

SPECIAL ISSUE: L.A. WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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A TRIO OF SUCCESS

Business owners, industry leaders and entrepreneurs. Jessica Hall, Neferteri Plessy and Diana Madison are three local mothers who built their own empires from the ground up.

BY TARA FINLEY



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Neferteri Plessy



Diana Madison



A TRIO OF SUCCESS

The story of how three incredible business women built their own empires from the ground up

BY TARA FINLEY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM BATTAGLIA

As the old adage goes: never underestimate a woman.

Talking to these three incredible business owners, industry leaders and entrepreneurs, nothing rings more true than those words. Jessica Hall, Neferteri Plessy and Diana Madison are three local mothers who are highly accomplished in their fields.

Set in the city of L.A., where success is what you make it, here are the stories of how these three women built their own empires from the ground up – raising children, paying bills and keeping the chaos of life in order along the way.

Jessica Hall

“I have many roles, but my most important one is being a mom to my two children, Jake and Sophie,” introduces Jessica Hall.

Jessica, who also goes by her married name Carlson, started off in television, on the MTV

series *Burned*. She caught the eye of *Playboy*, becoming a modeling regular and the host of multiple *Playboy* radio programs. Gorgeous and astute, she turned one opportunity into another, joining the likes of Chrissy Teigan as a briefcase model on *Deal or No Deal* as well as being frequently featured on her best friend’s show, *Kendra on Top*.

“Going from television hosting to reality T.V. and now becoming a business owner is nothing I ever imagined,” Jessica describes. “I have never felt as fulfilled as I do now.”

Today, with her littles in tow, Jessica is focused on her businesses and positive influence.

“Being a partial owner of BB Lifestyle, a skincare product line, an investor in Sugar Tacos, a vegan restaurant in L.A., a co-owner of Fetch Cocktails, a clean hard refreshment drink and part of CO CÚ LUXX.... I for sure have my hands full,” Jessica laughs. “I’m also

an influencer and podcaster at Action Park Media Group.”

Her podcast, #Flashbacks with Jessica Hall and Heather Rae Young, is her outlet to dish on all the memories of how she got to where she is today. A highly rated 4.8 out of 5 stars, a career of hosting has readied her to become a host of her own enterprise, giving listeners a peek not only into her own life, but those of her celebrity guests as well.

She is thankful that her goals have become a reality, due in part to her tight professional network. “I am very grateful for my team. For the first time in my professional life I trust everyone I’m working with and what they stand for,” Jessica confides.

“With my hands being this full I would love to see all the business ventures I have become very successful,” she envisions. “I would love to continue to work hard and hopefully create job opportunities for others. I want to show my daughter that women can work hard and succeed.”

As a woman in business – or rather, *several* businesses – she is all too aware that some of the challenges she faced on her journey to success were due to her gender.

“When I first started out in the entertainment business it was hard in many ways,” Jessica says. “Let me just say this, the stuff that I endured in the past would not fly today. I’m seeing now how much men need women and what we can offer professionally.”

Thankfully, things have changed.

“All my business partners – besides Sugar Taco, which is women-owned – are men. They have been so amazing and I feel very equal to all of them, as it should be,” she states.

Things haven’t always been so equal for the entrepreneur, however. In fact, she’s often felt

like she’s had to take a few more steps than her male colleagues in order to keep from being overlooked.

“I feel not only as a woman but as a mother, I had to put in extra hours to make sure I kept up and proved myself,” Jessica describes.

How did she juggle it all?

“If I didn’t know a term, or understand something my colleagues were discussing, I would be Googling a description or watching a how-to video to learn quickly. I never let anyone suspect that I didn’t know the answer,” she confides. “I would find it and memorize it. I also felt like I needed to go above and beyond when submitting anything that was my obligation and it would *always* be more than they asked for. I didn’t want them to think ‘oh she can’t get to it because she had kids’ or ‘she has no time.’ I always figured it out.”

Beyond being a successful businesswoman, Jessica’s passion is her family. Her love for her children and husband is instantly recognizable, through her work (especially her online community for parents *Sleepless Moms*) and by simply speaking to her. As she and I talk, you can hear her son happily chattering away in the background. I’m relieved to hear his tiny voice, as mine is doing the same on my end.

There’s something about talking to another mother, no matter how famous and accomplished they are, that instantly bonds you. Jessica is no exception, and her life – along with its successes and struggles – become all the more relatable when viewed through the lens of a loving mama just trying to make her family proud. And given all she’s done and continues to do, there’s no doubt she has.

