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NO. 6 VOL. XXXIV

20th Annual

## 40 Under 40

Meagan Verschueren, an attorney with the CaseyGerry law firm, joins 39 other 40 Under 40 Award winners in this 20th anniversary edition of the popular awards. Find them on **PAGE 14.**

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#### COVER STORY:

##### 20th Annual 40 Under 40 Awards

Introducing the men and women judged winners of SD METRO's 40 Under 40 Awards competition — the 20th annual edition. Pictured: Meagan Verschueren, attorney with CaseyGerry..

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##### Symphony Announces Opening for New Bayside Concert Venue

Construction will begin this month on the San Diego Symphony's permanent bayside concert venue to be located in the Port of San Diego's Embarcadero Marina Park South on the San Diego Bay. First concerts are scheduled for summer 2020.



##### Zihuatanejo the Town That Sings

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# SAN DIEGO SCENE



## San Diego Symphony announces summer 2020 opening for sparkling new Bayside Concert venue

Rendering of the San Diego Symphony's Bayside Performance Park facility.

The San Diego Symphony announced that construction will begin in September on its permanent bayside concert venue to be located in the Port of San Diego's Embarcadero Marina Park South on the San Diego Bay with the first concerts scheduled for summer 2020.

Symphony officials said the new upgraded park and venue will feature a permanent, highly innovative, architecturally striking and acoustically superior outdoor stage that will allow the symphony to present a wider variety of musical presentations and enrich the patron experience with improved sightlines, expanded concession area and permanent bathrooms.

Groundbreaking for the project is set for October as well as the introduction of the symphony's new musical director Rafael Payare.

The Bayside Performance Park project is being made possible solely through private philanthropy. While fundraising continues, the ability to break ground and begin construction at this time is possible because of many individuals who have been inspired by what this project will mean to San Diego and the region, symphony officials said.

Lead contributions include a gift made possible by Una Davis, and gifts from Joan and Irwin Jacobs and Ernest and Evelyn Rady.

The acoustically engineered stage features a concert shell designed to complement the San Diego Convention Center sails and surrounding Downtown development. The stage provides a larger performance space for both the orchestra and guest artists.

Design of the park was developed by Tucker Sadler Architects and will be constructed by general contractor Rudolph and Sletten. The conceptual design of the performance stage is by Soundforms, with construction by Fabricecture. The acoustic design of the stage is by Charles Salter Acoustics of San Francisco together with sound designer and consultant Shawn Murphy.

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Ronson J. Shamoun, Principal Attorney and CEO of RJS LAW, is an Adjunct Law Professor at the University of San Diego-School of Law where he teaches a Tax Practice and Penalties class. He was recently presented with the following awards:

- San Diego Metro Magazine- Best Attorney 2016
- San Diego Magazine- Top Attorney 2016
- San Diego Business Journal- Best of the Bar 2014, 2015 & 2016
- Martindale Hubbell's- AC Preeminent Rated 2014, 2015 & 2016
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## \$59 million Prebys Cancer Center breaks ground

A \$59 million state-of-the-art cancer center designed to serve patients throughout central and south San Diego County took a big step forward with a groundbreaking ceremony on the campus of Scripps Mercy Hospital San Diego.

The outpatient facility, to be known as Prebys Cancer Center, will offer a comprehensive range of cancer treatment and support services. The 40,000-square-foot, four-story center is named for the late Conrad Prebys, who in 2016 pledged a \$20 million gift toward the facility and a \$5 million gift for an endowed medical director position at Scripps MD Anderson Cancer Center. The gifts and facility name were officially announced Friday.

Prebys Cancer Center will be part of the Scripps MD Anderson partnership and will be located on Fifth Avenue on the campus of the main hospital in Hillcrest. The facility represents the first new construction in Scripps Mercy's master redevelopment plan and is expected to be open for patient care in spring 2022.

Patients at Prebys Cancer Center will have access to leading-edge radiation therapy technology, including two TrueBeam linear accelerators, which deliver external beam radiation treatments with exceptional accuracy and speed. Additionally, the facility will house a 20-chair infusion center, where chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy and other treatments will be delivered. The new center also will include spaces for treatment planning conferences, patient exams and consultations, physician offices and patient support services. A new 140-space parking garage, expected to open in 2022, will adjoin the facility.



Prebys Cancer Center rendering



We are proud to congratulate our attorney  
**Meagan L. Verschueren**

on being recognized by  
*San Diego Metro Magazine* as one  
of the 2019 "TOP 40 UNDER 40"  
rising stars in San Diego.

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## Invested Advisors founder Crystal Sargent to chair March of Dimes annual Signature Chefs Gala

Crystal Sargent, president and founder of Invested Advisors, will return as event chair for the March of Dimes annual Signature Chefs Gala, one of San Diego's largest charity events. The gala will be held Oct. 2 at the Del Mar Race Track.

As the event chair, Sargent will play an integral role in raising awareness and funds to advance the scientific research and educational programs at the core of March of Dimes

efforts to lead the fight for the health of all moms and babies. With 25 years of experience as a brand and business builder in the financial services sector, and as a business owner supporting public agencies and private enterprise, Sargent is known for positioning organizations as top brands and helping them grow into that space through a disciplined process, collaborative relationships and creative excellence.

