



**AL ABDALLAH**  
Urban League  
San Diego County



**CHRISTINE ANTOINE**  
Port of San Diego



**QUINTON AUSTIN**  
Louisiana  
Purchase



**SATIA AUSTIN**  
North San Diego  
County NAACP



**DERRICK BANKS**  
Freshly Faded



**REAR ADMIRAL  
STEPHEN BARNETT**  
U. S. Navy



**JANICE BROWN**  
Meyers Nave



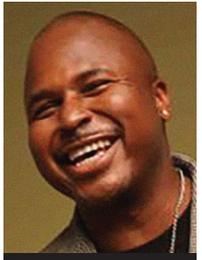
**MARY CHEEKS**  
Jamul Casino



**JULIE COKER**  
San Diego Tourism  
Authority



**DR. GAIL  
COLE-AVENT**  
CSU San Marcos



**MICHAEL COX**  
The Official  
Black Magazine



**KIM DESMOND**  
City of San Diego



**BRITTNY FERGUSON**  
U.S. Bank



**TERRELL FLETCHER**  
City of Hope  
International  
Church



**CHRIS FRYSON**  
BHHS California  
Properties



**KENNETH  
GETHERS**  
C&S Engineers, Inc



**SABRINA GOOSBY**  
Voices for  
Children



**PAMELA GRAY  
PAYTON**  
The San Diego  
Foundation



**DR. HELEN V.  
GRIFFITH**  
The Preuss School  
UC San Diego



**DR. CARL  
HENDERSON**  
NV5



**NICHOLAS HOLMES**  
Rady Children's  
Hospital



**INDIA JEWELL**  
North America Sony  
Electronics Inc.



**RUDOLPH A.  
JOHNSON, III**  
Neighborhood  
House Association



**REGINALD JONES**  
Jacobs Center for  
Neighborhood  
Innovation



**DR. STEVEN JONES**  
Jones & Associates  
Consulting



**BENJAMIN KELSO**  
San Diego Chapter  
of the National Black  
Police Association

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
**BLACK  
LEADERS  
OF INFLUENCE**  
**TOP 50**  
2022



County of San Diego  
**SDBCC**  
Black Chamber of Commerce

**HONOREES**



**DR. GAIL KNIGHT**  
Rady Children's  
Hospital-San Diego



**APRIL LASTER**  
Open Heart  
Leaders



**MAYA MADSEN**  
Maya's Cookies



**BRUCE MAYBERRY**  
CSDBBC,  
JBM Energy  
Solutions



**MILES  
MCPHERSON**  
The Rock Church



**EUGENE "MITCH"  
MITCHELL**  
Sempra



**ELLEN NASH**  
Black American  
Political Association  
of California



**TIMOTHY PARKER**  
Chula Vista  
Brewery



**DR. BECKY PETITT**  
UCSD



**RAMLA SAHID**  
Partnership for the  
Advancement of New  
Americans (PANA)



**SEAN SCOTT**  
California  
Western School  
of Law



**RICKY SHABAZZ**  
San Diego City  
College



**FELICIA SHAW**  
Women's  
Museum of  
California



**ANDREW STRONG**  
County of  
San Diego



**STEVE SUBLETT**  
CBIZ



**DUSTIN SUTTON**  
Black Commercial  
Real Estate  
Network (BCREN)



**MICHAEL TAYLOR**  
NWB Environmental  
Services, LLC, and  
NWB Imaging



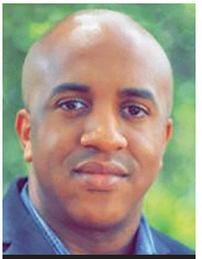
**TASHONDA  
TAYLOR**  
SDG&E



**VICKIE TURNER**  
Wilson Turner  
Kosmo. LLP



**KEON WEST**  
Clark  
Construction



**DWAYNE  
WHEATLEY**  
ResMed



**AJ WILLIAMS**  
Hammond's  
Gourmet  
Ice Cream



**LEE WILLS-IRVINE**  
ASML



**LUKE WOOD**  
San Diego State  
University



**LEON WYDEN**  
CSU San Marcos



**TONY YOUNG**  
Civic Link  
Strategies  
RISE San Diego

**SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022**



**AL ABDALLAH**  
COO  
Urban League  
San Diego County

**A**bdallah currently serves as the chief operating officer of the Urban League of San Diego County. The nonprofit was founded in 1953 with a mission to assist African Americans and other underserved people in San Diego County to achieve social and economic equality through advocacy, bridge building, program services and research. Abdallah worked for State Farm Insurance Automotive for 27 years, first as an auto underwriter, claims adjuster, claim support services supervisor and auto claims team manager. While working at State Farm, Abdallah joined the board of the Urban League of San Diego County and served as board chair for nine years. He left State Farm in 2016 and eventually moved from board member to staff at the Urban League, taking over as COO. Abdallah is also board chair for the San Diego Children's Choir, where he assists in fund development.



**CHRISTINE ANTOINE**  
Senior Policy Administrator  
Port of San Diego

**A**ntoine is responsible for developing policy positions, conducting research and data analysis to inform agency decisions and stakeholder outreach. She previously was the government relations director for California State University San Marcos advocating at the local, state and federal levels for equity in – and access to – public higher education. Antoine balances her professional career with participation civic and social organizations, which have included the Center for Community Solutions, Chula Vista Democratic Club, South County Economic Development Council, University of San Diego Alumni Association and County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce. Antoine has chaired social justice and public policy committees in many of those organizations. She is also a recipient of the "Woman Leader" award for the 79th Assembly District.



**QUINNTON AUSTIN**  
Co-owner  
Louisiana Purchase restaurant

**A**s executive and corporate chef, Austin is a hospitality professional at Louisiana Purchase, a restaurant on University Avenue near Louisiana Street in North Park. Austin's roots are in Louisiana and he had early experience delving into the Bayou's culinary culture. Austin's formal training began at the Culinary Institute of New Orleans. That knowledge laid the groundwork for a seasoned career. Austin worked up the food chain from assistant corporate chef, test kitchen chef, sous chef and chef de cuisine to award-winning executive chef at some of the top dining spots in Louisiana, including Cinclare Rustic Southern Cuisine and Antoine's in New Orleans. Austin has past experience that spans the globe. He relocated to San Diego from New Orleans for the opening of Louisiana Purchase in 2019, a concept from Grind & Prosper Hospitality Group.



