

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE:  
Nonprofit & Philanthropy



**T**HERE ARE MANY IMPACTFUL ORGANIZATIONS HERE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY DOING INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT work, and the leaders behind those organizations are essential contributors to the fabric of our community. They steward their teams through a delicate balance of running a business while selflessly serving essential and worthy causes.

In this section, we acknowledge some of the leading lights of the nonprofit sector – inspirational individuals who have stepped up to provide examples of forming powerful partnerships and developing strategies to better meet the many needs of our community and beyond. We’ve alphabetically compiled this lineup of superb nonprofit leaders and supporters, along with information about their careers, roles and relevant accomplishments they’ve achieved.

*Methodology: The professionals featured in these pages did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted to the Los Angeles Business Journal. Those selected for inclusion were reviewed by the editorial department. The professionals were chosen based on a demonstration of impact made on the profession and on the Los Angeles community.*

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**JENNIFER GUTIERREZ ARMSTRONG**

Chief Operating Officer  
Baby2Baby

As COO of Baby2Baby, Jennifer Gutierrez Armstrong oversees organizational strategy, internal operations and programming for one of the country’s most impactful nonprofits serving children living in poverty. Since joining Baby2Baby in 2013 and rising to COO in 2021, Armstrong has played a critical role in scaling the organization to reach more than one million children annually.

Under Armstrong’s leadership, the organization has distributed over half a billion essential items in the last 14 years – including diapers, formula, clothing, and hygiene products – to children in need. One of her most significant achievements to date has been leading the development of Baby2Baby’s groundbreaking diaper manufacturing system.



**JULEE BROOKS**

CEO  
Woodcraft Rangers

Julee Brooks, CEO of Woodcraft Rangers since 2018, is a visionary social entrepreneur with nearly two decades of experience in delivering high-caliber family programming and guiding nonprofit growth. Under Brooks’ guidance, Woodcraft Rangers has emerged as a leader in youth development, addressing critical challenges in education with innovative solutions. She has strategically aligned the agency’s vision with its mission, fostering a culture of equity and inclusion that prioritizes high-quality expanded learning experiences in a people-centered environment.

Under Brooks’ leadership, Woodcraft Rangers has leveraged partnerships along with local and state funding, implementing pioneering strategies such as inclusion support for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



**LARRY BROWN**

President  
National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 24

Larry Brown has served as the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) president of Los Angeles Branch 24 since 1989. In 1998 he began serving as chairman of the three-member NALC Board of Trustees. He also was the branch’s mutual benefit association representative from 1981 to 1989.

A tireless community activist, Brown is vice president of the Los Angeles Federation of Labor and chairman of the Los Angeles Labor Community Services, AFL-CIO, and he sits on the advisory committee of the Los Angeles Trade Technical College. Brown also plays a prominent personal and leadership role in political affairs as NALC’s congressional district liaison for California Rep. Maxine Waters and as an active member of the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee.



**THE COMMUNITY EXCHANGE TEAM**

Hollywood Food Coalition

The Community Exchange program serves as the food rescue and distribution arm of Hollywood Food Coalition. It is powered by a team of nine people, who handle the complete cycle of food recovery – from collecting and transporting rescued food to coordinating and communicating with nonprofit recipients and volunteers.

The team rescues food from a collective network of over 700 businesses, food producers and organizations, and distributes it to organizations serving low-income and food-insecure people across LA County. About 8% of the team’s rescued food supplies Hollywood Food Coalition’s Community Dinner program, while 88% is distributed to a network of over 170 nonprofits. Over the past five years, the team has rescued over 11 million pounds of food (9.2 million meals).



**MELISSA COSTELLO**

Retail Market Region Manager; SVP  
Columbia Bank  
(Formerly Umpqua Bank)

As senior vice president and market region manager for Columbia Bank (formerly Umpqua Bank), overseeing California, Colorado, Arizona, and Nevada, Melissa Costello directs more than 40 branches, driving growth in deposits, loans, and customer relationships while ensuring strong operational integrity.

Costello’s approach combines data-driven decision-making with a commitment to customer experience. She has led initiatives to create and implement the bank’s retail playbook, improve retail reporting systems, and strengthen cross-functional partnerships between retail teams and corporate banking centers. Costello coaches branch managers to consistently exceed production goals while fostering an inclusive and empowering workplace culture.



**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**PATRICK MAHONEY**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF METRO LA



LA BUSINESS JOURNAL’S LEADERS OF INFLUENCE, NON-PROFIT & PHILANTHROPY

Under Patrick’s leadership, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Los Angeles has become a model for comprehensive youth services—expanding innovative programs in STEM, workforce readiness, arts, and wellness.

Each year, more than 2,500 youth are empowered through these life-changing opportunities and caring mentorship to discover themselves, overcome challenges, and reach their full potential.

Join us on October 17, 2025, as we honor champions of youth development in Los Angeles and rally support for the programs that help turn dreams into realities for the next generation of leaders, innovators, and creatives.

**DREAMBUILDERS GALA | OCTOBER 17, 2025 | 5-11 PM | SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER**  
Learn more & secure your sponsorship at [bgcmla2025.givesmart.com](http://bgcmla2025.givesmart.com)



**Congratulations, Beulah Ku!**

We’re proud to celebrate Beulah’s contributions to affordable housing advocacy as she receives the **Leader of Influence: Nonprofit and Philanthropy** award.



**Beulah Ku**  
Chief Strategy Officer, Century Housing



**CENTURY**

Affordable Housing Is Our Mission

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**JESSE DURKIN**

Executive Director, Programs  
Think Together

As executive director of programs for Think Together, Jesse Durkin leads a \$20 million regional operation serving eight school districts. Durkin oversees a team of over 500 educators who deliver high-quality after-school programs across 67 school sites, supporting more than 4,000 students. His leadership has been instrumental in expanding program impact and ensuring students receive the academic and enrichment support they need to thrive.

In Fall 2023, Durkin collaborated with the organization’s program design team and South Whittier School District to help launch Think Together’s first-ever “High Dosage Tutoring” program. This program aligns with grade-level standards, aiming to accelerate student learning by as much as a year and a half for every four months that students are part of it.

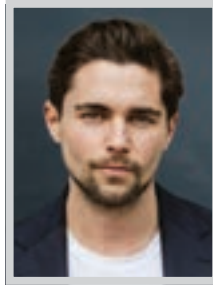


**RON FRIERSON**

Director, Economic Development  
for the US West Region  
Amazon

Ron Frierson is a visionary leader whose career bridges the public, private and nonprofit sectors with a singular focus on driving inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability in LA. As director of economic development for the Western US at Amazon, Frierson oversees strategic investment, site selection, and public partnerships across five states.

Under Frierson’s leadership, Amazon deployed the company’s largest heavy-duty electric truck fleet at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and introduced same-day delivery via Amazon Pharmacy to increase local health-care access. In 2024, Frierson was elected as the first black chair of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC).