What advice does she have for others hoping to do the same?

“If you can envision yourself in a position



Jessica Hall

that you want then go get it! Let nothing stop you and manifest your being there. The only one that can stop you is yourself," Jessica encourages.

Neferteri Plessy

Neferteri knows a little something about manifesting. She set her heart on building an incredible life for herself and her family, and she's done that and so much more.

"I'm the founder of Elevated Strategist, an agency with expertise in digital audience development and strategy, including the cultivation and management of digital marketing campaigns, brand identity, social media marketing, public relations strategies as well as the production of live digital events," establishes Neferteri.

Accurately described as a trailblazer, she's the single mom of two boys who decided it wasn't good enough to just make sure her boys had everything they needed, but that all single

mom families got a boost.

"I'm also the founder and CEO of Single Moms Planet (SMP), a 501(c)(3) non-profit established to educate, empower and uplift single mothers and their children," she continues. "Through SMP, I developed cutting-edge programming, events and resources focused on financial literacy and business development for single moms. Each year, SMP impacts over 10,000 single mom families nationwide."

If it wasn't already clear, Neferteri is a powerhouse. Speaking to her is like jumping into an alpine lake, she leaves you feeling awake, alive and ready to climb mountains using the paths she worked so hard to forge for you.

Like Jessica, her early career was shaped by co-hosting reality television, acting and modeling. Her talent for the latter caught the eye of the – at the time – ubiquitous *Playboy*, for whom she appeared as Ms. July 2000.

"Since high school, I had an entrepreneurial and free spirit which led to me always want-

ing to be my own boss," she explains. "I knew early on that pursuing my passions professionally was what I needed to do to truly be happy. My passions led me to travel around the world right out of high school. This is where I learned how business and money worked. In the middle of that, I had two beautiful sons and then a divorce."

A divorce at a young age would leave many stuck in the ground, but it seemed to do the opposite for Neferteri. Instead of drowning in sorrow, uncertainty and fear, she became galvanized by those same negative emotions to ensure stability for herself personally and professionally.

"Around that time, when I was determining what my next steps in life would be, I saw through my own experiences the need for educating, uplifting and empowering single moms. Taking all that I had learned and been exposed to in business, I then dedicated myself to finding a way to help other single moms.

That is when I founded Single Moms Planet," she tells us. "In addition to SMP, I established a successful business which focused on the marketing needs of companies and individuals in various industries, including in real estate, law, finance, medical, beauty and a variety of other industries. My company, Elevated Strategist, was born out of the years I devoted to that marketing business."

Being a female business owner and entrepreneur isn't easy, especially in a fast-paced city like Los Angeles where one false step can have you back at square one.

"Creating a world for my voice to be known and heard has been my biggest challenge being a woman in business," confides Neferteri. "There have been times when male colleagues try to talk over me and create an environment where they dominate the room. I allow it, only to create a space where they wear themselves out."

As clever as she is beautiful, Neferteri



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knows how to play the game. But no matter how skilled one is at business, 2020 has been a difficult year. What professional lessons has she learned?

“The power of being able to pivot and reinvent myself, my brand, my business and my family at any moment has been my greatest professional lesson of 2020,” she answers. “I also discovered there is no room for the concept of remaining stuck. The companies and business owners that remained flexible through 2020 have seen an increase in business, sales and customer retention.”

Her current projects include working closely with luxury skincare brand Cole Skincare for Men as an investor and co-owner through her firm Elevated Strategist.

The project she’s most proud of? Creating the Single Mom’s Awards.

Through the Single Mom’s Awards, Single Moms Planet has celebrated the amazing achievements of single moms who have built success in business and inspired other single moms around the world. Honorees have included Anastasia Sores, owner of Anastasia of Beverly Hills; Shanna Moakler, former Miss USA; and Garcelle Beauvais, actress and television personality.

“This has been one of my greatest passion projects to date,” describes Neferteri. “For five years I’ve had the pleasure of highlighting notable single mothers in business and the corporations that support them. Coupled with the “Smart Mommy, Smart Money” live and online conference that educates over 10,000 women globally each year, this has been a powerful project that not only supports women and children but also creates economic well-being in families.”

One thing to know about Neferteri is she is absolutely *brimming* with valuable advice. Wish as we may to share it all, we’ll leave you with this:

“Learn from the people around you, both the great things they’ve accomplished and their failures. Create a world where mentors and coaches are part of your life structure. Own your worth and never be afraid to ask for what you want.”

