

# SDMETRO

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NO. 1 VOL. XXXVI



## LUVVIE AJAYI JONES

*San Diego*  
**WOMEN'S WEEK**

SAN DIEGO WOMEN'S WEEK CONTINUES TO  
EMPOWER AND INSPIRE AFTER 11 YEARS

Photo credit: Kesha Lamber

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## COVER STORY:

### Luvvie Ajayi Jones: Professional Troublemaker

Luvvie Ajayi Jones doesn't seem like the kind of person who's afraid of anything. In fact, the New York Times bestselling author of "I'm Judging You," and internationally renowned public speaker seems like fear's worst nightmare. But that same bestselling author was once a confused pre-med student, afraid of calling herself a writer. Jones is one of the speakers at the virtual 2021 San Diego Women's Week March 15-19 sponsored by the North San Diego Business Chamber. Page 8. (Photo credit: Keshia Lambert)



### Tech privacy expert to lead new center for data, AI and society

Maritza Johnson, a widely respected data privacy and security professional, has joined the University of San Diego as the director of a new center focused on data science, artificial intelligence and society. In this pioneering role, Johnson will be responsible for developing the center.



### A Unique Program provides Life Skills for Teens

Marisa Fogelman is the founder of Integra Development Center, which extends learning for youths beyond the acquisition of knowledge and focuses holistically on whole child development in five primary ways, called building blocks: mental power, emotional intelligence, social skills, physical well-being and personal development.

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# SEVENTH ANNUAL WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM JOIN US VIRTUALLY!

This annual event brings together prominent female leaders for a series of workshops and panels.

This year's theme, **WATCH HER RISE**, will focus on stories of perseverance and reinvention. At a time in our world when iteration seems to be the key to success, these stories from our speakers will resonate with all of us!

**Friday, March 12, 2021**

Tickets & sponsorship opportunities at [aolp.org/OLPWS](https://aolp.org/OLPWS)

*Funds raised from this event support education at the oldest all-girls' Catholic high school in San Diego*

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# SAN DIEGO SCENE

The all-new Expanse supercomputer at the San Diego Supercomputer Center on the UC San Diego campus. (Image: Owen Stanley, SDSC/UCSD)

## San Diego Supercomputer's 'Expanse' formally enters production

*System now available to academic & industry researchers*

The San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC) at UC San Diego announced that its new Expanse supercomputer formally entered service for researchers following a program review by the National Science Foundation (NSF), which awarded SDSC a grant in mid-2019 to build the innovative system.

At over twice the performance of Comet, SDSC's current petascale supercomputer, Expanse supports SDSC's theme of "Computing without Boundaries" with powerful CPUs, GPUs, and a data-centric architecture that supports a wide range of scientific workloads including experimental facilities, edge computing, and public clouds.

"The name of our new system says it all," said SDSC Director Michael Norman, the principal investigator for Expanse and a computational astrophysicist. "With innovations in cloud integration and other features such as composable systems, as well as continued support for science gateways and distributed computing via the Open Science Grid (OSG), Expanse will allow researchers to push the boundaries of computing and substantially reduce their times to discovery."

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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
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## Registrar Michael Vu named county assistant chief administrative officer

Registrar of Voters Michael Vu is now taking on the responsibilities of assistant chief administrative officer for the County of San Diego. Vu began his new role Jan. 8 after working for the County for nearly 14 years, the last eight as Registrar.

The Chief Administrative Office is responsible for implementing policy decisions from the Board of Supervisors. The office also manages day-to-day operations.

Chief Administrative Officer Helen Robbins-Meyer praised Vu for working tirelessly to engage the San Diego community in a way that represents county values. "Not only has he enjoyed taking on new challenges, but he has been innovative and resourceful in

responding to them," said Robbins-Meyer. "For this, he has gained the respect and trust of many within our community, including community-based organizations, advocacy groups, elected officials and the media."

As Vu takes on his new responsibilities, he will also continue to lead the Registrar of Voters particularly now that a special vacancy election is expected for the 79th Assembly District. Assistant Registrar Cynthia Paes will serve as the acting registrar.

Vu succeeds Tracy Sandoval as assistant CAO. Sandoval left the county last October to become the CEO for the San Diego County Employees Retirement Association.