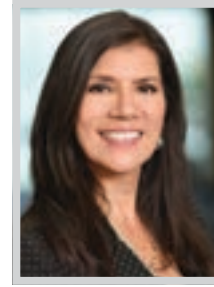


**CARL GAMBINO**

Founder and Principal  
Gambino Group At Compass

Carl Gambino, founder of the Gambino Group at Compass is one of the most influential and widely recognized agents in the real estate industry. With over \$2 billion in sales, Gambino has continually broken records while representing some of the most reputable names in business, sports and entertainment.

When the California wildfires forced families out of their homes, Gambino immediately began coordinating with brokers across the city to identify available furnished rentals and short-term housing. He and his team worked around the clock to help clients, friends, and even strangers find a safe place to land. He launched the Gambino Group’s Complimentary Concierge Relocation Service to connect displaced residents with trusted local resources to help ease the stress of starting over.

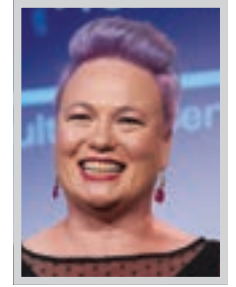


**MARISSA GOLDBERG**

CEO  
Doheny Eye Institute

Marissa Goldberg, CEO of Doheny Eye Institute, has dedicated over 30 years to vision research. With a deep commitment to the mission of Doheny, Goldberg is instrumental in attracting top vision scientists and under her leadership, the critical research continues to make transformative discoveries into the causes of retinal diseases.

Goldberg strongly believes Doheny Eye Institute is one of the outstanding vision research institutes in the world because of its steadfast commitment to advancing vision science and education. The exceptional scientists and staff, as well as Doheny’s broad approach to improving the quality of lives in our community contribute to Doheny’s mission to further the conservation, improvement, and restoration of human eyesight.



**SHANE MURPHY GOLDSMITH**

President & CEO  
Liberty Hill Foundation

Shane Murphy Goldsmith has led Liberty Hill Foundation since 2013 and has served on its staff since 2009. She has worked closely with the foundation’s board, staff and community partners to develop strategies, galvanize and support grassroots leaders, and deliver effective results. In that time, she has grown the foundation’s budget from \$8 million to more than \$30 million, enabling it to provide training, grants and campaign support to community-based organizations and leaders across LA.

Goldsmith spearheaded the launch of “Agenda for a Just Future,” which has supported the efforts of campaigns for reductions in youth incarceration, bans on neighborhood oil drilling, and strong rent caps and protections for tenants.



**CONGRATULATIONS,  
JOHN MURILLO!**

Recognized as a Leader of Influence in Non-Profit & Philanthropy by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*

As the Enterprise Bank & Trust Community Bank President in Los Angeles, John Murillo exemplifies the spirit of service and leadership. Inside and outside of the office, John is steadfastly committed to giving back to the community and sharing his knowledge and time with nonprofits to further their missions. Most importantly, he inspires others to do the same.

Thank you for your dedication to making a lasting impact in our community.

[www.enterprisebank.com/la-oc](http://www.enterprisebank.com/la-oc)



LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**KEITH GREGORY**  
Partner  
Snell & Wilmer

With over 35 years of experience, Keith Gregory is a respected and accomplished leader within the legal industry, serving as partner at Snell & Wilmer and chair of its Commercial Litigation Group in LA. He also co-chairs Snell & Wilmer’s First-Gen Forward program, which supports first-generation attorneys as they navigate the legal profession, providing mentorship, guidance and access to resources that promote growth and success.

Gregory is an active volunteer and supporter of numerous charitable and civic initiatives and brings the same energy and dedication to his community work as he does to his legal practice. Whether through pro bono service, board involvement, or mentoring the next generation of leaders, Gregory leads with humility and purpose.



**KEN GROUF**  
Chief Executive Officer  
A Sense of Home

Ken Grouf is a leader whose career bridges mission-driven innovation, operational excellence, and deep human impact. As the recently announced CEO of A Sense of Home (ASOH), Grouf brings decades of experience across nonprofit, tech and retail sectors to the pressing social challenge of preventing homelessness by creating dignified, fully furnished homes for displaced individuals and families. Beginning as CEO in early 2025, Grouf — in partnership with founder Georgie Smith — jumped in to support ASOH during a time of rapid growth and transformation.

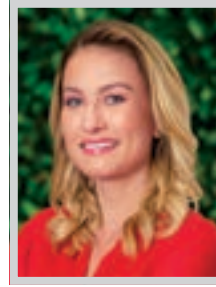
Grouf previously served on the founding teams of some of the most recognized social impact organizations in the US, each known for pioneering models of youth engagement, volunteerism, and public-private partnerships.



**CYNTHIA MITCHELL HEARD**  
President & CEO  
Los Angeles Urban League

Cynthia Mitchell Heard is the president and CEO of the Los Angeles Urban League. Heard has over 25 years of experience in nonprofit management, government, philanthropy, community and corporate engagement. She has been an intricate partner in the field as a nationally acclaimed social impact strategist, coalition builder and philanthropic change agent. As a strong executive leader, Heard has worked to develop exemplary models to break through economic barriers to create systemic change for marginalized communities both locally, nationally and internationally.

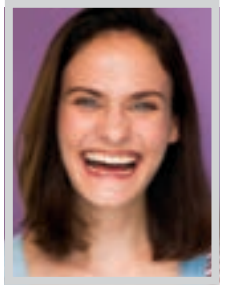
In response to the catastrophic Eaton Canyon wildfires in Altadena, Cynthia led the Los Angeles Urban League in swiftly deploying resources to assist survivors.



**MELANIE HOROWITZ**  
Principal  
GHJ

Melanie Horowitz, CPA, is an emerging leader at GHJ and plays a key role in its nonprofit practice. Horowitz provides auditing and consulting services to a diverse range of nonprofit clients, including organizations that offer social services like child development, mental health and educational services. Her expertise helps these organizations maintain financial stability and compliance and enables them to focus on their critical missions.

Horowitz was promoted to principal in 2024 in recognition of her commitment to high-quality service and professional excellence. Additionally, Horowitz brings experience in the for-profit sector, which enriches her perspective and approach to nonprofit accounting. Her work ensures that nonprofit organizations can operate effectively and transparently.



**MAGGIE JORGENSON**  
Employee Communications & Engagement Specialist  
GoodRX

Maggie Jorgenson is a staunch advocate for local nonprofits through her work at GoodRX, with a special focus on the Children’s Lifesaving Foundation — a nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of underserved, BIPOC youth and houseless families living in shelters and transitional housing in LA. Through her work with the Children’s Lifesaving Foundation, Jorgenson has organized on-site toy holiday drives, Thanksgiving volunteer events, and has facilitated financial sponsorships for the organization’s “Coastal Eco-Mariners Surf Camp Program” for underserved youth in LA.