Diana Madison

Diana Madison knows what she wants. Organized and to the point, an interview with her is every journalist’s dream.

For those out of the loop: “I am an actress, producer and the CEO of Diana Madison Beauty,” she describes. “I recently sold my digital studio that I created out of my parents garage which was an exciting accomplishment.”

Humble as ever, that garage digital studio she describes is Shandy Media. A talented digital production company she co-founded that owned three popular YouTube channels with over four million engaged subscribers.

Today, she’s readying herself for something even bigger.

“Now I am getting ready to film my second movie *I Love Us*, and launch my second product with my beauty brand,” she shares excitedly. “When I started the beauty brand, the philanthropy aspect was very important to me. One dollar of every product sold goes to a charity that I choose quarterly. Most recently, I donated 100 percent of our sales to the Armenia Fund to provide necessities to the

Diana Madison



people displaced due to the war in Armenia and Arstakh.”

A proud Armenian herself, being able to use the platform she has built so studiously to give back to those in need has been of utmost importance to the philanthropic entrepreneur.

“I also have my podcast, DREAM BIG, which you can hear weekly on iTunes,” she continues. “I interview some of the biggest entrepreneurs, spiritual leaders and actors/actresses about how they’ve created their empires.”

Establishing oneself as a beauty influencer, businesswoman, and within the film industry is no easy feat. How did Diana do it?

“I have been working for this moment my entire life,” she answers. “Over the past 14 years, I’ve paid my dues in this industry. I wish I could say my journey has been an easy one, but the truth is, I have dealt with a lot of rejection and failures. The thing that has kept me going after all these years is my passion and drive. I love creating – I am a creator and a storyteller, and whether I’m acting or selling my beauty products, I am telling a story.”

2020 has been a strange year for business, but for this undeterred creator, it’s given her the time and space to make her next big dream a reality.

“In the next couple of months, I will be announcing the launch of my production company,” Diana shares. “I plan to create movies and shows dedicated to females and ethnic voices like myself. My first project with this company will be a show I wrote about Armenians in Los Angeles, in which I will play the lead role.”

“I am excited to show the world a show that will have an ethnic minority as the main lead – something we don’t really see often. I hope to change the way Hollywood sees women and ethnic voices through the stories that I will be telling with my work,” she continues. “In the next 10 years, I hope to have my own studio where I will be creating long-form content, from movies to documentaries to scripted shows.”

As a successful woman in business, did she ever feel taken for granted?

“Till this day, people are confused about how, as a woman, I can be so successful and a mother of two, and yet still have the same hunger I did when I was 18 – to keep on creating opportunities, projects and goals for myself,” she answers. “For me, it’s frustrating when I get told, ‘You’re good, you’ve done enough.’ People don’t understand my philosophy. I am a creator, and the day I stop creating things is the day that I die. I love my work and I am so passionate about my family; I don’t feel like you need to choose one or the other.”

“It’s a modern age, and in my opinion, you can do it all if you want to,” she says. “Women today are breaking barriers and I am so proud to be a woman in this day and age.”

Her advice?

“Never stop believing in yourself. Your flaws can be your superpower and an avenue for success,” she advises. “I also believe in DREAMING BIG, hence the name of my podcast. Always believe in the beauty of your dreams and don’t stop working for them. Through hard work, perseverance and passion, anything is possible.”

Looking at the success of these three hard-working women, mothers and entrepreneurs, the proof of those words shines through.



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FEATURE

WOMEN OF INDUSTRY

BY TARA FINLEY

Throughout Southern California, female leaders of industry are taking the professional world by storm. Powerful role models, these women in business have risen to the top of their career fields through hard work, grit and determination.

No matter your gender, the following stories of achieved dreams and the roads that led them there will serve as inspiration in a time where motivation may feel stagnant. While success may be hard-won, these 10 incredible women prove that the endeavor to do so is always worth the effort.

Here are *L.A. Weekly's* Top Women in Business 2020:

Andrea Matiauda

Andrea Matiauda is someone who can do it all.

"I am the General Counsel at Calnetix Technologies. Calnetix develops and manufactures



Andrea Matiauda

state-of-the-art, high-speed electric motors, generators and systems, based on our proprietary technologies, for a host of applications, from power generation, to motorsports, to medical, to defense," describes Matiauda.

