

Distinguished Leaders – *Human Resources*

The disruptions of the past two years presented human resources executives with extraordinary challenges.

HR executives had to navigate a new office environment. They managed corporate culture with staff working remotely. The administration of benefits and ever-changing policies had to be observed. Recruiting and onboarding presented new challenges with the falling unemployment rate. The new normal has become the norm. These 72 HR leaders show they have what it takes to navigate the paradigm shift.

METHODOLOGY: The honorees did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted. This list is not comprehensive. It includes only executives for whom nominations were submitted and accepted after an editorial review. The Distinguished Leaders are serving in a senior leadership role and demonstrate an impact on the Orange County community.

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



RAMONA AGRELA

UCI

As Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer for the University of California, Irvine, Ramona Agrela has transformed the role of human resources at one of Orange County's largest employers by launching a revolutionary, client-centric HR model supported by a center of excellence and best-in-class employees.



Agrela's steadfast leadership and commitment to her team has yielded spectacular results. Her HR model focuses on diversifying the workplace, advancing employee wellness, and dismantling pay inequities, the latter of which made UCI one of the first organizations in the U.S. to be fair pay certified. Her agile methodologies allow her to formulate and enact programs quickly, with no better example than the leadership she assumed as UCI pivoted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From strategizing remote work for the majority of UCI's 24,000+ employees, to leading the effort to hire hundreds of temporary frontline healthcare workers, to providing operational logistics for UCI vaccination centers, to securing paid childcare, mental health aid, local hotel accommodations, food donations, and more for frontline workers, Agrela's efforts empowered employee success through an incredibly difficult time.



DEBORAH AJESKA

5.11 INC.

Deborah has brought a wealth of business and HR knowledge to 5.11 over the last three years. She never shies away from building company culture, has honest and authentic conversations, and is a key player in just about everything we do. Deborah was a critical leader during the COVID pandemic, dealing with legislation, OSHA and employee safety on a global scale. She stepped up and took leadership of 5.11's policies and plans as they pertained to the pandemic, where there clearly was no playbook and used a very logical and thoughtful approach which was based upon the culture and values of 5.11. She navigated us through the largest upheavals ever experienced in business. She is the consummate professional and understands all facets of the business and how HR plays a vital role in managing and developing associates across the organization. Deborah is a caring and dynamic leader. As a full-time executive and mother of two, she understands the importance of achieving the right balance between home and work life.



We are very lucky to have her as part of the 5.11 team.



MARION ANDERSON

CHANNEL BAKERS

As Vice President of People and Culture at Channel Bakers, Marion Anderson is uniquely responsible for the department's holistic approach to People Operations, Learning and Development, and Talent. Rather than follow a traditional HR silo methodology, Marion helped develop each of these three facets of the People and Culture team as individual units that work alongside and with each other, promoting change through a working synergy between them. From a personnel perspective, Marion's work can be seen and felt throughout the Channel Bakers workforce, which has scaled from just under 60 employees in 2020 to well over 200 today; all during a time when in-person onboarding and training were not available options. Marion facilitated much-needed adaptations during the events of 2020 by providing key support to the implementation of an all-new virtual onboarding process, and helping to develop "Absurd University", a curated video academy which prioritizes self-empowered learning via the "70-20-10" method (70% experience, 20% coaching, and 10% coursework). Her efforts on these projects, and many others since, continue to ensure that Channel Bakers will grow as a company for years to come without compromising the growth and development of its people.



KENDRA ANGIER

VIANT TECHNOLOGY

Kendra Angier is a results-driven, accomplished Executive HR leader with a track record of proven excellence. Kendra prioritizes leadership and talent and has had unparalleled success creating cultures of collaboration. Kendra engages in all aspects of HR, including employee relations, coaching, employee engagement, talent acquisition, workforce planning and change management. She has had particular success in transformational leadership, career coaching, and communication. Kendra loves working with people, processes, technology and data to drive results, growth, and operational distinction. She is highly respected in her organization, as an HR leader, and in her community. She is the epitome of a Distinguished HR Leader.



MARCO BAEZA

COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

The Coast Community College District underwent a dramatic shift as COVID-19 required hundreds of faculty members to shift thousands of courses online. At the same time, staff and management shifted almost all student services and operations online. Dr. Marco Baeza, Vice Chancellor of Human Resources for the Coast District, led negotiations on remote teaching and work with staff and faculty unions while consulting with non-unionized groups. Dr. Baeza continues to consult with stakeholder groups as the District pivots back to in-person classes, services, and operations. He promoted HR solutions to minimize disruption - e.g., implementing digital forms, automating processes, and transitioning to virtual training.



Simultaneously, Dr. Baeza led and continues conversations necessary for transformation of the district and colleges to become more welcoming institutions. This included a districtwide climate survey, master Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan, expansion of DEI professional development, and revamping Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) processes and training. Dr. Baeza has a willingness, passion, and leadership presence when engaging in DEI and EEO initiatives.



GABE BALTODANO

RBA BUILDERS INC.

RBA Builders, Inc. nominates Gabe Baltodano for his outstanding work and significant impact in our Human Resources department. Gabe is a true ambassador for RBA and has led the HR team in a huge recruiting effort which continues now in 2022. Having been a valued team member for six years and an RBA Stakeholder, Gabe has made a connection with employees and has created a safe path for team members to express themselves. This trusted engagement and guidance contributes to RBA Builder's organization and company culture. As someone who is easily approachable, Gabe's character makes him a perfect ambassador for the company. In recent years, his approach to the COVID-19 pandemic is more than commendable. Gabe wrote the company policies to help clarify any ambiguities, led weekly and monthly meetings, created a COVID safe policy for office and field, and led the tracking effort for close contact monitoring company wide.



DAN BERZANSKY

ONETEAM360/ PREMIER AQUATIC SERVICES

Dan started Premier Aquatics in 2011, which provides life guard services and also runs swim schools under the name Premier Swim Academy. He grew the company from 11 employees in 2011 to almost 500 in 2021. Through the years of running his company, Dan always struggled to retain his best employees or have them return for next season. In order to keep them engaged and incentivized to advance within the company, he started working with a software developer on a home grown software platform that would help manage the priorities and performance of his team members and translate them into points that would help them advance within the company. This software resulted in more engaged employees and improved retention by more than 45% at Premier. In 2021, Dan launched OneTeam360 with the goal of bringing his home-grown platform to the masses in the form of a SaaS platform. OneTeam360 launched the first version of this platform in January 2022 and currently has 1500+ users.



NATHAN CANDANER

JOBZMALL

Nathan Candaner is the Co-Founder and CEO of JobzMall, the world's largest video-talent marketplace for Gen Z. After struggling to land a job himself while he was in college after using traditional job boards, he realized how disconnected hiring companies are to the Gen Z population looking for jobs. Since its launch in 2018, JobzMall has grown to a size of more than 2 Million job seekers and partnered with more than six-thousand organizations ranging from Fortune 500 companies, startups, small businesses and non-profit organizations utilizing Video Resumes and Video Job Ads. In 2019, Candaner was honored as Forbes 30 under 30 due to his achievements and contributions to the Employment Technology scene. Most recently, Candaner unveiled a partnership with the Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce to strengthen employment and workforce readiness in Orange County. He is also a founding partner of HackingHR Orange County, a leading global community focused on creating the best HR that has ever existed. Candaner is a leading figure in HR often talking as a keynote speaker on topics of Future of Work, Automation, and HR Tech.





Congratulations **Jimmee Medina**

...on being honored as one of the

Orange County Business Journal Distinguished Leaders in Human Resources

Jimmee Medina is the Director of Human Resources & Innovation for the City of Irvine. Over the past 15 years, Ms. Medina has served the City in multiple capacities including roles in Human Resources & Innovation and the City Manager's Office. In 2017, she was a recipient of the City Manager's Award for Team of the Year. More recently, Ms. Medina was instrumental in the adoption of a formal telecommuting program in March 2021 to improve the organization's efficiencies during the pandemic.

Ms. Medina graduated cum laude from California State University, Fullerton where she earned her bachelor of arts in Communications and a master's degree in Public Administration. She is an International Public Management Association for Human Resources Certified Professional, holds a certificate in Negotiations and Leadership from Harvard Law School, a certificate in Dispute Resolution from Pepperdine University, and a certificate in Leadership Excellence from the Disney Institute.



