



## SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

# TOP 50 INFLUENTIAL VETERAN BUSINESS LEADERS

AWARDS 2022



**TOP 50  
INFLUENTIAL  
VETERAN  
BUSINESS LEADERS**  
AWARDS 2022

**ERIC ARMSTRONG**

*Co-Founder, Partner  
Compass Consulting*

Eric Armstrong is co-founder and partner at Compass Consulting. His determination, work ethic and ability to stay the course come from his Marine Corps experience. He has taken that experience and successfully combined it with how businesses operate in the private sector. Armstrong is always learning and looking to improve through education and his mentors, some of whom are from his days in the Marines — more than 30 years ago. The driver of growth for Compass Consulting, Armstrong's ability to see what's coming next, not only keeps the firm relevant but benefits the banking and credit union spaces it supports. Armstrong is sought out as an industry expert nationally. His six-year Marine Corps experience included three overseas tours in Asia and the Middle East, with one being a combat tour. In business, Armstrong has managed hundreds of large projects. He can be reached at eric@compassconsulting.com

**BRIDGETTE AUSTIN**

*Chief Executive Officer  
B. Austin Consulting*

Bridgette Austin is CEO at B. Austin Consulting. Austin holds a Master of Business for Veterans from USC and has more than 23 years of military service. She has earned the Combat Action Ribbon for multiple tours in various areas of conflict. She has also served as director on multiple boards including the San Diego Veterans Coalition, the Veteran Chamber of Commerce and the nonprofit space for US4Warriors. Austin also served as a Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Advisory Council member for the California Department of Veterans Affairs. She currently serves as vice president for the San Diego Equality Business Association and is the co-Chair for the USC Lambda LGBT+ Alumni Association. Austin is a business coach and mentor to veterans, transitioning service members and members of the LGBTQ community. She can be reached at bridgette@baustinconsultingllc.com or 619-786-5843.

**MARK BALMERT**

*President and CEO  
San Diego Military Advisory Council*

Mark Balmert is president and CEO at San Diego Military Advisory Council. Rear Admiral Mark Balmert capped a successful military career with a second one in the defense industry in the shipbuilding sector. Following this he took the reins at the SD Military Advisory Council where he has been the change leader in expanding SD-MAC's role to advocacy for veteran employment in the San Diego region and a voice for military related policies in the region. Under his guidance, SDMAC has become the "go to" resource for understanding the role of the military in the San Diego region, helping local political and community leaders in shaping policies that will help sustain local veterans and ensure that our local military bases are integrated into the local community. He has also partnered with other organizations focused on veteran and military affairs. He can be reached at ceo@sdmac.org or 619-299-3762.

**DR. ROSS COLT**

*Medical Director  
Gary and Mary West PACE*

Dr. Ross Colt is medical director at Gary and Mary West Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) in San Marcos. Originally from Northern California, Dr. Colt received his undergraduate degree from UC Davis, his medical degree from Dartmouth Medical School and his Master of Business Administration from Pacific Lutheran University. He is a family physician with more than two decades of full spectrum clinical practice experience, including a deep background in academic medicine and leadership in managed care environments at regional and national levels. A decorated war veteran, Dr. Colt served two combat tours in Iraq and retired after 24 years as an Army colonel. Dr. Colt has served as medical director for West PACE since 2018 and works closely with West Health to adopt innovative healthcare technology and services for seniors. He lives in the Rancho Bernardo area of San Diego with his wife and two teenage children.

**STEVE COOPERSMITH**

*Managing Attorney  
The Coopersmith Law Firm*

In accomplished open water swimmer, Steve Coopersmith, managing attorney of the Coopersmith Law Firm, is constantly motivated to take on complex cases and focused in giving the wisest counsel to his clients and obtaining the best results possible. Coopersmith often handles corporate and partnership break-ups, financial fraud and executive-level employment litigation, as well as fine art disputes and selected large municipal and land use matters. As an Army JAG Officer, Coopersmith advised brigade (O-6) level commanders on legal matters affecting the command, and tried courts-martial for felony crimes alleged within the command. With training at the Army JAG School on the University of Virginia campus in addition to his education at Penn and the UC Hastings College of the Law, as well as three years of active-duty service, Coopersmith was well equipped to transition to a private law practice. He can be reached at stc@stevecoopersmithlaw.com or 619-238-7360.

**MICHAEL CROCKETT**

*Head of Business Operations  
Gig Talent*

Michael Crockett is head of consultant operations at Gig Talent, LLC, co-founded by his wife, and where he helped grow revenue by at least \$1 million in 12 months. Crockett served the U.S. military for 23 years, in combat as a member of the legendary "fighting" Fifth Marines and as a senior leader at the School of Infantry. An expert in the Marines' 14 Leadership Traits, he oversaw units at Seal Beach, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and was the senior Marine Corps official at the U.S. Embassies in Kathmandu and Berlin. Crockett retired from the Marine Corps in 2018 and is a sought-after speaker and consultant on military leadership and bringing the strong foundations and structure of military leadership into organizations. He is the co-author of "The Everyday Leader: 14 Marine Corps Traits to Unlock Your Leadership DNA." He can be reached at michael@gogigtalent.com or 760-213-8917.

**DR. WILLIAM DEAN**

*Corporate Engineer and Deputy Director of Navy Programs  
LinQuest Corporation*

Dr. William Dean is corporate engineer and deputy director of Navy programs at LinQuest Corporation. Dean is responsible for program management and oversight for the company's core U.S. Navy efforts and projects. He collaborates with LinQuest's clients and teams to identify cost-saving solutions for the government. His team has provided real-time impact analysis, reporting and support to defense partners and ensured their ability to articulate manning and funding needs to stakeholders. This has allowed for reallocation of funds to existing contracts, resulting in cost savings across the defense space domain. Through his leadership and experience serving in the Navy, Dean has collaborated across multiple teams to successfully provide support for the communication efforts within intelligence and defense communities. He is also active in the business and veteran communities through contributions and leadership in the nonprofit sector, federal, local and state governments, academia and philanthropic efforts. He can be reached at William.Dean@linquest.com or 757-354-3722.