Registrar of Voters Michael VUzyynski

## Alaska Airlines takes delivery of its first Boeing 737-9 MAX aircraft

Alaska Airlines has accepted delivery of its first Boeing 737-9 MAX airplane, marking a new phase of modernizing the airline's fleet in the coming years. Alaska pilots flew the aircraft on a short flight from the Boeing Delivery Center at Boeing Field in Seattle to the company's hangar at Sea-Tac International Airport with a small group of Alaska's top leadership on board.

Alaska's first 737-9 is scheduled to enter passenger service on March 1 with daily roundtrip flights between Seattle and San

Diego, and Seattle and Los Angeles. The airline's second 737-9 is expected to enter service later in March.

Teams from across various divisions at Alaska will now follow a strict readiness timeline that guides the actions that must be taken before the start of passenger flights, according to officials. The process – involving rigorous rounds of test flying, verifying and specific preparations -- will take five weeks.

Alaska announced a restructured order agreement with Boeing in December 2020 to

receive a total of 68 737-9 MAX aircraft in the next four years, with options for an additional 52 planes. The airline is scheduled to receive 13 planes this year; 30 in 2022; 13 in 2023; and 12 in 2024. The agreement incorporates Alaska's announcement last November to lease 13 737-9 aircraft as part of a separate transaction.



Alaska Airlines' first delivery of a 737-9 MAX departs Seattle's Boeing Field. (Photo courtesy of Alaska Airlines)

## Taylor Guitars transfers ownership to employees

El Cajon-based Taylor Guitars, a global builder of premium acoustic guitars, has transferred ownership of the company to its nearly 1,200 employees through its Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

“We have delighted in giving people the joy of music and hope to do so for generations to come,” said Bob Taylor, co-founder and president of Taylor Guitars. “Becoming 100 percent (employee owned) allows us to ensure our independence for the long-term future and continue to realize our vision for the company as an innovative guitar manufacturer.”

Kurt Listug, co-founder and chief executive officer, added, “While Bob and I are not retiring, we have been preparing for our eventual exit. Master guitar designer Andy Powers is not only the wellspring of our guitar designs for the future, but he also joined our leadership team several years ago, and strengthening our leadership team has been essential to our succession planning.”

Listug views the transition in ownership as the next step to ensure a sustainable future for the company, while also providing a valuable financial benefit to people who have contributed to its success. “We believe we’ve created a special company, where passionate people can engage in problem-solving innovation, collaboration and respect,” he said.



Taylor Guitars employees, now owners, at the El Cajon factory prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## SHOOTING FOR THE MOON

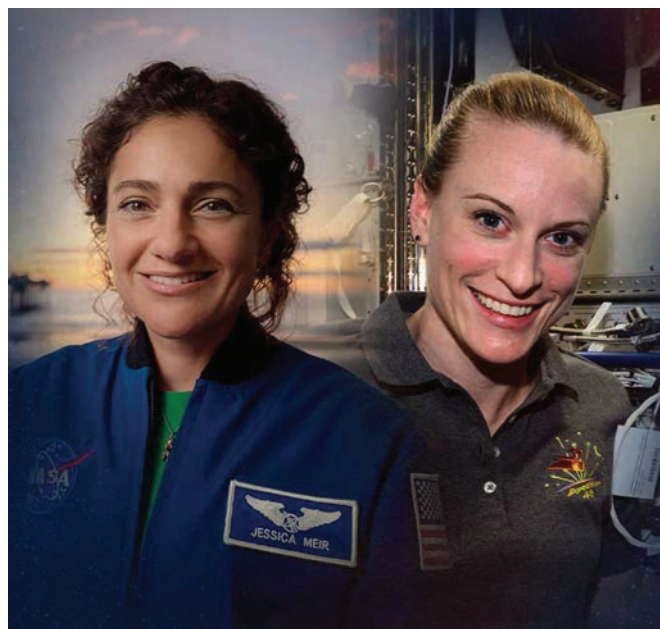
### UC San Diego alumni selected to NASA's Artemis program that aims to land first woman and next man on the moon

By Brittany Hook and Mario Aguilera | UC San Diego

When NASA unveiled the initial team of astronauts for its ambitious moon exploration project in December, the news quickly spread that two of the announced 18 Artemis program team members hold degrees from UC San Diego. The superstar alums are Jessica Meir, who received her Ph.D. in marine biology in 2009 from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Kate Rubins, who earned a bachelor of science degree in molecular biology in 1999.

