

Texas Trailblazer

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the

★ TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME



A letter from Amanda Brock, 2025 Chairman of the Board

Dear TBHF Network,

Welcome to 2025—a year that promises tremendous growth for an organization synonymous with the most coveted honor in Texas business. This year's Induction Dinner will take place in Houston on October 29th, featuring an exceptional lineup that will no doubt further our mission to honor and inspire business leaders who better our state and community.

In addition to selecting this year's honorees in the coming month, we will be identifying our Future Texas Business Legend Award recipients— outstanding entrepreneurs in Texas' higher education, Veteran, and high school communities who promise to embrace their future success as a responsibility to their state and community. This selection process will be more competitive than ever before and play a more central role in connecting our Directors and Hall of Fame members with leaders who embody the legacy and spirit of this organization.

We will also continue to invest in the growth of our past grant recipients through unparalleled learning and mentorship opportunities made possible through arguably one of the most powerful network of business leaders in the country.

Additionally, we plan to expand our reach to more entrepreneurs through public programming with strategic partners who are aligned with our mission and vision. This effort will begin with Creators 2025, a speaker series traveling across the state that will feature some of our state's most successful innovators and brand builders. We are kicking off the series in Houston on February 11th in partnership with the Ion and Rice Business Alliance in a conversation event featuring TBHF Legend Janet Gurwitch (founder of Laura Mercier) and Tiffany Masterson (founder of Drunk Elephant) to talk about the promising and unlikely evolution of Texas as a place to build a beauty and wellness business.

Thank you for your continued support and for raising the bar for business leaders everywhere through your own example in your businesses and communities.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda Brock".

Amanda Brock
2025 Chairman, TBHF Board of Directors



Tax Season for Entrepreneurs

Jon Karp, TBHF Director and Tax Partner, Whitley Penn

Tax season 2025 is upon us, and it may seem daunting for entrepreneurs and business owners. From an accountant's perspective, strategic planning is essential to ensure compliance and optimize tax outcomes.

Have the Right Accounting Software

First, maintaining organized financial records throughout the year is crucial—performing this task in January can be overwhelming for many. The use of accounting software to track income and expenses will make it easier to compile the necessary documentation when tax season arrives. Updating these records and talking to a tax professional about which system is best for a business is key to efficient tax preparation.

Know the Tax Laws Around Your Industry

Second, understanding tax deductions and credits is vitally important. Business owners should familiarize themselves with tax laws impacting their specific industry.

Having knowledge of how tax policy relates to an industry can significantly reduce taxable income—the most up to date information will generally be found in trade magazines and industry specific news sites. Consulting with a tax professional that understands a specific industry can help identify additional opportunities for savings.

Break It Down

Third, taxpayers should consider estimated tax payments. Many business owners and taxpayers underestimate their tax liabilities.

Making quarterly estimated payments based on projected earnings can both save money and avoid surprises.

Stay Engaged in Policy

Finally, stay informed about tax law changes. Tax legislation is constantly changing, and entrepreneurs must adapt their strategies accordingly. For example, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 has several provisions that will expire at the end of this year.

It is expected that several of these provisions will be extended. Subscribing to industry newsletters, attending workshops and having a relationship with an accountant can provide valuable insights into expiring and new regulations and how they may impact a small business.

For more insights and resources, visit Whitley Penn's [website](#).



Creators 2025

This year, the Texas Business Hall of Fame proudly unveils Creators 2025, a dynamic speaker series celebrating innovation and leadership. This four-city tour will feature Texas' most iconic business leaders in engaging, moderated conversations led by prominent journalists or industry figures. Each event will delve into topics critical to shaping the future of business.

We are thrilled to announce the first event will take place, in partnership with the Ion, in Houston on February 11th, featuring 2023 Hall of Fame Legend Janet Gurwitch (Laura Mercier Cosmetics) and Tiffany Masterson (Drunk Elephant). Experts in the beauty industry and beyond, Janet and Tiffany will explore brand marketing, retail life cycle, innovative marketing, and more. You won't want to miss this. Members, check your inbox for RSVP details.