Jorgenson is also an accomplished film producer dedicated to elevating narratives centered on female and LGBTQ+ experiences.

CONGRATULATIONS TO  
**ELDA MENDEZ-LEMUS**  
FOR BEING NOMINATED AS A  
**LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
LEADER OF INFLUENCE, NON-PROFITS  
& PHILANTHROPY



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LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**PATIMA KOMOLAMIT**

*Executive Director*  
Center for the Pacific-Asian Family, Inc.

For over 20 years, Patima Komolamit has dedicated her life and career to advocating for social justice, with a focus on survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Her unwavering commitment to ending gender-based violence is evident through her 18-year tenure at the Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), where she currently serves as executive director.

Komolamit is dedicated to ending violence against women and children, especially for those from underserved communities. She has been an integral part of CPAF for nearly two decades, starting as a family advocate providing direct services and advocacy to Asian and Pacific Islander women and children who were survivors of violence. She also led CPAF's largest team as the shelter program director from 2016-2023.

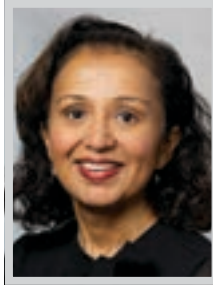


**BEULAH KU**

*Chief Strategy Officer*  
Century Housing

Over more than two decades, chief strategy officer Beulah Ku has guided Century Housing through strategic growth, market shifts, and the launch of innovative initiatives that have expanded housing opportunities for Californians in need. Ku leads the development and execution of Century's organizational growth strategy, identifying high-value partnerships, pursuing joint ventures and acquisitions, and overseeing critical capital projects.

Ku has been instrumental in advancing innovative financing approaches, helping the organization step in when traditional lenders retreat, ensuring mission-driven developers can move projects forward. Her strategic leadership has been pivotal in shaping Century's engagement with the newly formed Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency.

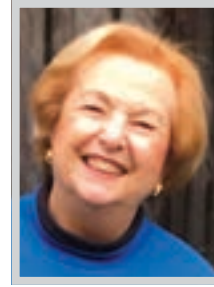


**MANJUSHA (MANJU) P. KULKARNI**

*Executive Director*  
AAPI Equity Alliance

Manjusha P. Kulkarni is the executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance, a coalition of over 40 community-based organizations which serves and represents the 1.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County. Kulkarni's career has been dedicated to advancing the core values of equity and inclusion against racism directed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as well as communities of color more broadly.

In February 2020, after a local Asian American child was attacked at the start of the COVID pandemic, Kulkarni led the nation's first press conference with policymakers and advocates garnering international attention on the discrimination Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders were facing.

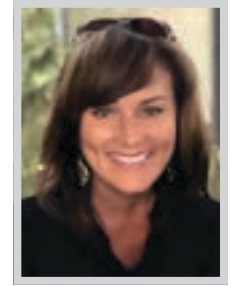


**SHERRY LAPIDÉS**

*Board Member*  
Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley

Philanthropist Sherry Lapidés has been a dedicated member of the West San Fernando Valley for many years. Lapidés has served on the board of Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley (BGCWV) for almost a decade. She also serves on the boards of CSUN's Soria and Northridge Hospital.

In the past 12 months, Lapidés has been instrumental in supporting the BGCWV Teen Center program, which focuses support for students in sixth through eighth grade. Lapidés has continued to find creative ways to support making the environment at the club a positive one, creating a second home for students to attend to at after school. As the liaison for the Teen Center, she continues to engage the staff, supporting them with advice and guidance.

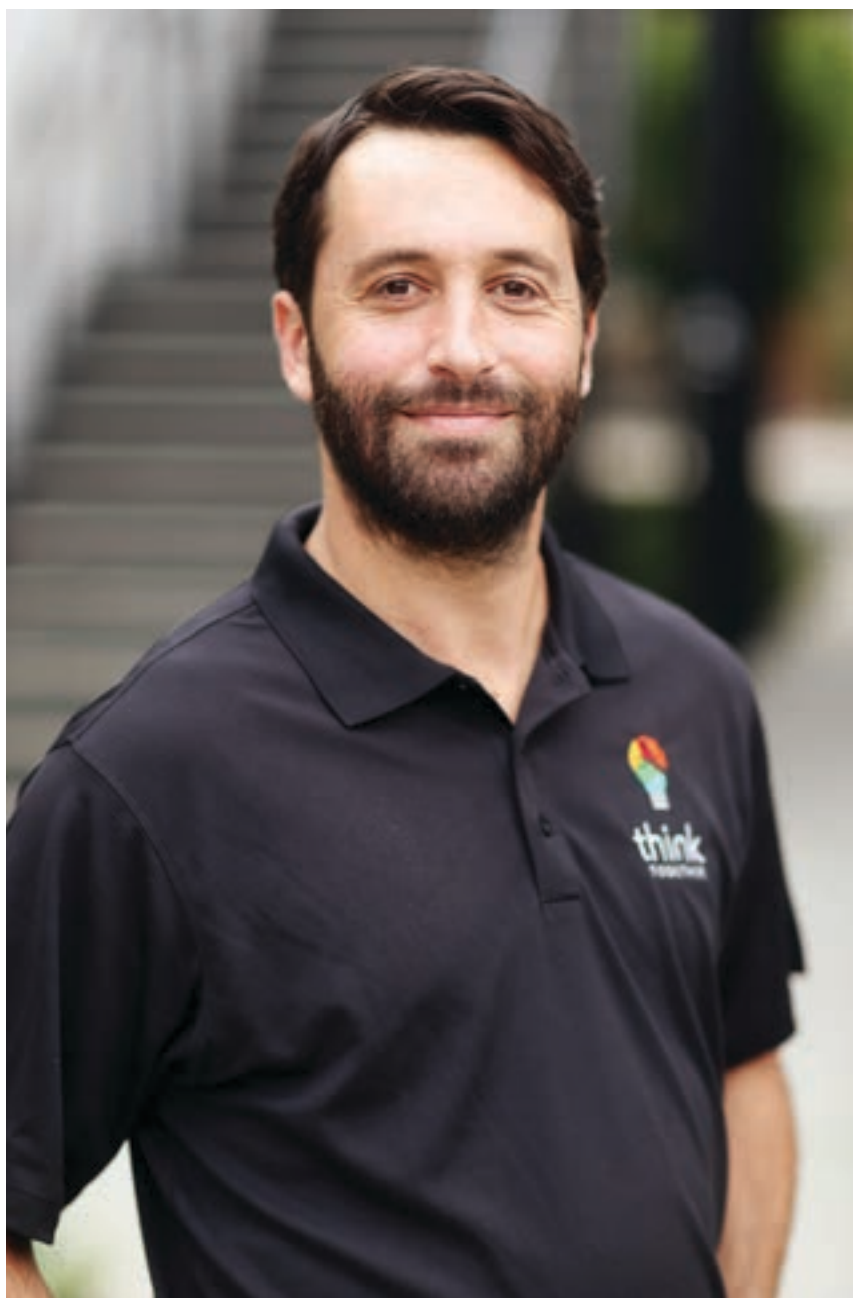


**RUTH LAURENT-KOCHER**

*Executive Director*  
Beauty Bus

Ruth Laurent-Kocher's impact at Beauty Bus, a nonprofit in its 16th year of programming, has been notably impactful, especially considering her short period of time there. Beauty Bus brings free, professional salon services to patients and caregivers in hospitals and care facilities across Los Angeles and has recently restarted its Home Visits program.