"I am responsible for all legal activities across the company, including intellectual property portfolio licensing and acquisition, commercial agreements, mergers and acquisitions, subsidiary formation and exits, equity/debt financings, tax restructurings and governance matters," she continues.

Her responsibilities are many – including several cornerstones of company success. What was her path that led her to become such a trusted member of the executive team?

"I started my legal career at Latham & Watkins (LW), a first tier national law firm. All LW new associates were 'unassigned' which essentially meant that newbie lawyers didn't have to specialize immediately, but instead were exposed to all types of work and clients. This broad experience gave me a strong legal foundation," she explains. "I believe my willingness always to learn new areas of the law and to think strategically and creatively have enabled my long career as General Counsel of Calnetix."

Matiauda is the kind of woman you want on your team. Never one to back down from challenge, proving herself was just another rung to ascend on her ladder to personal success.

"The legal profession, in general, is very embracing of women. However, at least when I started, the billable hours culture at the big law firms was not in line with my expectations for a work/life balance. And while that balance has continued to be elusive at times, it was in search of that balance that pushed me to pursue a career in-house where I felt I had more control," she asserts. "When I started at Calnetix ... there were few women, and none on the executive team. So, I do think I had to work hard to prove my capabilities, and to expand the management team's expectations of the type of work and strategic advice that I could provide."

Her strong, calm leadership has paved the way for other female lawyers not only looking to get a seat at the executive table in predominantly male-dominated industries, but for general counsel as a whole to be included in the executive team fold.

"I believe that I am an example of a more integrated, strategic general counsel, one focused on the whole arc of the company, not just its pure legal contracts," she says. "I am also a strong advocate for workplaces and positions that promote flexibility."

This ties into Matiauda's key advice for young professionals: "Seek a job that enables flexibility! I find that women who have achieved great success in their fields often had positions that enabled flexibility. Ironically, I think that COVID's acceleration of the remote workforce and video technologies will make this easier for women and men."

Barbara Johnson Bechthold

Barbara Johnson Bechthold is the kind of person you want to have breakfast with. Not brunch, not dinner, but breakfast.

Why? Her energy is unmatched. Contagious and motivating, a conversation with her – no matter how brief – will leave you feeling like you can conquer the world just as she did. Any day begun with a word of encouragement from this

energetic, educated and dedicated professional will no doubt be a day of accomplishments.

As the Vice President of Administration for Clean Energy, Mrs. Johnson Bechthold has



Barbara Johnson Bechthold

had a long career of rejecting gender roles. Historically, the energy industry has been male dominated, though today, gender is no longer the divider it once was. This is due, in part, to pioneers like Bechthold.

Clean Energy is a natural gas fueling solution that has been established in its industry for decades. Born out of a vision for a better tomorrow by entrepreneur and energy pioneer T. Boone Pickens, it is the culmination of Pickens' career pursuit of clean energy.

Mrs. Johnson Bechthold has worked with Pickens and his natural gas endeavors for over 27 years now, first starting out at his former business, Mesa Petroleum. At the time, Mesa was one of the most sought-after employers in Texas, and securing a position there was no easy feat for a young woman.

"Mesa Petroleum was a highly respected employer in Amarillo, Texas," she explains. "Positions did not open often and were in high demand when they did become available."

Despite the odds against her, Bechthold is the kind of woman who makes things happen. She wanted on the team, and would start at the bottom if that's what it took. She applied as an executive assistant, knowing that with her foot in the door, she would soon figuratively and literally be climbing the ladder on her way to the top.

How did Mrs. Johnson Bechthold have to adapt as a young, ambitious woman climbing a professional ladder catered towards men? "I learned that 100% was never enough," she answers. "My contribution had to be significantly more than the basic requirement. Thankfully, I enjoy a challenge."

A great representation of this 110% work ethic is her willingness and ability to throw on work boots and lead the way up a rig, surely a physical manifestation of her aptitude for all facets of her field and that same commitment to team. In fact, her well-rounded experience and expertise in the energy field has earned her valuable relationships with the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Energy Commission.

It can be said that the work she does is of vital importance to not only the health of the planet, but the health of its people and future generations. Was this always a passion of Bechthold's?

"I always wanted to work for a company that made a difference and the energy business provided an opportunity for me to contribute toward that cause," she confirms. "I hope that in my role, I demonstrate that being ethical, respectful, faithful and loyal coupled with hard work brings success."

If this woman in business could give future female leaders a piece of professional advice, what would it be?