As members of the Artemis Team, Meir and Rubins will help pave the way for NASA's next lunar missions including sending the first woman and next man to walk on the moon in 2024. The Artemis program aims to use innovative technologies to explore more of the lunar surface than ever before, and will serve as a springboard for NASA's next giant leap—exploration of Mars.

“There is so much to learn from going back to the moon,” said Meir. “We’re still learning new things every day from the samples that came back from the Apollo Missions which changed the way that we look at our solar system, and now with entirely new technologies we’ll be going to destinations we’ve never been to, like the South Pole regions of the moon. There’s so much yet to discover.”



Artemis Team members Jessica Meir, left, and Kate Rubins



## University of San Diego hires tech privacy expert to lead new center for data, AI and society

Maritza Johnson, a widely respected data privacy and security professional, has joined the University of San Diego as the director of a new center focused on data science, artificial intelligence and society. In this pioneering role, Johnson will be responsible for developing the center.

Johnson joins USD from Google, where she was most recently a senior user experience researcher. She holds a Ph.D. in computer science from Columbia University and earned her bachelor's in computer science from USD in 2005. She has lectured at University of California, Berkeley and the University of San Diego, and has published in the areas of data privacy and security.

"I know from experience that USD has a great culture around the humanities and liberal arts, as well as a Changemaking spirit.



Maritza Johnson

"I'm extremely excited to join this community which is already primed to explore how we can responsibly use data as a tool for empowerment to create change in society," said Johnson. "I'm looking forward to seeing how we can instill that in our students and envision programs that really live up to that."

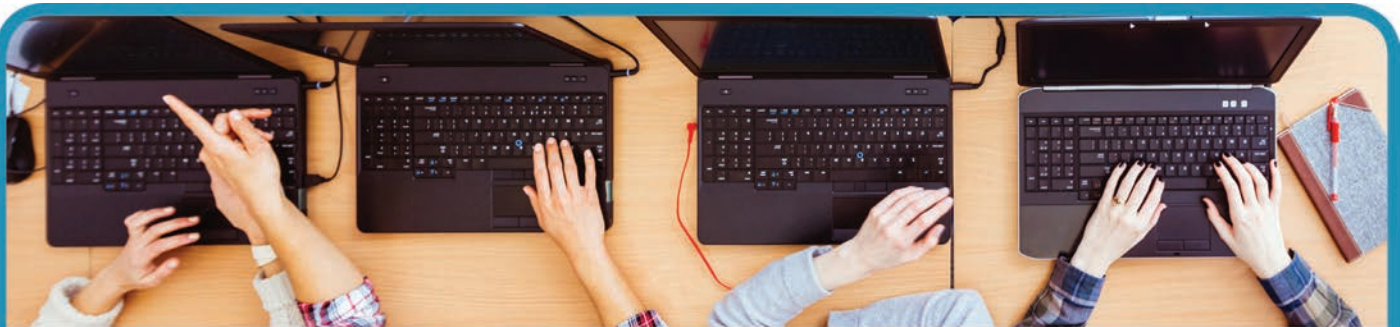
While the center is yet to be named, it will be led by USD's Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering, which houses the university's computer science programs. One goal of the center will be to engage the entire campus around issues of big data and artificial intelligence, and their social implications — ethics, privacy and fairness.

"It's essential that a liberal arts institution like USD provides a space for a robust conversation around topics of data, security

and privacy, which are affecting all of us," said Chell Roberts, Ph.D., dean of the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering. "Maritza Johnson brings a wealth of experience from the tech industry, and I and my colleagues across campus are thrilled to work with her to bring this center to life."

The University of San Diego currently offers programs in business analytics, data science, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity engineering, as well as courses in digital humanities.

Johnson will partner with colleagues across the entire university to help make data science and artificial intelligence a truly interdisciplinary collaboration for all students and faculty. In addition to acting as a hub for the USD community, the center will serve the broader public through consulting outreach, lectures and events as we explore the far-reaching impacts of these topics.



## TW2 CELEBRATES SAN DIEGO WOMEN'S WEEK!

**W**e congratulate the North San Diego Business Chamber for organizing this exciting event and the many supporters who make it possible.

The TW2 team is proud of our woman-owned heritage and is honored to work with many of the incredible women doing business in our city.



