

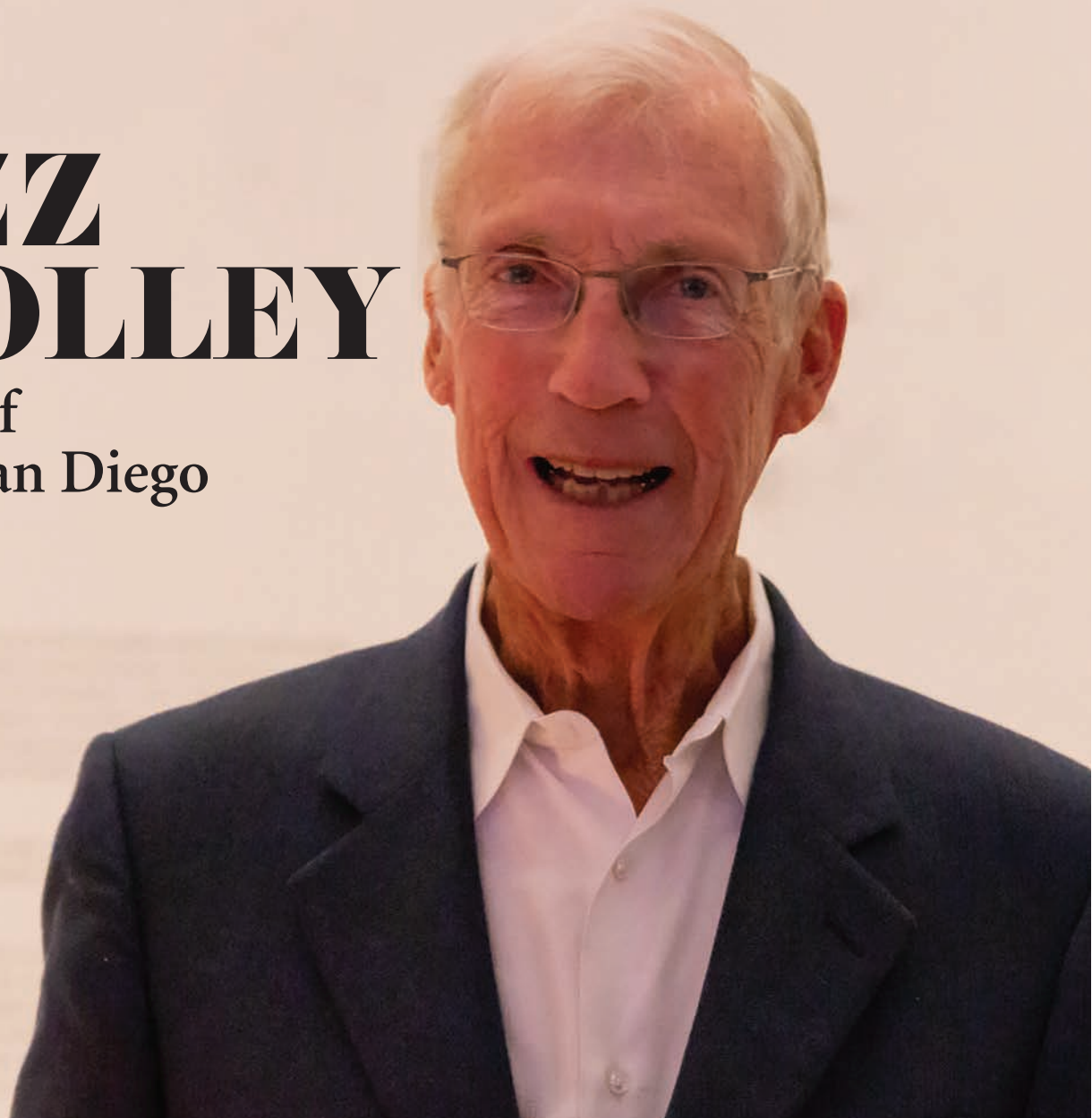
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NO. 5 VOL. XXXV

BUZZ WOOLLEY

Founder of
Voice of San Diego



SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2020 MEN OF INFLUENCE

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COVER STORY:

Buzz Woolley's San Diego Legacy

At 83, Buzz Woolley has had a major influence on local government and education reform, but one of his most enduring contributions was the creation of the Voice of San Diego with longtime journalist Neil Morgan. Begun in 2004, Voice of San Diego became the first online nonprofit newspaper in the country. Page 10.