"Determine what your talents are and select a career that will enable you to use those talents," she wises. "Spend time with other professionals to learn more about the career you are considering. Follow your passion: do what you know you are good at doing, rather than follow someone else's dream."

Cheryl Osborn

Cheryl Osborn builds dreams, a career she is all too qualified for after spending her professional life architecting her own.

As the President and Founder of Casco Contractors, an Orange County based Commercial Tenant Improvement Construction and Design Solutions firm, Osborn has over 30 years of construction experience under her belt.

Today, the industry is still thought of as predominantly male. But 30 years ago? A female boss at the jobsite was almost unheard of. But Osborn knew who she wanted to be and what she wanted to do. Not satisfied with stopping at designing, she wanted to build from the ground up.

Thankfully, she had an excellent mentor in her early years. A father of daughters, this seasoned professional wanted to show to the world that women belonged in construction and he had the good judgement to recognize Osborn as the person to prove it.

"He ended up hiring me and giving me way more autonomy than I could have imagined," she remembers. "I was basically thrown in the fire *and I loved it.*"

With that same fire lighting her way, she began collecting experience after experience, constructing her resume. When she was pregnant with her second child, Osborn got fed up with the gender discrimination she faced at other companies, so she decided to create her own: Casco Contractors.

"I call it my ignorance and persistence 'thing.' I was so ignorant about starting my own business, but I jumped in with two feet," she says. "I started my company with a baby and a laptop in my kitchen and went from there."

A very persistent person, she just put one foot in front of the other and began to build her empire. It's grown organically from there.

"I think women are particularly good in construction because they are so organized and detail-oriented," she describes. But don't abuse those innate skills. "Don't ask me to take notes because I have a uterus, I'm willing to do my share but I'm not going to do all of it."

Does she feel that throughout her career, she's had to work harder than her male counterparts?

"Absolutely," she answers. "I constantly had to prove that I knew what I was talking about, had the experience that I actually had, and was qualified."

"Even bankers and accountants were reticent at first to deal with me until I went the extra



Barbara

Your commitment and dedication to our organization is one of the important reasons we are successful. As Vice President, Administration, our company relies on your expertise in mitigating risk, managing safety and directing Human Resources. In your position you touch every facet of what keeps our company moving forward and we appreciate everything you do.

Know that you are well respected and admired by us all and congratulations on this nomination!

Andrew J. Littlefair, President and CEO
And all of us at Clean Energy Fuels!



mile to prove to them that I was capable,” she furthers. “I got asked all the time ‘where is the man behind this business?’ I would reply – ‘it’s just me.’”

Her advice for all those starting out who feel they aren’t being heard?

“Don’t have a chip on your shoulder. People will figure out that you know what you’re doing, and you’ll earn their respect,” she advises. “You have to prove yourself, but you don’t have to prove it the first time you meet them.”

Jennifer Schwab Wangers

Jennifer Schwab Wangers is the kind of woman you want to have in your corner. And thankfully, for the hundreds of students and graduates of ENTITY Academy, she is.

As the Founder and CEO of ENTITY – a media platform built to encourage a new generation of female leaders – Jennifer is a fierce supporter of all women, and has made it her life’s work to empower them.

She does so through ENTITY Academy, a post-graduate training program that centers around high-touch mentorship with estab-

lished industry leaders. The curriculum is curated to help women fill the skills gap between college and professional life, an important and often career-making distinction that is many times missed by colleges and universities.

get women on the fast track right out of school,” explains Jennifer. “I was constantly noodling on: Why is the transition from college to career often so daunting? What skills was I missing on day one when I became a tax consultant at Ernst & Young in Chicago? What skills do entry level women need so they can hit the ground running in their first job? This eventually morphed our company into an innovative EdTech business that has a four pillar approach to education: a) hard skills; b) soft skills; c) mentorship; and d) experiences.”

“When I began my corporate career out of school, I was shocked to see how few women held senior positions,” she continues. “I was even more shocked to see how women viewed their compatriots at the office as competition. Instead of banding together to help each other, they would often torpedo and discredit each other. While this behavior has improved today, women truly pulling for each other in both action and word is still a relatively new phenomenon. ... What we need is to support and mentor each other in the workplace and beyond – much in the same way men have done for

she has made it her life’s mission to rescue dogs in need, provide them with the medical care necessary to save their life, and adopt them into loving homes who are better for it.

Wags and Walks is a non-profit organization dedicated to saving the lives of dogs stuck in kill shelters and matching loving families with their perfect canine companion. Since its humble beginnings in Lesley’s backyard, to

unbearable.”