**SATIA AUSTIN**  
President  
North San Diego County NAACP

**A**ustin is a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American organization founded in 1909 to work for the end of segregation and discrimination, oppose racism and ensure Black Americans their constitutional rights. Austin devotes a significant amount of her time to the organization, specializing as an advisor to the group's youth and college division, seeing to it the group maintains professionalism and excels in their activism at all times. Under her leadership, these young people have won myriad awards at the state, local and national levels for their advocacy efforts. Austin is passionate about creating opportunities that address the needs and betterment of young adults. She firmly believes that the NAACP is the vehicle for African Americans and other minorities confined in low-performing schools or the criminal justice system to find their way out.



**DERRICK BANKS**  
Owner  
Freshly Faded

**B**anks is owner and operator of Freshly Faded Barber Shop, established in 2013 in North Park. Banks has been cutting hair professionally since 2005 and specializes in fades of all types on any hair texture. He designed the barber shop to be a hub of art and culture and a community resource. He said he opened his shop because there wasn't a shop in San Diego that would allow him to grow into the person he was becoming. He wanted to accurately display the diversity of African American culture and provide positive representation of that culture on a platform that is approachable and welcoming. A San Diego native and community activist, Banks regularly hosts men's groups that allow for conversations about mental health and overall wellness. Banks also lectures at high schools throughout the county. At the talks he gives, Banks speaks about walking in your purpose and designing your lifestyle through entrepreneurship.



**REAR ADM. STEPHEN BARNETT**  
Commander Navy Region Southwest  
US Navy

**A**s the Commander of Navy Region Southwest since July 2021, Rear Adm. Barnett heads the Navy's shore installation management headquarters for the Southwest Region, providing coordination of base operating support. More than 17 percent of the Navy's active-duty force and 25 percent of its fleet is stationed in San Diego. On his first day in command, Barnett oversaw response operations for recovering a downed search and rescue helicopter in Nevada. In his first six months of command, Barnett directed Navy Region Southwest personnel to improve the Navy's efforts in supporting environmental equity initiatives throughout the region. Barnett was previously commanding officer of Naval Base Coronado. During his military career, Barnett served as senior program analyst for Chief of Naval Operations, monitoring naval aviation's \$137 billion annual budget, and as deputy executive assistant to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations.



**JANICE BROWN**  
Principal  
Meyers Nave

**B**rown, a principal in Meyers Nave's labor and employment, workplace investigations and commercial litigation practices, has more than 35 years of trial, arbitration and appellate experience in state and federal courts. Brown's distinguished career began in the U.S. Justice Department where she quickly demonstrated outstanding legal expertise that earned her membership in the Honors Program and the "Outstanding Trial Attorney" and "Trial Lawyer of the Year" awards in under three years. She is recognized as a pioneer in the legal profession as founder and chief strategy officer of Brown Law Group, a woman- and minority-owned employment and business litigation firm in San Diego. She is a trusted advisor to clients, an inspirational mentor to colleagues and an influential leader in advancing diversity throughout the legal profession.



**MARY CHEEKS**  
President and General Manager  
Jamul Casino

**C**heeks, a gaming industry veteran with 30 years of experience, is one of only a handful of Black women nationwide to work in casino leadership. Cheeks joined the Jamul Casino team in May 2018, initially tasked with helping lead the team through a management transition and re-branding. In 2021, she oversaw a successful refinance of Jamul Casino, setting up the Jamul Indian Village Tribe for long-term financial success. Previously, she held senior level roles in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York gaming markets, and throughout her career, she has been responsible for the financial management of facilities with revenue in excess of \$1.2 billion. Cheeks has overseen numerous philanthropic efforts for the casino, including ongoing annual campaigns to support breast cancer research and veterans' organizations.



# JONES

OVER 20 YEARS OF DEVELOPING LEADERS



**JONES celebrates our CEO, Dr. Steven Jones, and all the distinguished San Diego Business Leaders being honored!**

These 50 Leaders continue a legacy of Black Leaders who have historically blazed a trail of Black Excellence throughout San Diego and beyond.. We, at **JONES, SALUTE YOU!**

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BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022**



**JULIE COKER**  
President and CEO  
San Diego Tourism Authority

Coker, is working to help the travel and tourism industry recover, grow and prosper. In the past year, she has overseen efforts to push San Diego to become a top destination in terms of hotel occupancy and rates. She oversaw the launch of the Tourism Accelerator pilot program, designed to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the local tourism industry by providing free membership, mentoring, education and networking opportunities to businesses owned by people of color, women, veterans and those who identify as LGBTQ+. Coker also helped raise \$10,000 in charitable contributions for Feeding San Diego and the San Diego Food Bank. Gov. Gavin Newsom named Coker to the California Travel & Tourism Commission to help guide the state's tourism recovery efforts. She previously served as the president and CEO of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau.



**DR. GAIL COLE-AVENT**  
Associate Vice President  
Student Life  
Cal State University San Marcos

Cole-Avent is an expert in student life and has served as a leader and instructor in higher education and educational organizations for 22 years. She was appointed to her current role in 2018 and since then has established a collective vision and integrated operations among 10 departments at the university. She seeks to enhance student success, contribute to their retention, and redefine student engagement and the campus experience. Cole-Avent understands the process of how an individual comes to a sense of identity as a student, as a member of a university community, and as a whole toward educational success. Her responsibilities include a range of student support programs designed to welcome, embrace, encourage and challenge students to succeed academically, socially and personally. She has led the strategy planning for the Student Life Centers for Identity, Inclusion and Empowerment.



**MICHAEL COX**  
CEO and Publisher  
The Official Black Magazine

Cox, CEO and publisher of The Official Black Magazine, a premier African American lifestyle magazine showcasing the beauty, excellence, culture and luxury within the community. The magazine highlights Black-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and creatives while providing a space for conversation on social, cultural and economic issues for the community. He is the executive director of the Catalyst Black Academy that takes African American entrepreneurs through a free three-month training program and quarterly programs for small Black-owned business owners to give them resources, tips and guidance to support their business. He has coached and trained more than 50 Black entrepreneurs and small business owners through his nonprofit.



**KIM DESMOND**  
Chief of Race and Equity  
City of San Diego

Desmond is the first Chief of Race and Equity for the City of San Diego, leading the Office of Race and Equity for Mayor Todd Gloria. Desmond has coordinated and developed citywide race and equity offices, normalizing racial equity tools and social justice practices over government systems with more than 11,000 employees. Desmond's work includes improving policy, service delivery and equitable distribution of resources to ensure priorities of equity are integrated in key programs, practices and budget decisions. Desmond also has extensive experience designing curriculum and facilitating training on racial equity and inclusion that contextualizes historic oppression, systemic racism, and implicit/explicit biases to guide departments on building equitable outcomes. She previously held a similar role in Denver for the mayor's office, where she led a citywide antiracism race and social justice academy.