Luxury residential high-rise going up in Little Italy

Trammell Crow Residential (TCR) and joint venture partners are building a 36-story high-rise in Little Italy, consisting of market-rate 358 apartments, five penthouses and 32 subsidized apartments for low-income residents. Simone, the building, is a joint venture between TCR, Pacific Life Insurance Company and AAA Management.



San Diego County's 2020 Men of Influence

We honor many of the men who have made significant contributions to the San Diego region through hard work in business, law and community involvement. Nathan Schmidt (pictured), executive vice president and chief experience officer of San Diego County Credit Union, is representative of the outstanding individuals who are recognized here.

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SAN DIEGO SCENE

San Diego International Airport one of the fastest recovering airports nationwide

San Diego International airport ranked 13 on the top 15 list of airports recovering the fastest from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a new travel survey by FinanceBuzz based on U.S. Bureau of Transportation data.

“We are a year-long leisure destination. People want to come here because of our weather and beaches,” said Sabrina Lopiccolo, public information officer for the airport.

In the survey, April shows close to 40,000 departing passengers from the airport. Then in June, that number jumped to 200,000.

“In April, we were down like many other airports -- down 95 percent,” said Lopiccolo. “Month to date in October, we are down 68 percent.”

Lopiccolo added that as states have been lifting restrictions and more businesses have opened, air travel has increased.

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36-story luxury residential high-rise going up in Little Italy

The Southern California division of Trammell Crow Residential (TCR) is breaking ground on construction of Simone, a luxury, 36-story high-rise in San Diego's Little Italy consisting of 358 market-rate apartments, five penthouses, 32 subsidized apartments for low-income residents, 32,000 square feet of resort-style amenity spaces and parking.

Located at 1401 Union St., at the intersection of Ash Street, Simone has panoramic views of San Diego Bay. The 0.6-acre site is bounded by Union, Ash and Front streets and occupies half a city block.

The 612,000-square-foot community, which was designed for LEED Gold certification, is scheduled for completion in 2023. The residential tower, with 30 floors of apartments, will sit atop a six-story podium with three levels of underground parking and four levels of above ground parking. Simone is a joint venture between TCR, Pacific Life Insurance Company and AAA Management.

Simone. (Courtesy of Trammell Crow Residential)



Lenny Leszczynski named chief executive officer of San Diego Automotive Museum



Lenny Leszczynski

San Diego native Lenny Leszczynski, who joined the San Diego Automotive Museum as the executive director in January 2020, has been booted up to chief executive officer.

Leszczynski brings more than 25 years of nonprofit professional experience to the Automotive Museum. His experience also includes more than 15 years of developing, managing, and reporting budgets for community programs and over 10 years of fundraising experience.

Leszczynski prides himself on having advanced skills in organizational leadership, program development, fiscal management, fundraising, and forging community collaborations. He has a degree in Child and Adolescent Development from California State University Northridge and has a Master's degree in Business Management and Leadership from WGU.

General Atomics awarded \$93.3 million smart sensor contract

General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI) has been awarded a \$93.3 million contract from the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center (JAIC) to enhance the autonomous sensing capabilities of unmanned aircraft. The goal of the JAIC Smart Sensor project is to advance Artificial Intelligence technology by demonstrating object recognition algorithms using an unmanned aircraft, as well as employing onboard AI to control the aircraft's sensors and direct autonomous flight.

Denver-based Black Creek Group acquires San Diego's largest iconic industrial building

Denver-based Black Creek Group has purchased a 601,417-square-foot, multi-tenant industrial building in Otay Mesa -- considered San Diego's largest iconic industrial building -- for an undisclosed sum. The facility at 2020 Piper Ranch Road is situated on more than 31 acres near the U.S. Mexico border.