"I am happy to lend my time, talent and treasure to March of Dimes as it is a wonderful cause and it's rewarding to be able to apply my talents to benefit others," says Sargent. "My hope is that we're able to help March of Dimes expand critical research and programs, so that more women and men improve their chances of having healthy babies."

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## General Dynamics NASSCO awarded \$1.6 billion contract to build Navy ships

General Dynamics NASSCO, a subsidiary of General Dynamics (NYSE: GD), was awarded a contract by the U.S. Navy worth up to \$1.6 billion for the construction of the sixth and seventh ships of the Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) program, as well as an option for ESB 8.

The contract, announced by the Department of Defense today, provides \$1.08 billion as a fixed-price-incentive modification to a previous contract for the design and construction of the two ships, with an option for the third that, if exercised, would bring the total

cumulative value to \$1.63 billion.

Named after famous names or places of historical significance to U.S. Marines, ESBs serve as a flexible platform and a key element in the Navy's airborne mine countermeasures mission, with accommodations for up to 250 personnel and a large helicopter flight deck. The ship's configuration supports special warfare and Marine Corps task-organized units.

Work on the two new ships of the ESB program is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2020 and continue to the second

quarter of 2023, providing the opportunity to sustain and grow the workforce along San Diego's working waterfront. NASSCO's unique location along the historic San Diego Bay provides shipbuilders and skilled tradespeople with unparalleled access to the nation's leading maritime support businesses, and highly-trained employees allow NASSCO to build and repair some of the world's greatest ships in the most efficient manner possible.

## New Extended Learning building at CSUSM a gateway to innovation

With its official opening, Cal State San Marcos' Extended Learning Building moved from first shovel to first class in just 16 months. As the largest academic building on campus, the six-story, 135,000-square-foot EL building (ELB) brings all Extended Learning operations under one roof for the first time and becomes home to student support centers, lab and research facilities, select CSUSM academic departments, administrative offices such as CSUSM Corporation and inventive learning spaces such as the CSUSM Corp Innovation Hub.

With every college at CSUSM represented in the building and programs serving individuals from first-year undergraduates to lifelong learners, the ELB is a comprehensive education center designed to bridge disciplines and inspire innovation. The facility includes 19 new classroom and lab spaces equipped with technology-rich features such as 4K projectors and mobile instructor stations with touch-screen displays and digital pens for annotation.

"This multifunction space creates opportunities for the campus to grow programs," said Bella Newberg, executive director of CSUSM Corporation. "This is a great space for interdisciplinary activity. We are always going to have specialized buildings, but having flexible space is an asset to the campus as a whole. This model really is the future."





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*Congratulations, Nicholas Alpers  
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## CONGRATULATIONS SAM SNEED!

Hahn Loeser congratulates litigation partner Samuel C. Sneed on his selection as one of *SD Metro's* 2019 40 Under 40 honorees.

Sam's commitment to his profession and his community make him truly deserving of this honor. Congratulations to Sam and all of the other 40 Under 40 honorees!

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# Congrats Lauren!

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*Congratulates Sarah Shekhter on being named one of San Diego Metro Magazine's 40 under 40. Sarah is a rising star at our firm and throughout San Diego's legal industry.*



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# LOCKTON CONGRATULATES KRISTINA HESS

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INTRODUCING THE 20TH ANNUAL

# 40

Under 40

CLASS OF 2019

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40 Under 40, San Diego's premiere event honoring 40 of the brightest and best men and women in the city, will be held Tuesday, October 1st at the Sheraton Hotel & Marina.

Sponsored and hosted by SD METRO Magazine, 40 Under 40 began in 1999, making this its 20th consecutive year. Over that period of time 800 of San Diego's most outstanding young people have been honored.

40 Under 40 is a fun, fast-paced luncheon where each honoree is featured in an audio visual presentation. 40 Under 40 presents its sponsors with a wonderful opportunity to introduce themselves to an impressive group of young leaders. This year's sponsors include Alaska Airlines, Lockton Insurance, San Diego Union-Tribune, Gomez Trial Attorneys, RJS LAW, Mission Federal Credit Union, Invested Advisors/Invested Travelers, CBMD, Donovan's Steak Chop House and the Academy of Our Lady of Peace..





## JEREMIAH LOWE

Jeremiah Lowe is a partner at Gomez Trial Attorneys who dedicates his practice to helping victims of personal injury, with a specialty in spinal and orthopedic injury. He has managed hundreds of cases with favorable results. Since 2018, he has obtained several seven-figure verdicts totaling over \$10 million in recoveries. He also believes that it is important to give back to the community. He serves on the board of the Consumer Attorneys of San Diego and on the board of the Orthopedic Spine Injury Association, an organization which donates all proceeds to charities of orthopedic and spine injury victims. He also volunteers for the San Diego Legal Aid Society and has been recognized by the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California for his charitable contributions. He also has been selected as a Super Lawyer and Rising Star in the legal profession. He is a graduate of Arizona State University and earned his Juris Doctorate degree from the California Western School of Law.