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**Luvvie Ajayi Jones**



**Barbara Bry**



**Karyn Schoenbart**



**Alessandra Wall**



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San Diego Women's Week, celebrating 12 years of inspiring, empowering and connecting men and women with a week of leadership events for all ages and professions.

Everyone is invited to join us for networking, keynote speakers, panel discussions and more, all wrapped around creative solutions to everyday issues affecting all of us in the workplace and in our daily lives.



**Andrew Bolwell**



**Caroline Johnson**



**Tammie Jo Shults**



**Shellye Archambeau**



## San Diego Women's Week Virtual Schedule

Every year a large contingent of men also attend throughout the week and share their experience. They feel a sense of responsibility to understand, support and showcase the work of their female colleagues.

This year's speakers are bright, articulate, diverse and their messages are empowering and inspiring to everyone. The 2021 San Diego Women's Week is focused on leadership, with speakers that will be sharing their journeys and success.

Women such as Luvvi Ajayi Jones, Shellye Archambeau, Tammie Jo Shults, Andrew Bolwell, Karyn Schoenbart, Alessandra Wahl, Barbara Bry, Carolyn Johnson, and others are preparing to speak at the 12th annual San Diego Women's Week between March 15 – 19. Panelists will also be sharing lessons and journey's that have shaped their lives and careers.

San Diego Women's Week is produced by North San Diego Business Chamber and considers diversity and inclusion important in our regions changing business environment. "Our focus for the week is to connect others, share stories, and empower leaders to reach higher" says Debra Rosen, president and CEO of North San Diego Business Chamber. "More companies than ever have implemented women's leadership programs as part of their diversity and inclusion leadership initiatives.

## Exciting Change For San Diego Women's Week 2021

This year San Diego Women's Week is offering more keynotes and panels for the attendees to enjoy. The new format will include three half day conferences, with each day featuring three keynotes and one panel. Keynote and panel schedules are listed on the website [sdwomensweek.com](http://sdwomensweek.com)

## THE CHAMBER TEAM BEHIND WOMEN'S WEEK



**Denise Visconti, Littler**  
Chair of the Board,  
North San Diego Business Chamber



**Debra Rosen**  
North San Diego Business Chamber  
President/CEO  
Celebrating 12 Years



**Brianna Eltzroth**  
North San Diego Business Chamber  
Chief Operations Officer  
Celebrating 15 Years



**Anne-Marie Jewel**  
North San Diego Business Chamber  
Member Relations Manager  
Celebrating 6 Years



**Dylan Fisher**  
North San Diego Business Chamber  
Sr. Manager - Economic Development  
& Advocacy  
Celebrating 3 Years

# Fighting Fear Luvvie's Way

By Marsha Sutton



Doing what's right in the face of adversity, staring down your fear, and speaking truth to a room full of skeptics is the powerful message in Luvvie Ajayi Jones' new book, "Professional Troublemaker, the Fear-Fighter Manual."

To be released by Penguin Publishing Group this March, Professional Troublemaker offers wisdom, assurances, guidance and support for those afraid to say or do what they know they should.

"A professional troublemaker is someone who shows up as themselves no matter what room they're in; [they're] people who are not afraid to say or do things that feel hard," Ajayi Jones said. "They're disrupters, they're trail-blazers, they're game-changers – people who basically insist on charting courses even when they have no map."

She said they are often "sharp-tongued and misunderstood" but "always golden-hearted."

Facing up to fear and not letting it take over is a focus of the book.

"In order for us to do better, we're going to have to do a lot of things that are going to be uncomfortable and are going to scare us," said the Nigerian-born writer, speaker and self-described troublemaker.

She also calls herself a truth-teller, explaining, "Being a truth-teller is being very honest – even when it's tough, even when it might cause a lack of harmony in the room."

Truth-telling, she said, is like a muscle that needs to be exercised regularly to be effective.

"It's a practice like anything else," she said. "If you don't do it often, it's hard to do it when it's necessary. You can't run a marathon if you've been sitting on your couch for the last four years. We can't expect people to all of a sudden be a truth-teller in tough moments if we have not prioritized it."

"Practice does not make perfect – it makes really good, though."

Told with Ajayi Jones' trademark humor, honesty and authenticity, "Professional Troublemaker, the Fear-Fighter Manual" is organized into three sections.