**BRITTNY FERGUSON**  
Assistant Vice President, Micro Market  
Leader and Financial Center Manager  
U.S. Bank

Ferguson has worked in the banking and finance industry for more than 17 years. A finance coach, author, speaker and founder of Once Upon Her Life, she also focuses on self-empowerment. She joined U.S. Bank in 2018 and works to help her customers succeed financially – and inspire and lead her team in reaching their professional potential. In 2020, as both COVID-19 and a spotlight on racism in America emerged, she supported small business owners and farmers to help feed frontline essential workers and military members through a U.S. Bank program. With Once Upon Her Life, Ferguson coaches about living a life of intention, awakening to full potential and summoning the courage to honor the true calling, purposefully creating your own life story. She was named Volunteer of the Year in 2021 by Junior Achievement of San Diego County.



**TERRELL FLETCHER**  
Senior Pastor  
City of Hope International Church

Fletcher is widely known as a National Football League star, who played for the San Diego Chargers from 1995 until 2003. A University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate, Fletcher earned a degree in English literature. While playing football, Fletcher attended San Diego Seminary and in 2005, received a master's degree in religious studies. He founded City of Hope International Church in 2006 and in 2016, he was ordained a bishop over 16 churches within the River Fellowship Network. He authored in 2017 "The Book of You: Discover God's Plan and Transform Your Future" and in 2018, completed his doctorate in transformational leadership. Fletcher uses his education and experience to challenge his audience to live up to their full potential "on purpose and with purpose."



**CHRIS FRYSON**  
Vice President, Human Resources  
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices  
California Properties

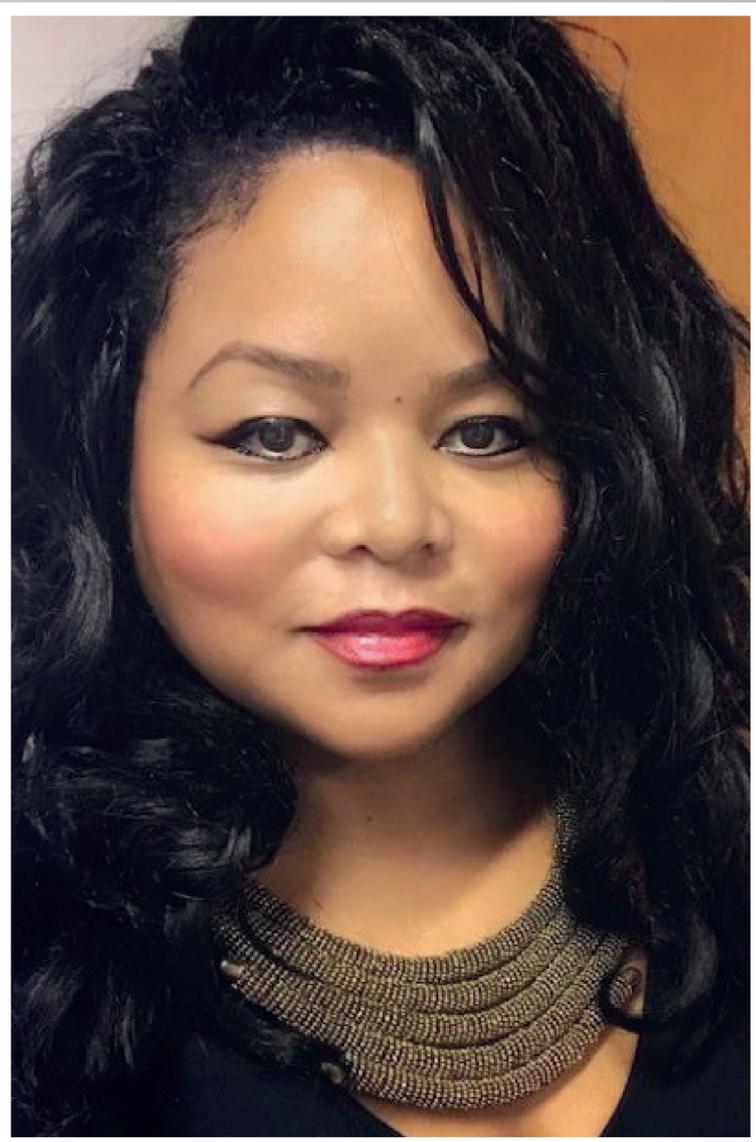
Fryson has been a top agent, branch manager and since August 2021 has been vice president of HR at for Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties. The prior three years, he managed the La Mesa and San Diego central BHHS offices. He has been designated as a Certified International Property Specialist. In 2020, he received the Award of Excellence as Office Manager of the Year from the Greater San Diego Association of Realtors. He is a co-director of BHHS California Properties Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council's Inclusive Mindset Promoting Action To Change Things (IMPACT). He previously held executive leadership roles in Human Resources for global brands such as General Electric, BP Amoco and CSX Transportation.



**KENNETH GETHERS**  
Senior Project Engineer / Principal  
C&S Engineers, Inc.

Gethers has been a leader at C&S Engineers for more than a decade, bringing forward the promotion of diversity, inclusion and outreach for the Black Engineers Society of San Diego State University. Gethers led the largest project in design for 2021 for the new San Diego International Airport aircraft Terminal 1 apron where aircraft will park, load, unload and receive service. He is responsible for airport and site/civil related design from conception through bidding and construction. His design and construction experience includes formulating project technical specifications, drafting contract drawings and completing related federal and state project forms and documentation. He has also improved ways for C&S to better its diversity platform for onboarding.





SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

**BLACK  
LEADERS  
OF INFLUENCE**

**TOP 50**  
2022

Sony Electronics congratulates

**India Jewell**

Legal Head of Consumer Products

on being selected as one of San Diego's  
Black Leaders of Influence.

Your leadership inspires innovation across our  
organization and is paving the way for the next  
generation. - Your Sony family

**SONY**

**SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022**



**SABRINA GOOSBY**  
Vice President of Programs  
Voices for Children

Since beginning her career at Voices for Children in 1988, Goosby has held a wide range of positions, working to give a voice to San Diego County's abused and neglected children in foster care. Goosby currently oversees recruitment and training of Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers and the group's Children's Assistance Fund, children's activities and events, and community partnerships. She serves on staff committees to promote workplace culture and to advance the entity's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Her close, consistent and caring relationships with youths over the years has made her the trusted go-to contact they reach out to, to share news about happy moments and their challenges into adulthood. She helped develop Voices for Children's Real Word, a speakers panel which gives current and former foster youths the opportunity to speak about their experiences and educate the community about foster care.