## BIBIANNE FELL

Bibianne Fell is a partner at Gomez Trial Attorneys who practices in the areas of catastrophic personal injury and medical malpractice. She won a \$105 million verdict in a medical fraud case where she served as lead trial counsel, a \$15 million wage and hour class action settlement, a \$5 million settlement for a boy hit while riding a bicycle, a \$4.5 million settlement in a wrongful death case and a \$1.25 settlement in a drunk driving case. She also teaches Advanced Trial Advocacy at the University of San Diego School of Law, serving as the program director for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy's Pacific Deposition Skills program, and teaches trial skills around the country and in Northern Ireland. She has been selected to be a member of American Board of Trial Advocates and has been selected as a member of National Trial Lawyers and Top Attorneys in Southern California and the California Daily Journal's Top 1009 Women Lawyers. She holds a B.A. degree in political science from UCSD and her Juris Doctorate from the University of San Diego. She used to be a professional salsa dancer and raises her three daughters with her husband, Trevor.



## SAMUEL C. SNEED

Samuel Sneed is an innovative attorney at Hahn Loeser & Parks and a champion for his community. As an advocate for his clients, he works to help them achieve their business goals and obtain their desired results. He mentors younger colleagues as they strive to grow their practice and join the firm's partnership. He earned his J.D. from Wake Forest University where he was senior editor of the Wake Forest Intellectual Property Journal and was a member of the National Moot Court Team. He earned his B.A. magna cum laude from Cal State Sacramento where he was a member of several national honor societies and Male Student Athlete of the Year. He was named a San Diego Rising Star by Super Lawyers Magazine. While in law school he was an Order of the Barristers recipient in oral advocacy.



## MILES BOWER

Miles Bower is the director, Construction & Planning for Cox California. He leads a team that is responsible for planning, building and maintaining all of Cox's outside plant infrastructure in California, including new construction for residential, retail and carrier work as well as any replacement, reinforcement, repair or maintenance construction to keep the network healthy and up to date. The coverage includes Cox facilities in Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. His team consists of eight direct reports, a total of 150 people including construction planners, fiber techs, permitting specialists, aerial linemen and compliance inspectors. Outside of Cox, he is active in multiple veterans service nonprofits. In 2011, he was part of the team that founded the Travis Manion Foundation's office in Diego. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and served on active duty as a Marine Corps Infantry Officer from 2004-2009. He was deployed three times, all to the Fallujah and Haditha areas of western Iraq in combat leadership roles. He also holds an MBA degree from San Diego State University.



## LAYA HUNTINGTON

Laya Huntington helps run her successful construction and project management firm, Next Level, while also raising two children under the age of 3, and contributing generously of her time to the real estate association CREW San Diego as well as to other charitable organizations. As a co-owner of Next Level, she oversees construction projects for office, tenant improvements, medical offices and retail as well as reimagining projects. She and a former co-worker at Cushman & Wakefield founded the firm so they would have the freedom to take their ideas to the next level, literally. Her parents founded several construction supply and general contracting businesses. She became the first in her family to graduate from college, which she did with honors from Northern Arizona University with a degree in construction management and a minor in business administration. She also donates her time to North County Lifeline, a charitable organization that supports families that experience homelessness.



## RACHEL MOFFITT

Rachel Moffitt has distinguished herself as a leader in the early stages of her legal career. She has handled many high-profile cases in her first four years at Higgs Fletcher & Mack. In her practice, she works on appeals in all state and federal appellate courts, with her first argument before the California Supreme Court anticipated later this year. Her pro bono work includes representing immigrants in challenging asylum cases and assisting transgender individuals who are seeking name or gender marker changes. She and her colleague, Jamie Ritterbeck, teamed up to represent a 15-year-old boy from Guatemala who fled his country due to years of violence by members of the internationally-connected MS-13 gang. After more than a year, the boy was granted political asylum. She has also handled immigration work through Casa Cornelia Law Center, a San Diego-based public interest law firm. She received the Center's Pro Bono Publico award in 2018 for her exceptional commitment of time and energy. She also received the State Bar of California's Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for pro bono services in 2018. She is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley and a Magna Cum Laude graduate of California Western School of Law.



## JAMIE RITTERBECK

Jamie Ritterbeck is a strong litigator and a community service all-star. Her litigation practice at Higgs Fletcher & Mack consists primarily of representing transportation companies and manufacturers in catastrophic loss claims. Her dedicated transportation practice includes a 24-hour rapid response protocol that ensures availability to transportation clients 24/7 for immediate response to accidents and catastrophic loss scenes. She is passionate about pro bono services, and she provides numerous hours every year to pro bono representation. She has made a significant contribution in the lives of others through her work on immigration matters. Her service to the community also includes handling matters on behalf of service members who have been deployed through the county bar association's Service Members Civil Relief Act program. She is actively involved in the Louis M. Welsh American Inn of Court and a member of the University School of Law Alumni Board. She holds her undergraduate degree from Florida State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law.





