

# Distinguished Leaders

## *Human Resources*

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*Human resource executives continue to face significant challenges in the post-pandemic labor landscape. Recruitment continues to be an issue—from attracting to maintaining top talent—as the employment market transitions from the Great Resignation of last year to re-engaging current employees. HR executives are managing new hybrid work models while striving to create a more productive work environment. They've gone from battling burnout to prioritizing employees' mental health.*

*The 53 HR leaders in this supplement show they have what it takes to navigate the ever-changing HR landscape. They have implemented and updated work-from-home policies and innovative onboarding processes. Recruitment is top of mind with one HR executive onboarding 550 employees in the past year. Employee wellness is also top of mind for OC HR execs with initiatives like virtual coffee chats and instituting employee wellbeing programs. In addition, they have restructured outdated retiree medical plans and advocated for market equality and fair compensation.*

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

## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### RAMONA AGRELA

VICE CHANCELLOR & CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

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.

Now focused on the complete employee experience lifecycle, Ramona Agrela's goal is to advance UCI's position as the employer of choice in Orange County.



### NICOLE ARNOLD

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Nicole Arnold has brought significant improvements to our organization's performance during her tenure. She has implemented various initiatives to strengthen our team and keep morale in check. Firstly, she led the extraction of a comprehensive People Experience Organization (PEO) for HR functions and onboarding to our own Human Capital Management system, all while building the HR team and functions from bottom up. Furthermore, she ensured that our employees were always at the forefront of every decision, offering strategic advice and advocating employee benefits, while also finding ways of streamlining processes and improving morale.

Arnold has also put in place innovative approaches to manage work from home policies. She has arranged remote training sessions and scheduled teleconferencing events with staff involved in the business operations. In addition, she has provided support to teams in order to help them adjust to the new working style, while at the same time leading the organization in the right direction with regards to HR operations. Arnold has done an outstanding job of not only providing quality care for employees, but also ensuring the organization is running as efficiently and effective as possible. She has consistently pushed the boundaries to create innovative system solutions that benefit all departments, ultimately making the company more responsive and efficient. We are grateful for her dedication and contributions.



### GABE BALTODANO

VICE PRESIDENT OF RISK MANAGEMENT & PERSONNEL

RBA Builders nominates Gabe Baltodano for his exemplary work in our Human Resources department and beyond. Since he started at RBA seven years ago, Baltodano has been instrumental in keeping this a growing and fruitful company through writing company policies, leading safety meetings and directives, spearheading a huge recruiting effort, keeping one step ahead of HR and safety trends, and so much more. Baltodano has also led the creation of the Young Executives in Training Initiative, which provides training and direction for those employees clearly seeking to utilize their potential and exceed expectations in their path to leadership.

With a passion for making a lasting impact, Baltodano is uniquely able to bypass the surface level of employees and see them for more than just their title, and truly caring about their life stories and aspirations. Completely embodying one of our Core Values "We Are Here For You," Baltodano is well known for making time for everyone no matter his schedule. "It's inherent in what we do," Baltodano says, "It's about trying to live a life of service, the value in helping someone overcome adversities, and the peace of mind for others in knowing that you are there for them."



### MELISSA BEZALEL

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR & FIRMWIDE PROJECT MANAGER

Melissa Bezalel is one of the reasons why the global law firm Orrick has been among the only law firms ranked in Forbes' 100 Best Companies to Work For. She serves as the Orrick Orange County office administrator and HR lead, and thoughtfully balances both roles to create a welcoming work environment. Bezalel took over as office administrator in a remote environment and led our office operations through the pandemic with a commitment to supporting flexible work arrangements while going above and beyond to maximize engagement and morale, empowering our attorneys and staff to effectively deliver client service even with the challenges of court closures and business interruptions. She was the architect of a firm-wide inclusive interviewing guide to attract and inspire the best talent while also providing transparency through the interview process in today's competitive job market.

Her commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is central to developing a supportive, team-oriented culture. Bezalel facilitates Orrick's broader impact in the Orange County community through her thoughtful planning and execution of charitable efforts and volunteerism, energizing our colleagues with a sense of purpose. Beyond Orange County, Bezalel also serves as a firmwide project manager - a testament to her leadership as a stellar HR business partner.



### APARNA CHITALE

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Virgin Galactic is able to scale its business and grow an innovative commercial space company, headquartered in Orange County, in large part due to the incredible work our People Team, led by Aparna Chitale, our chief people officer. Over the past year, Chitale and her team: hired a recruiting team which brought in over 550 new engineers, design leaders, technical operations crew and commercial teammates. Chitale implemented the Human Resources infrastructure necessary to scale a complex consumer-facing design and engineering company, including delivery of a comprehensive benefits policy overhaul and implementation of a new compensation and performance review system. She also brought forward an innovative recognition platform built around Virgin Galactic's values and successfully managed the transition to a new headquarters location and a hybrid working environment.

Above all, Chitale has become a trusted partner and advisor to the senior team and the board of directors, and she is a mentor and advocate to teammates at all levels across the company. She is an avid champion of inclusion in the workplace and the world, and she is an incredible champion of Virgin Galactic's mission of opening Space for All.



### JOY CORPORA

CHIEF PEOPLE & CULTURE OFFICER

Joy Corpora was hired right as the COVID-19 pandemic was being declared. This required her to develop relationships with our staff and leadership team in a virtual manner. She was responsible for the health and welfare of the staff and youth while partnering with our program team to ensure services could be safely delivered to our youth and young adults who needed our assistance more than ever. Despite the fact that managing COVID was a substantial effort, Corpora took the initiative to evaluate all our core human resources systems and business processes to make them more professional and appropriate for the increased size of our company, which has doubled over the last seven years to now over 175 employees. Corpora overhauled our new employee onboarding process and implemented an employee development tool called CultureAmp and a new payroll system. Her expertise in addressing employee performance issues and building a strong team has contributed to an overall culture that is now more unified and collaborative.

Like many organizations, we were impacted by the great resignation and, at the same time, we were adding staff for several new programs so recruiting and hiring the past two years has been extremely active. Corpora took the lead on recruiting for many of these positions in 2021 and 2022. In summary, Corpora has been a wonderful addition to the Orangewood Foundation team and has helped us grow and improve as an organization.

CONGRATULATIONS

avanath+

## PATRICIA GAUDIN

on your Distinguished Leaders  
in HR Nomination

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**Thank you for your  
exceptional work**

to achieve a culture  
of diversity, growth,  
and innovation at  
Avanath.