**PAMELA GRAY PAYTON**  
Vice President, Chief Impact and  
Partnerships Officer  
San Diego Foundation

Payton oversees The San Diego Foundation's Community Impact programs, leading the organization's strategic initiatives that advance quality of life for San Diegans. She helps develop cross-sector partnerships and implement future strategic plans for The San Diego Foundation, a nonprofit that collaborates with donors, government and other agencies, manages and invests donor-advised charitable funds and supports nonprofit organizations in the San Diego region. She previously served as the assistant VP, Community, State, and Local Government Relations, as well as assistant VP of University Communications at the University of San Diego. Payton has served as board president for the nonprofit RISE San Diego, which aims to advance urban leadership, and the Kim Center for Social Balance, which works to create gender equity in the workplace.



**HELEN GRIFFITH**  
Executive Director  
The Preuss School, UC San Diego

Griffith leads The Preuss School, where 95 percent of the students live below the poverty level and live in traditionally underserved communities. Under her guidance in partnership with UCSD Health, Preuss was the first school in San Diego to set up COVID-19 vaccination clinics open to students, their family members and the community. She also collaborated on other efforts to battle the pandemic. Griffith collaborated with the San Diego Association of Governments and the City of San Diego to pass an initiative to get students free transportation for a year in the county. She also works to raise scholarship funds for youth of color through gifts to various nonprofit foundations. She previously helped open the newly constructed Lincoln High with other administrators, was founding principal of Millennial-Tech Middle School and is founding executive director of Civic High.



**DR. CARL HENDERSON**  
Chief Diversity Officer  
NV5

Henderson has led and influenced a very traditional civil engineering firm to be more diverse and inclusive in its actions and engagement for its staff. He has experience in leading and managing a multidisciplinary office of between 20 to 50 staff. He has more than 24 years of experience in geotechnical engineering project roles to include project management, subsurface evaluation, and execution of various geotechnical engineering, soils and materials testing, field instrumentation, and construction oversight projects for a diverse array of clients. He has been recognized for the ability to develop employees' professional growth and increase their productivity. In his current role as Chief Diversity Officer, Henderson provided leadership and direction in NV5's overall Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives (both internally and externally). He was also recently appointed as Vice President of Geotechnical Services (West) for NV5.



*Congratulations Steve Sublett*  
on being recognized as one of San Diego's  
Top 50 Black Leaders of Influence!  
Thank you for your leadership and  
wonderful contributions to our business  
and local community.

**Steve Sublett**  
Sr. Vice President,  
CBIZ Benefits & Insurance Services Inc.  
CEO, CBIZ Life Insurance Solutions

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**NICHOLAS HOLMES**  
Senior Vice President and COO  
Rady Children's Hospital

Holmes has been senior vice president and COO at Rady's since October 2014. During a 15-year career in the U.S. Navy, Holmes was the head urologist of the Navy as the specialty advisor to the Navy Surgeon General. He assisted in shaping urology health care policy, manpower and graduate medical education. He served as the chairman of the Department of Urology at the Naval Medical Center San Diego from 2005-07. In 2007, he completed his military service and became the chief of Pediatric Urology at Rady's. Holmes in 2012 was named to the position of VP, Medical Director of Surgery for Children's Specialist of San Diego, the multi-specialty pediatric medical practice affiliated with Rady's. In 2017, he was among the first cohort of physicians to become board certified in Administrative Medicine by the American Board of Physician Specialties.



**INDIA JEWELL**  
Legal Head of Consumer Product  
North America Sony Electronics, Inc.

Jewell has more than 18 years of legal experience and has been at Sony Electronics Inc. for more than 10 years. In her current role, Jewell leads a team, counsels executives and provides overall legal strategy and responsibility for all consumer products and commercial transactions, including sales, trademark, advertising and antitrust matters. Formerly at General Electric in the Appliances & Lighting Division as Commercial Law Counsel, Jewell was responsible for global advertising for the appliances division, privacy and sales for the contract-builder sales channels. Jewell also mentors law students. She graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Law where she clerked as an extern at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.



**RUDOLPH A. JOHNSON III**  
President and CEO  
Neighborhood House Association

As a child, Johnson participated in the Neighborhood House Association (NHA) Federal Head Start program. Today, he leads the organization with great passion and a vision that has transformed NHA into one of the nation's model human services agencies. With 28 programs, 800 employees, a \$108 million budget, and an economic impact of over \$200 million to the local area, NHA has grown to be a major economic engine under Johnson's leadership. Under his leadership, the NHA has launched 20 new programs, including a Nutrition Services program that was recognized by Michelle Obama's Let's Move! program in 2012. Johnson also co-authored a book called "Strategies for Building an Agile Organization: Leading CEOs on Establishing Collaboration, Engaging Innovation, and Maximizing Value." He also received the Excellence in Achievement Award in Business from the Texas Southern University National Alumni Association.



**REGINALD JONES**  
President and CEO,  
Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation

Jones has been leading the Jacobs Group since 2012 and works with residents, organizations, political leaders and private entities for southeastern San Diego neighborhood revitalization. Jones has helped with successful real estate, economic development and community engagement efforts. He has developed partnerships that create equitable, community-driven change and opportunity in southeastern San Diego and works to build networks that support early-stage entrepreneurs and accelerate existing neighborhood businesses through training and mentorships, connections to regional partnerships, job opportunities and increased access to financial resources. He led CONNECT ALL @ the Jacobs Center, the region's first low-to-moderate income- and diversity-focused business accelerator program, guiding startups that want to grow rapidly with support they need to be successful.



# Congratulations

## Mary Cheeks

PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER, JAMUL CASINO

### 2022 BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE

The Jamul Indian Village of California is proud to Congratulate the President and General Manager of Jamul Casino for this regional honor. It's critically important that we honor the achievements of San Diego's Black Leaders as we celebrate Black History Month nationwide. We recognize African Americans have had a central role in our nation's history, and are vital to our health and wellbeing as a Country. We applaud Mary's inspiring leadership, and are thrilled to see her accomplishments appreciated throughout the region.



jamulindianvillage.com  
14191 Highway 94, Jamul, CA 91935

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**DR. STEVEN JONES**

CEO

Jones & Associates Consulting

Jones and his team have worked with leaders at Toyota, Honda, Qualcomm, the NBA and ViacomCBS guiding culture change, conducting bias training and supporting clients in conversations about how patterns of racial, gender and other forms of biases play out in the workforce. He has become a diversity, equity and inclusion global thought leader, speaking at conferences around the world. Jones was appointed to the board of directors for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, is a LEAD San Diego Executive Committee board member and served as past president of the San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce. In the past 30 years, Jones has created a firm that provides consulting, coaching, and training to leaders, schools, universities, cities and corporations around the world.