### LAUREN SUAZO

In her role as director of leasing, Lauren Suazo is responsible for Westcore Properties' leasing efforts with a 6-million-square-foot portfolio of investment properties in Southern California. Westcore is ranked within the top 50 owners of industrial real estate globally, and Suazo plays a very important role in achieving this ranking. She focuses on effectively repositioning assets, leasing up vacancies in partnership with third-party brokers, and retaining tenants. She does this over 12 different geographic markets. During her 10 years at Westcore she has been intimately involved with more than 600 lease transactions totaling more than \$350 million consideration and over 30 sales. She has transacted lease deals as large as 830,000 square feet and more than \$30 million in value. She has also managed lease renewals without the participation of brokers because her tenants trust her to handle their best interests. She serves as a mentor through the University of San Diego Undergraduate Mentorship Program. She is active with the Urban Land Institute's San Diego-Tijuana chapter. She is an active fundraiser for the Encinitas YMCA and is very involved with the Susan G Komen breast cancer walk. She is a cum laude graduate of the University of San Diego.



### KRISTI BLACKWELL

Kristi Blackwell is a highly regarded civil defense litigator at Tyson & Mendes LLP who has achieved excellent results for the firm's diverse array of clients in both federal and state courts. In April, she led the defense for Chino Hills Ford in San Bernardino County in a complex suit purporting the dealership's service department was liable for a serious car accident which allegedly causes seizures to a child. Blackwell highlighted two strong arguments against the liability claim and the jury agreed that the dealership was not liable for the accident. She also helped lead the firm's defense of clothing manufacturer Schwab Company in a suit alleging the company was responsible for a minor's injury after his shirt caught on fire while playing with a cigarette lighter. She is an active member of Tyson & Mendes' Women's Initiative and participates in Tyson's charitable giving initiative. She also played a key role in preparing the petition and opening brief in the landmark Howell v. Hamilton Meats California Supreme Court case. The court held for the first time that personal injury plaintiffs can only recover the amount of medical expenses paid. She is a graduate of California Western School of Law.



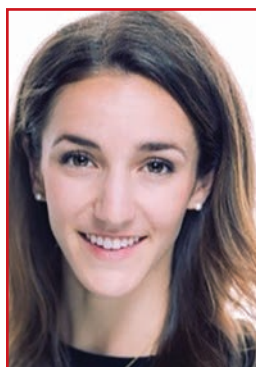
### HILARY DARGAVELL

Hilary Dargavell is the executive assistant to Ronson Shamoun, the chief executive officer of RJS Law. She is the lead executive involved in multimillion-dollar real estate transactions in which the firm is involved. She also directs the 300 + Tax Conference and manages the company's private commercial and residential properties and is involved in the Student to Student Peer Counseling Club, the Noah Homes in Spring Valley where she assists adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is a graduate of Cuyamaca College.



## KRISTINA HESS

Kristina Hess is a member of Lockton's Southern California Property & Casualty Practice and brings over 10 years of experience in the insurance industry including a bachelor's degree in Risk Management and Insurance. She partners with clients to understand their business, challenges and goals and develops short- and long-term solutions to achieve her clients' objectives while driving down costs. Her industry experience includes technology, consumer products, life science, manufacturing, staffing, chemicals and gases, education and energy. She works with fast growing startups to Fortune 1000 companies. She brings expertise and best in class resources in supply chain risk, human capital risk, global risk management, directors and officers liability, cyber and network security risk, product liability, workers compensation and claims cost reduction strategies.



## ALANA JOYCE

Alana Joyce is an attorney and serves as compliance counsel at Eaze, the largest delivery platform in California. Eaze is headquartered in San Francisco with offices in San Diego and Los Angeles. She began her career advising alcoholic beverage industry clients and quickly made the transition to the cannabis industry where she specializes in regulatory compliance matters related to both cannabis and industrial hemp-based products. She is involved with the Gift of Life Marrow Registry, a national nonprofit that strives to match marrow donors with blood cancer patients. She is also heavily involved with Crop to Kitchen, an organization dedicated to enacting policy changes that will allow for legal cannabis cuisine and beverages across California.



## BRIDGET BRICK

Bridget Brick is the founder of the Accelerate Group and is well known in the Southern California technology scene. She started working in the startup tech industry shortly after graduating from college across several industries and in stages anywhere from preconception to Series B funding. Accelerate focuses on helping early stage startups get ready for next stage funding rounds by ensuring their KPIs are in line with what investors are seeking. Attracting Series A funding is critical as only seven percent of Seed/Angel funded ventures receive it, and it is a make or break milestone on whether a company survives. The ability to scale is what attracts Series A to a company. Once KPIs are mapped out, Accelerate also offers consulting on how to build and implement repeatable, predictable sales processes in order to scale revenue growth. She is a founding member of San Diego Tech Hub where the idea is to focus on pillars of community, inclusion, talent, innovation and education.





## MELISSA PERRY

Melissa Perry is founder of The Perry Group, an exotic and luxury automotive concierge firm that puts the client first, while providing the ability to source the exact car, negotiating the best deal financially and overseeing the finance and delivery right to the client's door. She has over 14 years of retail sales experience in the exotic car industry. She launched her career in the automotive industry with the world-renowned Ferrari. While at Ferrari, she perfected her skills and product knowledge in all brands which led her to a management and sales position as the brand manager at Rolls Royce. About a year into managing and selling Rolls Royce, she was awarded the top performing sales dealer of the year award from Rolls Royce North America. With a vast knowledge of how the car industry works, she knew she had the knowledge to launch her own automotive concierge firm.