2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



JENNA CEBALLOS

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF GARDEN GROVE

In the face of COVID, our HR leader Jenna has shown resilient leadership in helping our organization navigate through unprecedented challenges and still-uncertain risks. Jenna expressed empathy and compassion for our employees, recognizing the radical rise in concerns about health and safety. Jenna ensured that all 400+ employees had 24/7 support with any questions about COVID, even when she did not have all the answers, and worked diligently to communicate testing & vaccine information, health care & mental health resources, mass distribution of PPE supplies (internally and externally), flexible work options, and everchanging mandates & regulations. Jenna's calm and methodical approach to the unknown was key to our success.



Not only did Jenna place precedence on supporting the people who drive this organization, she simultaneously made sound, measured decisions to protect the organization financially. She created effective, compliant data collection systems, consulted with experts, led weekly Board Safety meetings, helped secure PPP funding & reimbursement, and managed the challenges of hiring & training employees during the worst staffing shortage to date.

FAMILIES FORWARD

DIGNITY • EMPOWERMENT • HOPE

ELIZABETH CHILDS

FAMILIES FORWARD

Elizabeth Childs leads through change with quick, thoughtful decisions. When the world locked down in March 2020, she transitioned Families Forward staff to securely work from home using our new cloud system, with no disruption in services. She accommodated food pantry and front desk volunteers who numbered in the hundreds and couldn't be onsite, with a small staff and many creative solutions. She implemented a no contact, drive-thru food distribution system that grew from serving 60 to 700 families a week. In the first two months of the pandemic, we assisted 20,000 people (up from 12,000 a year). Elizabeth monitors policies and hiring, implemented virtual onboarding, training, employee engagement, and, due to an influx of government funding, increased staff from 48 to 70 to serve clients when they need us most. We safely returned to a hybrid office with its own opportunities, including temperature readings, self-attestation forms, physical spacing, alternating days in the office, and increased sanitation. New employees are selected as much for their talents as their fit with the team and staff are encouraged to try new roles, skills and ideas. Elizabeth inspires others to problem-solve as much as she fixes things herself and is a model of adaptability and appreciation.



CHRISTOPHER COURNEEN

M S INTERNATIONAL

Chris has been instrumental in changing many aspects of MSI as we look at our workforce. Ultimately he lived by the theme Lives and Livelihoods during the pandemic and continues to find innovative ways to help keep MSI's manpower requirements ahead of our 30%+ annual growth rate. All of this is done using data, analysis and high levels of research. Specific accomplishments include:
 1) Building and developing an internal recruiting team rather than depending on word of mouth, referrals and headhunters.
 2) At the onset of COVID read and analyzed over 100 different "stay-at-home" orders to understand specifically what could and could not be done by MSI. In addition, Chris worked with MSI's procurement team to order significant amounts of PP&E prior to full knowledge of requirements. Much of this was donated to local medical facilities.
 3) Worked non-stop along with the team to keep MSI open while keeping it safe. This included over 1,000 investigations and contact tracing during Covid, communicating with health department, reading and analyzing mask mandates, developing digital tools to reduce risk of contagion, analyzing numerous regional mask and vaccine mandates and organizing vaccine drives within MSI.



SHAWN COVARRUBIAS

APRIEM ADVISORS

Shawn Covarrubias, AIF® takes care of Apriem family as her own. Through her advocacy, Apriem fully pays premiums for medical, dental, and vision plans. During the brunt of COVID-19, there were no pay cuts and she brought on five new hires spread across four departments. To relieve the transition of working remotely, Apriem covered staff utility bills and fuel. She carries out the Apriem way in the onboarding process following our coined "3-CPO" method, analyzing for "Character, Competence, Credibility, Passion, and Ohana (Family)." Apriem has achieved an outstanding average employee tenure of 12 years. Apriem was noted for its inspiration to those from diverse backgrounds to contribute to the financial advisory industry by InvestmentNews' Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award. A partner in generosity, she helps organize Apriem's service days, where the staff volunteers in projects close to each other's hearts. Her Engagement Team finds opportunities to volunteer in person or virtually. Amidst COVID, Apriem volunteered with their families over Zoom with The Jessie Rees Foundation. HR engaged Apriem's Dollars-for-Doers program, matching staff donations and volunteer hours to charities up to \$1,000 per year. Her efforts have grown a culture of engagement and long-term sustainability at Apriem.



TERRI COVERT

PROVIDENCE MISSION HOSPITAL

Over the last two years, in these very challenging times, Terri has remained steadfast in her commitment to the mission and values of Providence Mission Hospital. She serves as the HR strategic executive leader for both campuses - Mission Viejo and Laguna Beach. This required unprecedented creative and strategic thinking to lead and manage during the pandemic. Thanks to her leadership, our caregiver engagement survey results increased, which is remarkable given the unusual demands our caregivers endured in the past two years. In response to our workforce crisis, Terri led by conducting talent reviews to create pipelines and opportunities for our caregivers to grow. She also led a new leadership orientation, charge nurse leadership courses, behavioral based interview skills workshops and on-site orientation. These programs were aimed at reducing our turnover and increasing retention. Terri has also implemented many caregiver recognition programs and events to continue to foster an environment of trust and a sense of pride and belonging. Through her efforts to enhance our caregiver referral programs, conduct market-based reviews of compensation and advocate for our caregivers, we have also seen an 19% increase in hires from 2020-2021.



MASHA EMPRINGHAM

RED DIGITAL CINEMA

Masha has been at RED for three years and in the time she has been here, the impact she has made has resounded with everyone. All companies go through growing pains and turnovers but where other companies fail, RED succeeded by having a HR leader that is engaged, empathetic and ready to roll up her sleeves. As the head of HR/People team, you must balance between the good of the company and the good of the people that work at the company. During the pandemic, we had to pivot from a business standpoint and as individuals. Masha ensured we were compliant with all the labor-related regulations while keeping us safe and spirits and morale up. She implemented BaseCamp, our internal digital magazine that kept us entertained and informed of the comings and goings of the company, highlighted individuals from all departments and shone a light on them. She introduced us to BucketList - a way for employees to recognize each other for achievements that gets posted for everyone to see. She made sure we stayed in touch as a company through virtual Townhalls, by being an executive that is accessible in times of need. Coming out of the pandemic, she educated the department heads regarding the job market to avoid/minimize the impact of the Great Resignation.



EMALEE FINKENBERG

TK1SC

In 4 short years at tk1sc, Emalee has gone from being our HR Generalist to being an accomplished and trusted business leader. Highly competent, adaptable and hard working, she has navigated our HR by effectively communicating through COVID while also contributing immensely during the M&A process, as our company was acquired by WSP. She is sensitive and attentive to employees, while also protecting the business from liability. She has proven to be a wonderful leader, adding strong support staff to her team.. and most importantly she is a pleasure to work with. Ethical, loyal, committed, patient and liked by all who interact with her. Emalee is a true SUPERSTAR and we are proud and honored she has chosen to share her gifts with our tk1sc team.



VALENTINA FIORENTINO

FARMERS & MERCHANTS BANK

Valentina Fiorentino, Senior Vice President and Human Resources Director, has been with F&M Bank for 37 years. Leading by example, Valentina started her career at F&M as teller and worked her way up to a leadership role. Currently a member of F&M's executive committee, Valentina oversees all aspects of Human Resources and Learning & Development. Operating with a high degree of creativity and flexibility, she has significantly improved talent acquisition and performance management. Valentina implemented F&M's centralized training environment (L&D), implemented the concept of position classifications to promote and guide career growth, and introduced and sponsored an internal leadership development program, Leadership F&M. Since its inception in 2016, 72 employees have graduated from the program with 38% subsequently being promoted. She has added value for F&M's employees through effective negotiations for medical plans, equitable compensation, and the development of incentive compensation plans. She also mentors multiple F&M Bank officers. Thus, F&M enjoys one of the strongest rates of employee retention in any organization, with an average tenure of 9 years, and 52% of employees with tenure more than 5 years.





ALWAYS BE READY[®]

For mind and body, from head-to-toe, 5.11 is the pioneering, purpose-driven brand making purpose-built gear for those who demand more of themselves, for the greater good and for those on the mission of a lifetime.



2022 ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES NOMINEE

DEB AJESKA

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, 5.11[®], INC.

5.11 is honored to recognize Deborah Ajeska, Chief Administration Officer, on her 2022 Orange County Business Journal's Head of HR Awards nomination. Deborah led the way for 5.11 to thrive and grow during extraordinary, dynamic, and challenging years of the COVID-19 pandemic. With global offices to manage, distribution centers to operate and retail stores across the US to keep safe, Deborah's support and dedication enabled us to not only to fuel our incredible growth, but also enabled us to live and exemplify our company's own mantra to "Always Be Ready."