**BENJAMIN KELSO**

President

National Black Police Association  
San Diego Chapter

San Diego Police Department Capt. Benjamin Kelso is the former chapter president of the San Diego Black Police Officers Association and a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, San Diego Branch. As the National Black Police Association's local San Diego chapter president, Kelso is the organization's liaison to the chief of police, and he is directly responsible for the overall oversight and success of the organization, including recruitment and retention, community relations and budget. Kelso is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., where he formerly served as a local chapter officer of the Omicron Iota Sigma San Diego North County Alumni Chapter. He served as chapter president, vice president and secretary. Regionally he was the Southern California State Director and Western Regional Delegate. He currently is an adjunct professor at the University of San Diego.



**DR. GAIL KNIGHT**

Senior Vice President and  
Chief Medical Officer  
Rady Children's Hospital

Dr. Knight was the first Black woman named the organization's chief of staff and clinical director for the division of neonatology. In nearly 28 years of working in health care, Dr. Knight has cared for newborns, providing critical care, including cardiac surgery and heart-lung bypass at San Diego's only Level 4 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. During her tenure as chief medical officer, one of her roles has been in developing and supporting multiple joint ventures and collaborations with other health systems to deliver the best care possible for children and young adults. Dr. Knight has been active in clinical research, especially in advancing therapies for newborn babies with respiratory failure. Her philanthropic contributions and dedication to advancing pediatric health care has earned her the Tribute to Women Award, ELSO Award for Excellence in Life Support and Black History Month Local Hero Honoree.



**APRIL LASTER**

CEO and Founder  
Open Heart Leaders

Laster is CEO and founder of the nonprofit Open Heart Leaders, the only African American female-led organization in San Diego providing full wraparound services focused on mental health and education. The organization is a resource and network hub for underprivileged and urban communities. Laster is also executive producer and owner of a media brand LADY A. The brand which she began in 2016 includes a radio show called Crown Conversations and a YouTube show called LADY A Live, in which she covers different public and private topics in the world. Laster also helped develop and implement a company called Professional Strategies, which helps companies better run and manage their organization properly through training and realistic goal setting. Laster has been a corporate trainer, senior training coordinator, document control supervisor and quality assurance trainer while working in customer service, and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology fields.



It is our pleasure to congratulate two of our leaders and dear colleagues on winning the distinction of **2022 Top 50 Black Leaders of Influence Award.**

Thank you for exemplifying excellence, dedication, and leadership at Rady Children's and for your continuous impact on children in San Diego and beyond. It is a privilege and honor to be on Team Rady with you.



**Gail Knight, MD, MMM**

Senior Vice President and  
Chief Medical Officer,  
Rady Children's Hospital



**Nicholas Holmes, MD, MBA**

Senior Vice President and  
Chief Operating Officer,  
Rady Children's Hospital

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022



**MAYA MADSEN**  
Owner and Founder  
Maya's Cookies

Madsen's gourmet plant-based cookie company was initially a way for her to create an additional revenue stream while baking vegan goods, which was one of her passions. Madsen was a personal trainer at one time. As a vegan with a sweet tooth, she said she could not find a gourmet plant-based dessert cookie on the market and used that as an opportunity to create her own soft-baked gourmet vegan cookie. With the support and encouragement of her family, friends, personal training clients and neighbors, Maya's Cookies was born. She launched an e-commerce website, mayascookies.com, in 2016. In 2018, Madsen opened a commercial kitchen in Grantville, near Allied Gardens. Maya's brand won a PETA 2020 Libby Award for a chocolate chip s'mores flavor cookie. Maya's bakes about 1,000 cookies per day. Madsen helps mentor other Black entrepreneurs in the food industry and has rented out her commercial space to women plant-based bakers to help them reach their goals.



**J. BRUCE MAYBERRY**  
Board Chair of San Diego Central Black Chamber of Commerce  
President and CEO of JBM Energy

Mayberry leads JBM Energy Solutions, a provider of professional services for simple to complex projects in the construction, utility and energy industries. He previously was project manager for San Diego Gas and Electric, in which he was responsible for identifying and introducing contract opportunities to women, minority, service-disabled veterans and LGBT businesses. As chair of the County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce Board, Mayberry is a leader in helping to build generational wealth in the San Diego Black community through business enterprise, employment, education and investment. He is also chair for the San Diego Community Housing Corporation, trustee at the San Diego History Center and at the Fleet Science Center, on the San Diego Black Workers Center steering committee and on the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Black and African American Advisory Panel.



**MILES MCPHERSON**  
Pastor  
The Rock Church

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and raised as one of five children on Long Island, McPherson's parents were a nurse and a police officer. A football star in high school, he played for the University of New Haven, was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in the National Football League and later played for the San Diego Chargers. While a football player, he got hooked on cocaine, then turned his life over to God and ended the addiction. He later became a youth pastor at a local church in San Diego, earned his Master of Divinity from Azusa Pacific University in 1991 and then started Rock Church in 2000. The Rock has more than 18,000 weekly attenders across five campuses and Rock services are broadcast around the world. McPherson has written eight books. The latest, "The Third Option," takes on the issue of racial reconciliation.



**EUGENE "MITCH" MITCHELL**  
Senior Vice President of Diversity and Community Partnerships  
Sempra

As senior vice president of diversity and community partnerships for Sempra, Mitchell advances the company's high-performance culture by leading a collective effort to enhance diversity and inclusion within Sempra, its operating companies and in the communities it serves. Mitchell previously was vice president of state governmental affairs and external affairs for San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Gas Company, Sempra's regulated California utilities. Before then, Mitchell served in a variety of roles in governmental affairs and community relations for the City of San Diego labor and business entities. He serves on the boards of San Diego Housing Commissioner, the Lucky Duck Foundation, Sharp Hospital Board of Trustees, Voice of San Diego, San Diego Museum of Art and San Diego Opera Board of Directors.



