

THE
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A supplement to The Business Journal

HOW SHE LEADS

2026 EDITION



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Table of Contents

Martha Espinosa — Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board	2
Associate Publisher's Note	4
Marty Ortiz — Women's Confidence Coach	5
Women-owned businesses list	6-7
Andrea Benson — CORE Business Interiors	8
Allysun Walker — Southwest Fresno Development Corporation	10
Michele Cantwell-Copher — Fresno County Office of Education	11
Sherri White and Priscilla Robbins — Fresno Mission	12
Cheryl Harless — Saint Agnes Health	14
Rachel Reed — Assured Senior Living Solutions	16
Susan Moore — Dumont Printing	17
Carla Monis — La Tapatia Tortilleria, Inc.	18
Jessica Smith Bobadilla — The Law Office of Jessica Smith Bobadilla	19
Andrea Kelly — FoodLink for Tulare County	20
Mindy Casto — Fresno Police Department	21
Jamie Manock — Saddle Sips Saloon	22
Wilhelmina Santana — Visalia Fox Theatre	23
Tina Mistry — Portfolio Advisors	24
Women-owned businesses in-depth	25-27



Martha Espinosa
Deputy Director

Fresno Regional Workforce
Development Board

Where Women Are Proving the Doubters Wrong

For decades, construction and wildland fire work have carried a reputation as male dominated fields, physically demanding jobs where women were overlooked. That reputation never matched reality, and here in the Central Valley, we have seventeen years of proof.

Valley Build, our pre-apprenticeship program for the building trades, has spent nearly two decades placing Central Valley residents into union apprenticeships as electricians, plumbers, operating engineers, carpenters, and more. Along the way, the women who've come through our doors haven't just kept pace, they've excelled. The same is true of the Golden State Forestry & Wildfire Corps, our newer program training people for wildland fire fuels mitigation and suppression-entry work. In under a decade, our female trainees there have shown the same thing: given the training and the opportunity, they thrive.

Valley Build works precisely because it doesn't just hand someone a hard hat and wish them luck. It builds the foundation first (the technical knowledge, the physical conditioning, the workplace readiness) so that when a trainee walks onto a job site or into a union apprenticeship, she's walking in prepared, not just present. That preparation is exactly what's allowed our female graduates to compete on equal footing and earn the respect of crews and contractors across the Valley.

The Forestry & Wildfire Corps asks something different, but no less demanding, the discipline to work in extreme conditions, the judgment to make fast decisions in unpredictable environments, and the physical resilience to do it all again the next day. The women in our program have brought exactly that. In a field where crews depend on absolute trust in each other, the women who've

come through our program have earned the confidence of their crews, one fire season at a time.

There's a real irony here worth naming. The industries most often labeled unwelcoming to women are, in our experience, exactly where women have the acumen to succeed. They consistently demonstrate the attention to detail, discipline under pressure, and the physical and mental toughness these jobs demand. Our participants don't need the industry to change to prove that. They've simply shown up and done the work.

That's the real lesson for any young woman in the Valley weighing her options: don't let a field's reputation make the decision for you. The construction trades and wildland fire work offer real careers (stable pay, benefits, and a clear path forward) and our numbers show women belong in both.

For those who want to see what's possible firsthand, our doors are open. Whether it's a conversation with a Valley Build graduate now working as a licensed electrician, or a Forestry Corps alumna who's found her calling on a fire crew, the stories are out there, and they're worth hearing before writing off an industry based on reputation alone.

At FRWDB, we're proud to keep opening those doors. The proof isn't in what we say about these programs. It's in the women who've walked through them and built careers nobody told them they could have.





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Leadership Looks Different on Everyone

Every two years, when we begin putting together a new edition of *How She Leads*, I'm reminded that there is no single path to leadership.

The women featured in these pages come from different industries, backgrounds and stages of their careers. Some lead companies and organizations. Some have spent decades building their careers, while others are part of a new generation stepping into leadership and making their mark. But each has a story worth telling.

And that is what I love most about *How She Leads*.

This publication gives us an opportunity to go beyond a title or a position and learn about the woman behind it. How did she get here? Who helped her along the way? What challenges did she face? What has she learned? And perhaps most importantly, what advice would she give to the women coming up behind her?

Leadership is about more than having a seat at the table. It's about what you do with that seat — the decisions you make, the people you bring along with you and the opportunities you create for others.

Here in the Central Valley, we are fortunate to have so many remarkable women doing exactly that. They are leading businesses, organizations and teams. They are mentoring the next generation, strengthening our communities and helping shape the future of our region.

As you read this year's edition, I hope you take the time to really get to know the women featured throughout these pages. Their journeys are different, but there is something to learn from every one of them.

To all of the women who shared their stories with us, thank you. Your experiences, lessons and advice are what make *How She Leads* so special.

And to the next generation of women leaders reading this: I hope somewhere in these pages you see a little of what is possible for you.



Marty Ortiz
Owner

Women's Confidence Coach



Helping single women feel confident & love their life.

Marty Ortiz Is Helping Women Choose Themselves

In a world where so many women are searching for confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging, it's easy to look outside ourselves for what we think will make us feel whole. But the answer to creating a life you truly love may be much closer than you think.

Meet Marty Ortiz, a women's confidence coach with a genuine passion for helping women live a life they love. Through coaching programs, events and her "Confident Girl" community, Marty inspires women across the Central Valley to choose themselves, trust themselves and feel supported throughout that process.

It all started at the end of a failed relationship. Feeling disappointed and unwanted, Marty began to wonder if she was meant to be alone. At that moment she made a decision. "I promised myself I would never again allow someone else's choice to determine how I felt about myself." The line was drawn, and along with that began the road to confidence and self-esteem.

"I had my first experience with life coaching, and the shift in mindset happened almost immediately," explained Ortiz. "I saw myself differently and realized how powerful it was to have someone help you see what you can't see on your own." As Marty continued doing her own work and building her confidence, she began thinking, "More women need this!" She was on fire, and Marty Ortiz, the confidence coach, was born.

Through her Confident Girl Community, Marty creates opportunities for women to connect through weekly walks, hikes, events, masterclasses and coaching programs. "The impact has been watching women build real friendships," she shared. "I've seen women who have come alone and left with new friends. Some continue to attend, and others decide they found 'their people.' Those connections are an ongoing reminder that these spaces matter."

Now, more than ever.

Confidence Coaching For Women

Build the confidence to create a life you love.



MARTY ORTIZ
CONFIDENCE COACHING

@martyortizconfidencecoaching





Women-Owned Businesses

In the Central San Joaquin Valley - ranked by number of full-time employees; if tied, by number of part-time employees & then by number of offices