Starting in January 2024, Laurent-Kocher's mission was to steer the organization towards growth and impact with a refreshed team on board. By hiring a marketing and partnerships manager, a program team manager, and a development and database manager, Beauty Bus has sharpened its focus to effectively become a well-oiled machine dedicated to expanding its reach, evolving its programming, and elevating the services it provides.



**Congratulations**

to 2025 Leader of Influence Nominee

**JESSE DURKIN**

As a Think Together Executive Director of Programs, Jesse leads a team of more than 500 educators delivering high-quality afterschool programs at 67 school sites, serving more than 4,000 students. As California's leading nonprofit provider of expanded learning, Think Together offers more opportunities to students, making it possible to change the odds for kids.

Learn more about our mission at [thinktogether.org](http://thinktogether.org)



LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**ANN LEE**  
CEO & Co-Founder  
CORE

**A**nn Lee has distinguished herself as a transformative leader in the humanitarian sector through her visionary approach to crisis response and long-term community resilience. As co-founder and CEO of CORE (Community Organized Relief Effort), she has guided the organization from its origins as a rapid disaster response initiative to a globally respected model for integrating emergency aid with sustainable development.

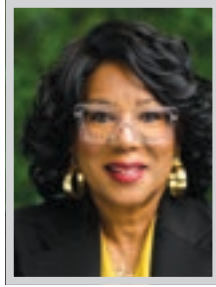
With over two decades of experience in disaster preparedness and emergency relief, Lee has played a critical role in shaping how humanitarian response can be both rapid and community-centered. She has led CORE's work across major global crises – including in Ukraine, Pakistan, Turkey, Haiti, and throughout the United States – while advancing long-term solutions around climate resilience.



**TURKESSA LEWIS**  
Security Instructor  
Goodwill SOLAC

**T**urkessa Lewis serves as the security program director of Goodwill SOLAC, and her professional journey is a powerful example of resilience, leadership, and unwavering dedication to service. What makes Lewis' accomplishments special is not just the outcomes she has delivered, but the personal transformation behind them — from being a homeless student in 2011 to now directing the very same program that helped her get back on her feet.

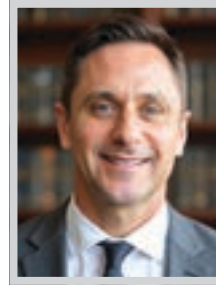
Since assuming leadership, Lewis has significantly expanded the scope and impact of the organization's security training program. In 2021 and 2022, the program achieved an outstanding 80% job placement rate. Lewis has also taken the initiative to upgrade the program beyond basic security training by embedding additional certifications.



**LORNA LITTLE**  
President & CEO  
St. Anne's Family Services

**A**s the first female of color to lead St. Anne's Family Services, Lorna Little has developed innovative programs for children and families since her arrival in 2018. With a focus on underserved communities that often live in the shadows, Little has a successful history of leading and developing exceptional programming that addresses the physical, behavioral and emotional components that lead to an optimal life trajectory.

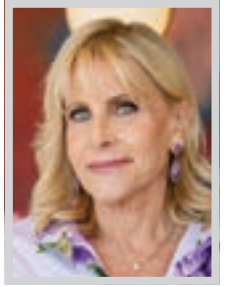
An advocate for children and families, Little has extensive experience working with parenting youth, youth in foster care, and in all aspects of adoption. She has melded a unique mix of social services leadership and media entertainment experience throughout her career, and is the author of "Mums the Word!" – a personal story of late discovery adoption.



**PATRICK MAHONEY**  
President & CEO  
Boys & Girls Clubs of  
Metro Los Angeles

**P**atrick Mahoney has led BGCMLA through significant growth and cultural transformation over the last five years. Under his leadership, the organization has expanded across Inglewood, South LA, Southeast LA, and Venice, serving thousands of young people and families.

Under Mahoney's leadership, BGCMLA's Peaceful Connections program has become a national model for trauma-informed and equity-focused programming across the Boys & Girls Clubs movement. Committed to ensuring that today's young people — the future leaders of Los Angeles — have equitable access to opportunities, Mahoney has advanced BGCMLA's mission to help youth thrive in safe, welcoming, and supportive spaces. He has focused BGCMLA's programs on access and impact.



**ROCHELLE ATLAS MAIZE**  
Executive Director  
Nourmand & Associates

**R**ochelle Atlas Maize transformed the way luxury real estate is marketed, pioneering social media strategies that have become benchmarks for the industry.

More than 15 years ago, Maize co-founded The Rochelle and Richard Maize Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to supporting and contributing resources to causes that drive lasting change. Through initiatives focused on art, fundraising, cultural enrichment, youth mentorship, and healthcare advancement, the foundation serves as a catalyst for solutions that uplift communities and inspire the next generation. Additionally, Maize has served on the boards of Big Brothers Big Sisters, SHARE, and Friends of Greystone, where she championed programs to preserve heritage, foster mentorship, and enhance community engagement.

CONGRATULATIONS

**CHELSEY OEFFLER**

SR. DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY RELATIONS & PLAYER PROGRAMS

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

LEADER OF INFLUENCE: PHILANTHROPY & NONPROFIT 2025

CCS Fundraising is proud to nominate **Aashika Patel**

Los Angeles Business Journal 2025 Leaders of Influence Nonprofit & Philanthropy

*Celebrating Aashika's drive to create transformational change.*

Connect with Aashika to advance your mission.  
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LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**BRENDA MARTINEZ-NEGRETE**  
Workforce Development Manager  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Brenda Martinez-Negrete began her workforce development career in the nonprofit sector to provide training and career development skills to historically excluded communities through local and federally funded programs. This foundational experience led to working in human resources, recruitment, operations, and workforce development with public agencies such as Los Angeles Metro Transit Authority and (currently) the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Martinez-Negrete is an active member of the Metropolitan ERG group, contributing to scholarship programs that support youth. She invests countless hours into local events, initiatives, and nonprofit programs.