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## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### LIZ CORREA

HR LEAD

Liz Correa was a pivotal part of the founding team at C3 Tech and continues to be a pillar of the company by improving talent acquisition, boosting morale, reducing turnover, and managing work from home policies. As work from home necessity ebbed and flowed, Correa acknowledged the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation to meet the changing needs of employees and the company. Not only does she keep up to date with changing employee policies, but she works everyday to ensure each and every employee is cared for and appreciated through her Culture Club task force. Those at C3 Tech are confident they have someone in their corner with Correa around!



### CHRISTOPHER COURNEEN

VICE PRESIDENT HUMAN RESOURCES

Chris Courneen 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 talent requirements ahead of our 20%+ annual growth rate. All of this is done using data, analysis and high levels of research.

Specific accomplishments include building and developing an internal recruiting team rather than depending on word of mouth, referrals and headhunters. At the onset of COVID he read and analyzed over 100 different "stay-at-home" orders to understand specifically what could and could not be done by MSI. In addition, Courneen 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 when they were in need.

Courneen 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. He also helped develop the full HR team at MSI to produce such metrics as no attrition at our senior levels and reduced overall attrition at other levels.



### SHAWN COVARRUBIAS

VICE PRESIDENT OF CLIENT SERVICES

Shawn Covarrubias extends the definition of family to the staff at Apriem. Through her advocacy, Apriem fully pays for medical, dental, and vision plans. During the brunt of COVID-19, all employees were retained without cuts in pay. To relieve the transition of working remotely, Apriem covered all staff utility bills and fuel. Returning to the office, Covarrubias initiated the hiring process, engaging Apriem's growth and capacity for teamwork. She carries out the Apriem way in the onboarding process following our coined "3CPO" method, analyzing for "Character, Competence, Credibility, Passion, and Ohana (Family)."

Covarrubias has achieved an average employee tenure of over 10 years. She leads the Staff Engagement Committee that aims to strengthen team moral by creating events inside and outside the office. Apriem was noted for its inspiration to those from diverse backgrounds to contribute to the financial advisory industry by Investment News' Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award.



### MARIA DILLON-OWENS

VICE-PRESIDENT & CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Maria Dillon-Owens is the dynamic executive vice-president and chief human resources officer for Lutheran Social Services of Southern California overseeing all aspects of Human Resources and internal stakeholder relations for 199 employees throughout 16 sites. Dillon-Owens joined the nonprofit in 2020 at the height of the pandemic and literally built the department from the ground up. She inspires innovative management techniques and transformative methodology designed to empower leadership and frontline teams alike.

In just three years, she's implemented an Employee Wellness Program with a goal to embrace, empower and equip employees to succeed on many levels. She meets with staff one-on-one to help them to grow in their careers and be connected to the organization. The Employee Development Survey Dillon-Owens created asks every employee to share one dream and she'll do everything in her power to help make them come true. Through this program, the organization has helped employees reach their dreams of higher education, home ownership, and one family just wanted to go to Disneyland. Dillon-Owens started Employee Connect where employees nominate one another anonymously as "hidden heroes" leading to higher job performance and camaraderie. She takes great pride in planning creative Employee Appreciation events to ensure that every employee feels valued and appreciated.



### KELLY DUNMORE

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

In her role of senior vice president, Global Compensation and Benefits, Kelly Dunmore is not only an experienced leader who built a team to operate at the highest level, but also oversees a unique and complex benefit structure to allow for multiple plans tailored to the requirements of client specific offerings, union collective bargaining agreements, company policy, and regulatory compliance. Her leadership skills inspire her team to perform at their best and she is outstanding at recognizing her team for their contributions while holding them to high performance standards.

In addition to managing the strategic development of Allied Universal's benefit offerings, Dunmore is also a key leader in the Human Resources function, driving for changes that have lead to substantial process improvements and positive financial outcomes. As Allied Universal has grown through acquisitions and new business, Dunmore is a key player in ensuring employees joining the company via acquired businesses have a seamless experience in regards to their benefits and pay. Dunmore is an absolute pleasure to work with and this is a well-deserved recognition of her talents and contributions.



### MALEA ESTRADA

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Malea Estrada is the senior director of human resources for Silverado. Silverado provides care to those living with Alzheimer's and Dementia, as well as those on Hospice. A cornerstone of Silverado's core operating philosophy is "LOVE>fear." This is the lens through which all associates and leaders interact with each other and make decisions in the care of residents and patients. As a proven HR leader, Estrada has shown resilient leadership by helping Silverado navigate unprecedented times and challenges through the pandemic and the changes that impacted the workforce as a result from the pandemic, by managing core HR Process such as policy management, performance management, talent development, employee engagement, recruiting, and retention initiatives. By leading and implementing a high touch HR department in 2022, turnover improved by 20%.

Silverado was the first assisted living company nationwide to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for our frontline workers, an initiative that Estrada spearheaded. Estrada was also a driving force in developing a Diversity, Equity Inclusion and Belonging Committee for a global company with 2,000+ employees, by examining organizational policies and practices she implemented constructive changes which resulted in employees feeling empowered to do their best work while feeling valued. Estrada believes in investing in the people, and by doing so has reduced turnover, increased innovation, and improved job satisfaction.



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



**ALWAYS BE READY®**



# SHANNON ROCHELEAU-HILL

SR. DIRECTOR, PEOPLE & CULTURE | 5.11®, INC.

*5.11 is proud to recognize Shannon Rocheleau-Hill, Sr. Director of People & Culture, on her nomination for the Orange County Business Journal 2023 Distinguished HR Leaders Awards.*

## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### ANDREA EVANS

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Andrea Evans joined Stradling during the first days of the pandemic, in the midst of a complete remodel of the firm's Newport Beach headquarters. She immediately worked with the IT department to execute a rapid transition to a fully virtual platform across all offices. She then designed and implemented a hybrid-remote/onsite policy, as well as an overhaul of the firm's retirement and health benefits packages, with no increase in employee attrition, and achieving material cost reductions for the firm.

Evans also has been instrumental in creating weekly "attractive nuisance" events, (happy hours, breakfasts etc.), and monthly personal performance awards (dinners, hotel stays, event tickets) to encourage employees to voluntarily return to onsite and improve morale.



### COLETTE FARNES

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

Throughout her tenure at the County of Orange, Colette Farnes has demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication and expertise in the field of human resources. Recently she completed the implementation of a multi-year classification and compensation study of 1,100 administrative managers to establish clear job descriptions that highlight the responsibilities and requirements of the positions, develop a new compensation system that is externally competitive and internally equitable, establish clear career pathways for career development and professional growth, and enhance the County's ability to recruit external talent and retain top performers.