**CAROL M. DEDRICH**

*CEO  
Girl Scouts San Diego*

Carol M. Dedrich is CEO at Girl Scouts San Diego. Dedrich is committed to helping girls develop their courage, curiosity, confidence and character and become the next generation of leaders. She recently helped launch the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility collaborative. She began her career with a U.S. Army RA commission as a Patriot Missile Officer and is a veteran of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. She transitioned to civilian life as director at United Way of Southern Arizona, creating awareness about the importance of community problem solving and increasing support from community leaders. Dedrich served as VP of marketing and development at John Wayne Cancer Institute, and then became VP at Fulfillment Fund, helping increase graduation rates and provide access to higher education for disadvantaged youth. She was also chief external relations officer for Girl Scouts Greater Los Angeles. She can be reached at CDedrich@SDGirlScouts.org

**JOHN FARNAM**

*Vice President of U.S. Operations  
Inmagene LLC*

John Farnam is VP of U.S. Operations at Inmagene LLC. Farnam served 26 years in the Marine Corps as a Weapons and Sensors Officer flying the FA-18D, served as an FA-18D Squadron Commanding Officer and as the Commanding Officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. Following his Marine Corps career, he transitioned to the biotech sector as VP of Operations for Celgene Receptos in San Diego. He was also the COO of Kura Oncology. He founded the Foundational Leadership Team in 2019 to provide biotech companies with both operations and leadership expertise. He has two master's degrees. Farnam retired from the Marine Corps as a colonel in 2015 and currently serves on many nonprofit and community boards including Support the Enlisted Project, Angels of America's Fallen and is Committee Chair for the San Diego Chamber of Commerce Defense, Veterans, Military Affairs committee.

**TOM FRIES**

*Aviation Services Manager  
San Diego Gas & Electric*

Tom Fries is aviation services manager at San Diego Gas & Electric. Fries is a Marine Corps retiree, serving 23 years on active duty. As an FA-18 pilot and Top Gun graduate, Fries participated in eight full deployments, numerous detachments around the world and completed his active duty time in 2013 at MCAS Miramar with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. Fries worked for General Atomics Aeronautical in Poway as a Program Manager and then with SDG&E. As aviation services manager, Fries oversees high-risk helicopter and drone missions, ensuring risk mitigation, aviation safety and efficient operations. He has two master's degrees. Among many accomplishments at SDG&E, he empowered a small group of employees (six full-time and 10 contract workers) to build a successful aviation management unit (10 full-time, 40 contract) to handle high-risk operations of helicopter work and expand drone use.



# Neil Dymott

ATTORNEYS

Trial attorneys specializing in medical malpractice defense, administrative law, and personal injury since 1964.

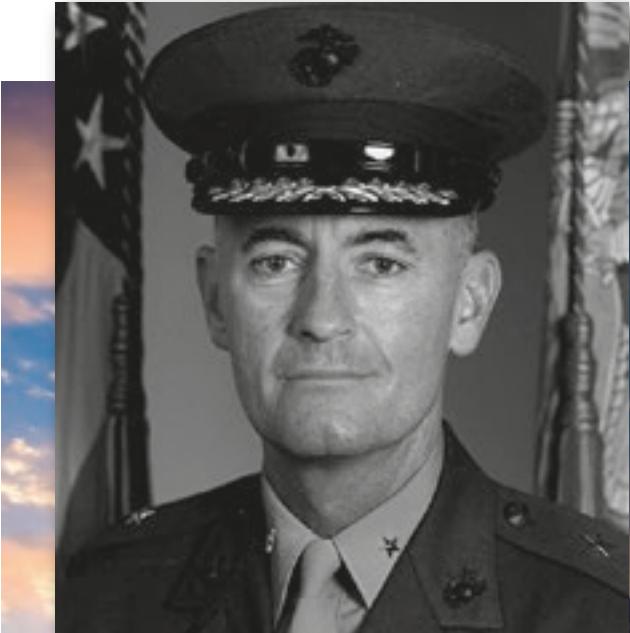
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## Brigadier General Michael I. Neil, USMC, Ret.

It is with great pride that our firm recognize and nominate, not only an esteemed multi-award-winning attorney, but highly decorated combat veteran.

Thank you for your 55 years of legal service to the San Diego community and distinguished career with the United States Marine Corp.



## Sir, we salute you.



Neil, Dymott, Frank, McCabe & Hudson APLC

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**JAY GARCIA**

*Founder & President  
Jay Garcia Group*

**J**ay Garcia is founder and president of the Jay Garcia Group. Garcia has excelled in the cybersecurity and data analytics industry the past five years. He has created and scaled veteran hiring initiatives in the tech space and founded his own company that focuses on attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, focusing on veterans and college students' space. He has developed award-winning diverse talent creation programs for major tech companies by capitalizing on a flexible blend of human resources, marketing, sales, training, technical and business development skills, and by applying his education, certifications and intangible traits acquired in his 20-year military career. Garcia leads Alteryx's SparkED Education Program for the Americas-WEST and LATAM. He sits on the Board of Directors as Vice President for nonprofit VetCTAP, is a George W. Bush Institute Scholar and is a member of Forbes Coaches Council. He can be reached at jay@jaygaciagroup.com or 916-212-5017.

**OSCAR GOMEZ**

*Chief Operations Officer  
Ronald McDonald House Charities of San Diego*

**O**scar Gomez is COO at Ronald McDonald House Charities of San Diego. Decorated Marine Corps Veteran and nonprofit leader, Gomez has 15 years of proven leadership and operational experience in government and nonprofit sectors. Gomez moved to San Diego from Northern California in 2005, when stationed at Camp Pendleton as a Marine. He spent more than a decade deploying overseas and when state-side managed operations and comprehensive training programs for Marines and sailors around the world and across various specialties. At Ronald McDonald House Charities, Gomez brings cross-functional teams together, providing leadership to House operations, guest services, facilities management, staffing, organizational budgeting and volunteer engagement. Gomez currently serves on the steering committee of the Alliance for Regional Solutions and was recently named to Episcopal Community Services' board of directors. He has also served on various boards and commissions for anti-poverty programs, veteran services, child development and second-generation initiatives.