	Name of company Address Zip	Phone Fax	Full-time employees Part-time employees	No. of local offices	Primary business	Notable clients	Year founded locally Headquarters	Top local executive(s) Owner(s) or partner(s)
1 (NR)	Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group 455 W. Fir Ave. Clovis, CA, 93611	559-449-2700 559-449-2715	287 33	2	Water, agricultural & civil engineering; land surveying; environmental; & planning	Cities of Fresno, Clovis, Visalia, Tulare and more	1968 Clovis	Ronald J. Samuelian, Matthew Kemp, Randy Hopkins
2 (2)	The Nelson Group 3400 McCall Ave., Ste. 100 Selma, CA, 93662	559-896-5000 559-896-8609	260 30	2	Automotive sales & service, property development, rentals/management, restaurant & hotel	WND	1928 Selma	Dwight G. Nelson, owner, Amber Nelson, Kellie Lewison
3 (NR)	Sebastian 7600 N. Palm Ave. Fresno, CA, 93711	559-432-5800 559-432-5858	140 5	2	Full-service electrical, low voltage, and underground construction contractor.	State Center of California - Department of Water Resources, Fresno Area Work Force, Amound World, Helena Industries, Porterville Development Center, Fresno State University, City of Delano, Fowler Packing, Valley Wide Beverage, Warmerdam Packing, Dinuba Unified School District, Fresno Unified School District, SCCC, City of Fresno, Harris Ranch, CUSD, Tachi Palace, Tenaya Lodge.	1946 Fresno	William Barcus, CEO Susan Moran, co-owners, Ruth Barcus
4 (6)	La Tapatia Tortilleria, Inc. 104 E. Belmont Ave. Fresno, CA, 93701	559-441-1030 559-441-1712	109 WND	1	Mexican food manufacturer, tortillas, tortilla chips and wraps	Food Maxx, Smart & Final, Save Mart, Winco, Food4Less, Wal-Mart and more	1969 Fresno	Helen Hansen, president & CEO, Carla Monis, chief administrative officer
5 (4)	GAR, LLC. 8246 S. Crawford Ave. Reedley, CA, 93654	559-638-6311 559-638-6314	100 0	2	Regulatory compliance, and crop care products, service, and advice in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare County	WND	1949 Reedley	Brian Crow, CFO, Ralph Rendon, CEO, Greg Musson, advisor Christina Musson-Rendon, owner, Karen Musson, managing partner
6 (7)	Fresno Equipment Company 4288 S. Bagley Ave. Fresno, CA, 93725	559-486-8020 559-444-1700	93 0	2	John Deere agricultural, turf and compact construction equipment dealership	WND	1961 Fresno	Marsha Vucovich, owner, president & CEO, Reid Pinion, CFO
7 (NR)	Selma Pallet Inc. 1651 Pacific St. Selma, CA, 93662	559-896-7171 WND	90 0	1	New and used shipping pallets. Manufactured and repaired pallets. Export shipping pallets	WND	1980 Selma	Lupe Romero, president, Louis V. Wilson Jr., chief operations manager, Lynette R. Wilson, controller, Vera Romero, VP
8 (10)	Payroll People Inc. 2152 E. Copper Ave., STE 105 Fresno, CA, 93730	559-251-9060 559-251-1431	76 4	1	Professional, scientific and technical services - payroll, HR and payroll tax technology and services.	WND	1981 Fresno	Bettye L. Smith, president, CEO & owner Bettye Smith, CEO & President
9 (11)	SAN MAR Properties, Inc. 6356 N. Fresno St. Fresno, CA, 93710	559-439-5500 559-439-1018	73 3	1	Property management- multi-family and single family	WND	1981 Fresno	Marc A. Wilson, VP/owner, Angel M. Jackson, president/broker
10 (13)	CORE Business Interiors 7761 N. Ingram Ave., STE 109 Fresno, CA, 93711	559-297-6400 WND	64 2	2	We are a full-service interior design firm serving both commercial and residential clients	Noble Credit Union, CSUF, SCCC, Fresno County, Fresno Mission, Marjaree Mason Center, Mission Hope Cancer Center, Fresno Chamber of Commerce, The Well Community Church, Fresno Unified, Madera County.	2009 Fresno	Andrea Benson, CEO
11 (14)	Dumont Printing 1333 G St. Fresno, CA, 93706	559-485-6311 559-485-6357	58 4	3	Printing, mailing, fulfillment, large format, signage, trade show graphics.	WND	1950 Fresno	Susan Moore, president
12 (12)	Delray Tire and Retreading Inc. 2544 S. Cherry Ave. Fresno, CA, 93706	559-485-1761 559-485-7848	54 0	6	Commercial tire sales, service, retread manufacturer, farm & retail tire and related products	WND	1993 Fresno	TENA LEWIS, VP of accounting, matthew MASTRIANO, VP of sales, Mary Mastriano, secretary, Michael Lewis, Ralph Mastriano Matthew Mastriano, Tena Lewis, VP accounting, Erin Mastriano
13 (17)	KS Electric 40380 Brickyard Drive Madera, CA, 93636	559-658-2525 WND	40 0	1	Service B2B sub, residential solar and battery subcontractor	We install for companies such as Sunrun, Palmetto, Powur, Electrum, Volt, Tesla and many more! With over five thousand happy residential customers in the Central Valley.	2000 Madera	Elizabeth Obernolte, CEO
14 (18)	Whitney Thompson & Jeffcoach LLP 970 W. Alluvial Ave. Fresno, CA, 93711	559-753-2550 559-753-2560	38 WND	1	Law firm	WND	2018 Fresno	Kristi Marshall, Marshall C. Whitney, Timothy L. Thompson, Mandy L. Jeffcoach, Nikole E. Cunningham, Courtney R. McKeever
15 (16)	Financial Credit Network, Inc. 2922 West Main Street Visalia, CA, 93291	800-540-9011 800-540-9011	35 9	1	Third-party debt collection	Energy, telecom, city government, court-ordered debt, health care, credit unions, B2B	1954 Visalia	Kris Davisson, VP, Alicia Sundstrom, owner/ president Alicia Sundstrom, president
16 (NR)	Amdal IN Home Care Inc. 318 S. M St. Tulare, CA, 93274	559-686-6611 559-686-6622	30 45	1	Provider of personal in-home care for seniors	WND	2000 Tulare	Deanne Martin-Soares, CEO Deanne Martin-Soares, CEO, Charles Mack, owner
17 (19)	Snowflake Designs, Inc. 2893 Larkin Ave. Clovis, CA, 93612	559-291-6234 559-291-6096	27 3	1	Manufacturing leotards	University of Kentucky, United States Special Olympic team, Egyptian Olympic and World Team	1985 Clovis	Richard Snow, VP, Kindra Snow Walker, president, LaDonna D. Snow, CEO & owner
18 (20)	Archer & Hound Advertising 7910 N. Ingram Ave. Fresno, CA, 93711	559-454-9400 559-454-9401	26 2	1	Full-service advertising agency	WND	2006 Fresno	Jessica Blanchfield, president, Dave Blanchfield, CEO
19 (NR)	ATMF, Inc, dba Ano-Tech Metal Finishing 807 Lincoln Ave. Clovis, CA, 93612	559-299-6836 N/A	25 WND	1	Anodizing of aluminum products, passivation, chemical conversion, electropolish	Malibu Boats, Really Right Stuff, Total Concept, PNM, Adaptive Aerospace	1981 Clovis	Kelly Downs-Tuman, president Carol Downs, Kendra Downs-Hunter, owners
20 (NR)	California Business Machines, Inc. 3752 W. Richert Ave Fresno, CA, 93722	(559) 225-5570 WND	24 1	2	Office technology, copiers, printers, scanners, MFPs, business phone systems and more	Fresno and Tulare counties, City of Clovis, Fresno State Athletics, Superior Courts	1953 Fresno	Tyler Johnson, Sr. VP of Sales, Eric McIntosh, Sr. VP, Stephanie Pinski, marketing director, Teri McNally-Brymer, president

WND-Would Not Disclose. NR-Not Ranked. All data has been provided by representatives of the businesses listed and The Business Journal research. Not all sources surveyed responded to inquiries.