Farnes has also restructured the County's outdated retiree medical program to achieve improved benefit for employees and a reduction of over \$91 million in long-term liability for the organization. The new plan, which includes a portable Health Reimbursement Account & components of the existing retiree health grant for legacy employees, is a milestone achievement in modernization of our health benefits package, making it a valuable tool to attract & retain employees as part of the total compensation package. Farnes played a critical role in supporting the County's workforce during COVID-19, key in providing County services to residents.



### MINNETTE GALLARDO

FOUNDER/CEO

With over 20 years working and leading human resource departments for large companies in Orange County, Minnette Gallardo founded her own human resources and payroll 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 Resources, Recruiting and Payroll services for clients involving over 1,000 employees on a local and national level. In addition, Gallardo founded Chamba Jobs, a mentorship and training organization for the restaurant industry. Gallardo is known for her acumen in aligning great people with awesome companies and helping companies reduce costs.



### PATRICIA GAUDIN

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

A 16-year HR veteran, Pat Gaudin is a gamechanger in her field. As EVP of HR at Avanath Capital Management, a multifamily owner and operator with more than 15,000 affordable and workforce housing communities across the U.S. totaling over \$3.5 billion in assets under management, Gaudin has optimized and greatly enhanced HR management at the firm. She has helped solidify Avanath's position as a leader in resolving the national housing crisis-which has grown increasingly challenging in light of the rising economic difficulties Americans are facing.

In addition to her unparalleled talent acquisition abilities, Gaudin is consistently striving for excellence, development, and improvement. She recently led her team in introducing a fully integrated human capital platform for leadership and workforce process-centered service delivery. The platform revolutionizes the HR sector and brings the company to a new level of systems integration.

Gaudin believes in providing appropriate training and professional development opportunities for Avanath employees at all levels. She is also committed to furthering a culture at Avanath that includes all employee backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Above all, Gaudin is steadfast about shaping an environment in which employees are heard and appreciated-one that fosters support, celebrates innovation, and champions work/life balance.



### JENNIFER GOLDMAN

HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR

Mrs. Jennifer Goldman stepped into our chief Human Resources role during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In her transition from the corporate world, Goldman embraced her role, participating in all aspects of what Port View Preparatory does from the ground level up. She sought to understand the culture that breathes within Port View Prep so that she could build a supportive and innovative HR department to support the efforts of the 200 team members that serve students that are most impacted by disability.

As if the pandemic wasn't enough, she steered Port View through the labor shortage by designing and implementing Port View's recruiting arm so that our reach to attract those looking for a rewarding career extended beyond traditional job postings on various pay to play sites. Goldman is an inspiring leader that has excelled in the very unique role that is Port View Preparatory's HR director. She is a mentor, a coach, and leader. Her consistency and dedication to our students and our team has made Port View Preparatory a better place.



### JACLYN GROENDYKE

VICE PRESIDENT OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Jaclyn Groendyke demonstrates a keen ability to conceptualize and activate change. One major accomplishment was transitioning SmartStop away from a PEO and onto an internal system. This enhanced our benefit offerings and employee experience. Our employees now have access to educational sessions with experts on various matters such as health & wellness and retirement planning. She is someone who naturally connects with employees, placing an emphasis on engagement and communication. Groendyke revamped employee engagement by rolling out an employee engagement survey and hosting virtual Coffee Chats for our leaders to engage on topics such as: Recruitment, Engagement, and EI in the Workplace. She also spends time on a monthly basis to educate our employees during our virtual All Hands on Deck meetings. Her efforts contributed to us being named one of the Top Workplaces of Orange County in 2022.

Groendyke also finds ways to help us make an impact within our local communities by partnering with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Wounded Warriors, Operation Santa Claus and BCRF. With respect to COVID-19, her level of empathy and care for our employees' and customers' wellbeing was paramount. She supported our 400+ employees who worked throughout the pandemic, providing guidelines to ensure their safety and wellbeing, as well as discrete levels of support on an as needed basis.

# Congratulations!



## **Michelle Gutierrez**

Vice President, Human Resources,  
Orange County Region  
MemorialCare

The entire MemorialCare family would like to thank you for your steadfast dedication and exceptional leadership. You are a champion in investing in MemorialCare people and creating a culture that supports our mission.

As a strong advocate for a supportive environment and positive employee experience, your efforts have helped our hospitals secure Top Workplace honors for 12 consecutive years.



Scan here to learn more about career opportunities to work with Michelle and the entire leadership team at MemorialCare.



## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### MICHELLE GUTIERREZ

VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Michelle Gutierrez joined MemorialCare in 1992 at Anaheim Memorial and moved steadily up in the organization, transferring to Orange Coast Medical Center in 2001. She assumed HR leadership over both Saddleback and Orange Coast in 2016 and was promoted to VP, HR in 2022. As a Certified Lean Leader and a graduate of the MemorialCare Leadership Academy, Gutierrez's effective leadership has standardized labor practices between the two campuses, has facilitated significantly increased employee engagement scores and both campuses have received Top Workplace honors, while remaining union-free. Her priorities have included creative talent acquisition which have resulted in improved recruitment and retention, allowing for decreased dependence on contract labor. Ms. Gutierrez is a strong advocate for market equity and fair compensation to ensure that the hospitals remain competitive in an extremely difficult environment. In addition, her adept representation of the MemorialCare hospitals has served the organization in a highly litigious industry.

Ms. Gutierrez's contributions to Orange Coast and Saddleback's stability and growth are integral to the organization's financial performance, staff engagement and ultimately, a positive patient experience.



### KAREN HAMMOND

VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Karen Hammond is more than an HR leader-she's a true champion for Jamboree. Exceptional leadership over the past 17 years has been a driving force behind the organization's success.

Hammond led the transition to work-from-home policies and COVID compliance requirements, ensuring everyone's safety and productivity. Her innovative thinking led to a cost-saving transition to BambooHR, an HRIS platform that improved efficiency and user-friendliness.

Since joining Jamboree in 2006, Hammond's focus on employee appreciation has boosted morale and fostered company loyalty. She established a Learning & Development department that helped attract and retain top talent. Quarterly employee appreciation events and an annual All-Hands retreat, developed and led by Hammond remind employees that they are valued and appreciated. This, paired with numerous other initiatives she has led-such as implementing a DEI plan and leading the exponential growth of our recruiting efforts from 2020 to the present day-has made her an outstanding and valued member of our company.

Hammond inspires others to perform at their best, leading to increased employee satisfaction, growth, and cost savings.



VERITONE.