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DAVID FORGUES

CAL STATE FULLERTON HUMAN RESOURCES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion (HRDI), David Forgues personifies what it means to be a distinguished HR leader and a true Titan.



Most recently evidenced as our campus coped with the challenges of COVID-19, his compassionate and innovative contributions made a significant impact to ensuring a safe and successful return to campus for over 4,000 employees. With "People First" as the guiding principle, he implemented post-pandemic initiatives targeted to address the evolving needs of our employees.

He developed an information pipeline dedicated to communication on all matters related to COVID-19 and re-entry, increasing transparency and clarity to all employees through monthly open forums, weekly manager check-ins, monthly newsletters, a dedicated webpage and regular social media updates.

Forgues also made employee wellness a priority, implementing programming and resources focused on physical, emotional, financial, professional, and COVID-19 wellness, including vaccine clinics, virtual wellness workshops, and counseling services.



MINNETTE GALLARDO

REGAL RESOURCES

With over 20 years working and leading human resource departments for large companies in Orange County, Minnette founded her own human resources consulting and advisory firm, Regal Resources, in 2012. She is an expert in many areas of the field, focusing on change management, recruiting and hiring. Her firm currently provides human resource services for clients involving over 1,000 employees. In addition, Minnette founded Chamba Jobs, a mentorship and training organization for the restaurant industry. Minnette is known for her acumen in aligning great people with awesome companies.



PATRICIA GAUDIN

AVANATH CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Since joining Avanath, a multifamily owner and operator with more than \$2.6 billion in affordable and workforce housing communities across the U.S., Pat Gaudin has transformed the service and scope of Avanath's HR mission and vision.



Pat is a seasoned and talented expert in all areas of HR who is distinguished by her sophisticated communication and talent acquisition skills. She has been working in HR for 15 years and was recently promoted to Executive Vice President of HR, placing her at the forefront of Avanath's strategic roadmap for all human capital initiatives. Pat's accomplishments as EVP include redeveloping the company's HRIS platform and introducing a fully integrated, human capital platform for leadership and workforce process-centered service delivery. Her new role places her in charge of development for the company's learning organization and improved staffing for both the HR team and Avanath's entire workforce nationwide. Throughout her many years in the industry, Pat has been responsible for leading the strategic direction of all HR and payroll functions as well as due diligence and M&A integration efforts. She is gifted in all aspects of client profitability and contracted HR administrative services.



BRITTANY GERHARTZ

RSM US LLP

I am proud to share Brittany's many accomplishments as HR Director of the West Region, including:



- Managing core HR processes such as performance management, talent development, learning and professional development and employee and owner engagement.
- Providing council on COVID-19 policies and risk management, including vaccination and testing policies, contract tracing, and interpretation of state and federal laws and guidelines. In this capacity, Brittany also managed the complete employee experience, including remote work, office availability, flexibility requests, mental health needs, staff reductions, furloughs and personal support.
- Managing RSM's annual salary administration for over 750+ employees within the US matrix and making compensation recommendations to ensure market favorable conditions were met and drive retention during a time of increased resignations.
- Serving as a leader and subject matter expert on many enterprise-wide process improvement projects, including future workforce, domestic and global mobility, and workplace safety.
- Being a trusted advisor and coach to leadership on diversity and inclusion.



Congratulations,
Andrea Riggio
 on your recognition as a
 Distinguished Leader in
 Human Resources.

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



SHAYNA GOLDBURG

SETSCHEDULE

Shayna helped facilitate hundreds of jobs by growing the SetSchedule team from a roster of 5 to over 228 employees inside and outside of the US in just a few years. With all the challenges HR teams across the world have been challenged with due to the pandemic, Shayna has found new strategic and innovative ways to find new and fantastic talent to add to the SetSchedule family. This year, Shayna was able to grow company benefits to include health insurance not only for the US team but for international teams across 5 different countries. Benefits include health insurance, life insurance, dental, vision, mental health benefits, and even pet insurance. As a medium-sized business, thanks to Shayna, we have benefits equivalent to a large company. Thanks to Shayna, SetSchedule's work environment has received awards from Orange County Top Workplace to Best Company for Diversity and Culture. Because of Shayna's efforts, overall employee morale is at an all-time high helping reduce the turnover rate of team members. We're thankful to have such an amazing Head of People here at SetSchedule.



PEGGY GRZYWACZ

ALLIED UNIVERSAL

Peggy is a key HR leader on Allied Universal's corporate team that had the opportunity to develop the Retention Performance Management (RPM) program for the company. The objective of RPM was to increase overall employee retention during the first 90 days of employment where employee turnover was five times greater than turnover for employees with greater than one year of service. Peggy helped to reduce turnover in the first 90 days of employment from 163.2% to 127.5% over a six-month time frame. Her team developed the objectives, partnered with operational leaders on program content and changes, consulted with Subject Matter Experts to create metrics that met not only top HR Best Practices, but also were aligned to meet operational needs. She implemented the following best practices for the project:

- Better data analytics and awareness of turnover/retention. Creating specific categories to measure results, and share data on web based platform.
- Job Matching- Getting the right candidate into the right job.
- Focus on the overall Employee Experience
- Improved New Employee Orientation for better employee engagement.



EILEEN HARRIS

WINDES

Eileen Harris has been a strategic partner and ambassador for Windes for nearly 25 years. As a vital member of the leadership team and the Firm's Chief Human Resources Officer, Eileen's initiatives provide employee empowerment, high performance, organizational growth, and lots of fun. Eileen partners with leaders in the firm to hire, motivate, and retain our fantastic talent with her creative ideas, bringing camaraderie, a sense of belonging, and a spirit of cheerfulness to the firm. Eileen and her team make sure that every new employee receives a cookie bouquet and plenty of Windes-branded goodies - her way of saying "welcome!" Our employees are family, and during the COVID pandemic, Eileen's swift and thorough communications, handling of concerns, and providing guidance were exceptional. She recognized the need to address mental health and provided manager training emphasizing flexibility, wellness, and empathy. As many employees continue to work remotely, Eileen strives to improve morale through motivational webinars, trivia games, and chocolates for Valentine's and Employee Appreciation Days.



GINA HARTIGAN

MAVENLINK

Gina Hartigan's mission is, and always has been, to enable business success through people. Gina consistently leads multiple successful initiatives designed to streamline operations, enhance culture and develop employees for success today and throughout their careers. Most recently Gina led people-focused merger and integration efforts including organization design, revamping the total rewards and recognition program, and development of a talent acquisition and retention strategy for today's workforce realities. New company core values more accurately represent our people and aspirations while employee handbook revisions ensure fair and equitable policies and foster a culture of inclusion. Gina worked tirelessly to create and sustain a safe COVID compliant global framework of flexibility that enabled employees to work from anywhere and created a wellness initiative that includes reimbursement for apps to support mental (Calm App) and physical wellbeing (Weight Watchers) along with dedicated time off for wellness. To equip leaders with the mindset and skill set to drive our strategy, Gina rolled out a specially designed leadership training curriculum.






AVID BIOSERVICES

CONGRATULATIONS LORNA LARSON
ON THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AS A
DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN HUMAN
RESOURCES.

Your positivity and leadership continue to inspire and motivate others. We value your dedication, compassion, and disposition.

Thank you for all you do.

A proud member of the Orange County community for nearly 3 decades, Avid Bioservices is a contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO) focused on development and CGMP manufacturing of biologics. A globally compliant partner, Avid offers a comprehensive range of process and analytical development and CGMP clinical and commercial manufacturing services.

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



RENEE HENDRICK

ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Under the leadership of Associate Superintendent Renee Hendrick, the Administrative Services division has been a lifeline not just for OCDE, but for education staff, students and families throughout Orange County. On top of its traditional responsibilities, this division took on oversight of on-site COVID-19 testing, organizational contact tracing and the coordination and distribution of millions personal protective equipment and take-home tests for 29 school districts and hundreds of charter and private schools. Renee and her division served as a steadying and stabilizing force internally. To prevent workplace infections, they rolled out a digital app that prompted employees to self-report any symptoms prior to reporting to work and introduced a separate app that enabled staff to easily upload their vaccine records into their personnel files. Her team also coordinated with health providers to offer mental health supports and services to students and staff. Meanwhile, Human Resources scaled up a robust two-day orientation and on-boarding program for new employees. Renee's managers communicated frequently with public and private schools to ensure they had resources necessary to safely resume in-person instruction.



