

Texas Trailblazer

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the

★ TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME



A letter from Brandon Karam, 2025 President, TBHF Alumni Association

TBHF just wrapped up an exciting first quarter with big announcements and engaging events. The Alumni Association would like to wish a heartfelt congratulations to the new Hall of Fame inductees that were announced this Spring. Our Legends motivate TBHF entrepreneurs with their inspiring stories, hard work, and selfless community endeavors. Also, in just one month, we are thrilled to be able to welcome a new class of 2025 Future Legends from around Texas that represent the bright future of entrepreneurship in the state.

This year, the Alumni Association is helping TBHF staff to bring one of the most ambitious programming schedules to date. We want to help provide fun and unique opportunities for Legends, Directors, and members to continue to learn from one another and build relationships. TBHF has already hosted some incredible events this Spring, highlighting entrepreneurs, such as Janet Gurwitch, Tiffany Masterson, John Arnold, and Mark Cuban. For the first time, each of our city groups is undertaking a charity initiative to allow members to bring TBHF's emphasis on community to our expanding outreach portfolio. The number, scope and size of our member events continues to grow, and we are excited to continue building on our momentum this year.

As Alumni, we hope to keep supporting TBHF to bring new ways for our members to get to know one another and grow as a community. We are here to help if you ever have any thoughts or suggestions.

All our best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brandon Karam".

Brandon Karam
2025 President, TBHF Alumni Association
Co-Founder, Pristine Cleansing Sprays





TBHF Announces 2025 Inductees

Ken Fisher, Founder, Fisher Investments - Dallas

Rich Kinder and Bill Morgan, Kinder Morgan - Houston

Chris and Harris Pappas, Co-Founders, Pappas Restaurants - Houston

Gary Petersen, Marty Phillips, and Bob Zorich, Co-Founders, EnCap Investments - Houston

Holly Thaggard, Founder, Supergoop! - San Antonio

The Texas Business Hall of Fame Induction Dinner will take place on Wednesday, October 29, 2025, at the Hilton Americas-Houston. This prestigious event honors transformational business leaders for their exceptional contributions to the Texas economy and our communities. Join us for an evening of celebration, beginning with a reception at 6:00 p.m. followed by dinner and the ceremony at 7:00 p.m. The event is proudly presented by Texas Capital. For more information, visit <https://texasbusiness.org/induction-dinner/about/>.

Presented By



Legend Spotlight: Daniel Lubetzky

Founder, Builders

Founder, KIND Snacks

Founder, Camino Partners

Q. How does Builders' mission to help people overcome our cultural and political divides align with the challenges we face in today's polarized landscape?

By helping equip citizens with tools to think flexibly, engage in constructive civic problem-solving, and hold elected representatives accountable, we can reduce division and extremism. This will enable the restoration of a democratic system where problem-solving prevails, leading to policy-making that reflects the will of the people.

Q. Builders is focused on replacing "us vs. them" thinking with a movement of flexible thinkers and constructive problem-solvers. Can you share a success story or example where Builders has helped shift perspectives or overcome polarization?

This is extremely challenging work, but citizens are demonstrating that solutions are possible. A great example is our [Citizen Solutions](#) initiative. We piloted the program in [Tennessee](#) on the issue of gun rights and safety. Eleven citizens with very different views and backgrounds – from a firearms instructor to a teacher who's lost multiple students to gun violence – worked together to create eight consensus-based proposals representing the needs of all sides.

Q. When you founded KIND Snacks, you created a product that was healthy and tasty while building a brand with a social mission. What lessons from that journey stand out most as you apply them to new ventures today?

KIND began as one idea that we were able to grow into a multi-billion-dollar global brand. While I am enormously proud of what we have accomplished, how we reached our goals has been just as critical to our success. Our culture of kind and hungry values, staying committed to excellence while operating with kindness and integrity, was fundamental to driving sustainable business outcomes.

Q. What qualities do you look for in the founders you invest in, and how do those qualities connect to the principles you've championed through Builders and KIND?

For me, the product and the person are equally important. I'm looking for innovative entrepreneurs who have the humility and introspection to be able to constantly learn from their mistakes.

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

“Our movement is uniting over 3.5 million Americans dedicated to prioritizing problem-solving over division. Our growing network of 325+ Movement Partners, distinguished leaders in their fields, is guiding this effort to create lasting change.”