**MARCIA MAYEDA**  
Director  
County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control

Marcia Mayeda has dedicated over two decades to transforming the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) into one of the largest and most progressive animal care agencies in the country. Under Mayeda's leadership, DACC has implemented innovative programs that have directly improved the welfare of hundreds of thousands of animals while fostering stronger community engagement and public trust.

Mayeda modernized DACC's operations by spearheading initiatives such as expanded low-cost spay/neuter programs, progressive adoption campaigns, community-based animal resource centers, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations to increase support for pet owners.



**ELDA MENDEZ-LEMUS**  
Executive Director  
LAFHBUILDS, Inc.

Elda Mendez-Lemus serves as the founding executive director of LAFHBUILDS, a nonprofit affordable housing real estate development entity launched in 2024. Mendez-Lemus began her career working in the affordable housing private sector, where she gained familiarity with the full real estate development cycle – from acquisition and financing to design, construction, lease-up, and project completion.

As Mendez-Lemus became increasingly aware of the scarcity of affordable housing, she sought out more purpose-driven work and transitioned to the nonprofit sector in affordable housing development. There, she fell in love with working for mission-driven organizations. She joined LA Family Housing in 2019, and within two years assumed the role of chief real estate officer.



**ELIZABETH MITCHELL**  
Partner  
Umhofer, Mitchell & King LLP

Elizabeth Mitchell has litigated thousands of criminal and civil cases in multiple jurisdictions. She is widely recognized for her work on the groundbreaking lawsuit against the City and County of Los Angeles demanding beds, services and treatment for thousands of homeless individuals – and clean and safe streets for the community. The lawsuit prompted swift and dynamic action by the Federal Court during the COVID-19 crisis, which ultimately resulted in a \$4 billion commitment for an additional 20,000 beds with services and treatment for homeless Angelenos by the City and County of Los Angeles, and commitment to encampment reduction.

Mitchell has served on the boards of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, California Women Lawyers, and the Cedars Sinai NICU Parent Family Council.



**LYN MORRIS**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

Lyn Morris, LMFT, was appointed chief executive officer of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services in 2022 after serving as the organization's chief operating officer. With more than 20 years of executive leadership and clinical experience, she has focused on expanding access to care for communities affected by poverty, trauma and stigma.

Morris is widely recognized as a national leader in suicide prevention. Her accomplishments include testifying before the California Legislature, shaping national policy, and securing millions of dollars in funding for critical programs. Under her leadership, Didi Hirsch has significantly expanded its reach, now serving more than 270,000 individuals each year. The organization's Suicide Prevention Center, the first and largest in the US, handles more than 230,000 crisis contacts annually.

# VISIONARY RESEARCH

## Honoring a Leader Who is Shaping the Future of Vision



Doheny Eye Institute is proud to congratulate **Marissa Goldberg, CEO**, for being recognized as a **2025 Leader of Influence: Nonprofit & Philanthropy** by the Los Angeles Business Journal. Marissa's visionary leadership has been instrumental in pushing the boundaries of vision research and educating the next generation of scientists.



Support our VISIONary Research to help us conserve, improve, and restore human eyesight.

To learn more about Doheny's mission and work, please visit [Doheny.org](https://Doheny.org)



LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**JOHN MURILLO**  
Community Bank President  
Enterprise Bank & Trust

With a successful track record of more than 40 years of banking, John Murillo maintains a strong foundation in community-oriented banking and has cultivated an extensive background in managing and developing teams, fostering client relationships and focusing on community impact through his professional work.

Throughout his career, Murillo has proven to be an integral member of the local community through his business and nonprofit initiatives. Murillo recently helped organize and co-host a March 2025 panel discussion that united business and nonprofit leaders to share LA wildfire recovery resources with the community. While at Wells Fargo, Murillo helped found an employee resource group called Amigos, which promoted and created opportunities for Latinos to elevate and expand their careers.



**LIZBETH NEVAREZ**  
Partner  
GHJ

Lizbeth Nevarez, CPA, is the nonprofit tax practice leader at GHJ, where she leverages her extensive experience in public accounting and nonprofit leadership to drive impactful change. Nevarez's leadership and dedication to her clients and colleagues have been instrumental in her career progression.

Nevarez's expertise in nonprofit accounting has significantly contributed to GHJ's growth in the sector. Nevarez frequently shares her insights on nonprofit accounting and leadership through articles, presentations and workshops. Her thought leadership helps shape industry best practices and empowers other professionals in the field. As co-leader of GHJ's Women's Empowerment Cohort, she plays a large part in advancing gender equity within the accounting profession.



**CHELSEY OEFFLER**  
Senior Director, Community Relations and  
Player Programs  
LAFC

As the senior director of community relations and player programs at Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC), Chelsey Oeffler leads the club's philanthropic arm, overseeing the LAFC Foundation as well as its community partnerships and player-led charitable initiatives. Promoted within seven months of her hire, Oeffler has directed the LAFC Foundation toward increases in visibility, partnerships, donations and donor engagement.

Oeffler created the "Girls Dream Big" speaker series, a now-annual event that connects young women with successful leaders across sports, media and business. A longtime advocate for inclusion and mentorship, Oeffler co-chaired the Detroit Pistons' LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group.



**DANA ONTIVEROS**  
Associate  
Snell & Wilmer

Snell & Wilmer associate Dana Ontiveros has distinguished herself as a nonprofit leader through her deep and sustained commitment to organizations focused on education, the arts, and community well-being. She currently serves on the board of directors for PUENTE Learning Center, a charter school and nonprofit learning center dedicated to educational equity and opportunity in Los Angeles. Ontiveros also acts as a liaison between Snell & Wilmer and PUENTE, leading initiatives such as the firm's annual Toy and Gift Drive for PUENTE's preschoolers and participating in holiday celebrations with students and families.

Through Snell & Wilmer's Community Involvement Committee, Ontiveros supports organizations such as the Downtown Women's Center and the DREAM Center.



**SARAH ORTH**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Blind Children's Center

With 25 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, Blind Children's Center's (BCC) CEO Sarah Orth has dedicated most of her career to agencies focused on early childhood development, and services for children with special needs and chronic illnesses. Orth's leadership reached a pinnacle with the successful completion of a \$7 million capital campaign – an endeavor that transformed the historic BCC facility. Under Orth's guidance, this renovation doubled the organization's capacity to serve blind or visually impaired children in an inclusive environment and modernized the campus to meet full ADA compliance.

Orth secured a transformative partnership with the Los Angeles County Office of Education that guarantees tuition-free enrollment for children, ensuring equitable access regardless of ability to pay.

**ScholarMatch**

Join us in making college possible for first-generation students

Founded in 2010 by author Dave Eggers, ScholarMatch started in San Francisco as a crowdfunding scholarship platform and has since evolved into a full-service college access and persistence organization, helping first-generation students from low-income backgrounds get to and through college so that they can earn a bachelor's degree within five years.



