understands that many people are not fully educated on insurance needs and that his job as an agent is to nurture the relationship with clients and protect their at-risk assets.

“The most important thing to me in an insurance relationship is making that bond with the client or asset manager through education,” Hopkins said. “When a client’s eyes go from glazing over to seeing the lights turn on is when I know I’ve brought that person to a new level of understanding of the importance of a properly insured portfolio.”

For eight years, Hopkins has also been a member of the **San Diego Equality Business Association** (formerly known as the Greater San Diego Business Association)

and is currently an executive board member with the group.

He said he is proud of his association because of what the group represents to local and national LGBTQ+ communities.

“There is the power of the pocket, and the power of the community,” Hopkins said. “Also, most importantly for inclusion purposes, the GSDBA/SDEBA has always been inclusive of its many allied members who have helped transact millions in revenues and transactions in the San Diego economy.”

Hopkins is part of a weekly business networking group with the SDEBA, which he said, “has become my extended family, and as we welcome new members and see others move on, it brings a great sense of pride in my heart to know that I have been one of many that has contributed to the success and wealth of others within our community... and this commitment (as a board member) is important to me as a business person in San Diego.” ■

Click2bind Insurance Services



FOUNDED: 2017

PRESIDENT: Amir Lozani

VICE PRESIDENT: Arthur Hopkins

HEADQUARTERS: Kearny Mesa, San Diego

BUSINESS: Insurance

WEBSITE: click2bind.com

CONTACT: (877) 463-0064

NOTABLE: Hopkins grew up in Santee and went to Christian Heritage College in El Cajon.



Arthur Hopkins
VP
Click2Bind Insurance Services

Making Financial Cents and Sense

Women-owned and -powered Financial Company Helps People Plan for Future

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Pride Month in San Diego has given financial planner and asset manager **Jamie Fleming** a very good feeling. Fleming, a 54-year-old native of Ventura, has been in the financial world for 30 years, all of them in San Diego, where she has lived since 1990. During those decades, and particularly in the last decade, she said she has seen progressive change in regard to the LGBTQ+ community.

From her **Fleming & Associates LLC** office overlooking **Petco Park** to her home in Mission Hills, she said the support is obvious, and heartwarming.

"It's really interesting today versus 10 years ago," Fleming said. "All the pride flags between downtown and where I live, where I work out at **Orange Theory Fitness**, you can see how much more supportive communities are, and it's awesome to see that."

A single mother of 13-year-old twins, one boy and one girl, she said her children's generation is much more comfortable with the differences in people.

"The whole gay and transgender thing is completely normal for them," Fleming said. "At least in this little corner of the world, it's beautiful to see how excited they are seeing rainbows and really positive things."

Fleming has also been part of changes in the financial world, where women are concerned.

Growing from 5% to 23% in 30 Years

She said when she began her career as a financial planner and asset manager back in 1992, less than five percent of financial advisors, managers and others in the field were women. Today, that number has risen to 23 percent.

"It's grown, but it's taken 30 years to go from 5 to 23 percent," Fleming said. "It's incredible for that change, but there is much room to grow."

Fleming started her own financial planning firm on January 2, 2003 -- "1-2-3," she noted -- because she was weary of being in a heavily male-dominated industry.

"While I was trained by men and appreciate what they offer, in finances, we speak a different language," Fleming said. "Women have a different experience with money. The whole psychology of money is different for women than it is for men."

Fleming said she was frustrated by her male colleagues when requesting to work with female business owners and being discouraged to do so.

"I just wanted to change all that, that was really important to me," Fleming said.

She said from the start she also wanted to be a financial advocate for those in the LGBTQ+ community, especially before same-sex marriages were legal.

"I wanted to protect people the way they needed to be protected," she said. "Same sex couples didn't have some of the same privileges. Things have changed a little but the dynamics are still challenging, especially if families aren't supportive."

Fleming has been on the board of the **Gay and Lesbian Center** since she was in her late 20s. She said it's important to her to give back to the community, and as part of that, she manages with center's 401K, and helps educate people



Jamie Fleming
Founder and CEO
Fleming & Associates
LLC

at the center about "contributing to their future."

Fleming enjoys public speaking and also puts on workshops at the Center, offering complimentary consultations to help answer questions to different financial challenges and questions.

A Knack for Numbers

Fleming said she has always been "a nerdy math person" and "numbers for me, I can see them, and they kind of speak to me."

She said that as a third grader in Ventura, she took a career test and when she answered the questions that were posed, found out that she was a good fit for a career as a financial adviser.

"I had no idea what that was," Fleming said, laughing. "I just knew I liked math and love people. I saw the potential salary was one of the only ones that had six figures. I went home and told my parents. I never lost that idea."

She said one of the reasons she wanted to start her own firm was to help clients feel empowered.

Fleming also said that a year-long stay in Spain during college changed the trajectory of her life. Not only did she master the Spanish language, her perspective of the world shifted.

"I was exposed to different cultures and really saw what's important," she said. "It was difficult not having hot water in Spain. And then here, people were complaining about their second car. Being in Spain allowed me to understand people's motivations better and ask better questions. I did not have homesickness going there,

but I had a hard time coming back."

Career-wise, that time away from California gave her insight and knowledge into helping her clients embrace what is required to make changes.

Fleming said one her favorite things to do is public speaking so that she can help out as many people as possible.