### JULIE HARDING

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PEOPLE

Julie Harding has made significant strides evolving the culture for its 650 global employees. She notably built Veritone's People function from the ground up - including People

Development, Engagement, Champion & Analytics, Health & Wellness, Talent Acquisition, Belonging, & Reward & Recognition initiatives. As a result employee engagement increased from 53% to 79% and Veritone's Glassdoor rating moved from 2.3 to 4.0. She impressively supported Veritone's expansion from 250 to 650 employees, and 25%+ YoY growth in 2022, while transitioning from an in-office to remote-first environment. She has ensured the proper systems, people and processes are in place - designing an organizational structure (job profiles, levels, etc.) and implementing several digital-transformation processes including Greenhouse (ATS), Workday (HCM), and Peakon (engagement).

Harding also developed and implemented compensation bands, conducted compensation analysis; developed a new Talent Review process to include calibration, succession planning and career pathing; and helped increase benefits and leave offerings, including tripling maternity and paternity leave, increasing employer-match contributions, and launching a 401k-match program. An executive leadership business partner, Harding has continued to lead a global organization and team, which not only includes original Veritone employees, but employees acquired through M&A activity over the past two years.



### EILEEN K. HARRIS, ESQ.

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Eileen Harris has been a strategic partner and ambassador for Windes for over 25 years. As a vital member of the leadership team and the firm's chief human resources officer,

she is responsible for setting and overseeing the execution of the business's overall "People Strategy." Her initiatives provide employee empowerment, participation, high performance, and organizational growth. Partnering with leaders in the firm to hire, motivate, and retain talent with her creative ideas, Harris encourages camaraderie and fosters a sense of belonging among employees.

Harris has implemented creative and inspiring firm interest groups, a Partner Spotlight to learn fun facts about our partners, a firmwide volunteer day, and a family summer picnic are some of the events she has initiated.

Spearheading the importance of firm culture, Harris works tirelessly to interact with our remote employees in 19 states and abroad. She recently coordinated a virtual painting event with our Philippine employees, who shared historical and cultural information with the participants.

Harris is our firm's cheerleader and highly encourages appreciation and recognition of employees. Her positivity is contagious and shows in our low turnover, improved morale, and connectedness that we all feel. Everything Harris does helps make Windes a Best Place to Work.



### GINA HARTIGAN

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Gina Hartigan was an integral team leader through Kantata's merger in 2022, primarily focusing on the people factor to achieve integration success (flexibility, acquire talent, culture, total rewards, OpX,

retention). She was transparent with employees and led the charge of bringing together two workforces to form an award-winning culture. In its first year, Kantata was selected by Built In as a Best Place to Work and has held high ratings on Glassdoor, with 96% of employees willing to recommend Kantata to a friend.

Hartigan's mantra is "when we build a 'great place to work' our teams are more productive, engaged, and motivated." She lives by it daily creating a positive, collaborative culture of excellence built on trust, respect, accountability, and open communication. Under Hartigan's leadership, Kantata built a culture of feedback focused on quality 1:1 conversations, values-based behavior and social recognition as well as a pulse survey platform. Kantata participation, engagement, and satisfaction scores rank above industry benchmarks across twelve submetrics.

Hartigan ensures Kantata provides a robust learning curriculum to expand employee skills and grow their career and is committed to providing an inclusive environment. Under her leadership, Kantata operates with a framework of flexibility and empowers employees to embrace a wellness lifestyle through their working model preferences.



### JUSTIN HASTINGS

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, EXPERIAN NORTH AMERICA

Empowering employees to bring their whole selves to work is top-of-mind for Justin Hastings, CHRO at Experian North America. To foster a

strong company culture, reduce attrition, and achieve high performance, especially during recent times of uncertainty, Hastings has invested in the creation of progressive policies, such as pay equity, paternal leave, and corporate social responsibility. He has also leveraged technology and creativity to engage with diverse, high-performing talent, shared transparent communications that demonstrate empathy and support for team members during the pandemic, and encouraged a new, flexible work environment that enables employees to select the working arrangement that's best for them.

Hastings has played a pivotal role in cultivating and maintaining a diverse, dynamic, and inclusive workplace culture by spearheading the "Power of You" program, a company-wide movement that celebrates the differences, perspectives, and unique contributions of the individuals who make up the Experian team. Since embarking on the North America culture build, the region has been named on the Fortune Top 100 companies list for the last four years, and has been recognized by the Human Rights Council, Anita Borg Institute, and others as a leading company across several diversity and inclusion dimensions.



## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### STEPHANIE HELLER

VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Since joining our organization in 2021, Stephanie Heller has been foundational in the strategy, execution, and subsequent communications engaging and supporting our Global Team. As an aspirational, fast-moving start-up business in the highly desirable area of Medical Aesthetics, she brings her robust experience but also a fearless vantage point towards the future. The key to her ongoing success is her ability to implement her executive expertise in Human Resources, coupled with her cross functional agility and accountability, all the while keeping our people at the center of our focus. Heller is the secret sauce to our engaged and inspired culture.



### KELSEY IRVIN

HR DIRECTOR

Kelsey Irvin is a former OCBJ Distinguished Leader that has used her past recognition as motivation to continue to improve the workplace atmosphere and maintain Murow DC's position on the list of Orange County's Best Places To Work. Her vetting of the talent pool brings only the highest quality of prospective personnel to the interview table. The quality of the personnel that she reviews attributes to a low turnover rate and even employees that do leave have ended up returning. Day-to-day she is always making sure that employees' needs are being heard and met. Irvin embodies the company's core values of Honesty, Integrity, Excellence, Respect and Service, acting as an example for the rest of the staff. Her efforts are always focused on improving the working life of all employees that are both in and out of the office. Irvin deserves to be recognized for her continued efforts in keeping Murow DC as one of the Top Places to Work.