DAVID HENRY

FOUNDATION BUILDING MATERIALS

- * Led through company through COVID-19
- * Helped to grow company from 50 branches to over 270
- * Built entire HR team of more than 20
- * Co-leader in 40 acquisitions
- * Managed implementation of more than 25 major products including switching to new HRIS



GINA HILLARY

MOULTON NIGUEL WATER DISTRICT

Gina Hillary, Director of Human Resources, was charged with ensuring MNWD staff were able to complete their mission critical roles during the global COVID-19 pandemic in a safe manner while limiting the spread of the virus. Gina worked with the management team to establish staggered work schedules for field staff and remote work schedules for administrative staff. Employees worked these modified schedules for 18 months until it was deemed safe to bring all staff back to work in-person. The Human Resources department provided 24/7 support to District employees throughout the pandemic. Our staff were instructed to call a member of the HR team at any time to report COVID-19 symptoms, provide necessary contact tracing information, make arrangements for testing, and get clear direction on return-to-work protocols. Because of the trust developed under Gina's leadership between employees and the HR team, our staff followed the provisions of our COVID-19 Prevention Plan and MNWD did not experience any workplace spread of COVID-19. Even during a pandemic, Moulton Niguel Water District was awarded the Top Workplace designation in Orange County and in the USA based on feedback given by staff via an employee engagement survey.



JOHN HOLTRUST

MENLO MICRO

A fast-growing, venture-backed startup like Menlo Micro requires extraordinary Human Resources skills and leadership to recruit top talented individuals that will deliver game-changing technology at scale. Menlo Micro is deep in the growth stage of deploying its revolutionary Ideal Switch technology to dozens of top-tier customers in markets and industries that impact all aspects of our lives. With John's extensive industry knowledge, HR expertise and ability to implement new recruiting strategies, Menlo Micro has hired some of the industry's most talented individuals - and significantly increased its headcount during the global pandemic. His strong leadership and communication skills, along with his extensive knowledge of HR practices have enabled him to be a successful role model for the company and contributed to the company's ongoing successes. Under John's guidance, Menlo's comprehensive patent portfolio, proven technology, blue-chip customer list and planned introduction of 6 new Ideal Switch products, Menlo Micro is well positioned for another major growth phase in 2022. Adding domestic manufacturing is the foundation to meet long-term demand expansion.



Kelly Parker
Vice President & Chief People Officer



CONGRATULATIONS

Avanir Pharmaceuticals congratulates our Vice President & Chief People Officer on being recognized as a **2022 HR Leader of Distinction**. As a member of Avanir's Executive Leadership Team, Kelly is a champion of investing in Avanir's people and creating a culture that supports our mission. Her dedication to advancing women's careers has been recognized as a recipient of the Luminary Award by the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association in 2021.

Avanir.com

CONGRATULATIONS!

Aggie Nesh
Human Resources & Risk Manager

The City of Laguna Beach congratulates our AMAZING Human Resources and Risk Manager **Aggie Nesh** on being recognized as a **2022 HR Leader of Distinction**. Aggie is a dynamic human resources professional with extensive experience across multiple HR disciplines, and also serves as an Adjunct Faculty member at the University of Southern California. She has a passion for helping leaders achieve their strategic goals and empowering employees to create spaces that promote engagement, collaboration and wellbeing.

Beyond her achievements in leading change, spearheading employee initiatives and championing a high-performance culture, she leads with kindness and truly cares about every staff member at the City of Laguna Beach. Congratulations, Aggie!



2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



ANN HUANG

NATURE BRIGHT COMPANY

Ann Huang has been working with our core employees and interns, with whom she showed steadfast inspiration and provided them with confidence in their area of expertise as well as their own personal goals. She has been highlighted by our employees as being the most effective leader in HR by the Happiness score. Whether our employees moved on to their other career pursuits or stayed with us, they were all very keen with Ann Huang, as their friend and advisor.



KELSEY IRVIN

MURROW DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

Kelsey has done a wonderful job of not just being a Human Resource Director, but really that of an Employee Retention Director. She has implemented various committees to our company, such as "Employee Wellness" Committee, "Give Back" Committee and "Events" Committee. Our Give Back Committee has been very popular for our employees, if it is serving monthly dinners at the HomeAid OC facilities, being a top donor in diaper drives, coordinating our Summer Beach Clean Ups and leading the "Operation Christmas Child" campaign. All efforts that are lead (and championed) by Kelsey. Our company is not just lucky to have someone like Kelsey in this position - as good things only happen every once in a while when you are lucky. We are blessed to have Kelsey in this key position as great things are happening every day through her efforts and visions.



SHANNON JENKINS

TLD LAW

Shannon Jenkins has over 25 years of experience in providing strategic leadership and legal counsel for all sizes of employers and executives in business litigation and employment-related disputes. Ms. Jenkins strives to solve employer problems utilizing an appropriately aggressive approach balanced with principles of fairness, diversity and inclusion both in the clients' workplace and in her practice. But where she shines brightest is as the Managing Shareholder TLD Law's four offices and nearly 50 employees. Since joining TLD Law in 2000, she has influenced initiatives around strategic growth hiring, job architecture, rewards strategy and execution, remote work, self-leadership, mentorship, service to the community, and diversity. With her leadership, TLD Law joined the National Association of Minority & Women-Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF) and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), which is the largest certifier of women-owned businesses in the U.S., and a leading advocate for women business owners and entrepreneurs. These organizations promote diversity and inclusion, rewards innovation, opens doors, and creates partnerships that fuel the economy.



JAN JENSEN

THE RAYMOND GROUP

Jan Jensen has over 20 years of diverse experience in human resources. Skilled in coaching, compensation and benefits, training, payroll, and employee relations, Jan provides direction to all aspects of The Raymond Group's human resource functions, responsible for maintaining and improving Raymond's administrative processes associated with benefits, legal compliance, and union relations. Since Jan joined Raymond in 2019, she has:

1. As a business partner, helped lead the organization in ensuring compliance with Covid-19 while getting people back to the office in a safe environment in this "essential business".
2. Enhanced HR relationship with the office and the field leading to improved employee morale and winning several "Best Places to Work" awards.
3. Streamlined and simplified all HR processes, seamlessly transitioning the organization to a paper free HR system.
4. Formalized and improved employee recruiting and hiring process.
5. Streamlined and improved office and union field employee on-boarding.
6. As a business partner, helped dramatically reduce worker's compensation claims.




CONGRATULATIONS!

Dianne Whitfield
Chief Human Resources Officer
OCBJ Distinguished Leader in Human Resources

The entire Tarsus family would like to thank you for your daily commitment and leadership as we continue to foster a positive culture and an inspiring employee experience that enables talent to grow.

[Scan here](#) to learn more about career opportunities to work with Dianne and the leadership team at Tarsus.

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



ANDREA JONES

CBT

As the HR Manager at a small company, Andrea wears many hats and contributes in a multitude of areas. She is responsible for recruitment, talent retention, company culture, benefits analysis, payroll management, policy maintenance, and more. In her time at CBT, Andrea has vastly improved the company's operational efficiency by sourcing, implementing, and training employees on a new cloud-based human capital management (HCM) platform that seamlessly integrates HR, payroll, training, and more. She also designed and issued an RFP for Employee Benefit Broker Services which resulted in an enhanced benefits package at a lower cost for both CBT and its employees. In addition to managing the strategic development and delivery of HR procedures for the company, Andrea's most significant accomplishment was successfully guiding CBT through the pandemic. When the business world was rocked by COVID-19, it fell upon Andrea to successfully pivot and manage the transition to remote work. Andrea gracefully managed the extensive disruptions of COVID-19, including implementing new policies, procedures, and protocols to keep the business running smoothly.



MIRANDA JORDAN

TEVORA

As the Director of People Ops at Tevora, a leading cybersecurity consultancy headquartered in Irvine, Miranda Jordan has built a newly formed Human Resources department of five that keeps pace with Tevora's rapid growth while enhancing work life for 190 employees nationwide. Miranda amplifies employee voices and encourages engagement through frequent surveys, an HR communication platform, features in Tevora's monthly newsletter, and the employee-led and HR-supported DEI Council. She facilitated Tevora's first-ever 401K match and has gained a deep understanding of employees needs and priorities to improve services and offerings. She is a key driver in Tevora's \$1 million investment in its Consultant Development and Tevora University internship pathway and is currently launching a new development path to support Tevora's internal mobility program. Putting employee safety first, Miranda navigated corporate decisions to continue offering flexible work options, implementing ap-based health checks, and investing in virtual events to keep staff connected and engaged.



CHRISTINA JUNG

ETHIKA INC.