Alumni Spotlight: Raleigh Dewan

SteadiSpoon | Founder + CEO

Dignity Innovations | Founder + CEO

MakeGood | Director

2022 Lucy Billingsley Future Texas Business Legend Award,

Southern Methodist University

Dallas



Q: What inspired the creation of SteadiSpoon™, and how did your experiences on film sets contribute to its development? Can you provide an update on the development and beta-testing of the SteadiSpoon™? What are the next steps for bringing this product to market?

A: My grandmother, Grand June, was a true southern belle who cooked extravagant feasts that brought our entire family together—until she developed Parkinson’s. She experienced hand tremors so severe she couldn’t cook, she couldn’t feed herself, and she was even too embarrassed to eat with us. Naturally, I wanted to help.

I grew up on my eldest brother’s film sets and loved the action scenes that used steady-cam technology to keep the camera steady while capturing the dynamics. I thought if it’s good enough for Hollywood, it’s good enough for grandma.

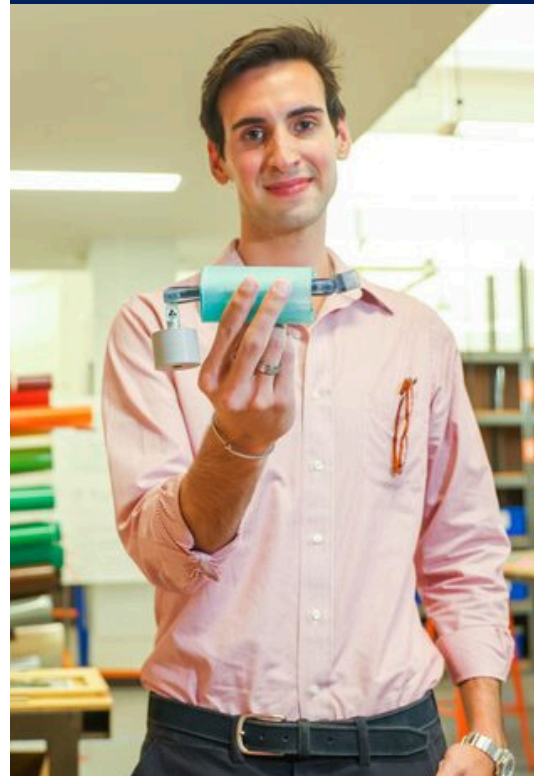
I began with motorized prototypes but switched to an affordable entirely mechanical design for a better consumer experience (no charging, dishwasher safe). After testing 10 prototypes with 300+ Beta Testers, we achieved 95% efficacy of leading motorized devices at half the price. We’re also adding attachments like a fork, knife, toothbrush, and pen to help users tackle more tasks confidently.

We are working with a design firm and our Texas-based manufacturer to prepare for commercial production. Once we have finalized our design for manufacturing, it is off to the races to fulfill our pre-orders and help the millions of Americans.

Read Raleigh's full interview on our [website](#).

To learn more about SteadiSpoon, check out their [website](#).

“For me, excellence in business revolves around the impact my business makes on my customers, my team members, and our community. I truly believe that business remains our best tool to cultivate change in our communities.”



2025 Future Texas Business Legend Awards

Exciting news! We are now accepting applications for the 2025 Future Texas Business Legend Awards program.

We seek to award individuals who want to become an active part of the Hall of Fame network and leverage the network as an opportunity to enrich themselves and others as civic-minded business leaders.

Each recipient is awarded a cash prize ranging from \$15,000 to \$20,000. In addition to the financial award, our goal is to provide a bridge between the most transformational business leaders in our state and the most promising business leaders of today and tomorrow.

We award Texas-based applicants across six categories: United States Veterans, scholars (undergraduate/graduate), entrepreneurs advocating for those with physical and/or developmental disabilities, MBA students pursuing corporate executive leadership roles, high school students, and high school business teachers.

If you know someone you think should apply, please encourage them to visit our website to learn more.

For questions about the awards program, please contact Patrice at pbartlett@texasbusiness.org.



Prison Entrepreneurship Program

Mitchell Cantwell, 2024 Alumni Association President

In 2024, our Alumni had a goal of giving back to the community through a service opportunity. The Prison Entrepreneurship Program quickly jumped to the top of the list as a potential idea. My first experience with the PEP was in April. I showed up with no idea what to expect. I walked out that day speechless at what I had just witnessed.