“That’s how Wags and Walks was born. I learned that dogs were overcrowding the many shelters in and around the L.A. area and they had to euthanize due to space,” she continues. “That day, I saved one amazing Mastiff and we continue to save as many family-friendly dogs from high-kill shelters and provide them loving homes as possible. In fact, since inception over



Cheryl Osborn



Jennifer Schwab Wangers

centuries. This is what ENTITY is all about.”

An excellent role model for all young professionals, what advice does Jennifer have for those that are just starting out?

“Be self-aware in recognizing when you enter ‘the zone’ and fall into a cadence where work doesn’t feel like work,” she advises. “Follow that feeling and do the work necessary to be one of the best in that activity or field. Your career can be an anchor for happiness if you prioritize this.”

Lesley Brog

If you love dogs, you love Lesley Brog. As the Founder and CEO of Wags and Walks,

the larger Adoption Center they operate today, Wags and Walks has rescued thousands of dogs (including my own sweet pup, Murphy), all thanks to Lesley.

So many of us love dogs, and hate to see them suffer in shelters. However, most of us haven’t been galvanized to permanently change the landscape of dog rescue in Los Angeles (and now also, Nashville). What committed Lesley to this cause?

“It was not a choice for me,” the CEO tells *L.A. Weekly*. “I grew up as the daughter of a veterinarian and never spent a childhood day without at least one dog in our home. I remain amazed at how much they adore us unconditionally and truly have the ability to keep us company in the best and worst of times. They are a constant companion and provide so much support and love for the people that get to be around them. The thought of any dog suffering knowing myself and my team can help is

5,500 dogs are safe and loved.”

Lesley, along with the dedicated staff and volunteers at Wags and Walks, have changed the rescuing landscape of L.A. County and beyond by facilitating a shift in conversation regarding breed stereotypes and rescuable dogs.

“These wonderful dogs are not in shelters due to anything they have done wrong, it’s a people problem. Many people don’t realize the commitment required to own a dog and end up bringing them to shelters when they realize,” explains Brog. “We know we can’t adopt our way out of the overcrowding crisis but we have saved thousands of dogs that never would have made it and to see them in their loving homes does make a difference.”

As someone who has made a career out of her desire to help and a love of animals, what advice does she have for others who hope to follow their own dreams some day?

“Follow your passion. Nothing feels better



than doing what you love everyday,” she wisens. “Chances are, if you are passionate about something and work hard, you will be successful.”

Lisa Chiya

Lisa Chiya has dedicated her life to giving it. She has endeavored to help people build their families, connecting eager parents with loving egg donors and selfless surrogates through her agency Genesis Egg Donor & Surrogacy Group, Inc.

“I am the president of the Genesis Group,” Chiya introduces herself. “We are an egg donation and surrogacy agency. We help people build their families.”

Even though it’s 2020, the process behind these avenues of family planning are still a mystery to some. But with Chiya’s guidance, it’s a fairly straightforward process that offers an end to the challenging fertility journey that people find themselves in.

How does it work? “We screen the egg donors and surrogates to match with the intended parents and facilitate the process from beginning to end,” she explains simply. “I would love for surrogacy and egg donation to become topics that are no longer in the shadows. One out of eight people struggle with fertility, often in silence. Surrogacy has become less taboo with the help of celebrities, but egg donation still has a ways to go.”

Her field is a fascinating and fulfilling one, acting as facilitator of dreams and life itself. How did she become president of such an incredible company?

“I never in my wildest dreams thought I

would end up in the fertility industry. It wasn’t a field I even knew about. As I recollect on my life, it all makes sense to me now that I ended up where I did,” she confides. “I grew up without a mother – my mom passed away when I was two from a brain aneurysm. I didn’t come from a big family, so growing up I built my own surrogate family members through my friends.”

“Now I help couples and individuals build their family through egg donation and surrogacy,” she says, explaining the natural progression of her life.

The strongest testimonial for her company is the one she gives herself: “I am the president of the Genesis Group and a happy client too. I personally needed to go through IVF and surrogacy to build my family. I carried my first son and am grateful to have found two surrogates that carried my two other children.”

And those three children are her absolute world. “I’m obsessed with them,” she laughs happily.

Her advice for others seeking professional and personal fulfillment?

“The difference between success and failure is often linked to an individual’s will. Have the will, perseverance and grit to not give up on your goals. I always say life is brutally unfair, so you need to be prepared to fight for what you want.”