Christina Jung has been recognized as the company leader in all aspects related to its people and internal branding. Joining Ethika in 2019, Christina was tasked with growing the company headcount 10x in just 3 years - going from approximately 20/30 employees to over 200 entering 2022 - all while safeguarding one of the company's most valuable assets, it's culture. Thriving in the high growth Ethika landscape, Christina has developed and implemented company-wide compliance standards, hiring practices, internal statues on corporate governance, building an HR department, all while completing her Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification.



KATHERINE KING

SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

In her 30 years at Soka University of America, Katherine has gained the trust and respect of the campus community with sage advice, unique insights, counsel, and calm in the face of major challenges. Currently, she is successfully leading the university's COVID prevention and response effort. During her time at SUA, Katherine has ably managed the university's growth from just a few employees to more than 250 faculty and staff, all while demonstrating the utmost professionalism, dedication, heartfelt kindness, and work ethic. She truly one of the jewels and cornerstones of Soka. Katherine, who has a BS in business and management from the University of Redlands, is also a graduate of the Japanese Language Institute at Soka University of Japan. She is certified as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) by the Human Resource Certification Institute, the credentialing body for human resource professionals. Katherine completed the Advanced Program in Human Resources Management at the UCLA Anderson School of Management.



CONGRATULATIONS FOR BEING RECOGNIZED AS A 2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN HR

In 4 short years at tk1sc, Emalee has gone from being our HR Generalist to being an accomplished and trusted business leader. Highly competent, adaptable and hard-working, she has navigated our HR by effectively communicating through COVID while also contributing immensely during the M&A process, as our company was acquired by WSP. She is sensitive and attentive to employees, while also protecting the business from liability. She has proven to be a wonderful leader, adding strong support staff to her team.. and most importantly she is a pleasure to work with. Ethical, loyal, committed, patient and liked by all who interact with her. Emalee is a true SUPERSTAR and we are proud and honored she has chosen to share her gifts with our tk1sc team.



EMALEE FINKENBERG



CONGRATULATIONS JENNIFER LOLLINO

2022 OCBJ "Distinguished Leaders of HR"

Congratulations on being recognized for your outstanding leadership at ECOS - you help make our company grow and our team members shine!



2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



LORNA LARSON

AVID BIOSERVICES INC.

Mrs. Lorna Larson has played an integral part in our organization (Avid Bioservices) throughout her tenure of nearly 12 years. She has efficaciously led our human resources department through periods of extreme growth as well as times of unfortunate reduction. Her passion for Avid and for each individual employee shows in everything she does. We've all come to depend on Lorna's positive attitude and peaceful demeanor to bring a little pep to each meeting. She is the first to arrive and the last to leave. Lorna truly leads by example. You can always count on her to participate in employee functions, events, and corporate initiatives. Throughout the pandemic she supported employees on both a professional and personal level. She listened to each and everyone's concerns and implemented health and safety strategies to ensure the wellbeing of the organization. Not only does she recognize the value current employees by utilizing numerous tactics to maintain employee retention but over the last 12 months her teams recruitment initiatives have resulted in over 130 new hires. Furthermore, Lorna participates heavily with local high schools and colleges to educate young career seekers. She justly deserves the recognition as a distinguished HR Leader.



AUDRIANNE ADAMS LEE

HR NETWORK INC.

For the past two years, Audrienne has lead the fight when it comes to COVID and it's impact on Small Businesses. She has gone to great lengths to keep our 75+ clients informed and as prepared as any of us could be! Whether this be through impromptu webinars, newsletters or dropping everything to create a policy or form that she felt would benefit our clients! Audrienne made sure our clients had all information regarding PPP's and EIDL's to ensure all our clients would make it through financially, and she also welcomed any businesses that were struggling and looking for guidance, at no charge! She did this because of her love of Small Business, and she knew what a massive impact COVID could have if not handled properly. Audrienne did all of this while she herself had to take her company from in-house to completely remote. She keeps company morale high with zoom lunches and happy hours, Trivia Fridays and anything to keep us all connected and feeling like a tight knit team! She's a pleasure to work for and so deserving of recognition!



JENNIFER LOLLINO

ECOS

Jennifer Lollino is a highly valued member of the leadership team at ECOS, the maker of environmentally friendly cleaning products. Not only does she oversee talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, and compensation and benefits at ECOS's four facilities across the U.S., she's a critical member of the company's COVID-19 response team. Throughout the pandemic, Jennifer monitored the constantly changing guidelines and created protocols to help keep employees safe and company operations uninterrupted. She provided frequent communications and constant support on COVID-19 protocols to ensure understanding and compliance. At the start of the pandemic, she increased headcount by 15% within very short time to meet increased demand for cleaning products, despite a limited candidate pool willing to work at that time due to safety concerns and available stimulus. Despite high industry turnover rates, Jennifer helped keep ECOS's turnover rate 58% below industry average and voluntary turnover 32% below industry average in 2021.



RICK LOPEZ

PLACENTIA-YORBA LINDA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Integrate. Elevate. Celebrate. That is the motto of the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District (PYLUSD) Human Resources Department under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Rick Lopez. The meaning behind the motto is simple yet impactful-integrate skilled employees into the organization; elevate individuals through promotional opportunities; and celebrate staff accomplishments. Each and every day, Mr. Lopez takes this saying and puts it into action to provide outstanding educational opportunities for nearly 24,000 students. Mr. Lopez has diligently served in the role of Assistant Superintendent since 2018 but first began his career with PYLUSD in 1994. He is responsible for planning, organizing, and directing a comprehensive program including recruitment, selection, classification, wage and salary administration, and employee/employer relations for over 2,800 employees. During his tenure, PYLUSD has enhanced its competitive compensation package and been identified as a Top Workplace in Orange County multiple times.



On Behalf Of The Entire Sunwest Bank Team, We Would Like To Congratulate

KARA TREBS

On being honored in the Orange County Business Journal's

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CONGRATULATIONS KELSEY IRVIN, PHR

from your colleagues at Murow-Development Consultants on your nomination for the 2022 Leaders in HR Award



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LESLIE LUJAN

PACIFIC HOSPITALITY GROUP

Leslie's leadership has brought not only structure and efficiency to the HR department, but also compassion and sincere care for the well being of team members at our property. COVID cases and staffing were the biggest challenges this year, and her guidance brought stability and comfort to staff during an uncertain time.



SHERI MAHONEY

US ALLIANCE GROUP

Sheri Mahoney has a knack for finding genuine people to fit the culture of the company with the drive to flourish within their roles. Her upbeat and positive cheer allows for everyone's comfortability to show. Sheri exceeded expectations before, during, and after Covid challenges. With the company working in office during Covid, She went above and beyond to make every individual feel safe and comfortable. She is determined to implement the most updated workplace regulations while keeping the office culture fun and exciting. Sheri is a leader, a mentor, and a friend.



MALISSA MCCRARY

DIGITAL MOTORS

An experienced startup veteran and SHRM-CP, Malissa understands what it takes to launch a company and build a team. Despite the challenges of COVID, Malissa was instrumental in recruiting and developing a top performing team across all functional areas (e.g., product, engineering, operations, sales, etc.). She is a valued member of the leadership team who is always willing to take the initiative and frequently steps outside of her comfort zone to lend a hand wherever needed. Employees look to Malissa as a trusted business partner and Malissa continuously champions a company culture rooted in transparency and trust. Moreover, Malissa always maintains a positive attitude and demonstrates a commitment to professional growth.



JIMMEE MEDINA

CITY OF IRVINE

Jimme Medina, Director of Human Resources and Innovation for the City of Irvine, has led the City in improving the organization's efficiencies during the pandemic by establishing a formal telecommuting program, developing virtual employee programs, and creating wellness resources to address an evolving workforce. Telecommuting: Under Jimmee's leadership, the City Council adopted a formal telecommuting policy in March 2021. The benefits of this program include: Environment - smaller carbon footprint; less energy usage; Productivity - increased output and efficiency; higher employee satisfaction; and Traffic - reduced fuel usage; less traffic. Virtual Employee Programs: Virtual employee engagement programs include: Citywide mentorship program - cross-collaboration with employees across departments to connect while working remotely; Getting to Know Your Executive Team series - opportunity to learn about the executive team in an informal setting; Meet Your Team series - spin-off of executive team series to learn about teams throughout the City; and LinkedIn Learning - a digital learning library available to all employees.




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No one should have hired me out of college, but...

by Kathi Guiney, GPHR, SPHR, SCP, President
 YES! Your Human Resources Solution

...they did, and the sun still rose the next morning. Someone took a chance on polishing me. In fact, hiring young, untried but fresh and eager talent can make your office shine brighter.