**WILLIAM GRANDE**

*CEO/President  
Quality Controlled Manufacturing, Inc.*

**W**illiam Grande is CEO and president at Quality Controlled Manufacturing. Grande launched QCMI, a precision machining company in October 1978 in his Santee garage with just one employee. He has led the company to receiving the prestigious and coveted United Technologies Corp. Supplier Gold award since 2008. The training and structure that Grande received in the military gave him the skills, focus, drive and courage to start his manufacturing machine shop business. In 2013, Bob founded The Grande Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to training in manufacturing and in 2014, QCMI kicked off The Grande Foundation Machinist Training Academy for Adults and Veterans. Nine cohorts have graduated and 97% of graduates have been successful in being placed in manufacturing jobs. Grande served in Germany during the Vietnam War while in the U.S. Army. He continues to support public organizations including National Veterans Transition Services, Inc. REBOOT Workshops and Rotary.

**JODIE GRENIER**

*CEO  
Foundation for Women Warriors*

**J**odie Grenier is CEO of Foundation for Women Warriors, a 102 year-old non-profit organization that honors and empowers women veterans in their transition to civilian life. Jodie joined FFWW in 2016, and in her short tenure rebranded the organization, increased revenue five times, and expanded and revitalized its programs. Under Grenier's leadership, FFWW has transformed into California's preeminent women veteran service agency, committed to preventing homelessness and enhancing the economic and personal wellbeing of women veterans and their families. Grenier has testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on the various issues impacting the economic well-being of women veterans. She began her career in the Marine Corps serving with 1st Marine Division, G-2 intelligence and deployed to Iraq twice. She was honored with the Navy Commendation, Navy Achievement, Global War on Terrorism Service and Iraq Campaign Medals. She serves on the SoCalGas Advisory Council California.

**ANDREW HAYES**

*Chief Executive Officer  
MRP Training Solutions*

**A**ndrew Hayes is CEO at MRP Training Solutions, a Disabled Veteran-Owned small business. Since the company's founding in 1995, MRP has trained more than 15,000 sailors and Marines. After retiring from the Navy in 2001 as Senior Chief Operations Specialist, Reed Popovich — a leader in Navy command and control training and founder of MRP — hired him to provide training to sailors on communications and computer systems management. Hayes eventually acquired the company when Popovich retired in 2015. Hayes leverages his operational, business and legal expertise to ensure MRP continues to build a solid reputation in the defense sector. A 2021 recipient of the U.S. Department of Labor's HIRE Vets Medallion Award, MRP specializes in delivering efficient, cost-effective and repeatable training solutions for Navy command, control, communications, computers and intelligence, Tomahawk weapons systems, metrology and calibration, administration and logistics. He can be reached at andrew.hayes@mrp-tsi.com or 858-952-9329.



## CONGRATULATIONS

# Bridgette Austin, MBV

**Founder/CEO  
(She/Her/Hers)**

on her recognition as  
an Influential Veteran  
Business Leader



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**INGO HENTSCHEL**

Senior Vice President/Region Manager  
Cox Communications

Ingo Hentschel is senior VP/region manager for Cox Communications. Hentschel oversees day-to-day operations and employees in San Diego and Orange counties, Palos Verdes and Santa Barbara. He has held various roles since joining Cox in 1992, including director of field operations, director of broadband operations and supervisor of network operations. Hentschel has more than 30 years of experience in telecommunications and served in the Marine Corps for eight years (1985-93). He was based at NAS Pensacola, Florida; MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii; and MCAS Tustin. He serves on the board of the USS Midway Museum, San Diego Regional EDC, California Cable and Telecommunications Association and Cal State San Marcos Foundation. Hentschel supports FourBlock, a nonprofit offering career readiness and professional networking for veterans. He has been honored with the Camp Pendleton Armed Services YMCA's Civilian Volunteer of the Year and Champion of Cox Culture awards.

**ANTHONY JACKSON**

Chairman Emeritus  
CSUSM Foundation

Gen. Anthony Jackson is CSU San Marcos Foundation Chairman Emeritus. Jackson retired from the Marine Corps on New Year's Day 2012, after serving for more than 36 years as an Infantry officer – holding command at every paygrade between Second Lieutenant to Major General. His service earned him awards including the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, and three Legion of Merit Medals. He also earned the Marine Corps Drill Instructor Ribbon. After his military service, Jackson assumed the duties of the Director of the California State Parks and Recreation. He also currently serves — or has previously served — on the California State University at San Marcos Foundation (Chairman as well as their Military and Athletic Council Chairman), Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Diego Board, Marine Memorial Hotel Board, San Diego Military Advisory Council, the Camp Pendleton Historical Society and the Governor's Military Council.

**ERIC JOHNSON**

CEO/ Founder  
Trident Coffee

Eric Johnson is CEO and founder of Trident Coffee. A native San Diegan, Johnson spent his youth playing sports and being active. From a young age, he knew he wanted to serve in the military after seeing the examples set by both grandparents, and to be part of something bigger than himself. He attended the United States Naval Academy, where he graduated with a mechanical engineering degree. He used this degree and served as a Civil Engineer Corps officer for eight years in the Navy and deployed four times in five years to Israel, Afghanistan and Iraq in support of overseas operations. While these experiences had a profound impact on him, he felt a desire to try something new and separated from the Navy to become an entrepreneur. After his transition from the Navy in 2016, he attended USC and earned a master's degree in business, to help guide him through the startup of Trident Coffee.

