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 to get in good trouble, necessary trouble.” She is the first female district court judge in the state of Florida, and a member of the Florida Bar Board of Governors.

Ahrens served on the boards of San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition, CONNECT, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and Equality California. She can be reached at jason@cleantechsandiego.org or 858-566-7777.

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 858-566-7777.

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 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 Scholar Foundations Southern California/ Southern Nevada Alumni Association since 2013. Atto is currently in the process of starting a non-profit supporting Mid- and Eastern LGBTQ+ community members who are in the coming-out process.

BRIDGETTE AUSTIN

(she, her, hers)
Founder & CEO
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 bases that come with the LGBTQ image and assumed identity.

Austin holds a Master of Business for Veterans from the University of Southern California and has over 25 years of military service. She earned the Combat Action Ribbon for multiple tours in various areas of conflict.

Ann 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@baustinconsulting.com or 619-786-5843.

KIMBERLY “EMO” AVILES

(he, him, his)
Senior Vice President, Global Human Resources
Bank of America

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

Aviles established and grew 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 Dinner Out for Life events. He also is an Out @ 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 emilio.aviles@bofa.com or 619-515-5538.
Congratulations to Kimberly Ahrens on her recognition as a 2022 LGBTQ+ Leader of Influence. We appreciate your fierce advocacy for victims of harassment and discrimination.
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 fundraising 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 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 of the California Board of Behavioral Science. Disposti also serves on the San Diego Leadership Council, the San Diego County Board of Education LGBT Advisory Committee, and the San Diego Community College’s Education LGBT Advisory Committee.

MOE GIRTON  
(she, her, hers)  
General Manager, Partner  
Gossip Grill

Mo Girton is General Manager and Partner at Gossip Grill, the successful woman-forward bar, restaurant and nightlife 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.

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

DAVID GLANZER  
(he, him, his)  
Chief Communications and Strategy Officer  
San Diego Comic-Con  

David Glanzer is Chief Communications and Strategy Officer for San Diego Comic-Con, 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 comic 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.
Congratulations Jay Henslee and Cameron Stacy!

At U.S. Bank we are proud to embrace, champion and foster diversity, equity and inclusion. Through their visibility, leaders like Cameron and Jay influence an environment where employees can be their authentic selves.

U.S. Bank is proud to be named one of the Best Places to Work for LGBTQ+ Equality
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 & Spas 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 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.

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 affirmation 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 Theatre, Rady Children’s Hospital San Diego and the surrounding area. Hartman also serves as co-chair on the board of directors of San Diego Pride.

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.
KAREN KAUFMAN
(she, her, hers)
President
San Diego Women’s Chorus

Kaufman became President of the San Diego Women’s Chorus in 1987 as a second soprano. In 1989, she became the alto one sec-
tion of the chorus, and in 1990, she was elected secretary. In 2020, she was elected to 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 marginalized voices to overcome barriers and reach their full potential. The chorus has performed across North America in venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, Denver Performing Arts Center and the Arsht Cen-
ter 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

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 first Marriott in San Diego in 1987. 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 has also recently achieved Marriott's "Sales Star" status by performing his sales goal by 155%.

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.

FERNANDO Z. LOPEZ
(he, his, his)
Executive Director
San Diego Pride

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 first Marriott in San Diego in 1987. 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 has also recently achieved Marriott's "Sales Star" status by performing his sales goal by 155%.

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RYLAND MADISON
(he, him, his)
Director
Cox Communications

Madison is Director at Cox Communications. He is a leader in the telecommunication and technol-
ogy sector with over 25 years of experi-
ence 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 mar-
keting strategy for Cox Business small and medium business segments.

MATT MORROW
(he, her, they)
Executive Artistic Director
Diversionary Theatre

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

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 Cali-
ifornia and Marriage Equality USA, and the National LGBTQ Task Force advo-
cating for the rights of LGBTQ individu-
als, couples, and families.

IN THEIR TIME WITH SAN DIEGO PRIDE, FERNANDO OVERRAS THE CREATION AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION'S EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, ARTS, AND PHILOSOPHERIC 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.

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Suna Solutions has worked with Suna’s external clients to develop Diversity Equity and Inclusion initiatives as part of their talent acquisition process. Scott Ortes 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. Ortes has developed key strategic partnerships with two emerging technology platforms—VNDLY and Utmost—that has developed into a great relationship.