### KRISTY JORDAN

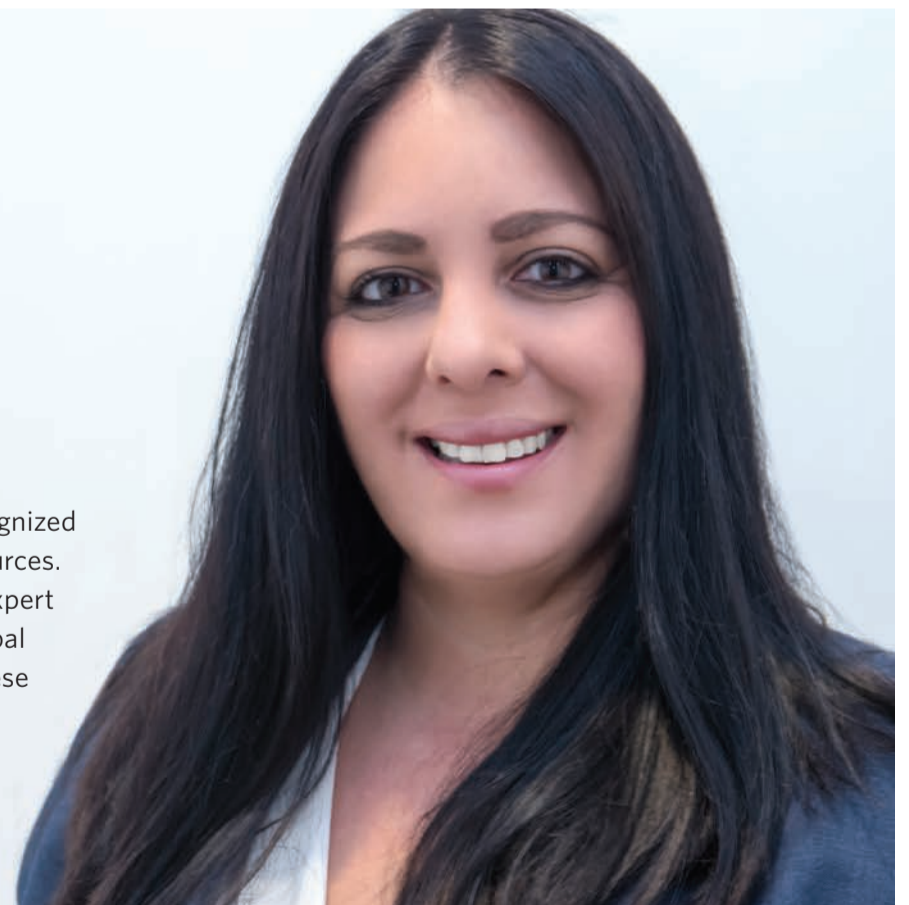
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Since joining Taylor Design nearly 25 years ago, Kristy Jordan has played a vital role in promoting the firm's phenomenal culture and supporting its tremendous growth. She's a leader in all things human resource-oriented from recruiting, benefits, policies, compliance and payroll to helping people get onboarded and enjoy long, successful careers at Taylor Design. Jordan's recent accomplishments include implementation of a software-based performance evaluation and goal setting solution, development of a comprehensive onboarding program and of course, guiding the firm through the last few years of ever-changing policies to manage the spread of COVID and remote working. She's in tune with the industry through her connections with other like-minded HR professionals and her curiosity about how others handle HR issues has benefited Taylor Design well over the years.

Jordan was instrumental in the firm's recent successes in winning our industry's most respected human resources prize - the Zweig Group's Best Firm to Work For - for the last four years! She is a highly respected and admired leader within the firm, one that all employees can count on for fair, friendly and helpful advice at any time, always delivered with compassion and a world class sense of humor.

## WHEN YOU FOCUS ON CURING CANCER, THE BEST AMONG US ANSWER THE CALL

Congratulations to Rebekah Martinek-Williams, City of Hope executive recognized by *Orange County Business Journal* as a Distinguished Leader in Human Resources. Working with her HR talent acquisition team partners, she is the strategic expert who helped us recruit more than 300 health care professionals during a global pandemic and serious shortage of health care workers. Rebekah believes these results are not surprising. Talented individuals from across the nation want to work at City of Hope. We are OC's most advanced cancer center with a thriving culture of scientific discovery and extraordinary compassion.



If you're a dynamic health care professional seeking a job that matters, attend our recruitment event on March 30. Hope is at work, and we're working to do one thing — end cancer.

Learn more at [CityofHope.org/OC/hopeisatwork](https://CityofHope.org/OC/hopeisatwork)



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## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



**EMMA KING**

CHIEF PEOPLE & CULTURE OFFICER

Emma King consistently delivers in all aspects of People and Culture with the highest level of care. Her efforts are reflected at all stages of the employee lifecycle. This starts with talent acquisition, where we see roles closing within 45 days with a 100 percent acceptance rate over the past six months, to a world-class onboarding program and continued engagement and high performance from our team at all levels. Envoy's Glassdoor rating is a 4.6/5 with a NPS of 81 in our Irvine office. Our team's satisfaction shows in their performance with 89 percent of current employees earning ratings of either "often exceeding expectations" or "setting a new standard" in their performance reviews.

King is an accredited ACC + CPCC coach and sets leaders up for success by serving as a trusted advisor and organizing management training. She also ensures a culture of belonging, with 90 percent of employees strongly agreeing that they can be themselves at Envoy. King diligently tracks compensation trends to ensure Envoy offers top tier benefits and pays market rate and above for all of our positions. King balances the needs of individuals at Envoy and the needs of the business with grace.



**ALFRED LAMARRE**

VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Alfred Lamarre's career as a human resources leader spans 27 years with a focus on Labor Law, Compliance, Talent Acquisition, Employee Relations, and Organizational Development. Throughout his career he has instituted HR Best-Practices in organizations ranging from high-growth startups to matrixed multi-nationals, in industries as varied as manufacturing, construction, real estate services, and non-profit health care. Lamarre's extensive experience developing staff to exceed future business demands will ensure CR&R's services will continue to surpass customer's expectations.



**KRISTIN MACHACEK LEARY**

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Kristin Machacek Leary started MicroVention in January of 2022 and has immediately made her presence known. Within a few months she has implemented an overhauled talent management process including individual development plans (IDPs) for high performers as well as implemented industry best practices such as nine box reviews and calibration sessions. Related to talent development she implemented both the MV One program for high performing individuals as well as a Managing at MV program in which key employees and managers are trained on softskills such as managing change, feedback etc. She has a long history of being a transformational leader and her experience at MicroVention has further exemplified these strengths.



**JENNIFER MARTIN**

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

With more than 30 years of HR experience, Jennifer Martin oversees a 50+ member HR department that supports all of Alliant Insurance Services and its employees. As the top human resources executive at Alliant, Martin is responsible for the design and direction of all human resources functions within the company. In this role, she directs the department's ongoing efforts to serve as trusted advisors across the organization by partnering with sales, staff, and leadership to foster a work environment of employee empowerment, elevate the employee experience, and bring value to the business. This includes providing support and education to help guide employees through their working journey at Alliant.

Martin joined Alliant in 2004 and was instrumental in transforming the company's HR department into a proactive business solutions environment. Throughout her time at Alliant, Martin has led the HR integration of 70+ acquisitions as the company has grown into one of the nation's largest insurance brokerage and consulting firms. Martin's prior experience includes HR leadership roles in the technology, architectural, and engineering industries, and she was recognized in 2016 with a top spot on HR Executive Magazine's HR Honor Roll.