## ALICIA IORIO



Alicia Iorio is president of CBMD and community outreach director at OC Hospice. After over a decade of experience in corporate accounting and finance consulting, she took her experience into something more enriching. After graduating from the University of San Diego, she began consulting for organizations both inside and outside of the

healthcare industry. It was her knack of operating outside convention that has influenced her unique style of leadership, one that resonates with the evolving workforce in today's corporate world. Coming from a family of prominent physicians, she pairs her passion with the roots her family laid in the healthcare industry. She serves as chair of the Orange County Gift of Life, a bone marrow registry seeking to provide every patient battling blood cancer with a second chance.

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## NICHOLAS ALPERS

Nicholas Alpers is co-founder and managing partner of Alpers Engineering, a boutique engineering firm located in Downtown San Diego. He and his father launched the firm in 2014 and have successfully grown the business every year for the past five years. The firm has expanded operations throughout California and supports many local school districts, military operations and commercial development projects with energy saving initiatives that support the environment and save taxpayer resources. Alpers is a graduate mentor for San Diego State University and has served as a Big Brother in the Big Brother Big Sister program since 2011. He is a two-time Half Iron Man competitor.



## CASEY MILLER

Casey Miller is the CEO and president of Latitude 33 Aviation, which he founded in 2006 with one Cessna CJ1+ and quickly grew the company to become a highly recognized industry leader. Latitude 33 Aviation now manages one of the newest and largest fleets of light, midsize and super-midsize aircraft in North America. In the last year alone, the company added two 2018 factory-new Citation Latitudes to its fleet, accompanied by a Challenger 300, Challenger 350 and Challenger 605, due to Miller's industry expertise. Beyond business, Miller's company helped raise over \$50,000 for community organizations in 2017.



## BOB COWAN

Bob Cowan is a director with Cushman & Wakefield San Diego, specializing in institutional property leasing, owner user sales and tenant representation. He and his team are currently responsible for more than 2 million square feet of office space in North County, with tenant representation assignments in both north and central San Diego markets. In the past 10 years, Cowan has been instrumental in some of North County's most notable real estate transactions that have contributed to the economic health of the region. Another of his key career highlights has been helping San Diego-based Workwell Technologies grow from a small 1,400-square-foot office in Carlsbad to a 33,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility.

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## CAMERON LAMMING

Cameron Lamming joined RAR Hospitality as the chief development officer and was promoted to president and chief operating officer in 2018. Under his leadership, the company has been recognized as one of the fastest growing firms in the industry, which has helped it secure multiple hotel acquisitions and development and even more partnerships and relationships with existing hotel owners. When it comes to making large investment and business decisions, Lamming is a trusted transparent financial advisor to hotel owners and lenders. Lamming takes the time to mentor students and young adults who aspire to be in the hospitality industry, visiting classrooms at Cal State San Marcos and Arizona State University.



## ILONA ANTONYAN

Ilona Antonyan is the founder of Antonyan Miranda LLP, and is one of San Diego's top-tier family law attorneys. An Armenian refugee, Antonyan immigrated to the United States in 1992 and now is known for her strategic, aggressive and effective advocacy on behalf of her family law clients. Antonyan is a trailblazer in the legal world and is the youngest person in California to become a Certified Family Law Specialist, a special designation from the State Bar of California. Antonyan specializes in high-net worth cases and those that generally involve complex areas of law and litigation. Given her diverse cultural background, she regularly represents international businesspersons and large marital estates.



## NEAL BLOOM

Neal Bloom, an entrepreneur and a former rocket scientist, co-founded San Diego EdTech software company Portfolium to help new grads promote themselves. He launched Hired.com to attract tech talent to the San Diego region, and launched a venture capital podcast (Tacos & Tech), and a newsletter and tech blog (Freshed Brewed Tech) to continue to bring venture capital and businesses to San Diego. Through this grassroots effort in multiple organizations, Bloom has helped build an entrepreneur-focused community that helps companies grow and prosper in San Diego. Bloom also co-founded local nonprofit Startup San Diego and has helped grow San Diego Startup Week.



## SARAH SHEKHTER

Sarah Shekhter is a young associate at Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek, a trial attorney whose practice focuses primarily on complex business matters. Shekhter has successfully tried over 40 cases to jury verdict and resolved nearly 2,000 cases through negotiations, motion work and investigations. Before joining Seltzer Caplan earlier this year, Shekhter worked at the San Diego Public Defender's Office for six years, where she represented clients charged in high-profile cases involving conspiracy, fraud, murder and other felonies. Shekhter is also a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate through Voices for Children, an organization helping to transform the lives of abused and neglected children.



## **ROSS BROWN**

As the San Diego regional manager for BNBuilders, Ross Brown oversees a team of 165 people whose work generates revenue in the San Diego region of \$150 million per year. He is San Diego's most senior executive within BNBuilders, which employs more than 600 team members companywide and has a gross revenue of \$750 million annually. Under his leadership, BNBuilders is quickly ascending the list of top general contractors in San Diego County, and earning regional and statewide awards for its company culture and safety programs. In 2010, Brown was recognized by the Associated General Contractors as the "Project Manager of the Year" among Large General Contractors in San Diego.