**Congratulations  
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— Honoree —  
**2022 Black Leaders of Influence  
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**SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022**



**ELLEN NASH**

Chair  
Black American Political Association of  
California San Diego Chapter

A southeastern San Diego native and San Diego State graduate, Nash was instrumental in forming the first Black Gospel Choir at SDSU. Over a 28-year period, she worked her way up from student assistant to manager of SDSU's Human Resources Department. She then served as manager of Human Resources at UC San Diego's Health System for five years before retiring. Nash owns a Transamerica World Financial Group business, offering financial education, products, and services to families, employees and individuals. She volunteers with San Diego Urban League, NAACP and the Urban Collaborative Project. She currently serves as chair of the Black American Political Association of California, San Diego chapter. She also serves as administrator at Faith Tabernacle Family Worship Center.



**TIMOTHY PARKER**

Owner and Founder  
Chula Vista Brewery

Originally from the south side of Chicago, Parker traveled around the world with the U.S. Navy, and said he learned from personal experience that beer brings people of all backgrounds together. Still an active member of the Navy, in 2002 he met his wife Dali, who has nearly 20 years of management experience. He said he had a belief that the craft beer scene was lacking in the Black community, and that it was underrepresented in the South Bay area of San Diego County. A home brewer for years, Parker said while running along Third Avenue in Chula Vista he saw a vacant storefront and started to envision creating a community space in the neighborhood in which people could enjoy drinking quality beer. Parker said his goal is to open doors, create opportunities and use experiences to learn and grow, not just himself, but the community as a whole.



**DR. BECKY PETITT**

Vice Chancellor for  
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
UC San Diego

Dr. Becky R. Pettitt is Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the University of California, San Diego, assuming the role March 2015. She is a visionary, an inspirational leader, and a nationally recognized consultant, specializing in equity and diversity in higher education, organizational learning, and organizational change. Dr. Pettitt's contributions to Black excellence have also been recognized by being honored with the Association of African American Educators' "Unsung Hero Award", and being named a "Trailblazer in Higher Education" by the County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce. She holds a bachelor of science in psychology and received both a master's and doctorate in education from Texas A&M University. She is a certified mediator and holds two management certificates from Harvard University.



**RAMLA SAHID**

Executive Director  
Partnership for the Advancement of  
New Americans

Sahid is the executive director of the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans. Witnessing as a young person the systemic and structural barriers faced by refugee women and their families, Sahid started PANA, an organization that aims to bring local refugees into San Diego's political, cultural and economic mainstream. Led by the communities it serves, PANA raises refugee voices to increase their visibility and impact in the region. PANA does this by bringing hundreds of impacted residents to meetings with their political representatives to voice their experiences and change policies that affect them and their economic, educational, health, and housing needs. As executive director of the organization, Sahid has overseen its growth into an important civic engagement and advocacy group.



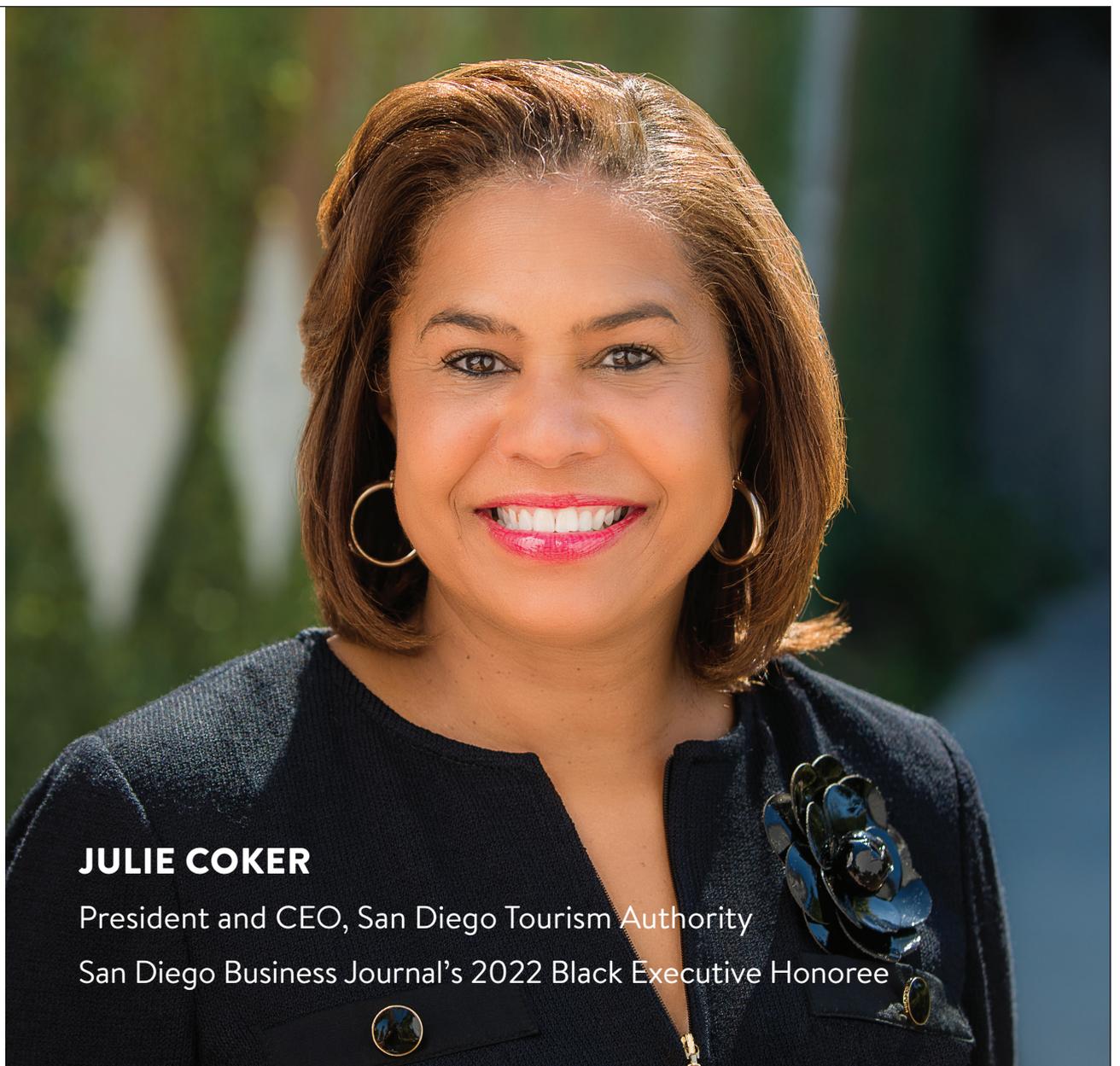
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New Americans

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

**BLACK  
LEADERS  
OF INFLUENCE**  
**TOP 50**  
2022

Congratulations, Julie,  
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industry forward.