How to craft a successful college-recruitment strategy:

- **Build brand recognition on campus.** Plant your brand's seeds early: Target local colleges and ones with programs matching your hiring needs. Attend job fairs and special events like Engineering Day. Build a recruitment pipeline through key professors who can recommend upcoming graduates. Offer resources, such as free seminars. Don't forget some memorable swag! Nothing pleases more than your company name on a bag of M&M's (it's true!).
- **Form relationships through internships.** Meaningful internships give your company first crack at a rising talent pool. The undergrads who loved your amazing brand strategy (and swag) are eager to learn and can be the foundation for a new hire down the road.
- **Leverage your company's outreach.** You've got their attention—now grow it. Create a career website that caters to students and includes alumni testimonials. Don't skimp on college-relevant posts to your blog and social media. Keep posts fresh! Repeat posts are so 2021! It is important to seek advice from your target audience to hone your outreach campaigns.
- **Embrace new ideas and rough edges.** You're hiring unrefined talent, so listen to their fresh perspectives and forgive their imperfections. Put in the effort to boost them—after all, we were young grads once, too.



These college-recruitment strategies can help you find the diamonds in the rough. With a little polish, this raw talent will help your office gleam! Get out the sunglasses!

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



ANNE MORIYA

HART KIENLE PENTECOST

Anne Moriya has been with Hart Kienle Pentecost for over three decades and has excelled in every position she's ever had including Legal Assistant and Office Administrator for more than twenty years. Not only does Anne handle complex HR issues, but she also keeps the office functioning like a well-oiled machine. Her coworkers will tell you Anne always has a positive attitude and genuinely cares about each and every individual's needs at the firm. The praises of Anne don't stop at the firm though. She's also a wonderful wife and mother to her three children who adore her and is actively involved in her church. Anne's assistance with the transfer of ownership in 2020, during a global pandemic no less, would not have been possible without her hard work, dedication, assistance, knowledge, patience, and overall amazing attitude. She is one of a kind and is an irreplaceable asset to HKP. We appreciate all you do, Anne!



AGGIE NESH

CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH

Laguna Beach Human Resources Manager Aggie Nesh is simply AMAZING! Aggie joined our team one year ago in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, and since then has taken the initiative and successfully navigated our team through it all. From face covering mandates, setting up COVID vaccination clinics for staff; providing weekly testing for unvaccinated staff; developing and administering a comprehensive employee survey of all City Staff and subsequent employee task forces and recommendations; and developing new employee health, wellness and staff development and engagement programs - Aggie continues to go above and beyond to make our team even better. But more than all of these achievements, and most importantly, she is the epitome of a kind and invested Human Resource Manager who truly cares about every staff member at the City of Laguna Beach.



LYNDA NGUYEN

WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY

It is with great pleasure that we nominate Lynda Nguyen for the OC's Distinguished HR Leaders' award. Lynda plays a key role in driving the performance and growth of Westcliff University. She redefined HR, transforming it from a transactional to a human experience, and has become a strategic partner in providing support and leadership to the organization. Lynda created HR initiatives to meet the organizational needs and goals. Her efforts in streamlining the talent acquisition and onboarding processes effectively reduced turnover in many departments. Moreover, her benefits benchmarking analysis provided vital industry insights and promoted forward planning for the university to remain competitive. With a passion for making a lasting impact, Lynda boosted our company morale, transforming the culture for the better. She is the champion and driving force behind employee focused initiatives including appreciation week, employee rewards program and workplace engagement. Amidst the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, Lynda provided frontline leadership in guiding the organization through unprecedented challenges.



TERRYL NIRTAUT

CASCO CONTRACTORS

Terryl has been an integral part of our onboarding and hiring processes. Currently, Casco is looking to hire over 10 people from project management (OC and San Diego), accounting, marketing coordinator, and HR assistant. She has been extremely involved in building our onboarding program and training. On top of hiring and management, Terryl has solely handled all payroll, benefits, and management of our ADP system. She has been a one stop shop for all of our HR needs. Terryl is always looking to better the organization and brings a fresh perspective to the group. She is thoughtful, professional, and extremely enjoyable to be around. Out of all the previous organizations I have worked yet, she is by far the most enjoyable HR individual to work with on a regular basis.



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Minnette Gallardo
CEO, Regal Resources

SOME OF OUR LOYAL CLIENTS

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Congratulations to Shannon Marie Jenkins, Esq., distinguished leader in human resources, TLD Law Managing Partner, and management-side defense attorney.

TLD Law is a woman and minority owned law firm which represents businesses, and their owners, high-net worth individuals, and their families in a diverse civil practice.

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2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



CRISTI NUNEZ

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (OVPTL), UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Cristi is instrumental within the Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (OVPTL). As Personnel Director, she oversees all of our human resources and payroll needs and also serves as a mentor and advisor to many staff members across our organization. Cristi excels in her role because of her big heart and ability to connect with colleagues and staff of all levels. Her door is always open, and she always takes the time to listen and help no matter how busy she may be. Cristi knows how to put staff members at ease, and her resourcefulness ensures that she always gets answers or comes up with effective solutions when working through challenging situations. She contributes to the positive and collegial work culture that we are so proud of at OVPTL, and her enthusiasm is contagious. Her leadership has been critical as our organization has transitioned through the various stages of COVID, and I appreciate all her efforts as we have returned to in-person operations on campus. I'm very excited to nominate Cristi as a Distinguished HR Leader to recognize her dedication, commitment, and impact, not only to the OVPTL, but to UCI as a whole.



CHRISTINE ODAM

BAKER TILLY US LLP

Christine Odam is a senior manager for human resources and people solutions at Baker Tilly. During the pandemic, Odam and her team worked closely with local leadership to navigate the complex regulations and requirements for office reopening in addition to tackling larger mental and behavior health campaigns for the company. She also supports national company programs such as developing a comprehensive partner sabbatical program, reconstructing reimagining internal award recognition programs, as well as employee experience evaluations. Odam serves on the personnel committee for Baker Tilly, a regional leadership group that guide conversations around coach and team member engagement to implement better performance expectations, transparency, accountability, and strategic goal setting. She also actively participates in Baker Tilly's GROW (growth and retention of women) regional team and the larger DIBS (diversity, inclusion and belonging for success) regional leadership team. Odam received a Bachelor's in human resources and Business Management from Cal State University Long Beach as well as a certification in Professional in Human Resources.



ANGELA OLIVER

SAGE HILL SCHOOL

In her role, Director of Human Resources Angela Oliver has organized education for employees on the School's health benefits and retirement planning to ensure they are making informed decisions. She formed a benefits task force with constituency representation to review health plans on an annual basis to ensure feedback, address concerns and present new offerings. In response to the pandemic, she regularly meets one-on-one with employees who have varying degrees of anxiety about returning to the workplace during COVID. Major focus and effort has been made during this challenging time to retain employees and make sure they feel heard, valued and appreciated. She has held a leadership role with the state-wide California Independent School Business Officer's Association (Cal-ISBOA) and was the first HR director to serve as a board member that had previously been made up of business officers only. She also leads and mentors HR professionals at other independent schools throughout California.



SAMANTHA PACHECO

GIGASAVVY

Over the past year, and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Samantha has been instrumental to Gigasavvy's continued success. She creatively updated policies and procedures that made a significant impact on an already award winning culture. She also spearheaded the formation of a unique and innovative back to office strategy for 2022, being coined the Nomadic Office. Beginning with taking the company's ongoing performance enablement process virtual, managers were empowered to meet regularly with their team members for virtual check-ins that evolved into frequent in-person meet-ups. This allowed managers to stay on top of performance by providing real-time feedback versus waiting a year with minimal contact in a remote environment. Samantha also moved Gigasavvy's multi-step interview process virtually without a hitch, resulting in the successful hiring of 6 top-notch team members. Lastly, Samantha worked closely with Gigasavvy's owners to survey the team on a regular basis to measure morale and collect candid feedback.



KELLY PARKER

AVANIR PHARMACEUTICALS

Kelly Parker, Vice President and Chief People Officer, leads the Human Resources and Corporate Communications functions for Avanir Pharmaceuticals. Her leadership and strategic vision has enabled a company culture that values innovation and promotes employee engagement. Kelly is also tremendously passionate about supporting employees' career growth. "One of the most important and powerful things we do is invest in our people," she said. "Career development is an ongoing collaborative process, driven by employees with support from managers." During the height of the pandemic, she kept employees connected and informed by implementing several new communications tools including an updated intranet and new employee newsletter. She also co-convened an executive task force to address key workplace issues such as health and safety and remote work policies, and her leadership was integral to a successful return to in-person work. In 2021, Kelly was recognized as a Healthcare Businesswomen's Association Luminary for her efforts to advance women's careers and her dedication to healthcare.