## **BLAKE E. MORGAN**

Blake E. Morgan, a development partner of Morgan Holdings, is passionate about designing quality multi-family homes in a creative manner. His vision with the company is to continue creating innovative affordable housing in major cities across the country. Morgan is the owner and manager of a \$15 million single-family luxury home infill development in San Diego featuring nine custom homes with contemporary style designs. He is currently taking this project from concept to completion. Blake is an active member and chair of the social network for young entrepreneurs, YPO Next Generation San Diego. He enjoys interacting with and learning from the many business leaders the Young Presidents' Organization features.



## **MEAGAN VERSCHUEREN**

Meagan Verschueren, an attorney with law firm CaseyGerry, plays a big role in helping litigate catastrophic personal injury cases that involve severe burns, traumatic brain injuries and other disabilities. She was recently inducted as the incoming co-president of the Tom Homann LGBT Law Association and will serve in that capacity from 2019 to 2021. Verschueren works closely with the Lawyers Club's LGBT committee and is an active member of the San Diego County Bar Association, California Women Lawyers, Consumer Attorneys of San Diego, and the National LGBT Bar Association. She also volunteers as a mock judge for the San Diego County High School Annual Mock Trial Competition.





## ROBERT K. DIXON

Robert K. Dixon is a partner at Wilson Turner Kosmo, a leading civil litigator and driving force for diversity in the legal community. He defends national and international clients in high-stakes product liability matters that involve catastrophic injuries. A leader of San Diego's largest certified women-owned law firm, where 80 percent of all firm personnel are women or minorities, Dixon's work to diversify the legal industry extends beyond the firm's walls. Dixon is co-chair of the American Bar Association Section of Litigation's Diversity & Inclusion Committee that ensures attorneys from traditionally underrepresented groups are working at every level to advance the ABA-wide effort to build a legal community that reflects the communities it serves.



## BERYL FORMAN

Beryl Forman is the marketing and mobility coordinator for the El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association, who says she thoroughly enjoys the work she does in helping revitalize the historic and ethnically diverse neighborhoods along El Cajon Boulevard, and to promote the corridor as a model for successful transit-oriented development. Forman's position on the "small-and-mighty" ECB-BIA team has allowed her the opportunity to work on significant collaborative projects which include the development of a culturally designated Little Saigon District, along with strategizing and implementing economic development efforts for the Boulevard. She strongly believes city planning is a tool for creating meaningful community change.

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### 40 UNDER 40

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Bibianne Fell, Esq



Jeremiah Lowe, Esq



## DAVID BERENS

David Berens is the owner and founder of ReFind Kitchens, a zero-waste residential design firm that specializes in the deconstruction and re-purposing of luxury homes and showrooms. Using a custom design process and the skills of gifted craftsmen, each year ReFind keeps hundreds of thousands of pounds of building materials from ending up in San Diego landfills. Through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, Berens is creating a unique architectural salvage system that makes it possible to frame and finish a home using almost entirely reused and recycled materials. Berens currently serves as chair of the residential building committee of the San Diego Green Building Council.



## ADAM SEERY

Adam Seery is chief operations officer of Harvest Small Business Finance, a private real estate finance company. He was recently elevated to that position from managing partner by his peers in the company he co-founded three years ago. Seery now oversees operations for the entire firm, helping grow Harvest to over 90 employees — half in Southern California and the other half spread across the country. In a strategic move, Adam and his co-founders secured one of only 14 nationwide nonbank SBA lender licenses available, allowing their firm to lend on behalf of the U.S. government through SBA 7A and SBA 504 real estate loans without being a bank.



## ROBERT GETTINGER

Robert Gettinger is principal of Gettinger Group, a firm he launched to aid the greater San Diego area in development/infrastructure growth, community planning consulting and brokerage services. Gettinger held a critical role in launching Downtown San Diego's first spec office space — Block D at Makers Quarter — in over a decade. He represented the buyer on the highest residential real estate attached unit sale in San Diego County history, breaking the previous record sale that occurred in 2007. He has worked with local nonprofit Humane Smarts to expand its operations in helping underserved young people aged 5 to 15 with a goal to promote life skills and self-esteem.





## SHAILENDRA KULKARNI

Shailendra “Shay” Kulkarni is, at 37, the youngest shareholder at Sullivan Hill, a full-service San Diego business law firm. He focuses his practice on construction and real estate litigation. Since joining the firm, Kulkarni has used his expertise to provide sophisticated and effective legal representation to his contractor and real estate developer clients, resulting in numerous favorable outcomes. He is extremely active in professional and industry organizations relevant to his construction and real estate litigation practice. From 2015 to 2017, Kulkarni served as the chairman of the Construction Law Section of the San Diego County Bar Association. He has been named a “Rising Star” by Super Lawyers for the past five years.



## LUPITA MORALES

Lupita Morales is the medical program services manager at Fresh Start Surgical Gifts, a local nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of disadvantaged infants, children and teens with physical deformities through the gift of free reconstructive surgery and other health care services. Fresh Start has provided free-of-cost medical care valued at over \$40 million for more than 7,000 children since inception at its free-standing clinic at Rady Children’s Hospital.