Suna has developed Pride Resources, a small, LGBTQ+ company based in San Diego. He is currently in the process of establishing a Private Limited operation in India to support its RPO solution. Scott Ortes is Vice President of Suna Solutions.

Vicky Pasche is the co-founder and CEO of Dapper Boi, Inc. with a five-year history of launching her online gender-neutral clothing brand, it is now a seven-figured company on a mission to revolutionize the gender-neutral fashion movement. Pasche has always had a passion for fashion 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. Vicky Pasche is the co-founder and CEO of Dapper Boi, Inc.

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. Paris Quion is General Manager.

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 50% last year and he regularly receives perfect 10 out of 10 client satisfaction scores.

Reicks has earned his CPA 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. David A. Reicks is Assistant Vice President.

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.

Veronica Rivera is National Sales Director.

Thank you, Dr. Holmes, for championing compassionate and inclusive health care for each and every child. We salute you!

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

With gratitude, Team Rady

Innovation belongs in every moment.

Leaders of Influence LGBTQ+ Top 50 2022 Honoree

Rady Children’s

San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA)
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 Administration and a Master of Business Administration from Pepperdine University.

Ruis is a native San Diegan, former board member for the LGBT Center and web grantee with Make A Wish. 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 Tom 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 solve 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 45 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

Edward Simon, II is Inclusion and Diversity Officer for California American Water.

Simon has 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 Solomon is Vice President and Senior Client Manager at City National Bank.

Prior to her position at City Nations, Solomon worked at Citi where she was Vice President and Branch Manager. Other past employers include Converse 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.

Solomon has a Bachelor of Science degree in Financial Management from National University. Outside of work, Solomon 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.

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
619 733-5396
619 296-4543
jeremy.wilson@sdeba.org
info@sdeba.org
P.O. Box 33848
San Diego, CA 92163

sdeba.org
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 2022, and continues to excel in his positions.

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

Stacy also currently serves on the San Diego Equality Business Association Board as the Treasurer. He has been an advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community dating back to his time attending SDSU.

He was on the executive board of the queer fraternity at SDSU/UCSD and currently serves 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 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.

Kevin Tilden is President of California and Hawaii American Water. He was one of the youngest to garner the position of Vice President in the organization through achievement of continual promotions of growth within U.S. Bank.

Under his leadership, SDZG raised $530 million in its first-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign.

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 change. Scoop raises money for local non-profit organizations that provide services to San Diego’s most vulnerable communities.

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 Diversionary Theatre. In 2019, he was awarded the prestigious Pride Honoree award by the California Legislators’ LGBT caucus.
DANA TOPPEL  
(he, her, hers)  
Chief Operating Officer  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  

A strong leader and innovator, Dana Toppel is the Chief Operating Officer of Jewish Family Service of San Diego. She provides overall leadership for the impact-driven, multi-service organization, with a focus on 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 participative local, regional and national conversations to advance efforts related to inclusive leadership, professional training, and ensuring access to opportunity for all.

AMY TRUONG  
(he, she, her)  
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 the Tokyo LGBT Pride parade. Truong serves as Marketing and Communications Manager, and has spearheaded a number of new programs and events including the Youth Art Show. Truong also 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.

NICOLE VERDES  
(he, 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 as 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 2016 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-chairs 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 tools 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 858-213-9327.
**Jeremy Wilson**

President & CEO
San Diego Equality Business Association (SDEBA)

Jeremy Wilson is CEO of the San Diego Equality Business Association (SDEBA) - one of the largest specialty chambers in San Diego County and the second oldest LGBTQ+ and supportive chamber in the nation.

In his role as CEO, Wilson leads SDEBA’s mission to advocate for and support LGBTQ-owned businesses throughout the region and empower its members through workforce equality, business ownership and active consumer to support equality, diversity and inclusion. Wilson has been instrumental in development of prominent visibility events that highlighted the impact of the businesses in the LGBTQ+ community and has forged strong bonds with community leaders to elevate the impact and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community.

Wilson previously held vice president roles at Banner Bank and Union Bank. He can be reached at jeremylwilson@sdeba.org.

**William York**

President & CEO
211 San Diego

William York is President and CEO of 211 San Diego. He built the expansive 211 team of leaders to meet the needs of communities and populations, while also leading the nation’s first Community Information Exchange, a system of services that puts the needs of clients at the center of service delivery. York’s collaboration, innovation and leadership was critical during COVID-19 in leveraging 211’s mission to put critical services at the fingertips of those that need them most.