**GILBERT KENNEDY**

VP, Business Center Manager  
California Bank & Trust

Gilbert Kennedy is VP and business center manager at California Bank & Trust. Kennedy's career spans 20 years of banking experience — founded on a unique skill set learned as a member of U.S. Naval Special Warfare Community. Kennedy spent eight years in the military before going into banking two decades ago. He got his start in banking through a management training program that was looking for people from other industries. Kennedy was a natural for this opportunity because of his leadership and military experience. With a comprehensive line of promotion based on superior performance from sales officer to regional manager to managing director, Kennedy is a passionate and motivated individual, dedicated to his community and proud to be a part of a company that recognizes the importance of veteran business owners. Among other achievements, he helped provided \$1.9 million in working capital to eight small businesses. He can be reached at Gilbert.Kennedy@calbt.com or 619-850-6498.



## SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



**Ingo Hentschel**  
SVP/Region Manager

**Congratulations to Cox Communications' Ingo Hentschel and all the 2022 Top 50 Influential Veteran Business Leaders.**

**Thank you for your service and for your commitment to serving others in the workplace and our community.**



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**JAMES G. KIDRICK**

President & CEO  
San Diego Air & Space Museum

James G. Kidrick is president and CEO of San Diego Air & Space Museum. Kidrick has completed advanced courses on aviation safety from the Navy Post-graduate School, Monterey. He lectures and consults on special event development and operations. Kidrick is a proponent of advancing programs that encourage youth to pursue the STEM academic disciplines and career opportunities. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Steve Pre-witt Skull Base Disease Foundation and the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership. He is a member of the QED — San Diego Chapter; Experimental Aircraft Association, Airplane Owners and Pilots Association, Association of Fundraising Professionals, Association of Proposal Management Professionals, San Diego Downtown Rotary, Navy League, Tailhook Association and more. He has produced 13 air shows, the San Diego Grand Prix, San Diego Offshore Grand Prix, World Championships Jet Ski Finals and other events. He can be reached at jkidrick@sdsasm.org or 619-234-8291.

**ISAAC LEE**

Sr. VP of Operations  
Soapy Joe's Car Wash

Isaac Lee is senior VP of operations at Soapy Joe's Car Wash. As a Marine Corps combat veteran, and decorated lieutenant colonel with more than 20 years of service, Lee served in multiple leadership roles and won myriad awards, including Meritorious Service Medal with three Gold Stars. Lee completed seven operational deployments, four being combat deployments. In 2017, Lee's military career came to a close. He found his real passion was the people and with the help of organizations that assist with transitioning veterans and networking, he found his spot at Soapy Joe's. Among other things, Lee has scaled the business for high-growth over three years growing sites 60% and doubling field staff during that time. Lee dedicates his free time to championing veterans' organizations such as Support the Enlisted Project and the Marine Executive Association Camp Pendleton, an organization that assists in the transition of service members.

**HERNÁN LUIS Y PRADO**

Founder & CEO  
Workshops for Warriors

Hernán Luis y Prado is founder and CEO of Workshops for Warriors. A 15-year Navy veteran, Luis y Prado founded San Diego-based Workshops for Warriors in 2008, the only nonprofit school in America that trains, certifies and places veterans and transitioning service members into advanced manufacturing jobs to help rebuild our nation. When he came back from Iraq in 2003, he saw firsthand the mental anguish and uncertainty that veterans struggled with. Workshops for Warriors has graduated more than 1,000 veterans into advanced careers with large manufacturers such as Tesla, Boeing, Ford and Caterpillar. Luis y Prado has been recognized as a Champion of Change by the Obama White House for his efforts helping veterans transition from the military. He was also named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Person of The Year for 2022 for the state of California. He can be reached at info@wfw.org or 619-550-1620.

**WES LUNDBURG**

President  
San Diego Miramar College

Wes Lundburg has been president at San Diego Miramar College since 2020. The college enrolls more than 16,000 students, offers more than 60 certificates, is a hub for transferring to universities and is a center for workforce training. Lundburg is a Coast Guard veteran who for several years owned and operated a full-service fishing charter boat company. He transitioned out of the U.S. Coast Guard to attend the University of Alaska Anchorage. Miramar is a leading institution for student veterans and other military-affiliated students. Under his guidance, Miramar established LEAD – Leading Equity, Anti-Racism and Diversity, creating a campus culture centered on equity. The college is establishing a new 800 square-foot Veterans Resource Center, letting students study, connect and plan their future. Miramar recently secured \$2.5 million in state funding to support the VRC and provide services to students who are veterans, active military and military affiliated dependents.



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**JOSEPH MAHON**

*Executive Vice President  
Level 3 Construction, Inc.*

**GARRETT MOORE**

*Co-Founder/CEO  
AGORUS*

**BRET MORRISS**

*Managing Partner  
Cast Capital Partners*

**MICHAEL I. NEIL**

*Attorney  
Neil, Dymott, Frank, McCabe & Hudson APLC*

**J**oseph Mahon is executive VP at Level 3 Construction Inc. Mahon joined the U.S. Navy in 1961 after high school, attended basic training at Naval Training Center in San Diego and then Class A Electrician School. He was assigned to USS Koiner for the rest of his service and was honorably discharged in 1965. He attended college under the GI Bill at UC Irvine, then began a 35-year career in information technology, working for several Fortune 500 companies, relying on leadership and engineering skills he acquired in the military as a transitioned veteran. Mahon's knowledge of information technology, human resources and leadership, project management, office and business process and procedures helped Level 3 Construction get off to a rapid start. His decision for the company to use ProCore and ProEst in early 2013 was a communication key. He can be reached at jmmahon@level3construction.com or 760-930-9602.