PEP is so much more than a service opportunity. It is a chance to see the lives of an individual change before your eyes. The premise is all about supporting the entrepreneurs in the program by helping them with their business ideas. You get to hear their pitch, give them feedback and spend quality time talking with them in a one-on-one setting.

Throughout the program, you will witness participants' progress, culminating in their graduation.

Our Alumni went above and beyond to step up and serve. Our own Wade McCrory (Class of 2022) was so moved by the vision of PEP he now serves as an Impact Champion for their organization.

I promise you, you will not regret getting involved with this incredible organization. You will learn more from the group than they will learn from you, and that goes far beyond business. The next available opportunity to volunteer with PEP is on March 28, 2025. This event, the "Big Idea Pitch," allows inmates to present their business ideas and receive feedback from volunteers. To sign up, contact Mario Soto, Director of Volunteer Programs, at O: (832) 409-0382 | C: (979) 299-9923 | msoto@pep.org.

2025 Alumni Association President: Brandon Karam

Please join us in congratulating Brandon Karam on being selected the 2025 President of the TBHF Alumni Association. Since getting his Future Texas Business Legend Award in 2020, Brandon has been an active member of the Alumni Association and Advisory Council. Brandon is the co-founder and CEO of Pristine Cleansing Sprays.

Brandon is a native Texan born in San Antonio. He received a mechanical engineering degree at Rice University, a JD at George Washington University, and an MBA at the University of Texas McCombs School of Business. While practicing law, Brandon and his first cousin founded Pristine Sprays to create more natural and eco-friendly personal care products that are better for the skin and more sustainable for the planet. Brandon and his cousin had the opportunity to pitch their flagship "toilet paper spray," an alternative to flushable wet wipes," on ABC's Shark Tank. Pristine has since appeared on Good Morning America, CNBC, and iHeartRadio with their brand new, eco-friendly product categories.



HALL OF FAME FAVORITES



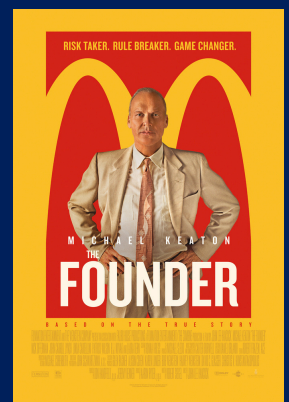
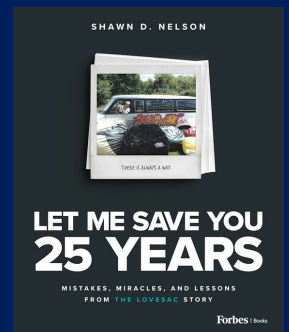
JASON MCCANN, FOUNDER & CEO OF VARI

Scholar Award Recipient, Class of 1996, University of Houston

Favorite Book: Let Me Save you 25 Years: Mistakes, Miracles, and Lessons from the Lovesac Story by Shawn D. Nelson.

Movie: The Founder is the story of Ray Kroc, a salesman who turned two brothers' innovative fast food eatery, McDonald's, into the biggest restaurant business in the world, with a combination of ambition, persistence, and ruthlessness.

Favorite Quote: "God only gives you as much as you can handle. And He must think you're stronger than you think you are." – My great grandmother said this to me every time I was struggling. And in moments of complete fear, uncertainty, and doubt I lean on this.



Mentorship in Action

The Texas Business Hall of Fame is more than an organization celebrating success—it's a powerful network of mentorship and inspiration. Few stories illustrate this better than that of Patrick Gnehm, a 2019 TBHF Future Texas Business Legend Award recipient from UTSA, whose journey from mentee to entrepreneur showcases the true impact of the TBHF community.

It all began with an interview. Director Brian Garrison (Retired Chief Operating Officer and Chief Compliance Officer, Covenant) conducted Patrick's award interview in 2019, sparking a mentorship that grew into a meaningful friendship. Over countless lunches, Brian's guidance became a cornerstone of Patrick's personal and professional growth.

In May 2023, Patrick faced a major career challenge: a layoff from Q2. At a crossroads, he turned to Brian, who urged him to embrace entrepreneurship.

With Brian's support, Patrick launched TalentSync LTD in September 2023, a recruiting firm dedicated to helping nonprofits in San Antonio find top talent.