2020 Piper Ranch Road was constructed in 2003 and features concrete tilt-up construction with varied bay sizes that accommodate a wide range of configurations.

Surrounded by several major corporate neighbors, the project is centrally located within the Otay Mesa submarket that services a broad range of tenants both related to cross border business and San

Diego companies looking for highly functional industrial space, according to Cushman & Wakefield.

The property offers freeway identity and quick access to the newly completed California State Route 905 freeway while its proximity to the international border provides immediate access to Tijuana International Airport, the planned Otay Mesa East Port of Entry border crossing, and the new Cross Border Xpress airport terminal, a processing facility with a cross-border bridge that improves domestic and international access. The project also lies within the Foreign Trade Zones and HUB Zone, significantly benefiting local trade operations.



Harbor Associates completes \$4 million renovations on Bungalows Del Mar

Harbor Associates has reintroduced a 39,537-square-foot, garden-style office building to Del Mar after finishing a \$4 million renovation. It's called the Bungalows Del Mar.

Harbor Associates, in joint venture with The Bascom Group, acquired the property at 2010 Jimmy Durante Blvd. in 2018 with the plan of repositioning the asset to appeal to a broader tenant base.

Improvements included a complete exterior redesign and new creative office suites with exposed vaulted ceilings, polished aluminum ducting, skylights and operable windows. Harbor upgraded the expansive outdoor space and patio areas to create "outdoor meeting rooms" and installed a locker room with showers, bicycle and surfboard storage and electric car chargers.



Bungalows Del Mar

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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
- San Diego Daily Transcript- Top Attorney 2014 & 2015
- San Diego Metro Magazine- 40 Under 40 - 2015



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SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2020 MEN OF INFLUENCE



NATHAN SCHMIDT

Nathan Schmidt is one of San Diego's top executives. With over 20 years of financial services management and marketing experience, he is responsible for strategic planning, brand, marketing, digital channels, product development, business development and community and media relations and the overall customer experience at San Diego County Credit Union. SDCCU is the 18th largest credit union in the country and the largest locally-owned financial institution in San Diego. A cornerstone of Schmidt's dynamic leadership is an unwavering focus on continually raising the bar on creativity, service, strategy and execution resulting in exponential growth for SDCCU and impacting the overall credit union movement. He has always had a knack for not only seeing the big picture but taking others along to anchor and deliver those ideas. In late 2019, Schmidt led the successful launch of SDCCU's new and improved online banking platform. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, the new online banking platform quickly became a valuable resource for customers to perform nearly all banking transactions from the comfort of their homes. Schmidt continues to push the envelope with marketing, leveraging new technologies, enhancing traditional tactics and making new, creative and innovative ideas a reality to elevate awareness of SDCCU's breakthrough banking products and services and encourage more customers to make the switch to SDCCU. With Schmidt at the helm, SDCCU's breakthrough and innovative product offerings continue to increase in popularity and have led to double-digit loan growth. SDCCU improved its home loan program in 2019 allowing loans up to \$3 million, which helped bring in over \$2 billion in real estate loans for SDCCU in the past two years.



RONSON SHAMOUN

Ronson Shamoun owns RJS Law Firm, San Diego's leading tax law firm. He started as a sole practitioner but his firm has now expanded into four offices throughout Southern California. He sits on the University of San Diego School of Law Board of Visitors and the USD School of Business Board of Advisors. He received his B.A. in Accountancy in 1998, his Juris Doctorate in 2002 and his Master's of Laws in Taxation in 2003, all three degrees from the University of San Diego. He co-founded the Annual USD School of Law-RJS LAW Tax Controversy Institute. Every year he donates billboard campaigns to the Girl Scouts of San Diego as well as to the Susan G Komen. Every year he donates a scholarship to a USD School of Law and Business student. He has been named a San Diego Super Lawyer, a Martindale Hubbell AV Preeminent: Highest Excellence in Legal Ability and Ethical Practice, a Best Lawyer in San Diego by SD METRO Magazine and has won the Distinguished Alumni Award from the USD School of Law.