**G**arrett Moore is co-founder and CEO at AGORUS, a construction technology startup. Despite a desire to work after earning a degree in mechanical engineering at Stanford, Moore became an officer in the Navy SEALs. He took a "team first" approach into situations where communication, calm-under-pressure and critical thinking are life-and-death matters. As a Navy SEAL, Moore was selected to become an Olmsted Scholar. After learning Hebrew from scratch, Garrett earned his master's degree in Cybersecurity at Tel Aviv University—in Hebrew. Deployments throughout the Middle East refined Moore's ability to lead others to achieve mission success in an environment with deadly and ever changing threats. Moore at AGORUS has secured more than \$25 million in investment financing, built the world's first digital and vertically integrated home production assembly line in San Diego and produced more than 100 homes to date, with no two units alike.



**B**ret Morriss is managing partner at Cast Capital Partners, which he founded in March 2022. An active pilot and lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, he and has led more than 250 combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. With more than 3,000 flight hours and 850 combat hours in more than 20 aircraft including a dozen different turbine and piston powered helicopters, Morriss has also served as a pilot for Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1), responsible for the transportation of the president and vice president of the United States, cabinet members and other dignitaries. Morriss sits on the board of NAIOP, a commercial real estate development association, and Urban Land Institute, as well as the committee of USD's Burnham Moores Center for Real Estate. Morriss is also a member of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. He can be reached at bret.morriss@cast-cap.com or 619-308-6680.

CAST CAPITAL PARTNERS

**U**.S. Marine Brigadier General Michael I. Neil, retired, is an attorney at Neil, Dymott, Frank, McCabe & Hudson APLC where he has been a named partner for nearly 40 years. Serving in Vietnam, he earned the Navy Cross. As a brigadier general in the USMC Reserve, he was called back to active duty in 1990 to become commanding general of Camp Pendleton for nine months. He earned his LL.B. from Boalt Hall at UC Berkeley and has been active in numerous legal, civic and fraternal organizations and boards. He was vice chair of the mayor's task force to select a new baseball stadium site. He is the author of "Welcome Home: American Heroes," co-written by J.T. Quinn, Corporal USMC, which tells of the trials and tribulations he underwent fighting for his country and for his clients' rights. He can be reached at mneil@neildymott.com or 619-838-3010.

**Neil Dymott**  
ATTORNEYS

# Congratulations to Dr. William Dean

on being selected as one of  
SDBJ's 2022 Top 50 Influential  
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**REBECCA NITKA**

Director of Laboratory Operations  
Millennium Health

**R**ebecca Nitka served in the United States Marine Corps from late 1997 to 2003. As a Sergeant of Marines (E-5), her MOS was 2831 Multi-Channel Equipment repair, and she served as a training non-commissioned officer (NCO) for 160+ Marines. Nitka's schooling was facilitated by utilizing the GI Bill and Disabled Vocational Rehab Programs to obtain an Associate of Science Degree in Medical Laboratory Science and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Clinical Laboratory Science. She has been an employee of Millennium Health since 2012, moving up the ladder from working as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist to Director of Laboratory Operations. Nitka holds a variety of certifications including the American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP), a California State License (CDPH) and a Nevada State License (NDBPH). She has completed the six-month Be Bold women's leadership course and Manager Training Program provided by Millennium Health.

**JOHN O'BRIEN**

Founder and President  
Flagg Coastal Homes

**J**ohn O'Brien is the Founder and President of Flagg Coastal Homes, a Coronado-based Residential Design Build Company. Since 2000, Flagg has designed and built over 75 homes, primarily in Coronado and La Playa. Flagg's iconic, coastal-inspired homes have been featured in national publications, including the cover and feature section in Coastal Living Magazine. The company was also recognized with a half hour television special on Today's Builder. O'Brien is a 1969 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and arrived in San Diego the very week that the Coronado Bridge opened. His Navy tours included a three-year tour with Coastal River Squadron One as Officer in Charge of a Vietnam-era Nasty-class PTF (PT Boat). After leaving the Navy in 1974, O'Brien embarked on a real estate and building career which continues to this day. He can be reached at jobrien@flagg.com or 619-435-1800.

**NEIL O'CONNELL**

Executive Director  
Mt. Soledad National Veterans Memorial

**N**eil O'Connell hails from Natick, Massachusetts. The oldest of five sons, he grew up on Cape Cod and entered the Marine Corps in 1977. Serving in the Marines for 33 years, he rose to the rank of Sergeant Major — a rank he proudly wore for 13 years — and was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Shortly after retiring from the Marines at Camp Pendleton in February 2012, he was recruited to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Mount Soledad Memorial Association. During his tenure he has dedicated his time supporting the Memorial Day and Veterans Day Services as well as conducting numerous Veterans Honor Ceremonies, membership development and fundraising in support of the memorial and served as the President and CEO of the Association from 2018 to 2021. He presently leads the Association as the Executive Director. He can be reached at neiloconnell@soledadmemorial.org or 619-838-2964.

**TIMOTHY PARKER**

Owner  
Chula Vista Brewery

**C**hula Vista Brewery was founded by Timothy Parker in 2015, and his wife Dali, as an homage to their two children. He started the brewery while still active in the U.S. Navy as a search-and-rescue team member. His first location opened in 2017, and he retired from the military in 2019 after a 20-year career. Chula Vista Brewery is San Diego County's only Black-owned brewery. It's a place where locals and surrounding area residents can gather and enjoy good company in a relaxed atmosphere. In 2017, Parker was honored to win the experienceship award from the Samuel Adams Brewing the American Dream program through local microlender Accessity. It gave him the opportunity to brew alongside Samuel Adams Founder Jim Koch. In 2021, Parker opened Chula Vista Brewery of Eastlake, and through his two locations, he has created nearly 50 jobs. He can be reached at parkert@chulavistabrewery.com.