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Women-Owned Businesses

In the Central San Joaquin Valley - ranked by number of full-time employees; if tied, by number of part-time employees & then by number of offices

	Name of company Address Zip	Phone Fax	Full-time employees Part-time employees	No. of local offices	Primary business	Notable clients	Year founded locally Headquarters	Top local executive(s) Owner(s) or partner(s)
21 (23)	HYPHEN ¹ 677 W Palmdon Dr Ste 101 Fresno, CA, 93704	559-438-2180 559-438-2186	24 1	1	Advertising, marketing, PR, branding, creative production and design firm	WND	1994 Fresno	Jane Olvera Majors, VP of strategy & development, Jeanna Antonino, CEO, Julie Lucido, VP of strategy & development, Josh Durham, chief technical officer
22 (21)	Valley Lahvosh Baking Co., Inc. 502 M St. Fresno, CA, 93721	559-485-2700 559-485-0173	24 WND	1	Lahvosh cracker bread and peda bread manufacturer	WND	1922 Fresno	Agnes Saghatelian, president & owner
22 (21)	Facility Designs 7511 N. Palm Bluffs, Ste. 101 Fresno, CA, 93711	559-432-3200 559-432-4227	24 WND	1	Certified MillerKnoll Dealer, Commercial Furniture Dealership & Interior Design Firm	Clovis Community Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente, Saint Agnes Medical Center, United Health Centers, Adventist Health, Valley Wide Beverage, Olam, Murphy Bank, Whelan Financial, Meyers Constructors, Reedley College, Fresno Area Workforce, Fresno Mission City Center, United Security Bank, Camarena Health, Boos & Associates	1991 Fresno	Carrie De Young, chief operating officer, Ali Butler, chief financial officer, Suzanne Byrnes, principal
24 (NR)	Hire Up Staffing Services 575 E Locust Ave., STE 203 Fresno, CA, 93720	559-579-1331 WND	20 300	2	Staffing services	WND	2010 Fresno	Rebecca Kirkman, owner, president & CEO
25 (NR)	Amdal Transport Services 318 S. M St. Tulare, CA, 93274	559-686-6611 559-686-6622	15 14	1	Non-emergent medical transportation	WND	2018 Tulare	Deanne Martin-Soares, CEO Deanne Martin-Soares, CEO & Owner, Charles Mack, owner
26 (26)	Spherion Staffing 2006 N. Fine, Ste. 101 Fresno, CA, 93727	559-251-4040 559-251-7070	12 WND	2	Temporary, temp-to-hire, direct hire staffing for clerical, administrative, professional and more	75 area clients who engage thousands of temporary employees each year.	1993 Fresno	Glenna J. Gates, franchise owner
26 (NR)	Express Employment Professionals 4002 S. Demaree, Ste. B Visalia, CA, 93277	559-738-7822 559-738-7820	12 WND	2	Employment agency	WND	2007 Oklahoma City	Tony Martin, owner
28 (NR)	Mathews Harley- Davidson 548 N. Blackstone Ave. Fresno, CA, 93701	559-233-5279 559-233-3772	10 19	1	Harley Davidson Motorcycles	WND	1953 Fresno	Melissa Walters, dealer principal
29 (31)	Hatmaker Law Group 7522 N. Colonial Ave., Ste. 105 Fresno, CA, 93711	559-374-0077 559-374-0078	10 1	1	Legal services	WND	2014 Fresno	Susan K. Hatmaker
30 (NR)	Red Rose Transportation, Inc 5705 N. West Ave. Fresno, CA, 93711	559-277-1060 559-277-1067	9 WND	1	Transportation 3PL specializing in dry van, temperature-controlled, specialized & flatbed heavy haul	WND	1996 1996	Julianne Scelzi, CEO, Mark Rose, COO
31 (29)	PREM PR & Social 8050 N. Palm Avenue, Suite 300 Fresno, CA, 93711	650-218-2205 WND	6 2	1	Social media management, content creation, public relations, branding, digital marketing	WND	2017 Fresno	Marilyn Cowley, CEO/founder
31 (32)	Cohen Communications 1201 W. Shaw Ave. Fresno, CA, 93711	559-222-1322 559-221-4376	6 2	1	Full-service marketing, advertising and public relations	Community West Bank, The Big Fresno Fair, Merced County Fair, De Young Properties	1986 Fresno	Debra Nalchajian-Cohen, owner/principal
33 (NR)	Fox Property Management 7638 N. Ingram Ave., Ste. 111 Fresno, CA, 93711	224-4008 224-4567	6 WND	1	We manage single family homes, condos and small apartment complexes.	WND	2005 Fresno	Chrisand M Darling, owner/broker
33 (33)	Armstrong Community Management 116 N. Bridge St. Visalia, CA, 93291	559-733-1322 WND	6 WND	1	Homeowners Association management	San Joaquin Valley Homes, The Villas at Bella Sera, Da Vinci, The Courtyards Property Owners	2017 Visalia	Crystal Williams, president/owner
35 (NR)	Maven Integrative Aesthetics 352 Pollasky Ave #206 Clovis, CA, 93612	559-765-4853 WND	5 0	1	Integrative Medical Spa and Wellness	WND	2018 Clovis	Melanie Boone, founder
36 (34)	RPM PR 581 W. Fallbrook Ave., Ste. 107 Fresno, CA, 93711	559-205-0721 WND	5 WND	1	Publicity, brand reputation management, social media, community connections, media training, brand activations	WND	2016 Fresno	Rae Pardini Matson, CEO/founder
37 (38)	Ortiz LED Solutions 4688 W. Jennifer Ave., Ste. 107 Fresno, CA, 93722	559-500-1986 559-500-1986	3 1	1	LED lighting distributor, serving property managers, schools, commercial & hospitals	Paramount School Dist., Adventist Hospitals, Manco Abbott, RL Jensen, Wasatch Property Management, and many electrical contractors.	2013 Fresno	Jasmine Luna Garcia, VP Araceli Ortiz DeCamp, CEO
38 (36)	Guardian Accounting, Inc. 16120 Monreal Road Madera, CA, 93636	559-472-3183 559-900-4119	2 3	1	Accounting, bookkeeping and CFO consulting services	Clovis Chamber of Commerce, Fresno Long-Term Care Medical Group, WorldLight Media LLC, One Fresno Foundation, Thrive Church.	2011 Madera	Krista Beavers, founder/CFO
39 (39)	Rosenthal Olive Ranch 29268 Avenue 9 Madera, CA, 93637	559-905-6447 559-905-6447	2 WND	1	Farming	Individuals as well as markets and restaurants	2012 Madera	Karen L Rosenthal, CEO/owner, Rolland Edward Rosenthal, VP
39 (NR)	Hemisphere Home & Interior Design Studio 6045 N. Palm Ave OPUS ONE CENTER Fresno, CA, 93704	559-226-0666 AND 559-246-8714 WND	2 WND	1	Residential/commercial interior design and special order furnishings, window treatments, & more	WND	1988 Fresno, Calif.	Roseanne Guaglianone

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¹ Formerly JP Marketing
Merged with Marketing Plus



Andrea Benson
CEO

coreinteriors.com

Great People Bring the Vision to Life

The most important leadership lessons I have learned come from the many roles I carry: woman CEO, mother, daughter, wife, and 2nd-generation leader helping carry forward a family business that means so much to me. Leadership has stretched me, humbled me, and reminded me that how we lead people matters.

1. Leadership is about surrounding yourself with great people.

You cannot build anything meaningful alone. Leadership is not about having every answer or being the smartest person in the room. It is about surrounding yourself with people who are talented, honest, creative, committed, and willing to grow with you.

At CORE, our success is built by people; designers, sales, project managers, installers, accounting, service, and the leadership team who show up for our clients and one another. As CEO, I may cast the vision, but the team brings that vision to life

2. Leadership requires humility, grace, and accountability.

I have learned that leadership requires humility. I do not have all the answers, and I do not believe a great leader has to pretend that she does. The best growth comes from listening, asking questions, learning from others, and admitting when there is a better way.

My faith guides me and reminds me to lead with grace. But grace does not mean avoiding accountability. I hold high standards for myself and those around me because I want CORE to keep striving to be better. Leadership means having

the courage to make hard decisions, have honest conversations, and still treat people with dignity, compassion, and respect.

3. Leadership means embracing growth.

The third lesson I have learned is that growth is essential. Personally and professionally, we should always be learning, stretching, and evolving. Growth is not always comfortable, but it is necessary if we want to become better leaders, better companies, and better people.

As a daughter in a family business, I am deeply grateful for the foundation my parents built. It is a gift to carry that legacy forward, but honoring the past does not mean standing still. At CORE, we are not just here to create inspiring spaces. We create opportunities, serve our community, and make it a better place to live, work, and learn.

Leadership is not about having every answer or being the smartest person in the room. It is about surrounding yourself with great people who share your values, bring the vision to life, and help the company grow with purpose.



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Allysunn Walker
President and CEO

Southwest Fresno Community
Development Corporation

Turning Leadership into Ownership, Opportunity and Legacy

For Allysunn Walker, leadership is not defined by a title. It is defined by what happens for others because you were willing to lead.