The BE section addresses the need to form a strong sense of identity before one can face what's scary. It says that "half the battle is with our own selves, our own insecurities and our own baggage."

The SAY section discusses how to use our voices for the greater good and asks that we say "what is difficult even when our voices shake."

The DO section advises how to put movement to that voice. In other words, "Our actions need to prove



the truth of our words.”

Being afraid to do what's right is what keeps many people from asking for what they want and deserve, she said. This applies especially for women.

“We're used to being told to keep the peace, and what peace usually looks like is: Don't ruffle anybody's feathers, don't rock the boat,” she said.

She reminds women of their right to demand what they are worth. “My life changed when I got the courage to ask for what I want,” she offered.

“I thought this book was necessary to write as a Black woman because books like these are typically written by White men who walk and talk with privilege.”

Professional Troublemaker, she said, is the “how” to her first book, the New York Times best-seller “I'm Judging You: The Do-Better Manual,” which she called the “what.”

Born in Nigeria, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, 36, moved with her family to Chicago when she was 9, attended school there, and graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana with a degree in psychology.

When she first attended school in Chicago, she found that her real Nigerian name was too difficult for Americans to pronounce, so she went with Lovette, a childhood nickname, which soon became shortened to Luvvie.

Her psychology background and her study of human behavior has helped her see the world in new ways and provided a lens of analysis to find perspective, she said.

Ajayi Jones provides an abundance of humor in her books and writings, which she said can sometimes point out the absurdity of the world.

### Don't get complacent

The election of America's first female vice president and woman of color, Kamala Harris, was certainly progress, Ajayi Jones said, but progress is not static.

“Sometimes when we make progress, we get comfortable and think the work is done,” she said. “Progress can actually regress. So we can't get comfortable. What we have to do is make sure there are other Kamalas.”

She advocates for more “disrupters” to not accept the status quo and find the courage to speak up and blaze new trails.

Fear, she said, can be healthy and natural, but people need to learn

to fight it. Her book, she said, “is a middle finger up to fear.”

“Fear is a universal emotion, but I think it gets a bad rap,” she said, adding that people associate being afraid with being weak. “They hear fearlessness and think someone is walking around afraid of nothing.”

“What I think fearlessness means is you are afraid but you still go forward regardless. I think fearlessness and courage come from being afraid but still making the decision to do that thing that felt too hard or felt too big.”

Real courage, she said, is facing one's fears and acknowledging it.

Ajayi Jones said people often talk about fear of failure but fear of success is just as real.

“It's something we all grapple with no matter how successful you are,” she said. “You still have fear. I just find that the people who are most successful are the people who don't make their decisions purely from a place of fear.”

An 18-year blogging veteran on AwesomelyLuvvie.com, Ajayi Jones is also the host of a top-rated podcast formerly called “Rants and Randomness” and now renamed “Professional Troublemaker.”

She has achieved wide acclaim in past years through her blog, podcast and numerous speaking engagements – including a TED talk titled “Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable,” which has over 4.8 million views and has been transcribed into 22 languages.

She was also chosen by Oprah Winfrey for her inaugural

SuperSoul100 list as someone who elevates humanity.

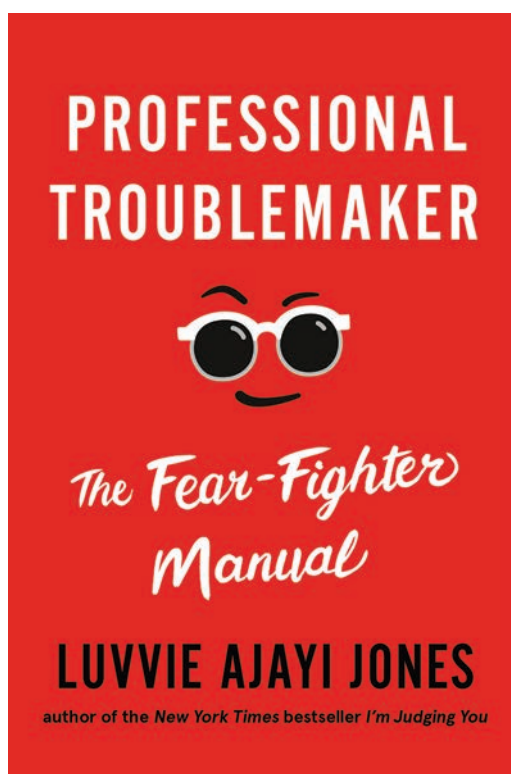
Ajayi Jones describes herself as someone who “thrives at the intersection of comedy, technology and activism,” explaining that marketing, communications, pop culture criticism, humor and social justice activism are all part of who she is.