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## CONGRATULATIONS TO **michael taylor**

ON HIS RECOGNITION AS A 2022  
**TOP 50 INFLUENTIAL VETERAN BUSINESS LEADER.**

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**CHIP F. PARKER**President & CEO  
LabX Ventures

Chip Parker is the Founder and Managing Director of LabX Ventures. He has 30 plus years of C-level business background that includes operations, sales, marketing and publishing in addition to capital formation, management and board building. Within the venture capital and angel investing space, he specializes in technology and life sciences. He started his career in the U.S. Coast Guard, specializing in high-sea rescue. Parker is the chief architect of a new discipline of venture capital called Venture Capital 3.0 which consolidates a broad knowledge base within key facets of the venture community, and brings Parker's innovative, inclusive and complete approach to venture capital investing for both the entrepreneur and investors. LabX Ventures and LabX Capital is a culmination of Parker's lifelong work, vision and diverse personal and business history. He can be reached at cparker@labxventures or 949-636-5655.

**JAMIE A. PLEMONS**Owner  
Advanced Estate Planning

Jamie A. Plemons is owner of Advanced Estate Planning, a family business. At 23 she decided to take a break from the business and joined the Army. She says she learned things she would never have been able to learn or experience in the family business, and that the military helped her cultivate and expand her ability to lead others. She also says her military background helped her persevere and continue her work following family tragedies. Some of her recent accomplishments include obtaining her Certified Estate Planner designation in 2020 and Certified Medicaid Planner designation in 2021. Plemons serves on the board of her homeowners association, trying to improve her neighborhood. She also works throughout the year to support the San Diego ALS Association. She has donated services to both the ALS community as well as the LGBTQ+ community. She can be reached at jamie@advancedestateplanning.com or 619-581-9591.

**STEVE QUINN**President & CEO  
American Property Enterprises**WILLIAM REED**CEO  
Aretanium

William Reed is CEO of Aretanium. He is a passionate, caring and inspiring leader with a strong spiritual compass who is dedicated to helping veterans and small business owners. He is a decorated former U.S. Navy Diver who conducted joint missions with SEAL Team One during the Cold War. He co-founded an award-winning veterans nonprofit that partners with the VA and National Guard to help veterans and their families. Reed is co-founder of several startups, one acquired by Intel and one by Helius. He leveraged over a decade of experience as an executive consultant for clients such as Avnet, Booz Allen, Cisco, HP, Oracle, SAP and Visa, as well as dozens of small firms, to understand employment and recruiting challenges in a remote/hybrid world. He wrote an award-winning leadership book on the topic that features a foreword written by a former Deputy Secretary of Defense. He can be reached at bc@aretanium.com or 408-771-7491.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL  
**TOP 50  
INFLUENTIAL  
VETERAN  
BUSINESS LEADERS**  
HONOREE

Congratulations to our partner Sean Southard, an Influential Veteran Business Leader!

Since helping to found the firm nine years ago, Sean has played an essential role in the continued growth and success of CGS3 – parlaying his training as a U.S. Naval Officer into the complex world of commercial real estate law.

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## CONGRATULATIONS

*Maj. Gen. Tony Jackson*

The California State University San Marcos Foundation Board congratulates retired Maj. Gen. Tony Jackson for his leadership in our region and support of military-affiliated students at CSUSM.

California State University  
SAN MARCOS

**MARK SANDERS**

*President and CEO*  
R3 Strategic Support Group, Inc.

**M**ark Sanders, President and CEO of R3, retired from the U.S. Navy after more than 20 years with qualifications as a Special Operations officer, Master EOD technician, Surface Warfare Officer, naval parachutist, deep-sea mixed gas diving officer, and joint specialty officer. His last three assignments were focused on the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) threat. He is chairman of the board of advisors of Command Post Technologies, a cybersecurity and network engineering government services firm. He is on the Executive Board of the NDIA Explosive Ordnance Disposal Planning and Advisory Committee, the Advisory Board of the Navy Special Operations Foundation and on the Board of Directors of the EOD Warrior Foundation. His business, R3, is a Service Disabled Veteran and Employee-Owned Company based in Coronado with 190 employees in 25 states and four countries providing training, logistics and maintenance to special operations units globally. He can be reached at mark.sanders@r3ssg.com or 800-418-2040.

**DIXON SMITH**

*Senior Advisor*  
Deloitte

**D**ixon Smith transitioned from the Navy in June 2019 following 37 years' service culminating with duties as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics. There he was the Navy's senior executive accountable for the nation's strategic sealift program and the Navy's environmental programs, as well as resource sponsor for operational logistics, supply chain support and shore readiness. At Deloitte, Smith has served as a critical advisor across major pursuits, projects and geographies. Prior to joining Deloitte, he served as Executive Vice President, R.E. Staite Engineering, Inc., an 83 year old family-owned small business in San Diego concentrating on marine and heavy construction, environmental restoration and dredging. Smith currently serves on various local San Diego nonprofit boards including Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the Ryan Family YMCA and USO San Diego, as well as the Mayor's Military, Veteran and Families Advisory Council. He can be reached at dixsmith@deloitte.com or 619-616-9035.

**SEAN SOUTHARD**

*Founding partner*  
Crosbie Gliner Schiffman  
Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3)

**S**ean Southard is a founding partner of Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3), a commercial real estate law firm established in 2013. After graduating from the University of San Diego with a B.A. in International Relations, he was commissioned by the United States Navy, serving tours in Iraq and Somalia. He was awarded his J.D. by Loyola Law School in Los Angeles in 1997. A seasoned leasing specialist whose ability to forge strong relationships throughout the real estate industry is matched only by his ability to process and apply market data about deal structures and terms to get the best result possible for his clients, he is a master of high-velocity deals. His ability to take personal ownership of projects and handle multiple priority matters at once has earned the enduring trust and confidence of his clients.