That philosophy has shaped a career spanning higher education, real estate, public-sector development, entrepreneurship and community economic development — and has brought Walker back to Fresno with a specific mission: helping Southwest Fresno residents participate in the economic transformation occurring in their own community.

A graduate of Harvard College, UCLA and Fresno State's Craig School of Business, Walker earned her master's degree from UCLA with distinction and her MBA from Fresno State



**SW Fresno
Community
Development
Corporation**

with distinction. She later returned to the Craig School as an instructor.

Her career includes serving as chief real estate development officer for the Fresno Housing Authority. She also became an entrepreneur and co-owner of a real estate brokerage firm, gaining experience developing, acquiring and managing real estate assets.

In 2024, Fresno State honored Walker with the Craig School of Business Top Dog Alumni Award. She became the first African American recipient of the award from the college.

Today, Walker serves as president and CEO of the Southwest Fresno Community Development Corporation (SWF CDC), which she helped found in 2012 with Bishop Paul Binion of the Westside Church of God.

"Leadership is stewardship," Walker says. "When you are given knowledge, influence, resources or access, you have a responsibility to use those things to create opportunities for other people."

That principle is reflected in SWF CDC's focus on building community wealth and power through ownership. Walker believes development should do more than bring new houses and investment into a neighborhood.

"We can't just build houses and call that community development," Walker says. "We have to build the capacity of people to own, to invest, to start businesses and to create wealth."

Her career has allowed her to view real estate from public-sector, private investment, brokerage, housing and nonprofit perspectives. It has reinforced a central part of her leadership philosophy: Communities should not simply be recipients of investment. They should become participants in it.

"Ownership changes everything," Walker says. "When you own your home, when you own your business, when you own an asset, you have a stake in the future of your community."

Education is another piece of that philosophy. Having experienced it as both student and instructor, Walker believes strongly in its power — but also believes education must be connected to opportunity. Knowledge alone can only go so far without access to capital, networks, property and ownership.

That thinking shapes the legacy she hopes to leave.

"I'm less interested in being remembered for what I accomplished than for what I helped other people accomplish," Walker says. "If I can help create something that continues to open doors for people long after I'm gone, that's leadership."

For Walker, legacy is multiplication: Build the institution. Create the opportunity. Transfer the knowledge. Open the door. Help someone else walk through it.

That is how she leads.

More information on SWF CDC | www.swfresnocdc.org | info@swfresnocdc.org | 559-209-8031



Michele Cantwell-Copher
Superintendent

Fresno County Office of Education

Leading with Purpose:

A Historic First. A Proven Record. A Vision for the Future.

Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher made history as the first woman elected Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, a milestone that reflected a community's confidence in experienced, collaborative leadership focused on students. Four years later, her reputation is clear: she is the leader Fresno County's children need.

With more than 35 years in education, Dr. Cantwell-Copher has spent her career centered on one goal: giving every student the chance to succeed, no matter their zip code or background. Under her leadership, the Fresno County Office of Education has strengthened support for all 31 school districts and charter schools, expanded career technical education and dual enrollment, advanced literacy initiatives, improved school safety, and invested in the teachers and classified staff who shape our kids every day.

Those who know her best often describe her as thoughtful, approachable, and passionately committed to Fresno County's students. She leads by bringing people together, educators, families, business leaders, labor, higher education, and law enforcement, to build real solutions for students. She listens first and leads with integrity, and that collaborative, results-driven approach is exactly why she is the best choice to lead Fresno County's schools forward.

As education faces new challenges, from preparing students for a changing workforce to learning recovery and school safety, Fresno County's kids deserve steady, experienced leadership that puts them first, not politics or headlines. Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher has the record and the vision to keep delivering for every child, building the trust and opportunity that will benefit generations of Fresno County students to come.

Re-elect Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher: The Best Choice for Kids.

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**DR. MICHELE
CANTWELL-COPHER**
Fresno County
Superintendent of Schools
2026

REPORT CARD



✓ Safer Schools

Partnering with law enforcement and parents, we've strengthened campus safety with secure entrances, cameras, fencing, anti-bullying programs, and provide mental health services to over 5,000 kids annually, keeping kids safe and well.

✓ Recognition for Excellence

In the past 3 years, Fresno County schools have shined with 6 National Blue Ribbons, 10 Distinguished Schools, 10 Schools to Watch, and 10 Golden Bells.

✓ Improved Student Achievement

Student scores are rising: 4% increase in reading and 6% in math scores over 3 years, additional A-G and CTE classes, and more dual enrollment options for students.

✓ Fiscal Responsibility

We saved \$5M in the first year by increasing office efficiencies, streamlining Kids Café, and balancing multiple school and office budgets, building trust in our finances and creating ongoing savings.

Visit: reelectcopher2026.com to stay up to date on my campaign!



Sherri White
Chief Business Officer

Fresno Mission



Leading from vast experience.

Built for This: Sherri White's Path to Purpose

Sherri White has become a powerhouse behind Fresno Mission's growing social enterprises. As Chief Business Officer, she has helped open a second Mission Thrift store, City Center's EZ-47 Coffee Shop, Mission Thrift's warehouse distribution center and e-commerce operations. She has also expanded Mission Auto sales, developed recycling initiatives and built the growing teams behind them all.

Her work also reaches beyond business operations. Sherri has strengthened career pathway partnerships that give students opportunities to gain experience, develop skills and move toward a more stable future.

It's a role built on skills she developed long before ministry work. Sherri spent years in fashion merchandising and logistics, including time at GAP's distribution center. An unexpected turn eventually brought her into mission work, where she discovered those same skills could be used to create Kingdom impact in a whole new way.

Today, Sherri leads more than 110

people. Her leadership philosophy is simple: train and encourage rather than correct and reprimand.

"Clear is kind," she says, borrowing a phrase from author Brené Brown.

Sherri also believes women bring an important perspective to industries like resale and fashion, where leadership has traditionally been dominated by men. Women often understand the details that matter to the customers they serve, and Sherri believes they deserve a seat at the table where decisions are being made.

One of her hardest leadership lessons came during a season of tremendous growth when she was opening a new store and warehouse at the same time. She realized she couldn't simply rely on what had worked before. Instead, she found herself asking a different question: "Lord, what would You have me do?"

That question changed the way she approached leadership.

Sherri's story is a reminder that God doesn't waste our experience. The skills built in one season may become the very tools He uses to create impact in the next.



Priscilla Robbins
Fresno Mission's Chief Ministry Officer

Fresno Mission



Leading from a deep heart.

Called to Lead: Priscilla Robbins' Leadership Legacy

For Priscilla Robbins, Fresno Mission's Chief Ministry Officer, leadership begins with a simple conviction:

"Leadership is not about me. It's about the work that I've been called to do."

That perspective allows Priscilla to lead with both truth and grace, even when the truth is difficult to hear.

Priscilla's role includes leading the teams who oversee Searcy Center, an 18-month addiction recovery program; the Family Center, which provides shelter for 73 whole families; Fresno Mission's Youth Program serving dozens of Transitional Aged Youth; and two apartment complexes providing low-income housing.

But Priscilla doesn't view the people she leads as simply employees. She sees herself as a steward of people God has placed in her care.

"I believe I have a servant's heart," she says, "but not a servant of shame. I serve because that is the model I saw in my father and in Jesus."

Neither, she says, led from arrogance or from a need to prove they were right.

Leading teams focused on transformation carries its own weight, and Priscilla is honest about that responsibility. One of the prayers she returns to again and again is simple: "Use me. Just make me the vessel." It's a reminder that she is an instrument, not the solution. That perspective keeps her grounded when leadership requires difficult decisions.

As a woman leading within a Christian organization, Priscilla doesn't allow the opinions of others to determine whether she belongs at the table.

"I have to come to work solely with the understanding that God gave me this," she says. "I stand on the authority that God has given me in this position." Her advice to future leaders follows that same conviction: know who you are before you try to lead anyone else. For Priscilla, strong leadership doesn't begin with a title. It begins with knowing who you are, knowing Who called you and being willing to serve wherever He places you.