**JULIE COKER**

President and CEO, San Diego Tourism Authority  
San Diego Business Journal's 2022 Black Executive Honoree

**SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
BLACK LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2022**



**SEAN SCOTT**  
President and Dean  
California Western School of Law

Scott became the president and dean at Cal Western in 2020, modernizing the oldest law school in San Diego with a focus on diversifying the legal academy and profession. She is one of less than 30 Black female law school deans in the U.S. One of her new initiatives is focused on law, technology and justice. The program expands on her development of law careers of the future, including cyber security and data law, and addresses racial bias inherent in new forms of digital technology. In the past year, she has helped the school increase its annual fund giving, including about \$1 million raised in new scholarships. She also began a new promotion path that creates equity among faculty members. Scott previously served as senior associate dean for the faculty at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. Scott serves on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee of the New Children's Museum and the board of governors of the Society of American Law Teachers.



**RICKY SHABAZZ**  
President and CEO  
San Diego City College

Shabazz provides executive leadership at San Diego City College, a school that serves 17,000 students and focuses on student completion, success and social justice. Among previous positions, he has served as VP of Student Services at San Bernardino Valley College, dean of Student Services at El Camino College's Compton Center and associate director of admissions at Harvey Mudd College. Shabazz has more than 20 years of executive experience advancing academic achievement, educational equity, diversity, and improving access to higher education. He specializes in enrollment management and cultivating institutional policies, processes, and culture that provide personalized student experiences and improves student outcomes. His research expertise is in increasing college access for underrepresented students. Shabazz serves on the boards of Sharp hospitals, the San Diego Workforce Partnership, the Jackie Robinson YMCA and YPO Pacific West.



**FELICIA SHAW**  
Executive Director  
Women's Museum of California

Shaw is a passionate leader committed to the advancement of arts and culture, and heads the only museum in California, one of only five in the U.S., exclusively dedicated to women's history. Shaw manages all aspects of the museum's day-to-day business operations and oversees its programs and vast archival collections, with more than 20,000 artifacts. Last year, Shaw moved the museum's headquarters and archives to Balboa Park and began creating a new educational space in the southeastern portion of San Diego. Under her leadership, the 39-year-old museum pivoted to a post-pandemic "museum without walls" model – offering online programs and in-person events and exhibits. Shaw manages all aspects of the museum, including the DETOUR program, which helps high school girls get introduced to careers in museum management. Shaw also distributed \$250,000 in funding to 100 San Diego artists as the co-chair of the COVID-19 Artist Relief Program and produced the Eighth Annual Women's Film Festival San Diego.



**ANDREW STRONG**  
Director of the Office of Equity  
& Racial Justice  
County of San Diego

In February 2021, Strong was named director of the County of San Diego's Office of Equity and Racial Justice, where he plans, directs and evaluates the overall activities of the group. Strong spent nine years in the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman before settling in San Diego. He began working for San Diego County in the Human Resources department and was promoted into key leadership positions. Before he took on the director's role, he was chief of staff of the Chief Administrative Office, where he directed and coordinated planning and project activities with county departments and other public agencies. He is also a commissioner with the City of Chula Vista's Growth Management Oversight Commission. As the director of the Office of Equity & Racial Justice, part of his role is to engage with underserved communities in the county's budget-making process.



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**STEVE SUBLETT**  
Senior Vice President  
CBIZ Benefits & Insurance  
Services, Inc.

Sublett has more than 30 years of experience and leadership as an entrepreneur and senior executive. At CBIZ, he partners with the division product line business leaders on key priorities. Sublett has responsibility for oversight of the retail and wholesale distribution channels for life insurance within CBIZ. He supports the community as a volunteer and donor and was the former chairman of the board of Promises2Kids, creating a brighter future for foster children in San Diego County. He continues to be actively involved with Promises2Kids and has awarded more than \$50,000 in grants over the last five years through personal and industry partnerships. Sublett has also been an instrumental leader in CBIZ's diversity and inclusion task force. He sponsors several workgroups created to support the development, planning and execution of the company's long-term national diversity and inclusion efforts and speaks on panels and discussions about how companies can begin and start their own diversity and inclusion efforts.



**DUSTIN SUTTON**  
Founder and CEO  
Black Commercial Real Estate  
Network

Sutton is a commercial real estate professional and entrepreneur with more than 17 years of experience in real estate, sales, marketing and business development. Passionate about solving problems and adding value, he focuses on integrity, excellence, teamwork and personal growth. Sutton has managed more than 20 million square feet of real estate across 19 states, including residential, mixed-use, office, retail and industrial portfolios. His current real estate duties include the development of relationships with owners and tenants, supervision of vendors, general property oversight, problem solving, strategic planning, construction and project management, budgeting, leasing and financial reporting. He helped rebrand and expand the services of Meissner CRES, a local commercial real estate firm. Sutton is also a board member of San Diego Center for Children, a mentor through Promises2Kids and has helped launch their minority mentorship program. Sutton also created and launched PortalView Inspections, a Black-owned tech startup in beta testing and available on the Apple app store.



**MICHAEL TAYLOR**  
President  
NWB Environmental Services, LLC  
NWB Imaging

Taylor is an archeologist and a filmmaker. NWB Environmental Services is a cultural resource management firm that provides an array of archaeological services, including FAA compliant aerial services using drones. NWB Imaging is an Emmy Award-winning cinematic film production company that specializes in corporate videos and aerial cinematography. Taylor has written, directed and produced short films and videos. He is the host, director and executive producer of Theatre Corner, an interview series that increases diverse interest and involvement in the national theatre scene by spotlighting Black actors, playwrights, directors and other theater and film professionals. The show can be seen KPBS, and the PBS digital platform. Taylor since 2016 has served on the Board of Directors for The Old Globe. A veteran of the United States Marine Corps, Taylor was an active Marine for 13 years.



**TASHONDA TAYLOR**  
Vice President Customer Operations  
San Diego Gas & Electric

Taylor is vice president of customer operations for San Diego Gas & Electric, one of Sempra's regulated California utilities. She is responsible for customer field services, customer programs and business services. Taylor began her career at SDG&E more than 21 years ago as an electrical engineer in the engineering rotation program. She has held a number of leadership positions within the company, including director of design and construction management; director of safety, wellness and employee care services; and other leadership roles in project management, construction and operations, and engineering. She currently serves on the board of directors for Athena and the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum. She is also a lifetime member of the National Society of Black Engineers. Taylor earned a B.S. in Electrical and Electronic Engineering from California State University, Sacramento and an MBA from National University.