DR. KAMI HOSS

Dr. Kami Hoss is a co-founder and chief executive officer of the Super Dentists. Hoss has written a book, “If Your Mouth Could Talk,” that will be published in 2021, that connects the dots between oral health and whole-body health, and makes the argument for the medical and dental fields to join together for the collective benefit of patients by employing a holistic and all-inclusive approach to their care. He is a strong believer in giving back to the community. The Super Dentists proudly supports San Diego causes, especially those related to kids and education. The Super Dentists Tooth Keri character visits hundreds of schools to deliver complimentary oral health presentations annually reaching 15,000 students across San Diego County. The Super Dentists was a premier sponsor of Grin Land! At the San Diego Children’s Discovery Museum in Escondido, and sponsored more than 19,000 San Diego students visits to Junior Achievement’s Biztown since 2015. Hoss is an alumnus of USC with a post doctorate in Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics and a doctorate degree from UCLA in Dental Surgery. The Super Dentists see more than 20 percent of San Diego County’s children and has served more than 250,000 patients in 24 years. The Super Dentists have seven locations: Carmel Valley, Chula Vista, EastLake, Escondido, Kearny Mesa and Oceanside and a corporate headquarters in San Diego.



CORY HAZLEWOOD

Cory Hazlewood is a principal with C&S Companies and is responsible for the Western Region engineering and construction practice. He has 20 years of leadership experience in Design and Construction and is responsible for taking the C&S practice from a small regional startup to one of the top competitors in engineering and construction in San Diego. His leadership style has offered his team empowerment and transparency through sales and delivery of projects. He was a project principal for the first public-private partnership project in San Diego that was nationally recognized for multiple awards for the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority. He is an active member of the DBIA San Diego Chapter where he volunteers time for the young professionals. He is a graduate of Southern Illinois University.



GREGORY CABELLO

Gregory Cabello is president of Greca Construction. He helps small business people seek contract work for the federal government and mentors companies pro bono in his spare time. He has worked with the federal government for more than 20 years. He has helped the Ronald McDonald House for seven years and serves dinner every three months and cooks for some of the families. He has won the Caltrans safety award, and recognized for supreme architectural design. He is a graduate of University IberoAmericana.



JORGE ENRIQUE DIAZ DE LA FUENTE

Jorge Enrique Diaz de la Fuente is the owner and president of De la Fuente Construction Inc. He was born in Sn Diego, went to school in Tijuana, then came back to continue his studies at Southwestern College and later at San Diego State University, where he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering. He has grown the company exponentially from the low \$100s to \$30 million following the company's business growth strategy. DSL Construction also serves the private industry as a general contractor and self performs various trades. Projects vary such as tenant improvements, new construction, custom residential, churches, car dealerships, restaurants, hotels, and other commercial projects.



BRAD WEBER

Brad Weber is Group Publisher of Local Umbrella Media which, in addition to donating time to numerous local nonprofits, has contributed over \$1 million since 2015 in complimentary media to numerous local organization throughout San Diego County including Boys & Girls Clubs, San Diego Oasis, Serving Seniors, Girl Scouts, San Diego Women's Auxiliary, Alzheimer's San Diego, Rady's Children's, Traveling Stories, Miracle Babies, Friendship Circle, ARC of San Diego, Kitchens for Good, F.A.C.E. Foundation, San Diego Humane Society, Helen Woodward Animal Center. Doors of Change, Kids' Turn San Diego, San Diego Foundation, St. Madeleine Sophie's Center, Patrons of the Prado, Kiwanis, Rotary, Rachel's Challenge, ALS Association, Walden Family Services, San Diego Rescue Mission, Project Compassion, YMCA, Share the Love Now Foundation and more.

As Group Publisher, Weber leads a team that publishes direct mail community magazines and newspapers in over 30 San Diego area communities, in addition to several areas outside San Diego County. With over 35 years of experience in printing, direct mail, and marketing, Weber has assisted tens of thousands of small business clients in reaching customers in local markets throughout the country. Originally from Colorado, Weber moved to San Diego in 1985 and is never leaving, currently residing in the Mt. Helix area with his wife Francine, and their two rescue dogs Luka and Pierrot.