SAM PENROD

CITY OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

Sam Penrod has had an incredible 2 years. He lead the way for the transfer of our water department to Santa Margarita Water District. He was able transfer our employees to the new water company, with all the complexities of retirement plans, wages, seniority etc. While accomplishing that feat, he played a key role in the restructuring of our city staff as we met the crisis of the pandemic and the effects on our City income. In the end, we have emerged from all of these adversities with an end to our longtime structural deficit and a motivated and happy staff.



JOSE PEREZ

GOODWILL OF ORANGE COUNTY

Jose Perez exemplifies kindness, integrity, helpfulness and creativity - the four core values of Goodwill of Orange County. In everything he does as the leader of Goodwill's Human Resources department, he puts the needs of our workforce and program participants first. Jose is a tireless advocate for people with disabilities and sees the ability in everyone. One routine day at work, Jose saw an individual in a wheelchair approaching the HR office and went outside to greet him. This individual was discouraged and plainly asked Jose "do you hire people like me?" Jose emphatically responded, "Of course we do." And within a week, Jose personally helped find this individual gainful employment working in Goodwill's e-commerce department. Jose actively recruits and supports people who are facing barriers to employment and places them into jobs throughout the Goodwill operation and in the community. During his tenure at Goodwill, he has helped thousands of individuals find purpose, pride and dignity through meaningful work. As a veteran and Latino leader, Jose is a role model for our workforce and truly makes every team member feel valued and respected.



ANDREA RIGGIO

SHOPOFF REALTY INVESTMENTS LP

Andrea has done an outstanding job of working through the various issues of the last two years. She has dealt with work from home, hybrid work, as well as initial layoffs when the lockdown began. She then had to pivot to growing the workforce to both replace the positions terminated but also to support the growth of the firm. Most recently she handled an office move and not only did people not grumble but were very pleased to participate. Additionally she has managed several team building events including the return of the holiday party after a Covid induced hiatus.



2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



CHERYL ROBERTS

SECUREAUTH CORPORATION

As Vice President of Human Resources at SecureAuth, Cheryl Roberts leads the global team in North America, Latin America, Asia Pacific, and Europe. A major project for the HR team was transforming the company benefits programs for all regions to include a focus on employees wellness and mental health. Making it a company priority to ensure that employees have the resources needed to work from home in a productive environment.



During the pandemic, Roberts led her team to easily transition employees to a remote work environment and addressed the complexities of managing a global workforce. Due to her strategy and vision, she has developed and executed processes for virtual new hire onboarding. With Roberts at the helm, she oversaw the transition from outdated offices to brand new headquarters in Irvine, CA and Buenos Aires including a remodel and rebrand to accommodate an enhanced work environment. She spearheaded the launch to ensure a healthy and safe workspace meeting stringent health regulations and government compliance while keeping the company updated on the ever-evolving challenges to COVID policies across all geographic regions.



DANIELLE RODRIGUEZ

TRACE3

Danielle is one of the most exceptional HR and Organizational Health leaders in the country and has taken Trace3 successfully from 100 to 1000 employees. Several years ago, Danielle rolled out an organizational health framework for the entire company based on the famed Patrick Lencioni approach called The Table Group. This framework has underpinned trace3's unique and innovative culture. She has also led the creation of the Tracers Program, a comprehensive internship program that benefits southern California universities and their students. She has also led the formation of veteran-focused program linked to the Hiring our Heroes initiative where she places military personnel into Trace3 based on their interests to help them kickstart or reboot their careers. She currently also leads our talent acquisition team and has launched several unique programs to attract consulting and technical leaders at an unprecedented rate and help trace3 gain the ultimate market advantage with our elite engineering. She also leads our corporate social responsibility program known as Trace3 Cares which works to benefit local charities like project hope alliance and together we rise.



TEDDY RUCKER

ALLIED UNIVERSAL

Over the last year, Teddy Rucker has created and chaired the Diversity and Inclusion Committee with the sole purpose of increasing our perspective on diversity and inclusion through every branch, region and function in our organization by providing a platform for colleagues to share their voice, a vehicle to connect and tools to educate and evolve. Here are few examples of initiatives that he helped launch:



- Inclusion Council: This council was formed with 12 dynamic senior leaders from across Allied Universal with different backgrounds, perspectives and passion for creating a more inclusive culture. The team meets bi-monthly and strategically aligns, plans and provides recommendations on all things D&I and focuses on cascading a cohesive message through the organization.
- Diversity and Inclusion Communication Strategy: With the help of our communications team, we strategically designed interactive events and celebrations to raise awareness of D&I through a number of key holidays, heritage and history milestones including Woman's Month, Juneteenth, World Culture Day, Black History Month, Veterans Day, Pride Month and others.



JODIE SAUNDERSON

ORANGE COUNTY RESCUE MISSION

Jodie Saunderson is not only an expert in benefits administration, labor laws and compliance, payroll, administration, and safety & security, but also a firm believer in building company culture. One of her greatest strengths is being attuned to employee needs and striving for positive job satisfaction while maintaining quality services. She is intentional in embedding a spirit of unity and collaboration through company-wide events such as annual team wellness challenges and festive gatherings. As a human service nonprofit entity, Orange County Rescue Mission's salary compensation cannot be as competitive as for-profit corporations. Therefore, Jodie seeks to be one step ahead of HR trends, keeping benefits and incentives competitive with its industry. In the midst of a rapidly evolving job market, she recently spearheaded company-wide market rate adjustments to enhance staying power and attract top-level talent. Being an essential service organization during COVID, Jodie was consistently ahead of health and safety trends, keeping everyone safe while staying in compliance with changing regulations.




TRACE3

Trace3 lifts and secures the careers and lives of our employees, clients, partners, and communities

Congratulations

2022 OCBJ Distinguished Leader of HR

Danielle Rodriguez
Trace3 SVP of People & Organizational Health



moulton niguel water district

Moulton Niguel Water District would like to congratulate our Deputy General Manager, Gina Hillary, on her recognition as a 2022 Distinguished Leader in HR. Gina is a 32-year HR professional who has helped create one of Orange County's most coveted places to work. Her inspiring leadership has resulted in an award-winning workplace culture and a powerful ability for Moulton Niguel to consistently recruit and retain the best and brightest to continually serve our customers.



Gina Hillary
Deputy General Manager

2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



JENNA SHOTT

NEKTER JUICE BAR

Jenna started with nekter as an admin assistant when we had 20 employees and grew with the company and getting her HR certificate. She has set up all programs and dealt with numerous phases of company growth. She handles everything with Grace and professionalism.



LILLIAN THAI

ARTEMIS DNA

Ms. Thai is an experienced and distinguished human resources leader. Most recently, Ms. Thai is Senior Director of Human Resources at Artemis DNA, having joined in November 2020, currently leads a highly productive and effective human resources team and function. Ms. Thai oversees her team to perform all HR functions for Artemis DNA including recruiting, onboarding, performance management, payroll management, benefits administration and terminations. She has implemented a full set of human resources and corporate policies, including policies addressing COVID-19, and helped the company deal with the challenges of COVID-19 with compassion while minimizing the impact to the company operations. Ms. Thai helps Artemis DNA obtain and retain all required human resources, company operations and quality documentation, including employee handbooks, policies, procedures, SOPs, waivers and consents, job descriptions and required notifications. Ms. Thai and her team plan numerous company events and celebrations that help to keep employee morale high and improve employee's health and productivity.



KARA TREBS

SUNWEST BANK

Sunwest Bank's Chief Human Capital Officer, Kara Trebs, has been instrumental in improving the performance of the organization through innovative talent management techniques. During her tenure, she has implemented several talent initiatives that have directly contributed to the higher performance of the Bank. Trebs established a hiring committee at Sunwest to vet top-tier talent and help preserve the company culture. She leverages resources like Quarterly 9 box, CriteriaCorp, Skill Survey and Predictive Index to better understand who the bank is hiring and what mix leads to the best success for the organization. In turn, this information also helps managers better understand staff needs to reach success. Trebs has also led a robust wellness program focused on the various pillars of wellness, physical, mental and financial. She has developed a program that leverages tools like SmartDollar and enhanced EAP benefits to encourage staff to build a fully well life. Lastly, Trebs continually provides guidance on new ways of doing business to improve the bank's operations and serves as a guidepost for executives and senior managers to focus on initiatives and maintain direction.