**Congratulations to our Executive Director!**

Karla V. Salazar

Nominated for the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2025 Leaders of Influence: Nonprofit & Philanthropy Awards



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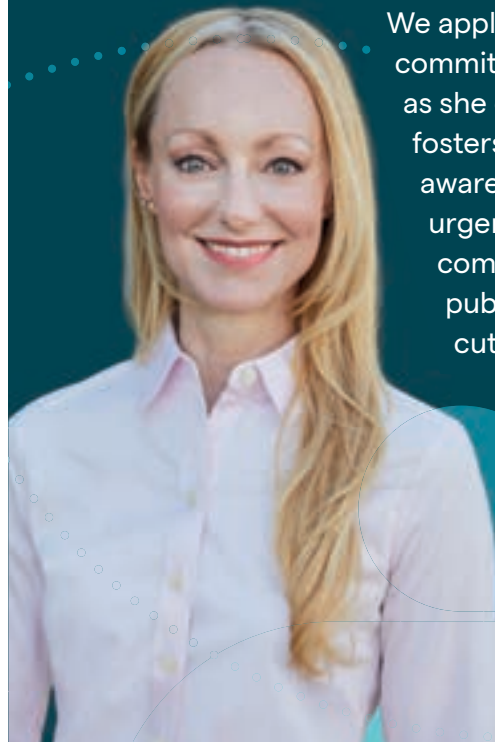


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Flexible Financial Aid

Congratulations to our Leader of Influence,  
**Sheri Strahl, MPH, MBA,**  
President and CEO of the ALS Network!



We applaud Sheri's deep commitment to the ALS community as she drives meaningful change, fosters collaboration, and elevates awareness of the ALS Network's urgent mission - delivering compassionate care, shaping public policy, and driving cutting-edge research.



LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**AASHIKA PATEL**  
*Managing Director*  
 CCS Fundraising

With over 12 years at CCS Fundraising, Aashika Patel has helped nonprofits raise more than \$1 billion through campaigns driven by strategy, data and collaboration. Her work spans more than 45 organizations across all sectors.

Patel specializes in pre-campaign planning, leadership alignment, and staff development. Her expertise ranges from major gift pipeline development to endowment fundraising and advancement audits. She is particularly skilled in case visioning, often helping organizations articulate a compelling story that resonates with donors and stakeholders. Patel currently serves on the board of the Cayton Children’s Museum in Los Angeles – a relationship that began through a CCS-led campaign and evolved into a lasting personal commitment.



**STACY D. PHILLIPS**  
*Partner, Matrimonial & Family Law*  
 Blank Rome LLP

With over 40 years of experience as a family law attorney, Stacy D. Phillips has been a leader in her profession while also serving her community through networking, philanthropy and volunteerism. One Phillips’s signature achievements is founding the Adopt-A-Center (AAC) Program in 1999, which partners with LA-based nonprofits that support underserved children and families.

In 2024, AAC and C5 Los Angeles (C5LA) hosted a Shark Tank-inspired Career Day at Blank Rome’s LA office. Sixty high school sophomores from under-resourced communities developed business plans guided by mentors from various industries, then pitched the ideas to judges. Due to its success, Blank Rome extended its support for C5LA for two additional years, covering two more student cohort years.



**ANNALISA PIZZARELLO**  
*SVP, Results Delivery*  
 Amgen

Annalisa Pizzarello is the senior vice president of Amgen’s Results Delivery Office, where she is responsible for leading the company’s global operating rhythm and continuous improvement initiatives. Pizzarello orchestrates Amgen’s enterprise-wide transformation capabilities. Her leadership ensures that Amgen continuously improves in terms of speed, quality and effectiveness.

Pizzarello’s commitment to humanitarian values is exemplified in her board service with Direct Relief, a globally recognized nonprofit dedicated to improving the health and lives of people affected by poverty or emergencies. As a member of Direct Relief’s board of directors, she plays a vital governance role in guiding one of the largest distributors of donated medical resources in the country.



**REBECCA RICCI**  
*Executive Program Director*  
 Village for Vets

Rebecca Ricci is a licensed marriage and family therapist whose leadership has transformed Village for Vets into one of Los Angeles’ most effective veteran-serving nonprofit organizations. Since joining the team, Ricci has played a central role in growing the organization from just five employees to more than 40, scaling programs to meet the rapidly rising needs of the veteran community.

Ricci’s program leadership has significantly advanced the organization’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, resulting in hundreds of veterans being placed into permanent housing annually. In 2024 alone, the SSVF team placed over 200 veterans and their families into safe, stable housing while preventing homelessness for many others through short-term financial assistance and targeted prevention services.



**TARA ROTH**  
*President*  
 Goldhirsh Foundation

Tara Roth is the president of the Goldhirsh Foundation, which supports social innovation through its financial, human, and social capital. Roth oversees all aspects of the foundation and assists with sourcing and vetting investments that aim to advance human well-being.

Under Roth’s leadership, the Goldhirsh Foundation’s community-guided LA2050 initiative aims to create a shared vision for LA’s future, and a hub for news and information about the LA impact community. Each year, the LA2050 Grants Challenge invites Angelenos to vote on what issues matter most to them, which informs the foundation’s participatory grantmaking. Roth has led the formation of a coalition of 12 philanthropic funding partners that have collectively made 68 grants to LA-area nonprofit organizations.

# Congratulations

to all of the LABJ nominees, especially our President and Chief Executive Officer, **Lorna Little**, honored in this year’s LA Business Journal Leaders of Influence: Nonprofit & Philanthropy.

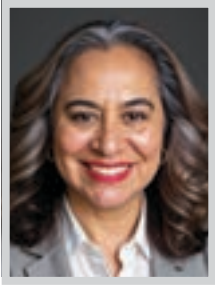


We look forward to celebrating the **2026 Evening of Angels** on May 15, 2026. For more information or event registration visit

[www.stannes.org](http://www.stannes.org) /stannestoday



LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**KARLA V. SALAZAR**  
Executive Director  
ScholarMatch

**K**arla V. Salazar is a strategic nonprofit leader whose accomplishments have transformed ScholarMatch – a leading college access and success organization – and have impacted the lives of low-income and first-generation students in Los Angeles.

Among Salazar’s most notable accomplishments is the development of a new initiative to serve students in Southeast Los Angeles, a region widely recognized as a college access service desert. Salazar galvanized partnerships with funders, school districts, and community leaders, culminating in a \$1.2 million seed grant from the Ballmer Group to support students from this region. Salazar also secured a \$2 million multi-year grant from the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation to expand the organization’s Scholars Program.



**PAMELA SHACKELFORD**  
Owner  
Heritage Haven

**A**ttorney and real estate broker Pamela Shackelford has created from scratch a unique and growing animal sanctuary with Heritage Haven. Shackelford rescues and provides forced homes to several animals on a ranch north of Los Angeles, including horses, cows, goats, chickens, turkeys, and many dogs. All donations that the organization receives go directly to housing and caring for the animals. We maintain an efficient staff that is dedicated to animal care.