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BUZZ WOOLLEY'S SAN DIEGO LEGACY

By Marsha Sutton

For someone who's had such a major influence on local government and education reform, Buzz Woolley is unusually unpretentious.

"Getting personally known is not something that I need, especially at this age," said the 83-year-old entrepreneur and venture capitalist.

"I'd rather be known for the things I've helped start ... things to help the community."

Behind the scenes is where he likes to be: investing in projects, entities and causes he believes will help make a better society.

Ralph "Buzz" Woolley was born in Pennsylvania, attended high school in Phoenix, and graduated from Claremont Men's College – now Claremont McKenna – in 1959, with undergraduate degrees in economics and political science.

He lives in La Jolla and has a second home in Sun Valley, Idaho. He has two children and six grandchildren.

Still physically active, Woolley is an avid skier, plays tennis regularly, hikes and bikes.

"My claim to fame I jokingly say is that my greatest athletic endeavors have been the fact that my body has still allowed me to do things like play tennis and ski at this age," he said. "The really good athletes are on walkers."

"I'm not saying the skill level is great, [but] being the more average athlete, I've had longevity. It's all relative to the age."

After college, he worked at IBM for a time, and that was his last "real" job.

"I've had a long business career not working for other people," he said.

Woolley started his independent career in venture capital in the 1980s when it was still relatively new, investing in start-up enterprises, mostly offering new technology.

Venture capitalists provided more than just cash, also offering management help for early-stage companies, he said.

After enjoying financial success with his Girard Capital firm, his interests broadened.

"One of the significant organizations in San Diego that I was a founding member of, is Connect," said Woolley, who established the nonprofit together with Mary Walshok, dean of University Extension and associate vice chancellor for public programs at University of California San Diego.

A foray into journalism was not on the top of Buzz Woolley's to-do list, but it became one of his significant interests when he joined forces with long-time San Diego journalist Neil Morgan in 2004 to start Voice of San Diego, the first online nonprofit newspaper in the country.



In connection with UCSD, Connect was created in 1985 as one of the nation's first organizations to serve entrepreneurs and start-ups from early stage through growth, by offering resources such as mentorship, education and capital to support innovation and increase prosperity in the San Diego region.

"Connect has absolutely made the community better," Woolley said.

Woolley is an emeritus board member, and Walshok remains involved, currently serving on the executive committee of Connect's board of directors.

Girard Foundation

In 1986 Woolley founded the Girard Foundation, a private family nonprofit that supports K-12 education programs and projects that can further opportunities primarily for underserved students.

Woolley is CEO of the Girard Foundation and has a seven-member board that includes Woolley, his two children, former state Sen. Dede Alpert and Mary Walshok.

The board meets regularly to review proposals that address the foundation's mission to foster innovation and systemic change in K-12 education and improve student outcomes in San Diego County.

According to a 2018 IRS Form 990 filing, 45 charitable contributions were made that year from the Girard Foundation, totaling just over \$1 million. This is about five percent of the fair market value of the foundation's assets, which exceed \$20 million.

The grants ranged from a low of \$1,000 to the two highest: \$242,500 for Thrive Public Schools and \$180,000 to the California Charter Schools Association.

Other major beneficiaries in 2018 included DonorsChoose.org, KIPP San Diego, Promises2Kids, Teach for America, Voice of San Diego and the YMCA.

Dede Alpert, Girard Foundation board member for the past decade, said they look for innovation in education.

"He does not like bureaucracies that he feels impede the ability to get things done

and make positive change," she said. "He is always asking what could actually make a difference."

Over the years since charter schools came along, Woolley has supported the movement for the innovations and independence these schools can offer.

The objective of charter schools, he said, is to provide choice for parents, but also to experiment with different strategies.

"We're really into trying new approaches," he said. "The first charter schools ... nobody had ever run something like that. Talk about adventurous."

"The charter schools we have supported are the ones that are trying to do things for poor kids," Alpert said. "We gave \$300,000 early on to Gompers Charter School when it was just starting, for example."

Girard and Woolley have helped various San Diego charter schools over the years, notably Gompers in Southeast San Diego, but his grants have not been limited to charters.