**REBEKAH MARTINEK-WILLIAMS**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

It takes a skilled human resources professional to provide strategic guidance and support to more than 300 health care professionals in the middle of a pandemic during one of the worst national shortages of health care workers. This is just one of the accomplishments of Rebekah Martinek-Williams, Esq., executive director, Human Resources Strategic Partners, for City of Hope Orange County. In preparation for the opening of City of Hope Orange County Lennar Foundation Cancer Center - Orange County's most advanced comprehensive cancer center - Martinek-Williams not only led the HR needs for hundreds of new employees, she also built a values-driven culture of compassion and scientific discovery.

Trained as an attorney, she is a well-regarded strategic partner to senior executives, helping them mitigate risk while ensuring fair treatment, diversity and inclusion, and a balanced approach for problem resolution, human capital decisions, and managing organizational change. Martinek-Williams came to City of Hope Orange County promising to make it an Employer of Choice. She fulfilled that promise and more. Not only did the organization meet its hiring goals, it has also been repeatedly recognized by Orange County Business Journal as a Best Place to Work.



**JOSE PEREZ**

VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

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. Perez is a tireless advocate for every individual he meets and sees the ability in everyone.

Perez actively recruits and supports people in our community who are looking for a pathway to opportunity and a career, and helps connect them to jobs throughout the Goodwill operation and in the community. During his tenure at Goodwill, he has helped thousands of individuals find purpose and pride through meaningful work.

As a veteran and Latino leader, Perez is a role model for our workforce and truly makes every team member feel valued and respected. He is also a champion of our employee engagement and culture building programs - including our GoodHealth program, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access Task Force and Employee Engagement Work Group.

Perez was onsite every day the pandemic, leading his team with grace in an avalanche of COVID leaves and the changing health department requirements.

This year, Perez led the development of a more robust tuition reimbursement program for all Goodwill team members that not only provides financial support, but person-centered career navigation to help them reach their personal career goals.



**CONGRATULATIONS**

**JACLYN GROENDYKE**

Vice President of People and Culture

## **Recognized as a Distinguished Leader in Human Resources 2023 Orange County Business Journal**

Congratulations to Jaclyn Groendyke, Vice President of People and Culture, on her recognition as a Distinguished Leader in Human Resources by the Orange County Business Journal. The entire SmartStop team has been positively affected by her continued achievements in HR excellence and her dedication to and demonstration of our core pillars of leading together, embracing change and enhancing everyone's journey. She is an inspirational leader, and we thank her for her commitment to cultivating a positive environment and empowering employees to achieve their full potential.

## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### DAWN RAILEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HR

Dawn Railey is an experienced executive director of human resources with a demonstrated history of working successfully in the facilities services industry. She is skilled in employment laws and practices, compensation and benefits, deferred compensation, leadership coaching, and team building. Railey is also certified by HRCI and SHRM, and have earned an Associates of Science degree in Business Administration from Cypress College and a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies and Organizational Leadership from Arizona State University.



### ANDREA RIGGIO

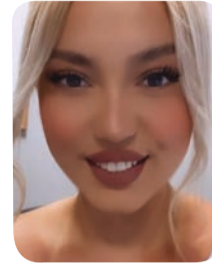
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

Andrea Riggio has grown exponentially over her tenure with Shopoff. She is the go-to resource for training and help for both managers and individual employees. Through simpler and more efficient software, Riggio has worked to clear all obstacles for each employee to be able to perform their duties efficiently and elegantly.

A valuable member of the Shopoff team, in the past year she was asked to join one of the weekly executive team meetings and has provided valuable insight, facilitating direction and policies for the entire workforce.

In an extremely difficult hiring environment she has excelled in finding talent, helping to onboard new team members, and working with managers to ensure the new employee is engaged. In 2022 she identified and onboarded two very significant positions for the company. Shopoff's CFO, after the former moved out of state, and the executive assistant to CEO Bill Shopoff, who's executive assistant retired after 20 years.

All in all, Riggio is the consummate employee always growing herself with the dynamic company she operates within. She is the heart and soul of the entrepreneurship that exists at Shopoff Realty Investments. Her quest to grow is matched only with her attention to detail.



### MARY RIOS

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Mary Rios is a dedicated human resources manager who oversees a wide array of responsibilities for BaronHR. Among other things, Rios manages recruiting, benefits, and payroll; lead the company's COVID-19 response team; implemented a new benefits program; improved employee retention; and reduced workplace injuries.



### KAREN L. ROBINSON, PH.D.

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Under Karen Robinson's leadership as chief human resources officer and corporate ESG Leader, Exemplis LLC achieved historical levels of success in areas such as ESG and DEI adoption, talent acquisition, employee morale improvement, turnover reduction, and work-from-home policy adoption. In 2017, Exemplis was recognized by the O.C. Register as one of the Best Places to Work in Orange County, and in 2022, it was recognized as one of the "most community-minded companies in Orange County" by The Civic 50 Orange County. Robinson also led the Exemplis team to victory in the OneOC Charity Challenge on behalf of the Surfrider Foundation in 2022.

Robinson's leadership played a crucial role in transitioning Exemplis from a fully on-site team to a hybrid workforce, providing better work-life balance and increasing access to top talent. Her focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion also resulted in Exemplis' workforce achieving inclusion scores +15% above the industry benchmark for companies of its size. Robinson's ability to align the company's mission with its employees' values has resulted in a highly engaged workforce that positively impacts Exemplis' bottom line, leading to increased productivity, improved retention, and an excellent reputation in the industry.

Robinson holds a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and previously served in Senior HR roles at Apollo Education Group, Eaton Corporation, and The Boeing Company.



### SHANNON ROCHELEAU HILL

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PEOPLE & CULTURE

Shannon Rocheleau Hill established inaugural cross-functional goals process resulting in an achievement shift, specifically reaching EBITDA target in the first year the process was launched. She partnered in refreshed values launch - S.U.I.T. Up (Service, Unity, Impact, Tenacity) honoring company heritage while capturing our evolution and aspirations for living our values at 5.11. She is responsible for bringing the DEIB conversation into a regular cadence bringing intentionality around supporting and including all team members and their diverse backgrounds. Hill drove and cultivated transition from silos to strong cross functional partnerships and interactive team dynamics to impact results.