Serving honorably in the Army during the height of the AIDS epidemic and before the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” era, York has been a strong advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, dedicated to improving service delivery systems for our most vulnerable communities.

He served as a member of several boards and was chair of the San Diego Veterans Coalition Board of Directors. York was awarded the 2015 Veteran of the Year Award by former California State Assemblymember Toni Atkins.

**Allen Young**

Manager, Government Affairs
Cox Communications

Allen Young is Manager of Government Affairs for Cox Communications. In his role, he represents Cox locally in San Diego County and is responsible for advocacy and fostering positive relationships and partnerships with local governments and stakeholders.

Prior to joining Cox, Young worked for several elected officials and has extensive experience in local and state government. He recently served as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Policy for a San Diego city council member managing a diverse policy portfolio. He also served as Committee Consultant for the city’s Budget Committee. While at the city, he spearheaded the effort to revitalize the San Diego’s LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group for city employees.

Allen also currently serves as a board member for San Diego Pride, Asian Business Association of San Diego, East County Chamber of Commerce and the East County Economic Development Council.

**Jimmy Zemel**

Business Program, Employee Experience Manager
California Bank & Trust

Zemel is Business Program and Employee Experience Manager at California Bank & Trust (CB&T). He began his banking career in branch banking with Wells Fargo before taking a similar role at CB&T. Before taking his latest position, he worked as a Corporate Trainer at Zions Bancorporation before returning to CB&T.

In his new role in CB&T’s Business Operations & Planning Department, Zemel will establish and lead programs in support of the bank’s employee-oriented, high-performance culture.

Zemel chair’s CB&T’s LGBTQ+ and Allies employee resource group, which he renamed from Pride@CB&T to be more inclusive. He also manages CB&T’s DEI programs and organizes company participation in events like San Diego AIDS Walk and sponsorships for groups like the North County LGBTQ+ Resource Center.

**Warren Ruis**

Top 50 LGBTQ+ Leaders of Influence

Congratulations to Brian Zotti for being selected as one of San Diego Business Journal’s Top 50 LGBTQ+ Leaders of Influence!

Brian exemplifies what it means to be a great leader and continues to be an inspiration for those in the LGBTQ+ community – between his positions on the San Diego Pride Board and No Silence/No Violence boards, and his commitment to this community after serving on the boards of Richmond Organization of Sexual Minority Youth and Diversionary Theatre. He exemplifies our core value, “Every Person Matters,” by being a natural resource to persons and communities that often feel excluded and marginalized.

Congratulations to our Director of Supply Management, Warren Ruis, on being honored in the San Diego Business Journal’s Top 50 LGBTQ+ Leaders of Influence. As advocates of personal and professional achievement, we’re proud of our employees who share this vision and strive to make a difference in the community.
The San Diego Business Journal and the Community of Business™ proudly support 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 stepfather. 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 during the German occupation of the Ukraine, which 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 and told the family they didn’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 owns his income,” said Zyhylij, who never learned to speak much English.

Tamara Zyhylij
Tamara Z Real Estate

Zyhylij said she has weathered some tough times and not easy.

“Going through COVID and all the requirements was very challenging,” Zyhylij said. “We were going to sell our home, but she didn’t want to go in. Buy- ers wanted to go see properties but nobody wanted to let people into their homes. Even when the buyer was moti- vated, the state of California and OSHA had constant require- ments—bowties, 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 $500,000 in San Diego,” she said. “And that’s 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 (if) you have [higher] interest rates, demand has slack- ed off.”

Zyhylij said during her nearly 20 years in real estate, she’s “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 li- cense and said she makes the necessary coursework.

Zyhylij was recognized as a 2020 Five Star real estate professional. The Five Star Real Estate Awards are awarded to top real estate professionals who excel in client satisfaction, chosen after client nominations and eval- uations, 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, sweep- ing 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 1½ was with a major retailer within walking dis- tance from home,” Zyhylij said. She marked she’s been working ever since.

Before real estate, she worked in opera- tions and management and product develop- ment and management.

Zyhylij worked for Foremost 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 service the way I have been doing ever since.

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

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 has sold people call him “the insurance encyclopedia.”

Now vice president at Click2Bind In- surance Services, the San Diego-based company that connects people to various insur- ance 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 Di- ego-based insurance company was found- ed 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 travel agent.

Hopkins, now 43, soon realized call center work wasn’t his future, especially since he was required to wear full business casual dress code and I wouldn’t have to wear a shirt and tie, that was it. 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 pro- moted to an underwriter position, “with- out a degree.”