Lynn Jochim

Every once in a while, a role model emerges that takes root in their given industry, sure to be looked up to and admired for years to come. In the world of development and beyond, Lynn

Jochim is that role model.

As the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President of FivePoint Holdings, LLC, Jochim oversees the operations and execution of land development plans and entitlements of the Southern California branch. Given that FivePoint is one of the largest developers of mixed-use communities in coastal California – responsible for icons like the Great Park Neighborhood, OC’s Great Park, and now Valencia (formerly Newhall Ranch) – her responsibilities are no small task.

And so, I don’t know what they are.”

One of her greatest joys has been the Orange County Great Park, and she loves to see what it’s become. “It’s the greatest compliment of all, that people find it a wonderful place to gather,” she tells us, after having worked so hard to design and build it.

When it comes to opportunities and challenges, Jochim has this philosophy: “We can control our own destiny by being open to it and being respectful of those around us.”

“I think sometimes the greatest example of

Lisa Chiya



She’s hit so many milestones already. In fact, her Valencia project is groundbreaking, on track to become the most sustainable master planned community of its size in the nation, with zero net greenhouse gas emissions. Coming from a background in agriculture and sustainability – she grew up helping out on the family farm in Central California – this is an achievement that means a lot.

“It’s a respect for the land and a respect for nature,” she explains. “It is pretty magical to be a part of. I know we all feel this responsibility that it’s really about us being stewards of the land and stewards of the environment.”

With so many goals realized, what other accomplishments does she look forward to?

“Ones I don’t know yet,” Jochim answers. “Because it always seems like I could never guess what that next step or stage is going to be.

what you would say your ‘opportunities and challenges’ are, is how you see your own children deal with issues,” she continues. “Both my girls, neither one of them see their gender as an obstacle, or a challenge, or an opportunity. They just see themselves as having opportunities as humans, being able to go and explore the world.”

A strong mother and a strong leader, Jochim is thankful for her mentors and colleagues for making work such an enjoyable and productive space. “We are all part of a group that’s doing great things,” she says.

From managing her team through a pandemic, to leading the development of iconic communities, Jochim has a lot of wisdom to share. Her advice to young professionals?

“Always be comfortable asking questions,” she advises. “I know I ask a million questions.

Lynn Jochim



... I ask questions all the time. And I think that young people need to ask questions. They need to make sure that they're experiencing life for themselves, feeling *comfortable* about what they're experiencing and finding a group they can share those experiences with. Because it is from experience that you're going to find

opportunity."

Lynne Foose

Lynne Foose is the kind of woman that'll teach you a lesson. Often mistaken for being just the beauty of the operation as Chip Foose's wife, those that discount her soon find that she

Lynne Foose



is the brains as well.

"I am the Vice President and Corporate Financial Officer," introduces Lynne. "Which means, I make all the decisions related to anything and everything legal, financial and administrative."

Lynne and Chip started Foose Design in 1999, the same year their first child was born. A graduate of Western State College of Law and young business owner herself, Lynne was a natural choice to helm the company while her husband let his creative juices flow. A new mom with a raw and fierce aptitude for business, she was a force to be reckoned with.

A force indeed, as today, Foose Design is a multi-million dollar business, widely known for being the focal point of the reality television show *Overhaulin'*.

"I think it's very true when people say that life takes you in directions you never saw coming," Lynne tells *L.A. Weekly*. "If you had told me that I would've spent my life self-employed and building a worldwide brand, I would've laughed at you. Today, one of my biggest goals would be to make the car building side of our business

be willing to say 'no' when others don't value your worth."

Her advice to other young women out there, hoping to become leaders in their industry as well?

"My advice to young women would be to remove all emotion from business. I always knew that my emotions had no place in the business world," says Foose Design's VP and CFO. "I could not get hurt or offended if someone didn't see the value in our brand, and at the same time, I had to have the courage to demand what I thought we were worth."

Meg Gill

The first thing that strikes me about Meg Gill is how disarmingly *normal* she is. When speaking to her, you feel like you're talking to a very articulate beer buddy, who really knows their stuff. Her good-natured humility gives no indication of her incredible success, though a quick Google of her name does.

Meg Gill is the Founder of Golden Road Brewing in Los Angeles. She built the L.A.-institution from the bottom up, successfully

Meg Gill



as profitable as the licensing and spokesperson side of our business."