She supported the elevation and empowerment of frontline managers through training, development and interactive support processes - resulting in double digit percent reduction in employee relations challenges. Hill was the executive sponsor for inaugural benefits plan for a warehouse team who previously had no access to benefits (former company). In addition she created COVID pay programs, mitigated layoff/terminations during the pandemic, developed process, policy, and protocol within a few months; structured environment resulting in safety of our team, protocol compliance, and outbreak mitigation.



### HEIDI ROTHBARD

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE & CULTURE

Heidi Rothbard has been an instrumental member of the Blues Skies Consulting leadership team. Our trust in her leading two of our most important aspects - People & Culture - has paid dividends beyond our expectations.

Some highlights of Rothbard's contributions is our growth from \$5 million in 2016 to \$22 million today, our headcount has grown from 22 to nearly 100, implementing needed systems (Teamtailor, Leapsome, ADP, JustWorks, etc.), developing our recruiting approach, mentoring/coaching everyone including executives, building an internship program, building the performance review/merit program and managing our operational HR functions just to name a few.

Her passion for the organization makes it more like a family to all she touches. Rothbard's dedication to the company extends beyond her defined role... it reaches into everyone's life in the most positive ways.

## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### MARYJANE RYLAARSDAM

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES

A masterful HR professional with 35 years' experience, MaryJane Rylaarsdam champions a wellness-driven culture. She is an expert at maximizing benefits and health-and-

wellness programs to control costs while boosting productivity and retention.

Since 2016, Rylaarsdam has served as director, Human Resources for KBS, one of the nation's largest investors in premier commercial real estate. She transitioned the company from a traditional benefits model to a fully insured self-funded model, allowing KBS greater control over plans while saving over \$4 million.

Rylaarsdam's additional accomplishments at KBS include expanding its wellness program to a system that manages company fitness challenges through digital documentation. She helped steer the firm through the COVID pandemic, researching solutions for a seamless, safe and productive transition to working remotely while maintaining team morale. She also transformed the company's HR and payroll system to a new employee-empowering program.

Rylaarsdam is laser-focused on taking excellent care of KBS' employees. This is reflected in the firm's minimal turnover, with tenure averaging 10.5 years. Her work consistently enhances credibility, integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness throughout the company.



### AGNES SANCHEZ

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

As the chief people officer at Laguna College of Art + Design, Agnes Sanchez played an invaluable role through the challenging times of the pandemic and campus-wide restructure. Sanchez's Human Resource experience and high-

level strategic management skills have allowed her to be at the center of profound changes in the College's governance and operations.

Since joining LCAD in 2021 and in a relatively short period of time, Sanchez has improved compliance, developed and implemented key policies, implemented best practices, and enhanced the College's benefit offerings, all while reducing costs. She also supported the College's diversity initiatives by raising campus awareness of inclusion, diversity, and unconscious bias. She demonstrates leadership and work ethic for all those around her and continues to take a lead role alongside LCAD leadership, ensuring the College will not only succeed in the long-term, but also thrive.



### MARINA SANTOS

VICE PRESIDENT - RECRUITING

In her role of vice president of recruiting, Marina Santos leads a team of approximately 100 directors, managers, and recruiters who oversee recruiting

efforts for Allied Universal in the western United States. This recruiting team is responsible for ensuring we are able to hire 1,900 new employees every week! Santos is responsible for all aspects of the recruitment process across her region. This includes developing strategies to increase our talent pipeline, driving efficiency and process improvements to meet the hiring needs of the organization, and creating custom solution for clients when needed. Human resources leaders are all familiar with the difficulties we currently face across the recruiting landscape. Santos has been tenacious in her efforts to ensure we have enough qualified candidates to serve our customers. By focusing on providing an excellent candidate experience, using technology to reduce time to hire, and working closely with our operational partners,

Santos' leadership proved an important part of how Allied Universal remained effective with recruiting during this highly challenging period of time. Santos' contributions go beyond the recruitment process. She is highly engaged with the company's committees on Employer of Choice, Diversity and Inclusion, and Rewards and Recognition.

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## TAIZO SHIBAYAMA

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**TAIZO SHIBAYAMA**  
Vice President of Human Resources



[LandseaHomes.com](http://LandseaHomes.com)

## 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### TAIZO SHIBAYAMA

VICE-PRESIDENT,  
HUMAN RESOURCES

Taizo Shibayama, vice president of human resources, runs the HR Department of Landsea Homes Corporation, a 5-state, 450 employee corporation. Shibayama created and implemented Sarbanes-Oxley compliance. In addition, he oversaw all HR-related matters of involving two major acquisitions and took Landsea Homes Corporation public.

Shibayama leads the department at Landsea Homes for HR offices of five states. Since starting in 2020, he has helped double company size and created and implemented employment policies from scratch for Landsea Homes. He is also responsible for creating and implementing COVID-19 protocols and safety protocols.



### REENA SMITH

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES

Reena Smith has successfully kept our organization running in a workforce perspective amidst the pandemic and far into the hiring crisis in the healthcare nonprofit sector. She manages a team of two in the HR department but keeps track of over 400 employees throughout our organization. Making them feel safe, wanted, and supported through their journey at Unlimited Possibilities.



### JESSICA SOLOMON

VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Over the last year, Jessica Soloman has evolved our benefits program to include Permissive PTO and an expanded mental wellness to employees and their loved ones. She has engaged the

InBrace culture with our “Years of WOW” and our quarterly “BAM Belt” award, given to the department that has stood out and resembled excellence! Transitioning from R&D mode to commercial takes a village, and our BAM belt creates team recognition, nominated and voted on by their peers across the whole company. Since 2020, Solomon has leveraged different tools to take care of our employees in challenging times. We all know not only how hard it is to identify talent, but training and then retaining them is a feat in itself. She implemented a Work Share Program that will keep all of our talented employees here, and still allow for the business to flex and grow in times of challenge and uncertainty.

Solomon has also contributed to the commercial side of our organization in creating, developing and launching InBrace U, an external education platform allowing us to deliver ongoing education to our current providers, new providers, and their staff.

Prior to her time at InBrace, she led the Human Resources division at Hydrafacial, and played an integral role in scaling the company. She was a part of the Hydrafacial go public event in 2021.



### KEVIN SONKSEN

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

With a growth spurt of close to 30% in revenue and associate expansion the past two years, Kevin Sonksen has implemented a strong recruiting process while putting in place performance recognition platforms and career growth programs throughout. The University of RD Olson has continued its growth by adding mentors and various subjects that provide various options for staff. The company’s objective of growing from within has elevated across all company roles, allowing the ability to remain focused on succession planning.