“They bring a **rare balance of wisdom**, strength, humility, & relational leadership, a **partnership that leads** the Fresno Mission & its employees to maximum impact.”

-**Nathan Freeland**
Chief Strategy Officer



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Cheryl Harless, DNP, RN
Chief Nursing Officer

Saint Agnes Health

Nothing Short of Extraordinary

Delivering an exceptional patient care experience is the highest priority for Saint Agnes Health Chief Nursing Officer, Cheryl Harless, DNP, RN.

With thirty years of clinical experience and more than fifteen years serving in executive leadership, Cheryl understands the importance of nurturing every patient's journey from admission through discharge and beyond.

Since joining Saint Agnes in 2024, Cheryl has fostered strong relationships with clinical leaders to develop consistent, evidence-based care models across the Medical Center.

Patient care at Saint Agnes is collaborative, often combining the skills of physicians, nurses and clinical technicians to meet the unique needs of every patient. In her role, Cheryl builds interdepartmental workflows, so every member of the team carries out their specific responsibilities to ensure positive patient outcomes.

Hands-on leadership

It's not uncommon to find Cheryl in scrubs rounding the hospital with care teams, personally checking on patients



Saint Agnes Health

A Member of Trinity Health

and assisting with their care. This hands-on approach demonstrates Cheryl's servant leadership in action and improves trust and transparency among nursing staff.

"Nurses have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our patients and families every day through human connection and compassionate care," Cheryl says. "As a nurse leader, I have the responsibility to support the daily work of our clinical teams by reinforcing a sharp focus on delivering an extraordinary patient experience and creating an empowering work environment where our colleagues can grow."

Patient care that measures up

The dedication of our clinical teams to standardize processes, improve patient workflows and reduce wait times in the Emergency Department have made a positive impact on patient satisfaction over the last two years.

Under Cheryl's leadership, Saint Agnes has seen dramatic improvement in patient experience survey scores including Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). The hospital was also recently recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a Best Regional Hospital 2026-2027 for the third year in-a-row and is listed as high performing in thirteen conditions and procedures.

"While we've seen measurable improvement in our patient experience metrics, what is most important to me is the feedback we receive directly from patients and their families. Patients describe our team as clear communicators, responsive and empathetic," Cheryl says.

Building for the future

By investing in the health of our community through expanded facilities and the adoption of new technologies and treatments, Saint Agnes is ensuring patients can get the expert care they need without the stress of traveling to the Bay Area or Southern California to see specialists.

"Saint Agnes has positioned itself as a pillar of advanced medical, surgical and preventative care throughout the Valley for nearly a century. Every new technology, procedure and clinical practice offered at Saint Agnes increases local access to the latest treatments which improves the overall well-being of our community," Cheryl says.

As Saint Agnes expands its services to meet the growing and complex needs of our community, we remain rooted in our healing mission to provide the highest-quality, patient-centered care for everyone we serve.

"The sacred work we do would not be possible without the trust our patients and their loved ones place in us every day," Cheryl says. "I'm proud to be part of the team that's shaping compassionate healthcare for future generations."



A legacy of care growing for the future

For generations, Saint Agnes has served as a healing presence across the Central Valley.

What began as a hospital founded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross has evolved into a comprehensive family of care – **including advanced inpatient and surgical care, primary and specialty care, physician education, a health plan and connected care services** – reaching more people in more places.

While our name is changing to reflect this growth, our mission remains the same:

*to provide the highest-quality, compassionate care
for the patients and families we serve.*



Saint Agnes Health

A Member of Trinity Health



Rachel Reed
Lead Senior Care Specialist

Assured Senior Living Solutions



Leading by Showing Up

Rachel Reed does not define leadership by a title or a place at the head of the table. She leads by showing up, doing the hard work, and treating the people around her as partners.

That approach has shaped more than 20 years in social services and nine years as co-founder of Assured Senior Living Solutions. Families come to Rachel frightened, exhausted, or facing decisions they never expected. She listens, tells the truth even when it is difficult, and helps them move forward with clarity.

Rachel has learned that no single person or organization can meet every need. Rather than viewing other senior care professionals as competitors, she brings them together as collaborators. That belief led her to co-found The Aging Network California, which now connects more than 860 professionals across the Central Valley and Kern County.

Her leadership is grounded in consistency, integrity, and compassion. Her recommendations reflect what is best for each senior and family, even when there is no professional benefit to her. Colleagues trust her judgment and often turn to her when care decisions become personal.

Rachel hopes her leadership legacy will be reflected in the people she has helped, the professionals she has connected, and a senior care community made stronger because more people chose to work together.

Finding the Right Fit Starts with the Right Guide.

Every family's situation is unique.

Assured Senior Living Solutions helps families navigate assisted living, memory care, and senior living options with compassionate local guidance and personalized placement support at **no cost to families**.

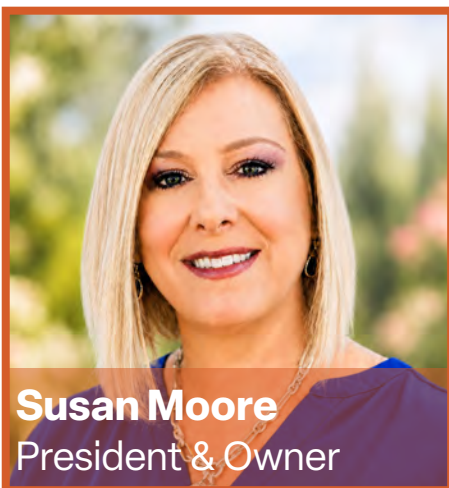


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Susan Moore
President & Owner

Dumont Printing

Hungry, Humble, and Smart

Success in manufacturing rarely follows a straight line.

I joined Dumont Printing in 1991 as an account representative after working in the business forms industry. I did not arrive with a plan to someday own the company. I came ready to work, learn the

business, take care of customers, and prove myself.

The defining moment in my career came in 2001. I became Vice President of Sales, but when the company's owner faced a serious health crisis, my responsibilities changed almost overnight. I stepped in to run the day-to-day operations of Dumont Printing. Suddenly, I was responsible not only for sales but for our people, production, finances, customers, and the future of the company.

That was when I truly learned to lead. It was a trial by fire, with no playbook, no gradual transition, and no choice but to step up, make decisions, and keep moving forward.

In 2004, I was named Vice President, reflecting the role I had already taken on. We continued to grow, acquiring Pacific Printing in 2011. In 2014, after more than a decade of running Dumont, I purchased the company and became President and Owner. In 2019, we expanded again with the acquisitions of West Shaw and Pegasus Printing.

Then COVID changed our industry almost overnight. Instead of standing still, our team adapted. Within weeks, we retooled part of our production floor to manufacture face shields and acrylic barriers. We found a way to keep our

people working while serving an entirely new need. It reinforced something I had learned years earlier: when circumstances change, leaders have to be willing to change with them.

In 2023, we continued moving forward with the acquisition of Val Print.

Becoming an owner never meant I had leadership figured out. For more than a decade, I have been an active member of Vistage, continually challenging myself to become a better leader, learn from other business owners, and look outside our industry for new ideas and perspectives.

More than three decades in a deadline-driven, traditionally male-dominated manufacturing industry have taught me that leadership is not about being the loudest person in the room. It is about listening, making decisions, surrounding yourself with good people, and never becoming too comfortable with the way things have always been done.

The work does the talking.

That is still how I lead today: stay hungry, stay humble, and never assume you have it all figured out.

Susan Moore is President and Owner of Dumont Printing, Central California's largest full-service commercial printing company, celebrating 76 years in business.



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Carla Monis
CAO & Human Resources Director

La Tapatia Tortilleria, Inc.

La Tapatia Builds Generations of Leadership Around Family

When a massive fire tore through La Tapatia Tortilleria's Fresno tortilla chip operation in 2021, the family-owned company suddenly lost roughly a third of its business while its chip facility was rebuilt.

For the family-owned tortilla maker, one of the immediate questions was what would happen to its employees.

