

Leadership Exemplified: Executives Under Age 40 Show How It's Done

AWARDS: A Night at The NAT Honors 40 Winners, Plus Finalists

■ By BRAD GRAVES

The atrium of Balboa Park's natural history museum, The NAT, is filled with replicas of sea creatures and dinosaur bones. On Aug. 28, it was awash with potential.

That is when the *San Diego Business Journal* honored its latest cohort of leaders under age 40. These are people who are rising fast within San Diego's business and civic circles. The event attracted more than 300 people, and was presented with the sponsorship of Alaska Airlines, Moss Adams LLP and Green Rope.

An independent panel of judges selected 40 winners from a pool of 127 talented and accomplished finalists. The judges were Chris Bryant, Frank Busic, Anna Crowe, Elizabeth Fitzsimons and Mel Katz.

"I felt incredibly inspired by the recognition," said Brian Morales, one of the evening's winners. He is president of Pro-Cal Lighting Inc. of Vista. "Growing a business is filled with challenges and being selected helps to push me further into that endeavor."

"Sometimes life is about risking everything for a dream no one can see but you," said Chris Ly, director of alternative investments with McKinney Capital & Advisory. "Receiving this award has made the risk all worth it."

Short biographies of the winners are on the following pages. Meeting the winners and reading their stories offer several lessons in leadership. Among them:

Leading People Is an Art

Writing in the publication *Hotel Executive*, John Yeadon recalled working in five cities over 10 years. One move was from Minneapolis to Maui, and the change was dramatic. His new city was beautiful, he said, "but I knew very little about the business, culture and people I was entrusted to lead." Obviously concerned, Yeadon set about learning.

Yeadon is now director of sales and marketing at the Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego. The person who nominated him for the award credits him with "perseverance, determination, insight and vision [that] have created a culture where team members thrive both personally and professionally." With attitudes such as inclusiveness and encouragement, "John has fostered a family-like environment that maximizes productivity without compromising fun." His team is 110% at goal.

Lifelong Learning Is Not Just a Saying

As vice president for corporate development with NextGen Healthcare, James

Hammerschmidt oversees strategic reviews, mergers and acquisitions, divestitures, financial planning and more recently, business development. According to the person who nominated him, Hammerschmidt "has demonstrated the ability to transcend traditional functions, leveraging his drive, self-education and his professional network to develop and refine new skill sets. He credits his source of motivation to the smart and highly diverse group of individuals he gets to interact with on a daily basis, which includes his current team, professional peers, boss(es) and mentors."

There Are Many Ways to Give Back

The 40 award winners have demonstrated 40 ways of giving back to the community. Dr. Jennifer Winward, who teaches at UC San Diego, has created a way for students from disadvantaged neighborhoods to get ahead in school. Andrew Feghali, who owns a dozen Little Caesar's restaurants, comes from a Lebanese family and speaks Arabic, which has led him to hire and help refugees. "He can't even say how many times he went to the car dealership to help someone buy a car, coach them on writing a resume or help someone figure out where they were going to live," said the person who nominated him for the award.

No One Achieves Alone

The people who won the awards were nearly unanimous in thanking their teams, their mentors and their families. Brant Abberg of Cushman & Wakefield thanked all three—with specific thanks to his brother, who introduced him to the business.

Nearly all winners said they were humbled. Many said they were honored to be among the 40 young leaders chosen.

"To be deemed a trailblazer in this capacity feels amazing! I'm honored to serve my community while paving the way for other minority executives and entrepreneurs," said Brittny Ferguson, assistant vice president and branch manager with U.S. Bank.

"I'm honored to be one of the few Latinos to receive this recognition and I'm inspired to keep working for our community," said Roberto Alcantar, senior director at the Chicano Federation of San Diego County.

Whatever the backstory, the award was something for the 40 recipients to savor.

"Someone once told me, your 30s are your earning years," said Greg Pieratt of Lee & Associates, who represents industrial and office tenants. "The honor of this award is evidence the hard work is paying off." ■



CAYCE LYNCH
Administrative Partner
Tyson & Mendes LLP

Cayce Lynch is the second youngest person to be named partner at Tyson & Mendes, and she has received three promotions since. As administrative partner, she oversees staffing and human resources, marketing, finance and accounting, facilities management and IT. Lynch has helped the firm more than double its size and raise its profile by developing a series of internal initiatives (including a student loan repayment program as well as a diversity and inclusion initiative). She founded and chairs the firm's Young Professionals Group and Women's Initiative; the latter provides mentoring and support for the firm's female attorneys and clients. Her commitment, attention to detail, goal oriented outlook and positive attitude have made her one of the firm's brightest stars, Managing Partner Robert Tyson said.