**VICKIE TURNER**  
Partner Emeritus  
Wilson Turner Kosmo, LLP

Turner has more than 40 years of experience in litigation filed against corporations, with emphasis in product liability, class actions, general business litigation and warranty. Turner has represented companies in the defense of tort and business disputes, successfully defending manufacturers, distributors and retailers in product liability claims throughout California and 12 other states. She was chosen for inclusion in "The Best Lawyers in America" in the area of product liability. Turner has been honored for her community service by Union Bank and KPBS, by The Salvation Army and was the 2015 Woman of the Year for the California 79th Assembly District. Turner is an adjunct professor at California Western School of Law and was an adjunct professor at the University of San Diego School of Law. She is on the board of Endeavor Bank, the National Bar Institute and the University of California Chancellor's Advisory Committee. She is also the founder and director of the Turner Dream Foundation and LINKS to STEM.



**KEON WEST**  
Senior Superintendent  
Clark Construction

West has headed construction of Snapdragon Stadium in Mission Valley, a 35,000-capacity multi-use facility. West is also overseeing site infrastructure work to support the Mission Valley plan. One of the largest active construction projects in San Diego, this development is playing a vital role in the region's economic recovery. West's career spans 15 years with a portfolio of projects that include high-rise residential structures, commercial office buildings and sports facilities. He supports local, grassroots programs such as Samaritan Inns, Boys and Girls Club of America and So Others Might Eat. West has also renovated facilities to better serve the homeless and those battling addictions, helped to engage disadvantaged youth, and participated in countless food and clothing drives. West volunteers for the Associated School of Construction student competition, where construction management and civil engineering students from various regions participate in an intense, multi-day, academic tournament.



**DWAYNE WHEATLEY**  
Vice President,  
Commercial Operations  
ResMed

Wheatley in the past year, along with a nearly 500-member ResMed team in San Diego and nationwide, delivered medical devices to people living with sleep apnea, COPD and other chronic diseases. Wheatley has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and is an active member of the National Society of Black Engineers - San Diego chapter, which seeks to increase the number of culturally responsible Black engineers and scientists entering their respective fields. At ResMed, Wheatley dedicates time and energy to diversity and inclusion efforts. He serves as executive sponsor and avid advocate for the company's Black Excellence employee resource group. He also actively promotes ResMed's eight other ERGs at ResMed to raise awareness of issues impacting other colleagues in the workplace.



**AJ WILLIAMS**  
Owner and General Manager  
Hammond's Gourmet Ice Cream

Williams, a San Diego resident for 30 years, earned an MBA from San Diego State University in Business Information Systems. Before becoming the owner of Hammond's Gourmet Ice Cream, which has two locations in San Diego - on Sports Arena Boulevard and on University Avenue - he worked in corporate America for 25 years. Hammond's has been around since 2014 but Williams acquired it in 2019 because he said he believed it was a great product. The ice cream comes from Hawaii through a deep freeze process that preserves the flavors. At least 50 percent of the ingredients come from the island itself. The ice cream is sold in more than 100 flavors that rotate regularly, with 32 available at any given time, and include vegan options. Ice cream "flights" are a popular option at his stores. The rich ice cream is made with 18 percent butterfat.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



**LEE WILLS-IRVINE**  
U.S. Chief Diversity Officer  
ASML

Wills-Irvine is head of diversity and inclusion at ASML, a global semiconductor technology company headquartered in the Netherlands, with about 1,500 employees in San Diego. She is a thought leader with a record of success in developing, implementing and advancing people strategies at global organizations like Qualcomm, Intel and Sony. She joined ASML in December 2020 as the company's first diversity and inclusion officer. Wills-Irvine guides and counsels organizational leaders on the integration of diversity and inclusion into long-term operations. She leads ASML's diversity and inclusion strategy including awareness, cultural competency, leadership accountability and employee engagement. She has established U.S.- and global-based diversity councils in the organization. A San Diego native, Wills-Irvine speaks on human resources topics and is a trustee of National University and serves on the board for the San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce.



**LUKE WOOD**  
Vice President of Student Affairs  
and Campus Diversity  
San Diego State University  
Professor of Education

Wood has delivered more than 3,000 scholarly professional and conference presentations, and has authored more than 170 publications, including 77 peer-reviewed journal articles and 16 books. Wood's research focuses on factors affecting the educational success of boys and men of color, with a specific focus on early childhood education and community colleges. His research examines social, psychological, academic, environmental and institutional contributors to positive outcomes. Wood also serves as the co-director of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab, a national research and practice center that partners with community colleges to support their capacity in advancing outcomes for underserved students of color. Wood holds a master's degree in Higher Education Leadership with a concentration in Student Affairs and a bachelor's degree in Black History and Politics from California State University, Sacramento.



**LEON WYDEN**  
Vice President, Finance and Administrative  
Services and Chief Financial Officer  
Cal State University San Marcos

Wyden was appointed to his role at CSU San Marcos in May 2021. Since then, he has overseen caring for CSUSM's financial well-being and stability. His leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic supported the college's strategic investments. He previously served as vice president for administration and finance at Frostburg (Md.) State University, was vice president for finance and administration at Tiffin University in Tiffin, Ohio, and was associate vice president of finance and planning at Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa. He was also deputy controller at Howard University in Washington, D.C. At CSUSM, Wyden oversees 240 employees in administration, business and financial services, facilities development and management, human resources, the police department on campus, and the CSUSM corporation.



**TONY YOUNG**  
CEO of Civic Link Strategies and  
President of RISE San Diego

Young served as policy advisor to Congressman Jim Bates and County Supervisor Leon Williams. For a decade, he was an educator for the San Diego Unified School District before serving as chief of staff to City Councilman Charles Lewis, who was elected in 2002. Subsequently, he was elected to the San Diego City Council, where he served as the first council president pro tem and two consecutive terms as council president. Young later joined the American Red Cross San Diego/Imperial County chapter as CEO. Under his leadership, the Red Cross created collaborative relationships with private and nonprofit businesses, government entities, and community organizations to better help with disaster and emergency preparedness plans on a regional level. Young also founded two companies in 2014 – Civic Link Strategies and RISE San Diego.



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