## HEATHER BUSCHMAN

Heather Buschman is senior communications and media relations manager for UC San Diego Health, where she specializes in turning complex research findings into lay-friendly press releases, newsletter articles, magazine pieces, videos, podcast episodes and more. She also co-teaches a Science Writing course at UC San Diego Extension and serves as a voting member of the UC San Diego Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. Buschman is passionate about helping scientists communicate their work with the general public and training the next generation of science communicators, all with the ultimate goal of improving the public understanding of — and appreciation for — science.



## JOHAN ENGMAN

Johan Engman is the founder and CEO of Rise & Shine Restaurant Group. He opened his first restaurant, Fig Tree Cafe, in October 2008 during the financial crisis, but refused to give up, though it took three years for him to turn his first profit. Now he has three Fig Tree Cafe locations, eight Breakfast Republic locations, and a Mexican concept, El Jardin, with more to open in the coming year, all of which fall under his San Diego-based company. Engman grew Breakfast Republic from one location in 2015 to now eight, and soon-to-be 10. A month-long burrito promotion raised nearly \$6,000 to help fire victims.



## SUSIE SLATER

Susie Slater is Pacific Building Group's only female project manager who built an expansive portfolio since graduating from UC San Diego in 2008. Slater is a California licensed structural engineer, an incredibly rare designation for a construction manager to have. In fact, she's one of fewer than 7,000 people to have achieved this title in state history. Currently, Slater is entrenched in the Portside Pier project at the San Diego Embarcadero, a significant project for Pacific Building Group and San Diego. The \$22 million project poses many unusual challenges, including the fact that the team is working off barges and boats and scheduling between tides.



## MICHELLE FLORES-GONZALES

Michelle Flores-Gonzales is vice president and director of operations at Flores Financial, a company she joined in 2002 while a student at University of San Diego. She has developed the company's marketing division as well as creating a successful training and development program. In the past year Flores-Gonzales helped implemented two new software programs — a new payroll program and Flores Insights. Flores Insights gives clients the ability to see real time insights including managing invoices, vendor payments, and cost reporting. Through these new programs plus other initiatives, the company went completely paperless last year.





## JOSH DEAN

Josh Dean is executive director of the San Diego Green Building Council, overseeing the daily operations and strategic direction of the organization, ensuring that it carries out its mission to inspire, educate and collaborate within our community to transform the built environment toward true sustainability. He has over 11 years of professional experience working in the sustainability, construction and real estate industries. Dean joined the council in 2015 as program manager and was promoted to executive director in 2018. He is currently serving on the Program Advisory Council for SDG&E's Power Your Drive program and the Public Health Alliance's Water Advisory Committee.



## GENEVIEVE RUCH

Genevieve Ruch is an associate attorney with Noonan Lance Boyer & Banach LLP who has a stellar track record of securing impressive victories for her clients in business, civil and major securities litigation. She has established this reputation for success in high-impact cases less than a decade into her career. Amid a busy work schedule, Ruch still devotes a significant amount of time to participating in legal organizations locally and nationally. She also gives back through dedicated community service, including volunteering her time to support the University of San Diego School of Law and the aspiring lawyers studying there.



## INGRID YANG

Ingrid Yang is a doctor, a lawyer and a yoga instructor, though not necessarily in that order. She has been teaching yoga since 1999 and is a physician specializing in internal medicine, currently at Scripps. Yang also is an intellectual property attorney, though she left her practice to fulfill her passion for helping people heal through yoga and as a physician. As a yoga instructor, Yang leads classes, trainings, and workshops all over the United States, Australia, Europe and Asia. She is currently teaching other yoga instructors on how to guide restorative yoga for cancer patients and survivors in a safe and therapeutic environment.



## KARIN NOLL

Karin Noll is founder and president of Ke Kō Sugaring, an award-winning, natural skincare company selling to licensed skincare professionals as well as offering a retail line and providing professional training and business support to established and aspiring estheticians. After working as an esthetician for years, as well as opening and owning several spas, Noll decided to start formulating her own sugar paste for her sugaring work (sugaring is a gentle alternative to waxing). Soon, a company was born. Karin's sugar paste was an immediate hit with other estheticians and spa owners far and wide, and it soon won her industry's most prestigious product award.

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Kristi Blackwell is a Partner in Tyson & Mendes' San Diego office and leads the firm's Retail, Restaurant, and Hospitality practice group.

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# ZIHUATANEJO

## The Town That Sings

Mexico's most visited destinations

By **Marlise Kast-Myers** | Photos by **Benjamin Myers**  
[www.marlisekast.com](http://www.marlisekast.com)

As avid travelers, my husband, Benjamin and I have navigated the better part of Mexico — in our youth as strapped backpackers, and in our marriage as “it’s totally worth the splurge” adventurers.

When Benjamin suggested we visit Zihuatanejo, the only reference I had was the paradise beach where freed prisoners, Andy and Red, reunited in the film “The Shawshank Redemption.” Unlike the 90’s American drama, this resort town northwest of Acapulco isn’t just an isolated strand with two people and a boat.

In fact, it’s much better.