Rather than lay off its permanent workforce, La Tapatia moved affected employees into jobs in its tortilla departments, warehouse, and other areas while the chip operation was rebuilt.

CAO and Human Resources Director Carla Monis said the company's response relied on something built long before the fire: a workplace culture centered on family and its employees.

"I think that's part of our success and our longevity—being able to keep it a family-first kind of environment here," Monis said. "And I think that definitely has helped us weather the really bad storms...when the fire came and we couldn't offer as many hours, our people stayed with us."

A family business led by women

La Tapatia's story began in 1969, when Helen Hansen was working a clerical job at a grain company and learned of a tortilla line for sale.

She purchased the equipment and built the business during her off-hours before

eventually leaving her day job to focus on La Tapatia.

Along the way, Hansen raised four daughters as a single mother.

"People are impressed that my mom grew this company herself and set an example for us," said daughter Yvette Cuellar, La Tapatia's marketing director. "But I didn't feel like we were ever deprived. We grew up around this business as a family business."

Hansen encouraged her daughters to attend college and pursue their own interests rather than pushing them to join the company. But eventually, all four came back: Monis leads human resources, Cuellar leads marketing, Linda Ghilarducci directs retail sales and Toni-Marie Rushing oversees accounting.

The values of leadership and family are now permeating to a third generation, with several of Helen's grandchildren having worked part time or full time at the business.

Those values have also extended to the employees.

After the fire, the company introduced a referral program encouraging employees to recommend relatives and friends for open jobs, with paid time off as an incentive. Monis said the program improved retention and helped create a workplace filled with husbands and wives, parents and children, and extended families.

Lead Machine Operator Irene Calderon has referred her son-in-law, aunt and niece during her three years with La Tapatia.

"Working with them over here has allowed us to build a different kind of bond at work," Calderon said.

That investment also includes opportunities to move between jobs and advance; Monis said every company manager has been promoted from within.

It is a culture Monis believes helped La Tapatia weather economic downturns, COVID-19 and the fire while retaining employees who could help the company recover.

For a business now spanning three generations, family has become more than its ownership structure. It has become part of how La Tapatia leads.





Jessica Smith Bobadilla
Attorney

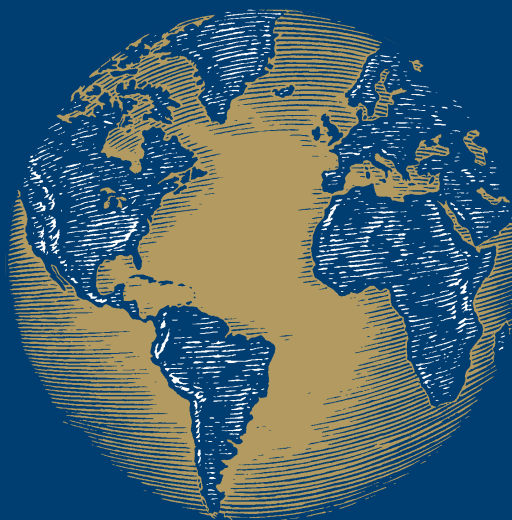
The Law Office of Jessica Smith Bobadilla

From the United Nations to Wall Street: Fresno attorney's path to immigration law

The Law Office of Jessica Smith Bobadilla is a full-service immigration law firm founded in 2007 by Jessica Smith Bobadilla. Prior to establishing her own practice, Jessica worked in government and human rights. She worked for the United States Department of Commerce, the United Nations Development Program and Human Rights Watch in various roles as a law clerk and consultant. She also worked on Wall Street for a firm that specialized in business immigration, asylum law, removal defense and appellate litigation.

Jessica serves clients in many states and throughout the world. Jessica's original office is still in Fresno, California in the historic downtown area close to the courts and immigration agencies. The community surrounding her office in Fresno, California is located blocks away from the area where Jessica's paternal grandparents made their home after arriving in the United States as refugees following the Armenian Genocide. Jessica also maintains

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offices in San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles, California. Jessica has the capacity to meet with and handle cases in other jurisdictions such as New York, Chicago, Denver, Phoenix and Boston. Due to her practice of 23 years and strong record of success in handling cases, Jessica regularly travels to jurisdictions throughout the United States to assist clients with their immigration needs.

Jessica has been cited in Forbes, the New York Times, the LA Times, the Washington Post, Mother Jones, the Fresno Bee, and has also been featured on television and radio programs such as Telemundo, Univision, NBC News, ABC News, CNN News, ESPN, and NPR. Apart from many hardworking families, Jessica has represented businesses and high-profile immigrants including DACA Olympian Luis Grijalva. Jessica is fluent in English and Spanish, proficient in French, and speaks elementary Armenian.



Andrea Kelly
Executive Director

Food Link



From Pixley to the Front Lines of Hunger

She started at FoodLink as a nutrition assistant in 2017. Today she runs it.

Andrea Kelly grew up in Pixley, an unincorporated farming town in the heart of Tulare County, where the abundance of the fields sat uneasily alongside the poverty of the families who worked them.

Kelly watched neighbors, classmates and relatives face the same daily question — whether there would be enough food on the table — in a region that grows food for much of the country. She came to see hunger not as a simple shortage of food but as a symptom of deeper problems: economic disparity, geographic isolation and limited access to resources.

That understanding shaped her path. Kelly worked in Pixley's schools and counseled domestic-violence survivors before joining FoodLink in 2017 as a nutrition assistant. She rose through community engagement roles to executive director in January 2024. She holds a bachelor's in social work from Fresno State and a master's from CSU Bakersfield.

FoodLink says its network now spans more than 100 touchpoints across Tulare County, a county that ranks near the bottom in California for child food security. Under Kelly, the organization launched Harvest Academy, an 11-week program for food entrepreneurs, and broke ground on its first agroecology center — part of a push toward a more resilient Central Valley food future.

“

I watched people work incredibly hard in the field, and I also saw how little of that abundance found its way back to our own tables,” Kelly said. “This center is a chance to change that, right here at home.

”



ENDING HUNGER & POVERTY THROUGH NUTRITION EDUCATION & FOOD SYSTEM CHANGE

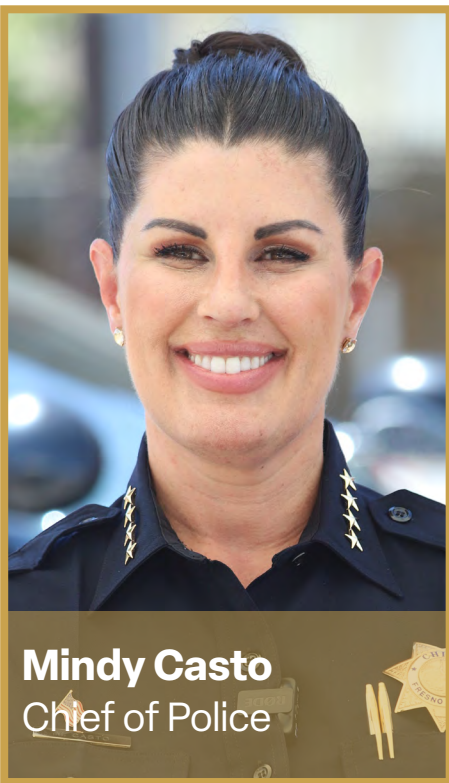
For 40 years, we have stood by our unwavering belief that food is a basic human right, as we distribute millions of healthy meals every year.

Food is medicine, yet nutritious food is out of reach for many low-income families and seniors. Fruits and vegetables are often unaffordable on tight budgets. And fresh produce isn't readily available in many low-income neighborhoods where grocery stores are sparse.

OUR VALUES

Trust Collaboration Respect Compassion Food with Dignity

FoodLink Tulare County aims to promote equitable and dignified access to nutritious, healthy food while also addressing the root causes of hunger through education, advocacy, and food systems change.