Just 14 months later, TalentSync is thriving. October 2024 marked its best month yet, with impactful partnerships including Vibrant Works, FirstDay Foundation, and BioMedSA. Patrick credits much of his success to Brian's unwavering belief in him and the mentorship opportunities that TBHF fosters.

Patrick's journey reflects the heart of TBHF's mission: transforming lives through mentorship and connection. His story is a testament to the enduring power of TBHF relationships and a reminder to all alumni to embrace this incredible network—it might just transform your future. To learn more about TalentSync, visit <https://www.talentsyncltd.com>.



Support the TBHF Alumni Association

The Alumni Association connects TBHF scholars, Veterans, Directors, and Legends, fostering a lasting sense of community and inspiration beyond the Future Texas Business Legend Award. Joining is a meaningful way to pay forward TBHF's investment, access the Hall of Fame network, and gain exclusive mentoring and learning opportunities. As a member, you become part of a legacy of exceptional students, Veterans, and entrepreneurs.

Membership Benefits:

- Member-only in-person & virtual programming
- Statewide network of entrepreneurs
- Leadership opportunities & mentorship
- Discounted Induction Dinner tickets

Membership starts at just \$60/year. Learn more at <https://texasbusiness.org/alumni/alumni-association/>

Alumni Milestones & Updates

If you have any exciting news you'd like to share to be featured in the next newsletter, email stillison@texasbusiness.org.

- Founder of Fluxworks, Bryton Praslicka (TAMU 2023 recipient), was named to Forbes' "30 Under 30" list for manufacturing. Bryton recently opened Fluxworks' new base in Workhub Developments' Conroe location.
- Priscilla James (Baylor 2017 recipient), Program Manager at Baylor University's John F. Baugh Center for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise, was recognized by Waco Under 40 for her leadership and contributions to the community.
- Vari, founded by Jason McCann (University of Houston 1996 Recipient) is proud to be one of nine recipients of the Business Council for the Arts (BCA) 2024 Arts Obelisk Awards. Vari was nominated by Wes Mays, Mayor of the City of Coppell and awarded the title of Arts Partnership Large Category.
- As President of Hawkins Family Partners, LP, Anderson Price (UT Austin 2010 recipient) oversees investments for the Austin-based firm. This year, they broke ground on The Hangars, a 25-acre flex-industrial park in Southeast Austin, set to be completed in mid-2025 and retained in their portfolio.
- Mario Ewell (Texas Southern 2007 recipient) has published *ORGANIC SOUL: The Healing Power of African American Music in a World of Artificial Intelligence (AI)*. The book is exclusively available on Apple Books [here](#).
- Co-Founder of re3D, Samantha Snabes (Veteran 2020 recipient), donated a Gigabot 4 3D printer to OrthoAdditive Africa in Cape Town, South Africa! OrthoAdditive Africa's mission is to overcome barriers to healthcare access for people living with disabilities through CAD and additive manufacturing technology.
- Paradigm Robotics, founded by Siddharth Thakur (UT Austin 2024 recipient) is preparing for a Pre-Seed round in Q1 2025 to scale development and commercialization efforts. Click [here](#) to read the full end-of-year update from Paradigm.



Upcoming Events

February 11th - Houston
Creators 2025: Janet Gurwitch and Tiffany Masterson
In Partnership with The Ion

March 5th - Dallas
Creators 2025: John Arnold and Mark Cuban
More info coming soon- stay tuned!

March 28 2025 - Venus, TX
Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP)
Volunteer Opportunity - "Big Idea Pitch"

Susser Welcome Reception

Last November, TBHF threw a cocktail gathering the night before the Induction Dinner. This event, graciously hosted by TBHF Legend Sam L. Susser and his wife Catherine, was a smashing success and wonderful way to kick off the week's festivities. Photography by Grant Miller. To view the full gallery, please click [here](#).