**RONALD STARK, MBA, LAADC-CA**

*Program Manager*  
Mental Health Systems dba TURN  
Behavioral Health Services

**R**onald J. Stark, MBA, is a U.S. Navy veteran and program manager with TURN Behavioral Health Services (BHS) North Inland Substance Use Prevention. He is a submarine veteran who served in the Vietnam Era, Cold War Era, Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Christian Heritage College, an MBA from the University of Redlands, and is a California Licensed Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor. He has served veterans and their families for over 27 years at Vietnam Veterans of San Diego and Mental Health Systems dba TURN BHS. He is president of San Diego Veterans Coalition Board of Directors and co-chair of

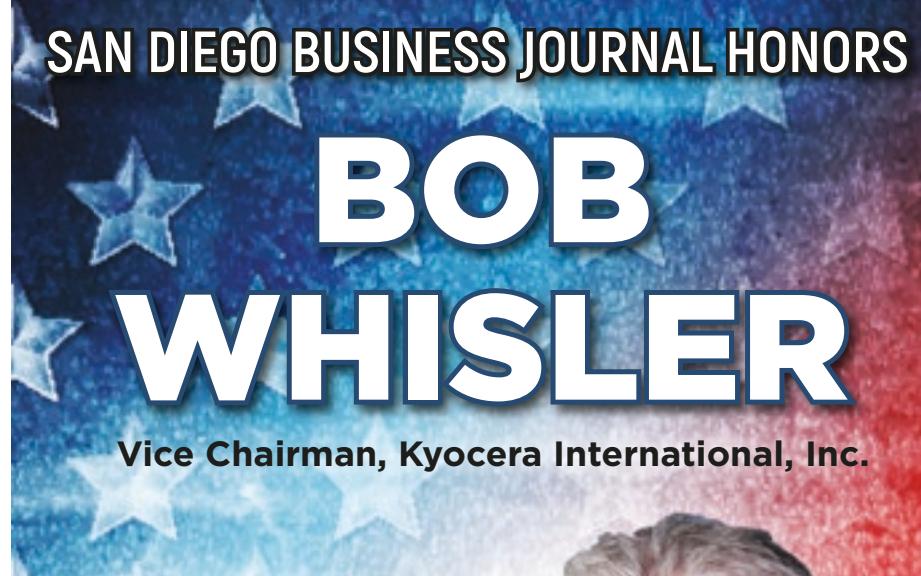
San Diego One VA Community Advocacy Board. Stark is the business services "go-to guy" in TURN BHS in San Diego, and nationally for veteran-related and other projects from concept, implementation and operation. He can be reached at rstark@turnbhs.org or 619-977-9515.



Gig Talent congratulates Michael Crockett for being named a Top Influential Veteran Business Leader! Thank you for being such an integral part of the Gig Talent team and for being an inspiration to all Veterans and business leaders who want to make a difference.



Website: [www.gogigtalent.com](http://www.gogigtalent.com)  
Phone: (800) 981-4809  
Email: [info@gogigtalent.com](mailto:info@gogigtalent.com)



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



**ANTHONY STEWART**

*Chief Executive Officer/Co-founder  
Us for Warriors Foundation  
(dba "Us4Warriors")*

**T**ony Stewart is Co-founder and CEO of The Us for Warriors Foundation, or Us4Warriors, an award-winning charity supporting military, veterans and their families. As Co-founder, he served as key architect for establishing programs and services helping warriors and families live stronger lives. Under his leadership, Us4Warriors has impacted 44,000 lives with 4,500 Warrior Volunteer Force members supporting projects throughout San Diego County, including food and jobs during the recent pandemic.

A servant leader for 35 years, Stewart served U.S. Navy's Submarine Force and as a government executive leading support services for staff training future Navy SEAL and SWCC Operators. He has served on veteran advisory boards for City, County and State and is sought out for his well-rounded perspective, including his most recent Congressional testimony regarding Veterans Hunger. Stewart holds an MPA from National University and BA in Business Administration, Management and Communications from Excelsior College.

**PETER STOLBA**

*Vice President, Business Operations  
and Supply Chain  
Maravai LifeSciences/TriLink BioTechnologies*

**P**eter Stolba brings over 16 years of experience in supply chain and operations management in the pharmaceutical field and various other industries. Stolba joined Trilink from Pfizer working in the Clinical Strategy and Supply Management organization with experience in design of preclinical through commercial supply strategies. Prior to Pfizer, he worked as Director of Supply Chain at Halo Pharmaceutical; a full-service FDA, BLA and DEA compliant CDMO specializing in oral dosage, sterile ointments, and API manufacturing. Stolba is a U.S. Navy veteran who served on the destroyer USS Stout based in Norfolk, Virginia. He holds a bachelor's degree in logistics management from American Military University and an MBA with a supply chain specialization from National University. He also has a certification in financial management from Cornell University and is a certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt. He can be reached at pstolba@trilinkbiotech.com.

**MARIA STOUT**

*Partner  
Knobbe Martens*

**M**aria Stout is a leading intellectual property lawyer, partner at Knobbe Martens, professor of law at the University of San Diego School of Law and a former Naval Officer and mechanical engineer. She has cultivated a well-earned reputation as a trusted advisor for clients seeking to safeguard and monetize their valuable and innovative IP assets, particularly patents. Stout works with clients ranging from small, fast-growth companies to international corporations. Her years as a Navy Surface Warfare Officer gave her specialized training and hands-on experience working with teams as both a leader and service provider to get the mission accomplished. Patient, loyal and personally accountable, Stout's ability to remain calm in stressful situations and her fearless approach to problem-solving has informed her work managing the extensive IP portfolios of her clients, while delivering the extraordinary work product and immediate service they require. She can be reached at maria.stout@knobbe.com or 858-707-4192.

**Knobbe Martens****LIZA STROM**

*Executive Vice President & Principal  
Strom Commercial Real Estate*

**L**iza Strom is an Executive Vice President and Principal of Strom Commercial Real Estate. She is a tenant representation broker with the firm, providing workplace strategy for new and existing clients. She was a Senior Leasing Director with Irvine Company for 14 years through 2019, responsible for leasing the company's 10 million square foot San Diego CRE portfolio. Strom served as a Captain in the U.S. Air Force, stationed at L.A. Air Force Base, and led program integration for the Delta II and Titan IV unmanned rockets. In this role, she directed contract administration services on behalf of the USAF and NASA in excess of \$2.7 billion and led a 20-person multifunctional team of military, DOD civilians and private sector professionals. Strom holds a B.S. in electrical engineering from Duke University and an MBA from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. She can be reached at liza@stromcommercial.com or 619-243-1244.