As a female leader in a stereotypically male industry, did she face any gender discrimination while building up the brand?

"Within the context of the male dominated custom car industry, I can say with a resounding yes, I did experience discrimination in this industry," she answers. "I definitely got the feeling that in this industry, women were to be seen and not heard."

Citing her mother as a strong role model and mentor, Lynne had to find the confidence within herself early on in her career in order to ensure Foose Design's success. "You have to know your worth," she advises. "You have to

helping its transition to Anheuser-Busch In-Bev's craft beer catalogue. Today, in addition to supporting her brewery in a founder's capacity, she is leading marketing and innovation for the Brewers Collective Business Unit at Anheuser-Busch, a centralized arm built to support the company's craft brewery partners across the country.

How did she get to where she is today?

"Grit and determination – combined with surrounding myself with smart, passionate and honest people who have similar ambitions and goals – played a large part in helping me get to where I am today professionally," she answers.

"When I started in the beer industry 13 years ago, there were certainly more challenges, but

being a young woman in the field gave me the drive to work even harder and smarter to create a great business and brand," she continues. "Women no doubt were seen as a rare breed amongst the brewing industry's rough and tough bearded men when I was starting out. However, the playing field has gotten more inclusive with regard to gender, age and race, in turn adding more diverse thought and excitement to the field. I'm proud of how far the craft beer industry has come in the last decade or so."

When she first started out, some of her colleagues doubted the weight of her determination, but they were soon proved wrong.

"When I was starting out in the beer industry, I recall a beer distributor saying, 'Hey little girl, go fetch me a beer.' I remember the brewery owner I worked with at that time replying 'Watch out, she'll be your boss in five years,'" Gill recounts. "There were tough times in the early days and even now, but all you can do is focus on the positive impact you can make in your role, whatever it may be. To the naysayers: I'd rather live in the positive, enjoy what I'm doing, and appreciate the beers in front of me."

Her positive attitude as well as tenacity to succeed and live her dream is an inspiration. What advice does she have for young women just starting out in their careers?

"Follow your passion first and don't get hung up on titles or money," Gill advises. "Remember that experiences and learning from mistakes and failures are what will make your career. The money and responsibility will usually come so long as the passion and experience is there."

Nicole Leal

Nicole Leal has spent her life showing people the beauty within themselves.



The resident hairstylist at Powder & Bloom, located inside the prestigious Allbright club, she also dedicates her time on her very own hair education platform. Called Sunday School (@sundayschoolhairedu), she uses her platform to advise stylists from all over

the world on not only styling technique, but business technique as well. A former cosmetology student herself, giving back to the community where she came from is important to her.

"It's been a 20+ year journey and I'm still learning so much. My career was molded by a company called Sebastian International which gave me a strong set of skills from the very beginning. They hired me when I was 18 years old as a makeup artist because I didn't have enough experience in hair, but after a year of free-lancing with them they hired me full-time for both hair and makeup. I remember going to audition/interview for them and telling my friend that they had to hire me because I knew it would be one of my biggest opportunities in my career. I also had some incredible mentors along the way," she tells us of her journey.

Leal is now one of the most sought-after stylists in Hollywood, lending her vision to the look of celebrities like Rebel Wilson. But the path to success is never easy, especially for female leaders who still face hurdles unique to their gender, like the opinions of men.

"In general, I felt early on that I always had to prove myself because I was so young when I started in the beauty industry," explains Leal. "Comparing male colleagues, I have to say that I had some really great ones that really supported me along the way and gave me so much guidance. I also had a few male colleagues along the way who believed that women couldn't fill stages and I just looked at it as a challenge to show them otherwise." And did she ever.

Today, her professional goals include continuing to grow her education and mentorship platform, to lend other young professionals the advice and lessons she's learned. To create a product line for professionals, and

of course, to keep growing herself.

Her professional advice?

"It's been said that comparison is the thief of joy, so my biggest advice would be stay focused and don't worry about what anyone else is doing," Leal advises.

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Case Number: 37-2020-00004949- CU-NP-CTL The name, address and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney or plaintiff without an attorney, is: Robert M Tennant, Esq./Raymond J Naples, Esq (Bar # 254513/293298), Sadaf Djavadi, Esq. SBN 319440; Veros Credit, LLC, 2333 N Broadway, Suite 400, Santa Ana, CA 92701, Phone Number: 714-210-6952, Fax Number: 714-415-6154. Date: 01/29/2019 M. Diethenhofer, Clerk of the Court

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