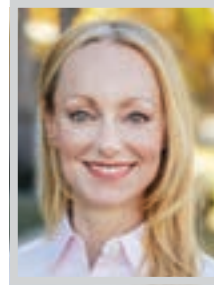
Any expenses for advertising, merchandise, or other items that are outside of animal housing, care and enrichment are paid for entirely by the founder. Heritage Haven boasts an impressive social media presence with nearly 100,000 followers on Instagram.



**RENATA SIMRIL**  
President  
Play Equity Fund

**A**s president and founder of the Play Equity Fund and president & CEO of the LA84 Foundation, Renata Simril leads a pioneering enterprise model at the intersection of youth development, equity and movement building — built on the conviction that access to play for all youth is a lever for systems change.

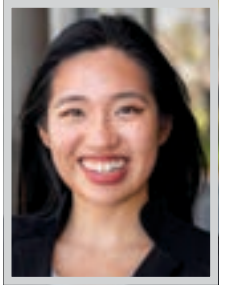
Under Simril’s leadership, LA84 invests in research, grants and educational programs guided by the legacy of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games, while the Play Equity Fund expands this impact through policy advocacy, coalition building, and strategic partnerships. Simril is also a leader of LA RISES, a major citywide initiative aligning philanthropy and civic sectors to ensure the diverse neighborhoods of LA equitably benefit from the upcoming wave of global sporting events.



**SHERI STRAHL**  
President & CEO  
ALS Network

**S**heri Strahl, MPH, MBA, took the helm of the ALS Network – one of the nation’s leading ALS nonprofits – in 2024. Strahl brings more than 20 years of non-profit experience to the role with a proven track record of expanding programs, driving efficiency in operations, and ensuring fiscal responsibility as the organization’s COO since 2019.

As the organization’s first president and CEO with a public health background, Strahl’s dynamic, servant-leadership approach reflects how the ALS Network engages the ALS community - through meaningful connections to urgently advance three mission pillars of work in care, research and advocacy. Under her guidance, the ALS Network begins a new era of serving the ALS community by driving the discovery of prevention strategies, treatments and cures for ALS.



**SHANELLE SUA**  
Recruiting, Development & Training Coordinator  
Strategic View Advisors

**A**native of Southern California, Shanelle Sua is a dynamic professional who plays a pivotal role in the recruiting, development, and training initiatives at Strategic View Advisors (SVA). Sua is instrumental in shaping the future of the financial services industry through her leadership of the SVA Summer Internship Program, which provides invaluable opportunities for undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience.

Sua also spearheads SVA CARES, the firm’s philanthropic committee dedicated to making a tangible impact in the local community. Committed to transforming local communities, SVA CARES supports diverse charitable organizations such as the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation, Alzheimer’s Association and American Cancer Society.

REGISTER TODAY!



The Los Angeles Business Journal is proud to host the 4th annual Top 100 Accountants event where we will honor the **top accounting professionals** in the Los Angeles region for their ongoing efforts as outstanding financial stewards. This event will recognize the achievements of leading accountants and firms within the Los Angeles business community.



**THURSDAY, NOV. 6**  
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LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY



**ADREANA THOMAS**

*Vice President*  
San Fernando Valley Rush

With over 20 years of experience across the legal, entertainment, technology and hospitality industries, Adreana Thomas brings a rare blend of cross-sector expertise and innovation to every role she takes on. Thomas has successfully led marketing teams overseeing business development, public relations, client engagement, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Thomas serves as vice president and co-founder of San Fernando Valley Rush, a youth sports organization dedicated to providing access and opportunity in track and field and football for underserved communities. Through her leadership, the program has helped hundreds of young athletes gain confidence and pursue athletic scholarships. Thomas is also the western league president of the Valley Youth Conference.



**ADAM UMHOEFER**

*Executive*  
CAA Foundation

Adam Umhoefer is an executive in the CAA Foundation, the philanthropic arm of CAA. Umhoefer serves as a strategic advisor to actors, writers, directors, athletes, executives, and corporations on their philanthropic and pro-social initiatives.

Umhoefer leads the company's climate and sustainability work, providing opportunities for action and helping to inspire a global network of climate activists. As the climate crisis intensifies, Umhoefer and his team are working to harness the power of Hollywood to shape public perception, drive behavior change, and accelerate real solutions through storytelling. At the heart of this effort is Green Screen, a first-of-its-kind initiative Umhoefer helped launch to integrate climate narratives into popular film and television.



**MATTHEW UMHOEFER**

*Partner*  
Umhofer, Mitchell & King LLP

Matthew Umhofer has been recognized for initiating and litigating a landmark case on behalf of unhoused individuals and advocates, resulting in a preliminary injunction and a final settlement compelling a \$4 billion increase in funding for critical shelter, housing, and supportive services in LA. Umhofer won the prestigious California Lawyer Attorney of the Year Award in 2024 for securing transformative outcomes to address homelessness in LA, including funding for 20,000 new beds and expanded mental health and substance-use disorder services.

In 2025, Umhofer and his firm continued to pressure the city and county through high-impact litigation. Additionally, Umhofer has served as president of the Dwight D. Opperman Foundation since 2000.



**STEPHANIE YAN**

*Managing Director*  
GHJ

With over 25 years of experience in public accounting and deep expertise in private foundations, Stephanie Yan, CPA, is GHJ's private foundation practice leader and a managing director. Yan specializes in audit, accounting and consulting services for private foundations, museums and nonprofit organizations. She brings a rare cross-functional lens to nonprofit work that enables her to advise mission-driven organizations with a depth of business acumen. Her historical industry reach also spans real estate, import and distribution, and employee benefit plans.

A working mother and leader, Yan is a visible role model for women and parents balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Her mentorship and example inspire the next generation of accountants.



**JAMES YUKEVICH**

*Founding Partner*  
Yukevich | Cavanaugh

In his more than three decades of legal experience, James Yukevich has cemented his status as one of the most sought-after litigators in the country, winning incredibly high-profile cases in areas involving liability, damages, proposed recalls, and public relations. Outside of the courtroom, Yukevich spends much of his time working tirelessly to raise funds for the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. In the last 20 years, he has served on the Food Bank's Advisory Board and raised over \$3 million to help feed Angelenos suffering from food insecurity.

Last year, Yukevich's philanthropic and humanitarian efforts were recognized by the Los Angeles Business Journal, which named him 2024 Philanthropist of the Year at the annual Non-Profit and Corporate Citizenship Awards.

# Fighting the World's Toughest Diseases

Amgen discovers, develops, manufactures and delivers innovative medicines to help millions of patients in their fight against some of the world's toughest diseases. More than 45 years ago, Amgen helped to establish the biotechnology industry and remains on the cutting-edge of innovation, advancing a pipeline that builds on its existing portfolio of medicines to treat cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, inflammatory diseases and rare diseases.