Associate retainment has been critical as the company is supported by multi-generational associates who have built long lasting careers with RDO. Some of those careers have now turned to the next chapter of life whereas retirement planning has become a reality. Sonksen’s leadership style stems from a forty-four-year company history with a unique and passionate culture. The Company’s Culture has supported the backbone in Sonksen’s planning and leadership implementation. Through Sonksen’s guidance all associate benefit categories are annually reviewed and improved, always looking to provide the best for RDO’s dedicated associates.



### CLAUDIA TORRES

SENIOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Claudia Torres has been integral to Yokohama in navigating the many challenges that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the ever-changing dynamics with safe work practices and remote work. Additionally, Torres has improved employee satisfaction and retention by focusing on cultivating better relationships between management and staff. Last but not least, she has been a trusted advisor in improving and updating employment policies throughout the organization.



### SHARLYN TURNER-BRYANT

VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Seabreeze Management Company has been rated Top Workplace for six years in a row by the OC Register. This is in no small part due to the efforts of Sharlyn Turner-Bryant and the other professionals on her team. She has been directly involved with expanding the company’s benefits plan to include pet insurance, identity theft, critical care discount buying program, and an Employee Assistance Program. Turner-Bryant was also involved with introducing performance coaching with certified coaching professionals and continuing education.

Last but not least, Turner-Bryant worked with management on taking a more holistic approach to employee 401(k) accounts that do not include an employer match, but also financial literacy training. These are just a few ways that Turner-Bryant and her team have stayed true to the company’s core pillars of people, performance, and passion for the industry.

# 2023 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS – HUMAN RESOURCES



### AMERICA VALDEZ

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

As the director of human resources at Community Legal Aid SoCal (CLA SoCal), America Valdez joined the organization almost three years ago in the midst of the pandemic. After

assessing the existing human resources (HR) structure, she implemented a fully integrated HR management system in her first year and transitioned the department to a paperless workspace. She formalized and improved employee recruiting, hiring, and onboarding processes and revamped the performance management process, which has led to improved performance and employee morale.

Valdez successfully oversees some of the most difficult and complex non-legal related projects in the organization. She's currently leading a three-year systems assessment and training project.

Undoubtedly, she embodies the CLA SoCal values of accountability, compassion, collaboration, equity, and trust in her work and in her interactions. She brings poise and skill in evaluating and responding to challenging HR situations and other complex issues that arise in the organization.

Valdez is creative and flexible in her approach, eloquently balancing the needs of the staff with the organizational goals. She remains open and curious to other perspectives and is a valued and trusted thought partner as a member of the leadership team and CLA SoCal's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee.



**VOLCOM**



### IRENE VILLANUEVA

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES

Irene Villanueva, director of human resources, leads the People, Talent & Culture functions for VOLCOM. She joined VOLCOM three years ago in February 2020, just as the

pandemic was starting to change their workplace. Her leadership and strategic vision, during a challenging time, has enabled a company culture that values innovation, diversity, and promotes employee engagement.

Villanueva is passionate about improving culture, an ongoing and dynamic process where HR and executive leadership partner with employees to create an environment that improves engagement. "One of the most powerful tools we have to improve engagement and retention is to create an environment where our employees feel valued and included," she said. In 2022, as their employees began to return to the office, Human Resources hosted events and programs promoting Diversity & Inclusion and Health & Wellness, allowing employees to reconnect and feel supported. She created an environment where employees are welcome to come forward with ideas and programs as well. Villanueva partnered with their VP of Product Development to create an amazing seven-week program called Inspire: Women Leading from Within.

VOLCOM was awarded as one of the 2022 Top Workplaces by the Orange County Register. This is something Villanueva is very proud of because the employees were a critical part of the nomination and award process.



**TARSUS**



### DIANNE WHITFIELD

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Dianne Whitfield joined Tarsus Pharmaceuticals, Inc. in January 2021 as Chief Human Resources Officer with 20+ years of experience in human resources.

In her time at Tarsus, she has helped create a company culture where innovative and passionate individuals can make an impact. These efforts have led to Tarsus becoming a top talent destination with a differentiated culture model that encourages diversity, collaboration, and belonging.

A champion of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), Whitfield has built DEI initiatives into everything from recruitment strategy and internal trainings to educational resources and events for employees year-round, such as annual activities for Black History Month, Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Juneteenth, Pride Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Whitfield's commitment to culture has attracted an incredible amount of talent to Tarsus, with the number of employees more than doubling in the last year, going from 45 to 100, and an increase in diversity at all levels of the organization, with the company comprising 57% women and 62% People of Color.

Whitfield also implemented a variety of forward-looking employee health and wellbeing initiatives at Tarsus, including a flexible (hybrid) work schedule, growth and development opportunities, professional coaching, recharge days and wellness weeks - leading to high employee engagement, low turnover, and external employer award recognition.



### MATTHEW WILSON

VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Matthew Wilson was named vice president, Human Resources of BIOLASE in April of 2016. He brings Human Resources leadership experience in diverse industries, including dental medical device, commercial real estate and aerospace. In an industry with traditionally high sales turnover, he has pivoted our company culture to

appreciating and investing in employees. Through empowering employees to learn more cross functionally, attain better training, and connect with teammates more, our sales turnover has miraculously gone to ZERO during 2022. This has never happened at any medical device company that I've seen. Everyone feels invigorated, hopeful, and proud to be part of the Biolase team. We all appreciate Wilson, who is approachable, fair, and looks out for every employee no matter their position.



### AMY YEAGER

VICE PRESIDENT HUMAN RESOURCES

Since joining First Financial less than two years ago as vice president, human resources, Amy Yeager has been a pivotal contributor to the company's expansion and success. Over the last year alone, she has attracted some of the finance industry's top talent to more than double our headcount and keep pace with our rapid growth. Yeager is a

respected member of the leadership team and has over 20 years of experience working in HR, primarily in the financial services industry.

As the department head, Yeager engages in all HR functions for US-based employees, including those working in the office, hybrid, and fully remote. She is responsible for talent recruitment, retention, employee engagement, company culture, learning and development, performance and reviews, employee relations, benefits analysis, payroll management, policies and procedures, and more. In 2022 following the acquisition of a Canadian-based company, Yeager expanded her role to oversee HR activities for Canadian operations.

Yeager has been immensely successful in training and engaging employees by developing new HR programs and employee-centric initiatives. She plans numerous company events and celebrations with her team each month that help connect and engage employees with one another and also with the local community. Through these programs, Yeager fosters a strong company culture that encourages open communication, rewards excellence, and is fair and trustworthy.



CONGRATULATIONS KEVIN SONKSEN

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