“I'm passionate about a more just world for marginalized people,” she said.

Moving forward with courage in unprecedented times is a challenge for everyone coping with the pandemic, civil unrest, social injustice and economic distress.

Yet Ajayi Jones suggests facing adversity fearlessly and with optimism.

“We must commit ourselves to be the people we want to see in the world,” she said. “It's a daily commitment. Do the things that scare us.”



## WOMEN'S WEEK 2020 FEATURED KEYNOTES



### Luvvie Ajayi Jones

#### PROFESSIONAL TROUBLEMAKER

Luvvie Ajayi Jones doesn't seem like the kind of person who's afraid of anything. In fact, the New York Times bestselling author of *I'm Judging You*, creator of the wildly popular blog *AwesomelyLuvvie*, and internationally renowned public speaker seems like fear's worst nightmare. But that same bestselling author was once a confused pre-med student, afraid of calling herself a writer.

The same woman whose TED talk has over 5 million views almost turned the opportunity down, and even wrote the first draft in an hour-long cab ride in the hopes that the organizers would reject it. Nobody is truly fearless, not even Luvvie—but we can learn how to charge forward anyway, and commit to not doing less because of fear. In her new book, *Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual*, Luvvie shows you how she's done it, and how you can, too.

### Shellye Archambeau

#### UNAPOLOGETICALLY AMBITIOUS: TAKE RISKS, BREAK BARRIERS, AND CREATE SUCCESS ON YOUR OWN TERMS

One of Silicon Valley's first female African-American CEOs, Shellye Archambeau will share how she overcame the challenges she faced as a young black woman, wife, and mother, managing her personal and professional responsibilities while climbing the ranks at IBM and subsequently in her roles as CEO. Through the busts and booms of Silicon Valley in the early 2000s, this bold and inspiring talk will share the risks she took and the strategies she engaged to steer her family, her career, and her company MetricStream toward success.

Through her journey, Shellye discovered that ambition alone is not enough to achieve success.







## Andrew Bolwell

### THINKING LIKE A FUTURIST

The art of thinking like a futurist is a necessary skill in today's world. Thinking like a futurist shouldn't be reserved for a select group of people, but instead a basic skill set that anyone can learn. The more people that can anticipate, plan for and create the future they want, the better off we'll be.

An understanding of the economic, social, demographic, and technologic shifts shaping our world, offers a blueprint to smarter decision making and business transformation. In a world where change is the norm, every day is an opportunity for reinvention.

In this talk, Andrew provides actionable insights to help the audience move forward and create the future they want and learn how to adopt long-term, futuristic thinking.

## Barbara Bry

### RELENTLESS PURSUIT WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER THAN GOOD GRADES

Barbara Bry joined Proflowers.com in April 1998 as vice president of marketing when the company was just an idea with four employees and no website. The company's plan, to upset the flower cart by shipping flowers directly from the grower to the consumer instead of using retail stores, faced enormous logistical and marketing challenges.

Barbara will talk about the ups and downs of the company's early history using the People, Opportunity, Context and Risk and Reward framework as well as weave in her own entrepreneurial journey. Proflowers.com, which became Provide Commerce, went public in 1993, and was sold to Liberty Media for \$477 million in 2008.





## Caroline Johnson

### MENTORSHIP: THE BEST CLASS OF SHIP

Caroline Johnson will share her experiences as a woman in the military, and how she is helping to empower the next generation. Caroline was one of two female aviators in her 230-person unit, and one of the only 1.7% women flying fighter jets in the Navy. She deployed in 2014 aboard the USS George HW Bush and saw combat action in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and was the first woman to employ weapons on ISIS in Iraq from her F/A-18.

Join Caroline Johnson on her adventures flying F/A-18 fighter jets in the US Navy. You'll experience: the precision of landing on an aircraft carrier, the courage of going behind enemy lines in combat, and the strength to succeed as a woman in a male-dominated profession.