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: NONPROFIT &amp; PHILANTHROPY

# Amid New Policy Landscape, Corporate America Changes Philanthropic Priorities

Seismic shifts in the US policy landscape are prompting corporate philanthropy leaders to make big changes to their companies' philanthropic priorities for the year ahead.

According to a recent survey by The Conference Board, more corporate philanthropy leaders plan to ramp up their companies' efforts around economic opportunity and education. At the same time, they anticipate dialing back their initiatives around racial and gender equality.

"These findings signal a shift, not a retreat, in advancing gender and racial equality. Companies are incorporating these goals into broader frameworks — like workforce development, technical trainings and financial empowerment — that better align with their core business priorities," said Andrew Jones, author of the report and senior ESG researcher at The Conference Board.

When it comes to geographic areas of focus, philanthropy executives are also shaking things up. They anticipate putting more support into initiatives based in the US, followed by Mexico and Canada. But they plan to scale back their philanthropic efforts in China.

This report is based on a survey of over 120 philanthropy executives from leading US and multinational companies. Respondents shared their challenges and opportunities for the year ahead in light of the 2024 election outcomes.

Additional findings include:

## AREAS OF FOCUS

Corporate philanthropy strategies are increasingly focusing on economic opportunity and education.

Question asked: *How do you anticipate the results of the 2024 US elections will influence the thematic focus of your citizenship/philanthropy strategy in 2025?*

- **More focus on economic opportunity and education:** They are the top two themes philanthropy executives are increasing their emphasis on in 2025.

- **Less focus on racial and gender equality:** They are the top two themes philanthropy executives are decreasing their emphasis on in 2025.

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Companies are turning more attention to US initiatives, while dialing back their activities in China.

Question asked: *How do you anticipate the results of the 2024 US elections will influence the geographic focus of your citizenship/philanthropy strategy in 2025?*

- **Increasing attention to US- and North America-based activities:** Executives say their companies will increase their emphasis on initiatives in the US, followed by Canada and Mexico.

- **Decreasing attention to China- and Latin America-based activities:** Executives say they will decrease their emphasis on China, followed by Latin America (a distant second).

## CHALLENGES

The top challenge facing philanthropy executives is demonstrating their programs' ROI.

Question asked: *What are the biggest obstacles you expect to face in achieving your citizenship/philanthropy goals in 2025?*

- **Proving the ROI of philanthropic efforts is the top pain point:** 43% of executives say demonstrating the ROI of their efforts is their biggest obstacle in 2025.

- **Other challenges** include measuring, verifying, or attributing societal impact (31%) and navigating political uncertainty and polarization in the US (29%).

"Executives who measure the ROI of philanthropic initiatives ensure their programs add value. Quantifying their value is an important task. Practical steps leaders can take include refining data collection on key business indicators, such as the link between employee engagement and CSR programs, as well as contributions to brand equity," said Jeff Hoffman, institute leader, corporate citizenship & philanthropy, The Conference Board.

## COMMUNICATIONS & TERMINOLOGY

The language describing philanthropic initiatives is changing, driven by the new policy landscape.

Question asked: *How do you expect to adjust the communications and messaging of your company's citizenship/philanthropy initiatives in 2025?*

- **More than a third of executives are revising language:** 37% of executives say they are revising the language and terminology used to describe their initiatives, both internally and externally.

- **The top-cited reasons** for making these changes are companies responding to political, social, and legal developments (44%) and minimizing backlash (41%).

Amid the flurry of change, the level and frequency of communications is increasing.

Question asked: *How do you expect to adjust the communications and messaging of your company's citizenship/philanthropy initiatives in 2025?*

- **Many executives plan to increase the level and frequency of communication:** 41% of executives plan to increase communications internally, while 30% plan to increase externally.

- **Less than 10% plan to decrease**, either internally or externally.

Learn more at [conference-board.com](https://www.conference-board.com).

# Next Generation Charitable Donors Focus on Social Issues and Technology

Generation Z and Millennial donors are approaching charitable giving differently than the generations that came before them, according to a recent report from the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Dynamic social, economic, and political shifts, globalization, and technological advancements over the last 20 years have reshaped how next-generation donors engage with the philanthropic sector. The Next Generation of Philanthropy study analyzes the interests and needs of younger donors, their evolving patterns of giving, and the opportunities and challenges those present. The report also examines younger donors' motivations, their attitudes toward giving, the causes they support and their preferred methods for making donations and evaluating the impact. The research was completed with funding from DAFgiving360.

"Younger generations of donors are impacting philanthropy in positive ways by seeking long-term, hands-on involvement with the issues that are important to them. They rely heavily on technology to inform their giving decisions, and invest time into looking for trustworthy and transparent nonprofits to support," said Amir Pasic, Ph.D., the Eugene R. Tempel dean of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. "The generational differences reflected in our new research underscore the need for nonprofits to adapt to Next Gen views, preferences and practices in order to advance their missions and build the long-term



relationships that sustain them."

The new report highlights that Generation Z (born 1997-2012) and Millennial (born 1981-1996) donors focus their giving on supporting issues rather than specific organizations and consider themselves to be active social change agents. Next generation donors bring a decidedly tech-forward approach to all aspects of their philanthropy, including learning about and advocating for causes on social media and making donations online. They participate in crowdfunding at higher rates than older generations, and growing numbers of younger donors are giving through social media-based charity

streaming events hosted by influencers.

"A significant wealth transfer is currently underway, and some estimates indicate that \$18 trillion will go to charity by 2048, creating the opportunity for next gen donors to have a significant charitable impact in the future," said Fred Kaynor, managing director, relationship management, marketing & partnerships at DAFgiving360. "Generation Z and Millennials are passionate about and deeply connected to the causes they support. It's incredibly important for charities to engage with their philanthropic spirit. In addition, the financial advisors who are guiding this next generation

of donors should also recognize their distinct needs and priorities to better support them and to help maximize their giving potential."

Key findings include:

- Basic needs and religion are top causes for philanthropic giving across all generations from 2003 to 2021, while giving to education is less common for younger donors.

- Generation Z giving to secular causes is similar to what Millennials gave at the same stage of life, despite an overall drop in secular giving.

- Compared to Millennials who gave to religious causes, Generation Z donors who gave to religion were significantly less likely to also support secular causes. This finding challenges the historical trend of religious donors being more inclined to also contribute to secular causes.

- Giving across all generations has declined since 2008. In each stage of life, individuals are less likely to give than they were in 2003.

Many of the report's key findings were derived using the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy's Philanthropy Panel Study, a module of the University of Michigan's Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which has been tracking thousands of US households since 2000.

By following the same households over time, this longitudinal approach provides unique insights into changes in giving behavior within individuals, households and families.

Visit [dafgiving360.org](https://dafgiving360.org) to learn more.