Palm-fringed beaches and a fishing pier set the stage for this authentic Mexican town cradled in the Bay of Zihuatanejo. Backed by the Sierra Madre del Sur Mountains, its Pacific waters lure sun-kissed anglers casting for billfish, tuna, marlin, and sailfish. Between shopping, golfing, parasailing, surfing, diving, and paddleboarding, it’s no wonder Zihuatanejo is ranked among Mexico’s most visited destinations.

Some might argue that the government’s plan to develop Zihuatanejo in the 70’s was like turning coconut water into Coca-Cola. Having never experienced it “then” and falling madly in love with it “now,” we consider it more of a refreshing *agua fresca*.

But on Day One, fatigue was at an all-time high. We had arrived at the Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo International Airport on a red-eye from Tijuana with Volaris (\$400). Two previous flights to Mexico had sold us on Cross Border Xpress (CBX) — the enclosed pedestrian bridge that connects passengers from the terminal building in San Diego to the Tijuana International Airport.

By 8:30 a.m., we were in a taxi on our way to La Casa Que Canta (The House that Sings), a luxury boutique hotel located 20 minutes from the airport. There’s no shortage of lodging in Zihuatanejo, but for those wanting to go straight to the top, “The House that Sings” is where you’ll find perfect harmony. It greets you with a hum that subtly transforms into the philharmonic orchestra by day three.

Guests are welcomed with hibiscus-flower water in an open-air lobby where Pernambuco-wood pillars support a palapa roof. This spot marks the first of many breathtaking vistas, each more Instagram-worthy than the last.





Perched above sprawling La Ropa Beach, La Casa Que Canta is like stepping into the Continuous Staircase by artist, M.C. Escher. Dozens of winding staircases lead to unexpected surprises around each turn — from an underground grotto spa, to a saltwater pool that blends with the ocean. Tucked behind sand-colored walls are 25 suites and two residence villas (family friendly), each thoughtfully decorated with works curated by Owner, Jacques Baldessari.

In these gallery-like suites, class-meets-culture with wildlife sculptures, natural materials, folk art, custom headboards, and masterpieces commissioned by Oaxaca and Michoacán craftsmen. Strewn across thick-white duvets are daily greetings spelled with flower petals and greenery. Showers are laid in river stones, soaps are handmade with cocoa, and hangers are wrapped in reeds.

The landscape alone is mesmerizing, with raked sands, braided trees, and a mingling of cacti and bougainvillea — openly proclaiming to gardeners everywhere that sharp spines and soft petals can, in fact, get along.

Within this heavenly compound, nature conquers man, to the point you just want to throw your phone into the ocean and unclench everything that beeps, buzzes, flashes, and rings. Here, water is music and silence is sound. Fountains, waterfalls, pools, and crashing waves hit perfect pitch. Together they overpower traditional creature comforts that La Casa Que Canta vows to avoid, including TVs, alarm clocks, and even cables and cords (they conceal them well).

In their place are books and reading nooks where travelers can select from in-room libraries and fade into calm. It's almost impossible not to unwind here. Each 1,200-square-foot suite comes with a plunge pool, living room, and spacious terrace with ocean view.

For nearly three decades, this property has been serving elite romantics, including outside guests who



come for candlelit dinners at Mar y Cielo. Chiseled into the cliff, this terrace restaurant prepares everything from scratch, including creamy rich ravioli and buttery breakfast croissants. Salsa is prepared tableside, portions are spot-on, and lunch entrées are surprisingly reasonable at \$8–\$10. Above all, the daily catch is divine, especially the whole fish baked in ginger and soy.

Between massages at their Spa by Clarins, and afternoon naps by the pool, it was remarkably challenging to venture outside the property. But we did, starting with a walk to El Centro. Just 10 minutes from La Casa Que Canta, this downtown area on the north end of the bay can be reached by the tree-lined malecón (boardwalk).

This is where Mexican culture awakens the foreigner, with locals selling street tacos, wrapped tamales, and roasted corn. There's cotton candy, shaved ice, and sugary churros to satisfy every sweet tooth. Narrow alleys draped in colored flags converge like a web at the main plaza. The center of all things fiesta, the plaza brings residents together, all 140,000 of them — children, parents, grandparents, and more Chihuahuas than we could count.

Along this pedestrian zone are the archaeological museum, the Catholic church, and the town's oldest building — Restaurant Coconuts — restored from a 150-year-old coconut plantation. Between the Municipal Beach and the pier is a smattering of shops selling silver, hammocks, hats, seashells, ceramics, and other crafts. The area was

buzzing with activity, especially at Paseo Del Pescador (Fisherman's Promenade) where the daily catch was on display.

On our way back to the hotel, we stumbled across a vegetarian market, small and sweet, held every Saturday morning. It was here where we met American expats who, like us, tested the waters of Zihuatanejo. The only difference is, they never left.

Understandably so.

By day three, we were so at peace in Zihuatanejo, that for a brief second, we wondered what it might take to retire there. Maybe it was the morning paddle across the silky bay that hooked us, or the sunset cruise to Ixtapa, but whatever it was, we left Zihuatanejo with the sound of crashing waves crescendo-ing in our minds.

For more info, visit [lacasaquecanta.com](http://lacasaquecanta.com).







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