"We've given out about a million dollars a year in all kinds of different grants," he said, mentioning a recent grant for a computer training program at UCSD for high school students called Program Your Future.

Recently, with the pandemic wreaking havoc on student learning, Girard has funded groups trying to address the learning gaps many students are experiencing.

Alpert said the Boys & Girls Club in Oceanside, for example, had about 90 kids coming there for remote learning so their parents could go to work, and the club needed more computers for the children.

And to provide computers and Internet access, small grants of \$10,000 or \$12,000 were given to schools whose students lacked needed technology for remote learning.

In addition to focusing on K-12 education, Alpert said the foundation is spreading out in both directions – younger and older.

People might think of Woolley as an establishment kind of person, she said, "but

he's got such a good heart. He picks things that he hopes will really make a difference for all kids."

Voice of San Diego beginnings

Besides awarding grant money from his foundation, Woolley also personally donates money – made primarily from astute real estate and start-up investments – to causes not limited to K-12 education.

A foray into journalism was not on the top of his to-do list, but it became one of his significant interests when he joined forces with long-time San Diego journalist Neil Morgan in 2004 to start Voice of San Diego, the first online nonprofit newspaper in the country.

The catalyst came when the San Diego Union-Tribune fired Morgan, one of San Diego's most well-respected journalists.

"He was a gentle man and he'd worked for them for decades," Woolley said. "It was an absurdity to fire him."

"I saw the Union-Tribune being a marginal, not the highest quality newspaper in the country," he said. "They distorted things drastically. So it was not a good publication as far as giving a balanced view of what was going on."

Woolley was disturbed that the Union-Tribune refused to write about troubling pension issues in the 1990s – because, he said, of U-T owner Helen Copley's friendship with then-Mayor Susan Golding.

When a few writers tried to investigate the matter, the U-T started firing people, he said.

Woolley identified a community need for more in-depth investigative reporting and for another media outlet besides the U-T.

That, coupled with changing technology, gave him the idea for Voice of San Diego, even though he had little interest in journalism.

"I recognized that we could do this in a fairly economic way," he said. "We didn't have to raise \$200 million to buy printing presses and try to compete with the old media."

He met with Morgan and asked if he'd be interested in starting what he described as "an independent web-based news entity that did investigations and told it like it really was."

A winning team

After Morgan and Woolley joined forces, Woolley sought reaction to the idea from prominent community members, and the feedback was universally positive.

He also analyzed the business side of existing online news platforms and learned that nearly all web-based news organizations were an off-shoot of print entities.

"It was sort of a side thought," Woolley said. "They were just taking what was in print and putting it on the web. We couldn't really look at the economics of it because nobody was cost-accounting it."

Whether to run Voice as for-profit or nonprofit was the question.

One national entity was for-profit, web-based only, but it suffered significant losses every year, he said. They discovered no nonprofit web-based media.

"Since nobody can make any money at it, why don't we just ... make it a nonprofit?" Woolley told Morgan at the time. "Then we can take in some advertising but we can get people to make tax-deductible donations."

The Girard Foundation had experience helping set up nonprofits. "And Connect gave me some training in understanding how to found Voice of San Diego," he said.

"We knew how to set up a nonprofit and knew something about managing it," Woolley said. "And Neil's enthusiasm for the idea and his reputation in town gave us the media credibility."

It was a winning team – a combination of business expertise from Woolley and journalism experience from Morgan.

An amazing board

"The founding board of Voice of San Diego was an extraordinary board," said Barbara Bry, Voice's founding editor and first CEO, who ran unsuccessfully for San

Diego mayor in the Nov. 3 election.

"We had a nationally known pollster, we had two of the best journalists in San Diego, and a woman who had started one of the top marketing firms in San Diego," she said, speaking, respectively, of pollster and marketing research analyst Dan Yankelovich, Neil Morgan and Bob Witty, and Gail Stoorza-Gill.



Scott Lewis is CEO and editor-in-chief of Voice of San Diego. He had previously been co-editor.