"People are sometimes afraid to ask for help and many people struggle with finances... and they don't have to," she said. "There are resources available. Most people think having a financial advisor is something only for the wealthy but the reality is everybody needs financial advice and going in the right direction. I want to encourage that."

Fleming is also a published author and her book "Financial Blind Spots: A Business Owner's Guide to Creating and Managing Personal Wealth Without Sabotaging Business Success" is due out in the fall. ■

Fleming & Associates LLC



FOUNDED: 2003

FOUNDER AND CEO: Jamie Fleming

HEADQUARTERS: Downtown San Diego

BUSINESS: Financial planning and asset management

EMPLOYEES: 15

WEBSITE: flemingandassociatesllc.com

CONTACT: (619) 839-9136

SOCIAL IMPACT: Delivers her 13-year-old daughter's crocheted scarves along with backpacks filled with water, food and snacks and gives them out to those to in-need people on the streets of San Diego.

NOTABLE: In 1998, Fleming rode her bicycle from San Diego to Jacksonville, Fla., to raise money for breast cancer research.

Building Bridges and Diversifying San Diego

San Diego Equality Business Association Raises Awareness of LGBTQ+ Needs

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

After more than two decades in the financial world, **Jeremy Wilson** has found the strongest investment with the best balance for his career has had the biggest payout -- helping support the LGBTQ+ business community in San Diego County and advocating for mainstream acceptance of diversity.

Since May of 2019, Wilson has been president and CEO of the **San Diego Equality Business Association**, formerly known as the Greater San Diego Business Association.

The SDEBA is the second oldest gay and lesbian business group in the United States, forming in 1979, five years after the Golden Gate Business Association began in San Francisco.

Wilson, 44, oversees the 281-member group, mostly small businesses earning revenues of under \$1 million.

He has been Vice President at **Union Bank** and **Banner Bank** in Orange County and in San Diego but left the banking business after finding that the then-GSDBA was having financial issues, and realizing that he had the background and know-how to help.

"I was working downtown and joined the board in February 2018, starting to do some fundraising on my lunch breaks," Wilson said. "I would go to the University Club and get contributions. I started to see the value of my

worth. I realized I was at \$500 an hour, meaning I could get a \$5,000 contribution after 10 hours of work. So I decided to pursue it further."

He became president of the group just over one year later. Early in his tenure, Wilson found out the group was \$40,000 in debt.

Taking Stock and Fixing the Debt

"We had people in leadership who had no financial background,"

Wilson said. "I started negotiating our debt, slashing expenses and put our organization on a path to make it viable and profitable. I got us out of our lease in Hillcrest and started a payment plan to pay off our credit card."

By October 2021, the group's ship had righted itself, and Wilson was able to leave his career in banking to become full time as the only employee of the SDEBA.

"I left my 22-year career in financial services and I've never looked back," Wilson said. "I turned away from my career and I feel liberated, as if a weight has been lifted off my shoulders."

Wilson now concentrates on running the group that promotes LGBTQ+ influence through business ownership, workforce equality and active consumerism. The SDEBA helps businesses create prosperity to support equality, diversity and inclusion.

"Doing what you're passionate about

is important, and that's what I'm doing now," said Wilson, who was born in Oregon but has lived in Southern California since age 3.

"When you do what you're passionate about, you're going to be much more focused -- and proud -- of your work. Giving back is very important to me, giving back to the community is important and honoring those who trailblazed before."

SDEBA members include real estate agents, mortgage brokers, certified public accountants, attorneys, insurance agents and bankers.

Others who belong to the SDEBA include bakers, printers, restaurants, physical trainers, dentists and construction businesses.

Prestigious Partners

"We also partner with larger organizations like **Sycuan Casino**, **U.S. Bank**, **Bank of America** and utilities like **Cox**, **SDG&E** and **T-Mobile**," Wilson said.

Nearly all of the businesses that belong to the SDEBA are gay-owned, but there are some businesses that are considered straight allies who offer support to the LGBTQ+ business community.

The group offers certification to those businesses whose ownership and management is 51 percent or more LGBTQ+.

SDEBA prides itself on outreach to other business chambers and to society at large. In 2000 it was the first LGBT chamber in the nation to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Small Business Administration, recognizing its

status as a minority business association.

At the end of every year, the group presents Equality Business Awards, including for business of the year, businessperson of the year, a community impact award and the Cindy Lehman Lifetime Achievement Award. Lehman is a retired bank manager who has been a straight ally and considered "an icon in the gay community," Wilson said.

The 2021 winners were **Avenir Thinking** (business of the year), **Tamara Zyhylij** (businessperson of the year), **MyPoint Credit Union** (community impact award), **Antoine Didienné** -- **147 Photos** (ally business of the year), **Pride Resource Partners** (corporate partner of the year), **Parkins Data Science and Analytics** (emerging business award) and **Chris Shaw** (Cindy Lehman award). ■

San Diego Equality Business Association



FOUNDED: 1979

PRESIDENT/CEO: Jeremy Wilson

HEADQUARTERS: North Park

BUSINESS: Nonprofit

BUDGET: \$150,000

EMPLOYEES: 1

WEBSITE: sdeba.org

CONTACT: (619) 296-4543

SOCIAL IMPACT: Group supports LGBTQ-owned business and provide certification.

NOTABLE: Second oldest gay and lesbian chamber in the United States.



Jeremy Wilson
President and CEO
San Diego Equality
Business Association