From Geico to Farmers to Click2Bind
He later left Geico and moved to a Farmers Insur- ance agency in Mis- sion Valley, where he worked for 15 years, be- fore 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 terms, quotes and certificates, and then presenting the end result on a current or prospective client.”

During his journey to Click2Bind, Hop-kins has a long list of successes along the way, among them receiving the Commu- nity Associations Institute San Diego’s “Rising Star Business Partner” award for his efforts to ensure that HOA commu- nities are inclusive of its many allied members and protect their at-risk assets.

In 2017, Hopkins moved to Click2Bind Insurance Services and the company was named a “Rising Star Business Partner” by the client or asset manager through ed- ucation and training and management, and not long after he started, he got pro- moted to an underwriter position, “with- out a degree.”

“The most important thing to me in an insurance relationship is making that bond with the client or asset manager through ed- ucation and training and management, and not long after he started, he got pro- moted to an underwriter position, “with- out a degree.”

“Training others to teach others to perform insurance ser- vices the way I have been trained and to meet and exceed those client ex- pectations on every level, and to remain active with my own book of insurance business for my many friends, clients and more as an insur- ance educator and top-producing agent.”

Hopkins understands that many people are not fully educated on in- surance 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 edu- cation and training,” Hopkins said. “When a client is going 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 im- portance of having insurance.”

For eight years, Hopkins has also been a member of the San Diego Equality Busi- ness Association (formerly known as the Greater San Diego Business Association) and is currently an executive board mem- ber 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, and through that work, he’s 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.”

About Arthur Hopkins
Arthur Hopkins is CEO of Click2Bind Insurance Services and one of the leaders of the company that connects people to various insurance needs.

Hopkins has served in various roles throughout his career in the insurance industry, including as a producer and insurance manager.

He is a member of the San Diego Equality Business Association and has been involved in various volunteer efforts throughout San Diego County.

Hopkins has been involved in various volunteer efforts throughout San Diego County.
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 34-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 10 or so, she said she has seen progressive change in regard to the LGBTQ+ community.

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

“We’re really interested 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.

“Those 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 started her own financial planning firm on January 2, 2003 — “1-2-3,” Fleming said — 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. Still, the challenge 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.

“To help 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 different, 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 is important to her to give back to the community, and as part of that, she manages with center’s 401K, and helps educate people at the center about “contributing to their future.”

Fleming enjoys public speaking and also puts on financial planning seminars for people who are looking for 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 found her career 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. She 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 may feel they don’t have the knowledge... 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 & Associates LLC**

FOUNDED: 2003
HEADQUARTERS: Downtown San Diego
BUSINESS: Financial planning and asset management
EMPLOYEES: 15
CONTACT: (619) 839-9136
SOCIAL IMPACT: Delivers her 13-year-old daughter’s breakfast to underprivileged classrooms... and lunch, food and snacks and gives them out to those in need 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.

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**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 — help others who are still challenging, especially if families aren’t supportive.

Fleming started her own financial planning firm on January 2, 2003 — “1-2-3,” Fleming said — 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. Still, the challenge psychology of money is different for women than it is for men.”

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**San Diego Equality Business Association**

FOUNDED: 1979
HEADQUARTERS: North Park
BUSINESS: Nonprofit
BUDGET: $150,000
EMPLOYEES: 15
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.

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**Jeremy Wilson**

President and CEO
San Diego Equality Business Association

Jeremy Wilson has found the strongest investment with the best balance for his career has had the biggest payout — helping 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, with revenues of under $1 million.

He has been Vice President at Union Bank and Banner Bank in Orange County and in San Diego, where he 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.

“With my background in banking and my love for helping others, I decided to go out on my own and start a firm of my own,” Wilson said.

Wilson concentrates on running the group that promotes LGBTQ+ influence in mainstream acceptance, working to increase economic power and visibility.

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.

**Prestigious Partners**

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

Jeremy Wilson

President and CEO
San Diego Equality Business Association

Jeremy Wilson, who was born in Oregon but has lived in Southern California since age 21, has found that 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, mortgage brokers, certified public accountants, attorneys, insurance agents and bankers.

Other industries include the SDEBA, including bakers, printers, restaurants, physical trainers, dentists and construction businesses.

**San Diego Equality Business Association**

FOUNDED: 1979
HEADQUARTERS: San Diego
BUSINESS: Nonprofit
BUDGET: $150,000
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.