While working at the Los Angeles Times, Bry met Woolley in 1983 and was later hired by Woolley and Walshok to be the associate director for Connect. She worked there for about 10 years, creating the structure and programming for the nonprofit.

In 2004 Woolley asked Bry to be the first editor and CEO of Voice of San Diego. She hired the staff, rented office space, created content management systems and oversaw the creation of the website which she called "clunky" in its first rendition.

Bry worked at Voice for under one year, getting the nonprofit off the ground. Within the space of just a few months, Voice of San Diego formally launched in early 2005.

Bry cited Woolley's commitment to education reform, transparency and accountability, and applauded his "significant contributions to this city."

Woolley identified two primary challenges in the beginning. One was financing and the other was credibility.

The credibility issue "was just something that we had to build," he said. "It's a gradual thing."

Morgan's association with Voice of San Diego as a board member and co-founder helped with that, by being "probably the most credible journalist in San Diego County," Woolley said.

Every new enterprise faces hurdles, he said, "but we just plugged away at it. You've got to go into things with optimism and an energy."

Woolley personally provided \$300,000 in start-up funding, but did not intend to be the major supporter after that initial phase.

"I put up the money for the first year," he said. "I said, let's not ask other people for money for the first six months because we want to show them what it looks like."

Giving money to journalism back then, he said, "wasn't something people did. We said if the community doesn't want to support this idea, then it's not going to work. If at the end of the first year no one was willing to contribute, we would have just had to close it down."

Voice today

Today, Voice of San Diego takes in about \$2 million a year, with more than 3,000 members and donors, 22 foundations and numerous corporate sponsors.

Major donors listed on the Voice of San Diego website include Woolley at the \$100,000 level, and Joan and Irwin Jacobs at the \$50,000 to \$100,000 level. About 30 more donations in the \$5,000 to \$50,000 range are also listed.

Qualcomm co-founder Irwin Jacobs was the first major donor besides Woolley to support the effort back in 2005.

But it was a gamble.

"I was taking a risk," Jacobs said. "Would this catch on? Can they do the job they would like to do?"

"After talking it over with [his wife] Joan, we decided to make a significant contribution to help them get started. It seemed like something worth trying to do."

Jacobs knew Woolley from the early days of Connect and said he was a great admirer of Neil Morgan.

"The two of them together seemed like a

team worth betting on,” he said.

Joan and Irwin Jacobs have continued to support Voice of San Diego every year since.

“I’m very pleased that I’ve been able to provide some level of support for them,” he said.

Besides contributing personally to Voice, Woolley – through his Girard Foundation – donates money specifically for education coverage. According to IRS data, \$55,800 was given in 2018.

Woolley has remained the largest supporter of Voice over the years. “Between the Girard Foundation and myself, we’re probably about 15 percent of the total,” he said.

“I got it going financially,” he said. “But it would not be functioning like it is if the community had not jumped in and supported it.”

The average contribution, according to CEO and Editor-in-Chief Scott Lewis, is \$181. As required for nonprofits, income generally equals expenses.

“Buzz is a brilliant investor and observer

of markets and as such he can also see what the market is missing,” said Lewis, who was named co-editor in Nov. 2005 and later became editor-in-chief.

“In 2004, he recognized that the market wasn’t necessarily solving the need for local journalism,” he said. “And he saw this many years before most others did. He proposed a solution for San Diego – nonprofit, professionally staffed and mostly online – that became the model for hundreds of others across the country.”

A civic project

Voice of San Diego describes itself on the 2018 Form 990 IRS filing as an “online newspaper operated exclusively to educate and inform residents of San Diego County through in-depth investigative journalism about civic and regional issues so that residents can become advocates for good government and social progress.”

“People can say Voice has really done well,” Woolley said. “They’ve gone from

\$300,000 to \$2 million. That’s not that big a deal. They helped start a national movement of nonprofit news. Well, that’s a pretty good deal.

“But if you live in San Diego, the investigations that Voice has done, how it’s changed things, is significant. It’s getting recognized more and more, but it’s taken 15 years to get to where we are.”

Voice is about communication and education, he said. “It uses journalism, but Voice is really a civic project.”