## Karyn Schoenbart

### ESSENTIAL BUSINESS ADVICE FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

Passionate about coaching others to greater levels of achievement, Karyn wrote Mom.B.A.: Essential Business Advice from One Generation to the Next as a practical guide on everything from effective first impressions and workplace politics to relationship development, work/life balance, skill-building, and overcoming the Impostor Syndrome. The book is based on the real-life business lessons Karyn amassed during her career.







## Tammie Jo Shults

### NERVES OF STEELE

Tammie Jo Shults possessed an early interest in flying, but she faced various obstacles on her path to becoming a military pilot. Applying her lifelong trait of perseverance, she eventually became one of the first female F/A-18 Hornet pilots in the United States Navy.

After concluding her Navy career, she became a pilot for Southwest Airlines. Tammie Jo's incredible history and talent received wide acclaim on April 17, 2018, when she successfully landed a Southwest Boeing 737 after an engine exploded at high altitude, causing multiple system failures and a rapid depressurization. The successful landing of Flight 1380 in Philadelphia saved 148 total lives including passengers and crew, as detailed in her captivating novel, *Nerves of Steel*.

## Alessandra Wall

### THE WOMAN HOLDING YOU BACK

Dr. Wall will show you how to take a closer look at critics, naysayers, and the people setting impossible standards and holding glass ceilings over women's heads. You'll be surprised to find out that sometimes the people holding you back are the ones you least expected to.

On her journey supporting women's leadership and equality, she discovered that there's more that holds women back than we sometimes realize.

Dr. Alessandra Wall went from counseling individuals on how to manage anxiety and depression to coaching women and mentoring leaders to bridge the gap and build a world where women reaching the highest levels of success and power is so commonplace it doesn't need to be mentioned.



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**TICKETS: \$89**

For additional information: [www.sdwomensweek.com](http://www.sdwomensweek.com)

\*details subject to change without notice

\*\*Speaker books will be distributed in order of event registration while supplies last.  
Books are to be picked up in Rancho Bernardo or can be shipped for an additional charge.

## KEYNOTES FROM PAST WOMEN'S WEEK EVENTS

This year San Diego Women's Week is offering more keynotes and panels for the attendees to enjoy. The new format will include three half day conferences, with each day featuring three keynotes and one panel. Keynote and panel schedules are listed on the website [sdwomensweek.com](http://sdwomensweek.com)

**DEEPAK CHOPRA**  
**KATHERINE SCHWARZENEGGER**  
**DAYMOND JOHN**  
**ELIZABETH SMART**  
**ED SMART**  
**PADMA LAKSHMI**  
**MARIEL HEMINGWAY**  
**MARLEE MATLIN**  
**SALLY KRAWCHECK**  
**ARIANNA HUFFINGTON**  
**KIM COLES**  
**AMY CUDDY**  
**GRETCHEN RUBIN**



Attendees at Women's Week luncheon. (Photo by Xavier Bailey Photography)



# SDMETRO SALUTES SAN DIEGO WOMEN'S WEEK



**SAN DIEGO WOMEN'S WEEK**  
12TH ANNUAL PRESENTATION: 2021

# A unique program provides life skills for teens

**By Marsha Sutton**

Before social and emotional learning became widely recognized as a critical component of teen lives, Marisa Fogelman was well ahead of the curve.

Fogelman spent two decades developing a curriculum that integrated SEL with traditional subject matter consistent with California state standards.

She put her holistic/academic philosophy into practice as co-founder of a North County charter school that she was forced to close after several years of success, due to political pressure and anti-charter sentiment.

Fogelman refused to abandon her mission and explored ways to continue to offer essential holistic lessons for teenagers.

Thus was born Integra Development Center [<https://www.integraeducation.org/>].

The timing of the opening in late 2019 turned out to be impeccable.

With the pandemic and school closures forcing kids into remote learning, the need for social interaction in a safe environment, to ward off depression and isolation, has become paramount.

“I’ve always felt that Integra was crucial and was the missing piece in education, but it seems more crucial now with what kids are going through – being isolated and often depressed and disconnected,” Fogelman said.

Integra (Latin for entire, complete, whole) extends learning beyond the acquisition of knowledge and focuses holistically on whole child development in five primary ways, called building blocks: mental power, emotional intelligence, social skills, physical well-being and personal development.