## Congratulations to Peter Stolba!

### TOP 50 INFLUENTIAL VETERAN BUSINESS LEADERS AWARDS 2022 HONOREE



**Peter Stolba**  
VP, Business Operations  
TriLink BioTechnologies

Over the course of Peter's career, he has built on the foundation of his military experience. Peter leveraged the skills he gained in the U.S. Navy to develop an operations career, holding leadership positions in various industries.

Peter contributes his success and career growth to several mentors, his family, and the qualities instilled in him from the military, including leadership, preparation, and accountability. We are proud to have Peter as part of the Maravai team!



Congratulations  
to **Rebecca Nitka**  
our Director  
of Laboratory  
Operations &  
Marine Veteran for  
being recognized as  
a Top 50 Influential  
Veteran Business  
Leader!



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**TOP 50  
INFLUENTIAL  
VETERAN  
BUSINESS LEADERS**  
AWARDS 2022

**THOMAS SUDBERRY**

Founder/Chairman  
Sudberry Properties

**MICHAEL TAYLOR**

President  
NWB Imaging

**TONY TERAVAINEN**

CEO & Co-Founder  
Support The Enlisted Project  
(STEP)

**FRANK VEGA**

Chief Estimator  
Sundt Construction

**EVAN WAHL**

Director, Project Management and  
Site Strategy  
Catalent San Diego

Thomas Sudberry, Founder and Chairman of Sudberry Properties Inc., served for five years as a Naval Aviator with two Vietnam combat cruises aboard the USS Constitution. Today he develops and manages commercial properties in Southern California, most notably in San Diego. Specializing in urban retail, community and town center development, with an emphasis on mixed use and master planned communities, his company has developed approximately 10 million square feet of property, with a combined market value of almost \$2 billion. His most remarkable accomplishment is the award-winning, 230-acre master-planned community of Civita in Mission Valley, honored as Best Urban Master-Planned Community of the Year. Sudberry is an influential community leader and philanthropist, serving on many Boards of Directors such as San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, San Diego River Park Foundation, Impact Urban America, Father Joe's Villages, the USS Midway Museum, the Lincoln Club of San Diego and more.

**M**ichael Taylor is an archaeologist and President of NWB Environmental Services, LLC, a cultural resource management firm specializing in an array of archaeological services. He is a filmmaker and President of NWB Imaging, a cinematic film production company, specializing in corporate videos and aerial cinematography. He has written, directed and produced short films and various other film productions. Taylor is an infantry veteran who spent 13½ years in the United States Marine Corps. He is an alumnus of San Diego City College with an associate's degree in Anthropology and a certificate in Archaeology. He transferred to Columbia University in New York where he graduated with a degree in Anthropological Archaeology. He has provided two \$500 scholarships to City College archaeology students each year for the past six years. He serves on the Board of Directors for The Old Globe Theatre.

**T**ony Teravainen is a vocal advocate for the public support of our military community. He founded and serves as CEO of Support The Enlisted Project (STEP), a nonprofit that serves young military families in financial crisis. Teravainen grew up in a military family and served as a U.S. Navy submariner, so he knows firsthand the hardships young military families endure. He is active in several veterans and civic groups and is an Honorary San Diego Deputy Sheriff, a TedX speaker and a recipient of numerous awards. Teravainen holds undergraduate degrees in business management and nuclear engineering, a master's degree in executive leadership from the University of San Diego, and is ABD with his Ph.D. in Public Policy at Liberty University. He holds licenses in Six Sigma as well as Project Management and Change Management and holds one U.S. patent. He can be reached at tony.teravainen@teamstepusa.org or 760-505-2670.

**C**hief Estimator Frank Vega is a valued employee-owner at Sundt Construction. He is a talented estimator with a great deal of experience in the construction industry. Prior to working in construction, Vega served for nine years as a U.S. Navy Seabee builder. Vega is the recipient of two Navy Achievement Medals, and while serving he constructed a naval hospital, went on a humanitarian mission to remodel a very old hospital in a tight 30-day window, helped build a childcare facility and supported rebuilding after several destructive hurricanes in Puerto Rico. He received a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Coleman University, studying on the GI Bill. He is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. Whenever Sundt assists veterans through the Sundt Foundation, Vega is first in line to volunteer. He is proud to continue to develop, learn and refine his skills.



## Congratulations, Tony on being one of 2022 Top Veteran Leaders of Influence!



**THANK YOU FOR  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE!**

Ranked #30 nationally among charities that support military and veteran families, STEP was founded by Veterans who believe that with the right tools and knowledge, every service member can build a strong financial future while retaining their basic needs. Learn more about how you can help those sacrificing so much to serve our country at teamstepusa.org.



Building financial self-sufficiency among our military and veteran families through financial counseling, education, and grant.

**BOB WHISLER**

Vice Chairman  
Kyocera International, Inc.

**MAURICE D. WILSON**

President and Executive Director  
National Veterans Transition Services, Inc.

**B**ob Whisler serves as Vice Chairman of San Diego-based Kyocera International Inc., which operates diversified product lines including semiconductor packaging and assembly, rugged wireless phones, advanced ceramics, automotive components, LCD displays, optical components, printing devices, medical components and advanced ceramic consumer products. Whisler's U.S. Navy experience during the 1970s reinforced his respect for discipline, order, organization and communication. He witnessed firsthand the Navy's ability to allocate personnel, ships, aircraft and materiel in challenging circumstances. He joined Kyocera in 1981 as a Sales Engineer in Silicon Valley. He developed the company's business in the Pacific Northwest and Colorado and served as president of both Kyocera America Inc. and Kyocera International Inc. of San Diego, as well as Kyocera Mexicana of Tijuana. As technologies continue to evolve, he is positioning the company for growth in such strategic markets as 5G communications, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence, smart vehicles, defense and aerospace components.