The media is the way we communicate and educate, he said. “It’s an aspect of education. Education is not something that you stop at 22 years old. More people are recognizing that education is a lifelong thing.”

When asked if Morgan, who died in 2014, would be proud, Woolley said he was a phenomenal journalist with a stellar reputation. But Morgan’s real legacy, Woolley said, will be the impact he had on Voice of San Diego.

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Neil Morgan, co-founder of Voice of San Diego



Julianne Markow, chief operating officer of Voice of San Diego.

National interest

Woolley said he's not as surprised by the success of Voice as he is about the level of national interest in nonprofit web-based news entities that Voice generated.

After the New York Times wrote about Voice of San Diego in 2008, naming VOSD the first of its kind, the phone began to ring off the hook at Voice offices.

"We came up with the concept," Woolley said, "and people started hearing about this around the country."

The calls for advice became overwhelming.

"Most of the people who were calling us were journalists who wanted to start something and they didn't know how to do it," he said. "Spending an hour a week helping people would be one thing, but when it's an hour or two a day it's getting to be absurd."

As a result, Woolley created a proposal for a national trade association to support those interested in starting something similar to Voice.

"We raised a couple hundred thousand dollars to explore this idea," he said. The Knight brothers from the Knight Foundation were key allies.

First established as the Investigative News Network, INN is now the Institute for Nonprofit News, with more than 250 nonprofit media organizations in North America.

Woolley was a founder but chose not to

serve on the board. "I told them I'd be involved to get it going, but my interest was in San Diego," he said.

INN's mission is to strengthen and support independent news organizations that are nonprofit, nonpartisan and dedicated to public service. INN also seeks to advance public support for nonprofit news as a public trust.

A section called Startup Guide provides a template on how to establish a nonprofit news organization.

"When you ask if I'm surprised at something, I'm delightfully surprised at how well INN has done," Woolley said.

A listener

Woolley, a registered Republican, now likes to refer to himself as a venture philanthropist rather than a venture capitalist.

"The biggest difference is that in venture philanthropy you're not looking for a financial return," he said. "Just sending some money to the community chest, that's not really very adventurous."

Woolley's real name is Ralph, an old family name, he said. When he was young, he was given the nickname Buzz, which his father Ralph thought was better than calling him "junior."

"I'm a relatively informal guy so I've been happy being Buzz," he said.

Although some have described Woolley as challenging to work for, most colleagues

praise him for his commitment to the causes that matter to him, his willingness to consider new ideas and his depth of business experience.

"He's very much of a listener," said Dede Alpert. "He's not at all dictatorial. He's always asking questions of people."

She described him as even-keeled, calm and moderate. "Nothing fancy," she said. "You never hear him yell or raise his voice."

Woolley's lifelong friend and business colleague Mary Walshok described Woolley as inquisitive, questioning the status quo, imaginative, demanding and outcome-focused.

"Buzz, now in his eighth decade of life, continues to be curious, creative and full of the energy and organizational savvy essential to seeding and growing innovative enterprises," she said.

Woolley said he'd like to be remembered for his philanthropic efforts in the San Diego community.

"By providing financial support as well as my management experience, I have helped start organizations that will outlive me," he said.

"Providing help in the education and training of our youth, supporting the growth of the high tech community, and supplying quality investigative journalism has been my goal."

Marsha Sutton is an award-winning local education writer and columnist and can be reached at suttonmarsha@gmail.com.

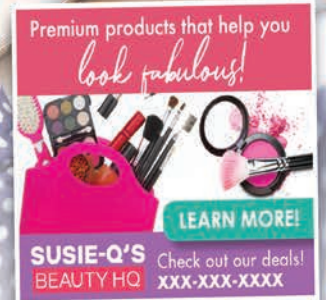
Personal note: As one of the original staff members of Voice of San Diego, hired by the talented Barbara Bry in 2004 to be the nonprofit's first education writer, I remember what a privilege it was to be associated with such an astonishing group of professionals on Voice of San Diego's first board of directors. It was an honor to be guided by the incomparable Neil Morgan, Bob Witty, Gail Stooza-Gill, Barbara Bry and of course Buzz Woolley.

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