The development center serves grades 6-12 students from public schools, private schools and the home-schooled.

The center’s purpose is to ensure that teens have a safe place “where they can grow holistically, connect with guides and peers, feel surrounded by a community that supports their well-being, and further develop a sense of purpose.”

Children in middle and high school, Fogelman said, are going through the most important period in their lives.

“They’re fortifying their identities,” she said. “They’re forming beliefs about themselves and beliefs in the world. At the same time they’re desperately trying to navigate their internal world.”

Integra lessons are provided twice a day – 20 minutes each morning and 50 minutes in the afternoon. “It’s a whole class,” Fogelman said.



Marisa Fogelman

All interaction is in-person, because “we are hard-wired for connection,” she said.

Supporting the students are three teachers, each with a single-subject credential in English/language arts, math and history/social science.

Besides being a credentialed teacher, Fogelman is a college readiness counselor and provides one-on-one counseling for high school students 15 minutes each week.

## Self-confidence

Integra has been described by parents and students as a way to inspire emotional confidence, internal stability and personal and collective responsibility.

The curriculum was designed to help teens understand their place in the world, their inner worth and value, and their unique ability to shine.



Fogelman said Integra seeks to ensure that students graduate high school with the tools and skills needed to thrive.

One parent said that traditional schools often overlook the full range of what today's children need, forcing students to live more in a structured box without seeing "the beauty of the kids who live outside the lines."

Although Integra can help all teenagers with adjustments necessary for healthy adulthood, the greatest benefits can be realized for kids who struggle in regular school and aren't being accepted by their peers.

It's often because they do not feel safe or respected, and they're not thriving emotionally or academically. Emotional issues and bullying can interfere with learning in profound and lasting ways, Fogelman said.

The Integra program has been championed by parents and students who say there is no tolerance for cliques, bullying, gender role stereotypes or isolation.

Parent Sarah VanDenBerg said the center doesn't just explore how to survive. "It's how do you thrive?" she said. "How do you find your purpose? What's your passion?"

VanDenBerg said Fogelman and the Integra Center foster a sense of acceptance and community.

"They said at the beginning that one of the most egregious things you could do is to make someone feel unaccepted," she said.

"I've always felt a lot of things were missing in the public school, and what she [Fogelman] provides really fills in those gaps," VanDenBerg said.

When normal school resumes, schools should incorporate Integra principles into their daily lessons, she said. "If all the school systems could be aware of this, that would be incredible."

### Healthy teens

"Marisa has known for quite a while that social and emotional learning is the core foundation to a healthy growing teen," said Integra Center parent Julie Anderson. "And with schools attempting distance learning, SEL is not being met and our youth is sadly suffering."

Students can fall behind in academics, and later catch up, Anderson said. "But what about the emotional trauma? How do you erase that? Won't that scar be carried for life? How about let's prevent that trauma in the first place."

Located on Second Street in downtown Encinitas, the Integra facility is warm and inviting, with six private office spaces for students who need to work quietly or have interactive call-ins with teachers.

Students bring their own laptops, headphones, chargers and any other personal equipment they need. Nothing is shared, masks are

required and rooms are sanitized before and after use.

"With the six rooms, the lounge, the community room and the outside area, they are all pretty well physically distant," Fogelman said. "The middle-schoolers and the high-schoolers for the most part are kept separate."

Students come from all parts of the county – Scripps Ranch, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Poway, Carmel Valley and other areas. San Diego Unified, San Dieguito Union and Poway Unified are among the school districts represented.

"We spend time as adults working to unlearn the habits, patterns, behaviors and beliefs we developed as children or adolescents that don't serve us," Fogelman said. "This is a reactive approach to life. At Integra, we believe in being both proactive and responsive."

"Additionally, when we create a safe space for adolescents to express themselves, we begin to alleviate the anxiety, depression and stress that once capitalized upon their well-being."

Fogelman advocates for a holistic curriculum as part of every student's education. Her eventual goal is to have Integra integrated into public schools, by offering the curriculum online or serving as an education consultant to help schools implement the program.

The result of that, she said, would be "a generation of adolescents who are self-aware, empathetic problem-solvers who live their lives with intention."

Marsha Sutton is an award-winning education writer and columnist and can be reached at [suttonmarsha@gmail.com](mailto:suttonmarsha@gmail.com).

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