Mindy Casto
Chief of Police

Following a Legacy of Excellence in Public Safety

It doesn't take a detective to figure out who had the most influence over leadership development in my career, because he was our chief for 18 years - and that's Mayor Jerry Dyer. Though the leadership lessons were many, there are a couple that strongly resonated with me - lessons that I live by every day I serve as the 24th Fresno Police Chief.

First is to never make a decision to save your own skin. You have to put the people you serve first in every decision you make, be that the Fresno community at large or the officers who sacrifice every day to help make our city safer. When things are going well, credit always goes to your team, but when they don't go so well it is the leader's responsibility to step out front and take the proverbial heat.

Another lesson was that leadership emerges in a crisis. When everything things seems to be falling apart, it's easy for a leader to get negative, but you simply cannot afford that luxury when a city of over half a million people and a department of 1,300 members depend on you.

There was a day last year where everything seemed bad - lawsuits, bad media, budget problems, it felt overwhelming. As I was trying to find something to be grateful for in the midst of all these challenges, I realized the one thing I prayed most for had happened that day. Every single one of my officers had made it home safely from their shift that day - and as Chief of Police, there is nothing I more important than that.

Fresno Police Department





Jamie Manock
Founder & Owner

Saddle Sips

Leadership Begins with Servanthood

If someone asked me what has shaped my leadership more than anything else, my answer wouldn't be a business book, a mentor, or a strategy. It would be my relationship with Jesus Christ.

People often ask how I built Saddle Sips Saloon, expecting a business plan or defining moment. Looking back, I don't see one grand leap. I see countless small steps of faith.

The Lord has always worked in my life one step at a time. An idea would settle in my heart. A door would open.

An opportunity would appear. My responsibility wasn't to have the entire roadmap, it was simply to discern and take the next faithful step.

As my business has grown, discernment has become an important part of my decision-making. I've learned that not every open door is necessarily one I'm meant to walk through. Before making big decisions, I try to bring them to prayer and ask not only, "Is this good for my business?" but, "Lord, is this where you are asking me to go?"

Sometimes the answer has meant moving forward in faith. Other times, it has meant waiting or saying no. I'm learning that success isn't about chasing every opportunity. It's about building what God is asking me to build, at the pace He is asking me to build it.

That perspective has changed how I approach business.

Saddle Sips Saloon isn't simply about serving cocktails. It's about serving people.

To me, hospitality means making sure everyone feels considered, including the guest who doesn't drink alcohol. That's why thoughtfully crafted mocktails are just as meaningful to me as the cocktails we serve. No one should feel like an afterthought simply because of what is—or isn't—in their glass.

We have the privilege of being part of marriages, milestones, new beginnings, and moments that become lifelong memories. Whether

we're handing someone a beautifully crafted drink or helping a bride breathe easier because everything is taken care of, those moments matter.

One of my favorite stories in Scripture is Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana, where He turned water into wine. While my work could never compare to the miracles of Christ, I often smile knowing my career allows me to serve during celebrations, just as His first miracle took place during one. It reminds me that joy, celebration, and serving others have always had a place in God's story.

Faith has also taught me that leadership isn't about recognition. It's about servanthood.

Jesus showed us that true leadership begins with humility. It means showing up prepared, treating every client with care, supporting my team, and remembering that every interaction is an opportunity to reflect kindness, integrity, and excellence. I'm still learning every day. I don't always know the next step, but I've learned I don't have to. If there's one thing I hope people remember about my business, it isn't the trailer, cocktails, mocktails, or décor. I hope they remember how they were treated. Because leadership, to me, isn't simply about building a successful business. It's about faithfully serving wherever God has placed me, discerning where He is leading, and trusting Him with every step that follows.

Photographer @gracefulglance





Wilhelmina Santana
Executive Director

Visalia Fox Theatre

How Visalia Fox Theatre's Wilhelmina Santana leads by listening

After more than four decades in live entertainment and venue management, I have learned that leadership is rarely defined by the biggest event, the most difficult decision, or the title beside your name. It is defined by how you show up for people.

One person who had a lasting influence on how I lead was Thom Connors, a former General Manager at SMG, where I spent 26 years. Thom taught me that strong leadership is not about authority—it is about how you use it. He expected excellence and accountability, but he also listened, trusted people to do their jobs, and communicated honestly. Most importantly, he made people feel respected because they mattered.

Today, as Executive Director of the historic Visalia Fox Theatre, those lessons continue to shape how I lead. We are stewards of a community treasure and a gathering place where

people experience music, laughter, celebration, and connection.

What makes me proudest is the people I have the privilege of working alongside. My staff is intelligent, curious, and eager to learn, while bringing their own knowledge, perspectives, and ideas to the table. I believe a leader should understand the work they ask of others and be willing to step in alongside their team when needed. I may have decades of experience to share, but leadership is not a one-way exchange—I continue to learn from them as well.

When I think about legacy, I think about people. I hope those I have worked with will say that I challenged them, believed in them, listened to them, and encouraged them to recognize what they were capable of achieving.

Leadership, to me, is ultimately an act of service. Success is not simply what we accomplish while we are in the room. It is what continues because we were there.



PRESERVING HISTORY. INSPIRING WHAT'S NEXT.

The Visalia Fox Theatre has been a landmark in downtown Visalia since opening its doors in February 1930. Now approaching its 100th anniversary, the Fox remains both a historic treasure and a vibrant performing arts venue where generations have gathered for music, entertainment, and connection. Operated by the Visalian Friends of the Fox Theatre, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the theatre was acquired, restored, and reopened as a performing arts venue in 1999. Today, we honor its extraordinary past while ensuring it remains welcoming and relevant for generations to come.

From its distinctive East Indian-inspired interior and atmospheric design to the performances and community experiences that fill it today, the Fox is a place where history is not simply preserved—it is still being lived. **As the Fox approaches its centennial in 2030, we are not only celebrating where we've been. We are preparing this community treasure for its next 100 years.**



VISALIA, CA

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FOXVISALIA.ORG



Tina Mistry, CFP®
President/CEO & Senior
Financial Advisor

Portfolio Advisors, Inc

Helping Others Find Their Way Forward

I've been fortunate throughout my career to have people who encouraged me to pursue what interested me rather than telling me what I couldn't do. Some of those mentors were women. Some were men. What mattered most was that they saw potential, offered encouragement and gave me room to grow. That experience has shaped how I think about leadership today.

At Portfolio Advisors, our mission is Enriching Lives Through Transformative Action. To me, that means looking for opportunities to make a meaningful difference—not only for the families we serve, but for the people coming up behind us. The firm's existing materials reinforce that mission alongside its work serving families and individuals through comprehensive financial planning.

There are still relatively few women in financial planning, and I would love to see that change. Women can bring qualities particularly valuable to this profession: empathy, problem-solving, attention to detail and a genuine willingness to serve. But ultimately, I want to encourage talented young people of all genders to consider this career.

That is especially exciting because I see younger generations entering the profession with a strong sense of purpose. They want their work to matter. And financial planning offers exactly that opportunity.

Financial planning isn't just about money. It's about people. It's about building long-term relationships and being willing to serve someone through the many chapters of life—the celebrations as well as the difficult moments.

My personal “why” is to support people in their best and worst moments, so that everyone has someone looking out for their best interests. I know from my own life how powerful support can be. When I felt supported, I thrived. When I didn't, I still found my way forward—but it often took longer and was more difficult.

That perspective challenges me as a leader: How can I help make someone else's path a little easier? Whether that means mentoring a young advisor, encouraging someone to pursue an opportunity they aren't sure they're ready for, or helping a family navigate an important life decision, leadership is an opportunity to help others move forward.

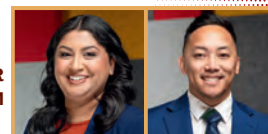
Sometimes the most transformative action is simply being the person who says, “I believe you can.”

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Tina Mistry, CFP® AJ Flores, CFP®



Officially, I handle morale. The rest of the team handles your financial plan.

Remy.

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**Take our Financial Guidance
Assessment to start the
conversation.**

Our Mission: Enriching Lives Through Transformative Action



Photo by Miguel Bruna on Unsplash | Women-owned businesses in the Central Valley employ thousands of people and have a significant impact on the local economy.