BARBARA TURNER

ASICS AMERICA

Barbara Turner is Chief Administrative Officer for ASICS America Corporation. With over 25 years of human resource leadership experience, Barbara has served in her role at ASICS since 2016 where she is responsible for the Human Resources function in North America, which includes the United States, Canada and Mexico. Reporting directly to the CEO, Barbara serves as a key member of the ASICS executive leadership team where she translates the business strategy into a talent action plan for the company, and helps drive a performance-based culture that has the capability to change and adapt according to the business environment. Barbara manages a team of 194 professionals located across Irvine, CA, Boston, MA and Byhalia, MS. On a day-to-day basis, Barbara partners closely with members of the executive leadership team at ASICS global headquarters in Japan, as well as other ASICS executive leaders around the world. Barbara is a trusted advisor to senior leaders and she provides leadership in developing and executing regional and global human resources strategies in support of the global business plan.



KATHY VALENTINE

RIVERROCK REAL ESTATE GROUP (RREG)

Kathy Valentine develops and implements RREG's on-boarding, wellness, and employee recognition and engagement programs. Her response to COVID has been centered on communications. A recent accomplishment includes opening RREG's new Irvine HQ in the middle of the pandemic and constantly adjusting as to who and when people would be returning to the office. The new space was designed to accommodate hybrid in-office and WFH schedules. To facilitate the new work plan, the team created small group tours to acclimate employees to the new space, layout and its open seating plan. Another important initiative at RREG is DEI. Kathy implements employee diversity training to increase employee understanding and education. Her work is critical to the overall mission of the DEI committee which encourages inclusion where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive. Kathy was also integral to RREG being named one of the first commercial real estate firms in the nation to certify its policies and procedures using the Fitwel Viral Response Module — a rigorous third-party healthy building certification system operated by the Center for Active Design. Some of Kathy's employee wellness initiatives include a monthly mindfulness coach and employee-run onsite herb and vegetable garden.



RACHEL VALENTINE

VINCIT

Rachel and the Vincit People Operations team have worked tirelessly to collectively improve Vincit's HR structure, employee culture and team community post-COVID and in an era known for the 'Great Resignation'. Over the last year the team accomplished the launch of Lattice, a performance management and growth tool, and further strengthened our CEO of the Day exercise with team-led decisions that provided access to monthly mental health coaches, company-paid Classpass memberships, company sponsored virtual coworker lunches, and more. By leading in a way that has encouraged more input and choice from our employees collectively, we've seen better decision making that satisfies the happiness and needs of our staff which has thus reduced turnover and improved morale.



CINDY VYSKOCIL

SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Dr. Cindy Vyskocil has been the ultimate professional in addressing the most critical needs of employees throughout the pandemic to ensure the safety and wellness of every SOCCCD employee. Dr. Cindy Vyskocil also understood early on that the Human Resources Department would have to support employees in a unique way while we learned to navigate through COVID-19. At the forefront the pandemic, she recognized that our employees would need access to new and innovative HR services to feel connected during COVID-19; she worked across District platforms to maintain and build morale that connected employees to supportive services whether working in-person or remotely. In addition to her valiant efforts during the pandemic Dr. Cindy Vyskocil was a leader in social justice issues. While she has always been an advocate of diversity, equity, and inclusion—the recent current events in our society amplified her work in this area. She worked with the district chancellor and college presidents to ensure that the campuses of SOCCCD felt like welcoming places for current and future employees. In her role, Dr. Vyskocil provides HR services for 2000 faculty at Irvine Valley College, Saddleback College, and the Advanced Technological Education Park to support nearly 50,000 students.



GENEVIEVE WALTON

THE WATERFRONT BEACH RESORT, A HILTON HOTEL

Gen Waiton began her career at The Hilton Waterfront Beach Resort in 2002 as a Front Desk Agent while attending college. Gen's caring disposition and genuine love of people made her quickly flourish as a natural hotelier, spending the following 10 years in leadership roles in various departments. Having completed her Master's degree in Human Resource Management and Services in 2011 from National University, Gen finally pursued her passion in the field and transferred to the resort's Human Resources department as Employment Manager, where she excelled and gained the respect of the entire operations team. Gen was later promoted to Sr. Human Resources Manager in 2012 and in 2015 she was awarded the Director of Human Resources by the resort's General Manager, Paulette Fischer with total support from the hotel's ownership group, the Mayer Corporation. After being heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the resort's roster was reduced from 500 to 35 associates within days. During this challenging period, Gen worked tirelessly with the resort's General Manager on operational strategies to keep the hotel's doors open and maintain cohesiveness.



2022 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



DIANNE WHITFIELD

TARSUS PHARMACEUTICALS INC.

Dianne Whitfield joined Tarsus Pharmaceuticals, Inc. in January 2021 as Chief Human Resources Officer. Dianne has worked at both large public companies and emerging start-ups throughout her 20+ years of experience in human resources but learned that she thrives in an environment where she is able to make a direct impact and shape corporate culture from the ground up. Her broad HR expertise and focus on talent and culture have been critical to driving growth at Tarsus. In one of the most competitive talent acquisition markets, Tarsus has more than doubled its employee size, from 20 to 50 and increased its diversity at all levels of the organization, with leadership roles comprising 45% women and 66% people of color. She has proven her ability to create an optimal employee experience that attracts, retains and develops key talent and all while driving the company's mission to address important diseases with impactful therapeutics. To build Tarsus as a best-in-class employer, Dianne spearheaded efforts to refine the employee experience from start to finish - starting with the candidate's experience. Upon joining Tarsus, employees have a personalized "Welcome Experience," a differentiated approach to build belonging.



CHRISTINE WILBUR

ALESHIRE & WYNDER LLP

Starting in March 2020, A&W's HR Manager, Christine Wilbur, and the firm's personnel committee worked around the clock to get ahead of ever changing COVID-19 pandemic news, information, and health requirements to protect the firm's employees and preserve its business as the economy shut down. Christine and her team took swift and immediate action to retain A&W employees without major disruption, including developing new health and remote work policies. Under fluctuating local, state and federal guidance, Christine and her team shifted A&W's on-site operating methods to a virtual process. Throughout this transition, Christine and her team had to quickly develop creative solutions that required unconventional action such as developing an emergency response team, locating limited sanitation supplies for five offices, holding recurrent virtual meetings with employees to reinforce A&W's support and provide for feedback, maintaining firmwide communication and creating a weekly rotation schedule so hourly employees could safely return on-site. Today, we continue to provide support for hybrid work and adapt to new realities.



MATTHEW WILSON

BIOLASE INC.

Matt is a well rounded Human Resources Leader with demonstrated broad-based strengths and accomplishments in:

- Talent Management Practices
- Competency Modeling
- Talent Assessment
- Organization Development & Restructuring
- Employee Engagement Programs
- Talent Acquisition, Retention & Development
- Culture Transformation
- Succession Planning
- Employee Relations



During 2021, Matt partnered with sales leaders to develop and execute a strategy to retain Sales Representatives, successfully reducing sales attrition in the second half of the year. He was instrumental in the Company's continued internal COVID-19 response, including employee communication, updates and execution of COVID-19 prevention plans and policies; and implementation of contact tracing and required quarantines. In addition, Matt successfully led the recruiting and onboarding of 50 employees (including 14 new positions) across different levels of the organization.



DAVID ZAMUDIO

KBS REALTY ADVISORS

David Zamudio is an experienced professional and a master of efficiencies in Human Resources. A former Marine who highly values morals and integrity, David was chosen by KBS, one of the largest investors in premier commercial real estate, for his fresh perspective on leadership. Since joining the company seven years ago, he has exhibited a deep understanding of how to leverage the skills of existing team members, and the most effective methods for recruiting and onboarding top candidates, helping the firm to become a leader in its field in talent acquisition and management. One of David's greatest accomplishments since joining the firm was recruiting a high level of HR professionals who allowed KBS to build a strong degree of trust in confidentiality toward his department. He also revamped entire protocols and introduced technology to create a more efficient payroll system, empowering employees to manage their benefits independently. In addition, David helped streamline candidate onboarding into a digital process. Technology and employee health remain integral to KBS' HR systems.



Register Today

Event Date: May 5, 2022

Registration Information

Visit: www.ocbj.com/bizevents or contact Melanie Collins, Signature Events Manager, at 949.664.5065 or collins@ocbj.com.

Dinner & Awards Program

May 5, 2022
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Tickets*: \$275 / Table of 10: \$2,600



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