Annika Cail, 2024 VeteranAwardee Dennis Cail (Zirtue), Catherine Susser, and Legend Sam Susser (Susser Bank)



Directors Laura Ilgun Martinez (Vannie E. Cook Cancer Foundation) and Janet Campbell Clark (BellaMia Technologies)



Legend Jerry Susser (Susser Bank) and Pat Susser



Alums Brandon Karam (Pristine Cleansing Sprays) and Mitchell Cantwell (Holt Lundsford) with Chairman David Huntley (ret. AT&T)



Legend and 2024 Inductee Kathy Hildreth (M1 Support Services), Brad Hildreth, and Alum Craig Cummings (Moonshots Capital)



Director Justin Harlin (Smile Fort Worth), Beth Harlin, Mary Crawford, and 2024 Veteran Awardee Edward Crawford (Cotala Holdings)

Future Texas Business Legend Awards Luncheon

Sponsored by Bank of Texas, the 2024 Future Texas Business Legend Awards Luncheon was hosted at SMU on November 13th. At the luncheon, our 38 awardees were recognized for their accomplishments and entrepreneurial leadership. Guests, including TBHF Legends, Directors, and university partners, were treated to a live audience Q&A featuring the 2024 Hall of Fame Inductees. You can watch the full Q&A by clicking [here](#). Photography by Grant Miller. To view the full gallery, please click [here](#).



The Class of 2024 Future Texas Business Legend Award recipients



Representatives from Bank of Texas, this year's luncheon sponsor



Legend Charlie Amato (SWBC), 2024 Awardee Michelle Guzman (First National Bank), Legend Gary Dudley (SWBC), and Jill Vaughn (SHSU)



2024 Veteran Awardee Frank Coppersmith (Smarter Reality) with Legend and 2024 Inductee, David B. Miller (EnCap)



2024 UofH Awardee Pranjal Sheth (Liquidium) with Director Jessica Whitacre-Thorne (Estes Thorne Ewing & Payne)



2024 Inductee and Legend Taylor Sheridan (Yellowstone, Bosque Ranch Production and 6666 Ranch)



2024 Chairman of the Board, David Huntley

Induction Dinner & Ceremony

On November 13th, 2024 in Dallas, TBHF gathered to celebrate six transformational business leaders. These individuals were selected for this honor because of their contributions to the state economy and in their communities. Please join us in congratulating the 2024 Inductees: Michael M. Boone (Haynes Boone), Joe Gebbia (Airbnb & Samara), Kathleen S. Hildreth (M1 Support Services), David B. Miller (EnCap), David Robinson (Admiral Capital Group & The Carver Academy), and Taylor Sheridan (Bosque Ranch Productions & 6666 Ranch).

Thank you to Texas Capital, our longtime presenting sponsor. This event was made possible by the generous support and donations from many organizations. We'd like to especially acknowledge DocuMATION, 1693 Distillery, Shiner Beer, and BETA Academy. You can watch the full ceremony by clicking [here](#). Photography by Grant Miller. To view the full gallery, please click [here](#).



TBHF Legend and our 2024 Master of Ceremonies, Richard Fisher



CEO of Texas Capital, Rob Holmes



Texas Business Hall of Fame Legends and 2024 Inductees



2024 Inductee Joe Gebbia (Airbnb and Samara)



Chairman David S. Huntley, Legend Richard Fisher, 2024 Inductee Kathleen S. Hildreth (M1 Support Services), and former TBHF Director and The Honorable Preston 'Pete' Geren III (former United States Secretary of the Army)



2024 Inductee David B. Miller (EnCap)



2024 Inductee Michael M. Boone (Haynes Boone) with the volunteer students from BETA Academy in Houston



2024 Inductee David Robinson (The Carver Academy and Admiral Capital Group)



2024 Inductee Taylor Sheridan and Legend John C. Goff (Crescent Real Estate)

The Chairman's Reception

Sponsored by JP Morgan Chase, the Chairman's Reception was an intimate gathering hosted at the Dallas Omni Hotel following the conclusion of the Induction Dinner & Ceremony. Thank you to our Legends, Directors, Alumni, and Awardees who kept the party going.

Photography by Grant Miller. To view the full gallery, please click [here](#).



Alum Lance Taylor (Texas Tailored Investments) and Junior Director Jonathan Cole (JP Morgan Chase)



Alum John Paul Thomas (Jacob & John) and 2024 UT Dallas Awardee Anisha Holla (FoodiFy)



Jennifer Poindexter (Susser Bank), Karen Pinkstaff (RSM) and Director Anne Witherspoon (Messick Peacock and Associates)



Jean Signor and Director Jason Signor (Big Sky Medical)



Director Jon Karp (Whitley Penn) and Lori Karp



Alums Joseph Kmetz (Latham & Watkins LLP) and Michael Kmetz (DH Capital)