What she built: Women-owned businesses grow from strong Valley roots, expanding their reach

The Valley's largest women-owned businesses are adding employees, expanding services and reaching markets far beyond the region.

By The Business Journal Staff

Some started with a single location. Others have been part of the Central Valley business community for generations. Today, the region's largest women-owned businesses include companies employing hundreds or thousands of people, serving customers across the country and, in some cases, doing business around the world.

The latest Women-Owned Businesses list from The Business Journal captures some of that evolution.

The list ranks Central San Joaquin Valley companies by full-time employees, with part-time employment and number of offices serving as tiebreakers. While familiar companies continue to lead the rankings, several businesses have made significant moves.

Ruiz Food Products Inc. remains No. 1, reporting 4,000 full-time employees and two local offices. Founded in Dinuba in 1964, the frozen-food manufacturer maintains its flagship manufacturing operation there even after moving its corporate headquarters to Frisco, Texas.

Its reach has expanded considerably from those Valley roots. Ruiz acquired the assets of Culinary International in Vernon in 2022, adding a 75,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and nearby 43,200-square-foot storage facility to its West Coast operations.

One of the biggest moves in the latest rankings belongs to Fresno-based Hire Up Staffing Services.

Hire Up jumped from No. 15 to No. 3, with reported full-time employment increasing from 60 to 200. The

company also reported 300 part-time employees in the latest list.

The change follows years of expansion. Founder and CEO Rebecca Kirkman began growing Hire Up after buying out its original investors. By 2023, the company had about 70 employees across 10 offices in California and Texas and was placing about 2,000 people in jobs annually.

The Nelson Group remains No. 2, reporting 400 full-time employees compared with 500 in the previous edition. The Selma-based company has built a portfolio spanning automotive sales and service, property development and management, restaurants and hotels.

GAR LLC follows at No. 4 with 180 full-time employees, while Visalia Ceramic Tile Inc. ranks No. 5 with 136.

What She Built | Page 26

What She Built | From 25

Some of the most established names on the list are also continuing to change.

La Tapatia Tortilleria Inc. moved from No. 7 to No. 6 as reported full-time employment increased from 100 to 109. Founded in Fresno in 1969, the tortilla manufacturer has reached customers well outside the Valley, including exports to South Korea, China, Malaysia and Jordan.

Fresno Equipment Company moved from No. 8 to No. 7 while holding steady at 94 full-time employees. The John Deere agricultural, turf and compact construction equipment dealership has operated locally since 1961.

Payroll People Inc. also held steady at 76 full-time employees, but the Fresno company's reach has changed considerably over the years.

Its 2021 acquisition of Kingsburg-based Payality was intended to help the company reach more clients nationwide, CEO Bettye Smith said at the time. More recently, Payroll People has been developing software intended to support an eventual expansion into international markets.

For other companies, growth has come through acquisitions and investment closer to home.

Dumont Printing returned to the top 20 at No. 14 with 56 full-time employees, four part-time employees and three local offices. The Fresno printer acquired Val Print in 2023, adding a fulfillment facility and warehouse to its operations. That followed acquisitions of other printing businesses in 2011 and 2019.

Dumont continued investing in its footprint in 2024, expanding its fulfillment center by 15,000 square feet and adding new equipment.

CORE Business Interiors, ranked No. 13 with 58 full-time employees, has broadened both what it does and where it does it.

Founded in Fresno in 2009, CORE has expanded from furniture and interior design into flooring, modular interiors, installation and related services. Its affiliated businesses have grown to more than 70 employees while serving clients across the Central Valley and Central Coast. A 2022 merger with



Photo by CoWomen on Unsplash | Women-owned businesses continue to thrive in the Central Valley and beyond, making their mark despite roadblocks.

Innovation Commercial Flooring added what became CORE's Innovation Flooring division.

Clovis-based Snowflake Designs Inc. shows that a company doesn't need one of the list's largest workforces to develop an international reach.

The gymnastics apparel manufacturer returned to the top 20 at No. 19 with 27 full-time employees. In 2024, Snowflake made custom leotards for members of Egypt's Olympic gymnastics team competing in Paris. Its work has also reached athletes and teams in Singapore and New Zealand, along with the University of Kentucky gymnastics program.

The rankings come with an important limitation. Movement from year to year does not necessarily mean a company grew or shrank.

Mary's Chickens, Turkeys and Ducks/Pitman Family Farms ranked No. 2 in the

2023 Book of Lists with 2,200 reported full-time employees. Rosenthal Olive Ranch entered at No. 3 in the 2025 edition with 410. Neither appears in the latest top 20.

Not every business surveyed responds to The Business Journal's inquiries, so disappearing from the list should not be interpreted as evidence that a company reduced its workforce.

What the rankings can provide is a snapshot of the scale and changing reach of women-owned businesses across the Valley.

Some have been operating here for more than half a century. Some are expanding into other states or countries. Others are growing by acquiring competitors, adding services or investing in their operations at home.

Together, their stories show that what women have built in the Central Valley increasingly extends well beyond it.

Women leaders make work better. Here's the science behind how to promote them

By Amy Novotney

American Psychological Association

When more women are empowered to lead, organizations and employees can benefit. Decades of psychological research associate women's leadership with greater collaboration, dedication, fairness and productivity.

Women nevertheless remain underrepresented at the highest levels of business. Industrial and organizational psychologists point to several evidence-based responses: identify leadership potential earlier, create formal mentoring and sponsorship programs and train people who already hold power to act as allies.

"Women still face challenges to their authority and success that are greater than those faced by their male counterparts," said Alice Eagly, a professor emerita of psychology at Northwestern University and a longtime researcher of women's leadership. Despite those barriers, she said, women have gradually gained leadership roles in politics, business and education.

What research finds

A landmark meta-analysis led by Eagly found that women were more likely than men to use transformational leadership, a style that connects employees to an organization's values and mission.

Research also challenges stereotypes about women's competence. A 2020 meta-analysis of nationally representative surveys involving more than 30,000 U.S. adults found that views changed substantially between 1946 and 2018. In a 2018 poll, 86% of respondents said women and men were equally intelligent. Nine percent considered women more intelligent, while 5% chose men.

Women's participation can also affect how teams work. A 2010 study of 699 people found that groups with

more women demonstrated greater collective intelligence, or a stronger ability to solve varied problems together. Those groups showed more equal conversational turn-taking, allowing members to use one another's knowledge more effectively.

Other studies found that the presence of women leaders led people to expect fairer treatment and greater organizational trust. Research analyzing more than 43,000 shareholder documents and investor calls also associated the appointment of women as chief executives and board members with language that connected women to qualities considered important for leadership.

How employers can respond

Organizations can begin by identifying potential leaders early and providing meaningful assignments, feedback, coaching and access to networks. Anna Marie Valerio, an executive coach and adjunct psychology professor at New York University, said early opportunities give women time to develop and demonstrate their ability to handle greater responsibility.

Employers should also distinguish mentoring from sponsorship. Mentors provide guidance, knowledge and feedback. Sponsors use their position and influence to advocate for an employee's advancement, including when promotion and compensation decisions are made.

"Mentors are great as a sounding board



and to provide guidance, but when the rubber hits the road, you need someone who will speak up for you when you're not in the room," said Victoria Mattingly, an industrial and organizational psychologist and founder of Mattingly Solutions.

Women-led professional organizations can provide another route to leadership development. A 2023 study found that members gained opportunities to practice leadership, expand their networks, observe other women leaders and build confidence. Employers can make participation more accessible by including professional-development funding in their budgets.

Allyship also matters. Research led by Mattingly found that men trained as allies were more likely to challenge gender inequality. Effective allyship requires people to recognize their own advantages, examine their biases and use their influence to support colleagues who have historically been excluded.

The evidence points to a sustained organizational responsibility. Advancement depends not simply on inviting women into leadership discussions, but on giving them consequential experience, advocacy, authority and a fair chance to lead.

Original source: American Psychological Association

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