Insider Perspective: Venture Capital Investing

Daniel S. Parsley, TBHF Director and Managing Partner of GPG Ventures, Lives in Houston, TX

For the better part of the past 25 years, I sought investment from venture capital firms to fund early-stage technology companies. For the past nearly 10 years, I have managed a venture capital firm, GPG Ventures, primarily focused on early to mid-stage medical innovation.

How Do Start Ups Start Up?

Following the euphoria after a brilliant idea has been born, the reality of how to fund the venture sets in. The typical progression of funding a startup begins with the entrepreneur self-funding, then family & friends, then individual angel investors, then venture capital firms and finally, the company may "exit" by going public or being acquired by a larger, strategic company or by private equity firms. Most are not successful; investors lose more often than they win.

The Most You Can Lose is 1X Your Investment...

...but you can earn many times your investment - 5-10-20X or more - on the winners. The key is to invest across 10 or more companies to ensure you are properly diversified. If investing with an experienced VC firm, you should expect to see returns of low to high 20% IRR over time. Most of the deals look really promising; however, be disciplined not to invest too much into a single deal ("shiny object" as we call them) or too few deals overall. Fortunately, in Texas, the many wildcatters and real estate developers know all about the risks of investing in deals; they make good investors. Texas breeds entrepreneurs and many good investment opportunities.

It's Not What You Know

In today's more-sophisticated wealth management world, it's difficult to beat the market, hence, many hire experienced, trustworthy managers to invest their wealth.

Similarly, with venture capital, it is important to trust the VC with whom you are investing. There are plenty of professional VC firms who see high volumes of deal flow from which to choose to invest. Too often, we hear about "a deal I heard about while golfing" or "a close friend's deal." It seems most of these fail, and it's driven many to never invest in start-ups. You'll improve your odds of success investing with a firm - large or small - with deep experience, good deal flow, and a structured vetting process. This is particularly true if you are seeking to diversify your exposure away from the industry where you have created your wealth.

How Much Should You Invest?

With the sophistication and efficiency of the public markets, it is more and more difficult to outperform the market. More investors are investing in "alternative" investments to seek better "alpha" or returns. Twenty years ago, it was common to allocate 1-3% of your net worth in alternative investments. Today, we see 5-20% allocated to a variety of alternative investments. Investing across a variety of alternative investment classes (e.g., venture capital, private equity, real estate, crypto currencies, etc.) can further help diversify your risk.

What To Look For In a Start Up

Running a start-up requires talented, motivated, and dynamic people.

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

Welcome New Directors

Five New Directors Join the TBHF Board for 2025

Please join us in welcoming these five new members to our Board of Directors. Their experiences, insights, and leadership will be crucial to safeguarding TBHF's mission. We look forward to working with them in 2025 and beyond. To read their full bios, please visit <https://texasbusiness.org/about/leadership/>.



Gary Farmer

President, Heritage Title
Company of Austin, Inc.
Austin



Marc Graham

Managing Director, Head of
Energy, Texas Capital
Houston



Dr. Laura Murillo

President & CEO,
Houston Hispanic Chamber
of Commerce
Houston



Brenda Schroer

President & Chief Financial
Officer, SGF Capital
Midland



Victor Tekell

Managing Director & Head
of Houston Middle Market
Banking, Texas Capital
Houston

Executive Committee Retreat



In February, members of our Executive Committee gathered in Burton, Texas, for an inspiring retreat, hosted by our Chairman, Amanda Brock. It was a weekend of meaningful discussions, fresh ideas, and strategic planning for 2025. We're energized and ready for the year ahead!

From left to right top row: Brian Garrison, David Peacock, Amanda Brock, Dr. Larry Hanrahan, Charles Philpott

From left to right bottom row: David S. Huntley, Rose Rogeau, Jessica Whitacre-Thorne, Martina Lemond Dixon, Michele Camp, Mary Bass, David Rodriguez

HALL OF FAME FAVORITES

Favorite Book: Hebrew Bible

Favorite TV Show: Dark Winds

Favorite TED Talk: "Why the world needs more builders—and less 'us vs. them.'" Daniel Lubetzky, April 2024

Current Favorite Movie: Anuja

Favorite Advice: "Embrace failure."



MORTON MEYERSON

TBHF Legend, Class of 2021

Announcing TBHF's First Ever Learning Opportunity...

VisualStory® Workshop by communications powerhouse Duarte

Leveraging the Hall of Fame network, TBHF is continuing to invest in the early- and mid-stage entrepreneurs we have funded. For the first time, we secured powerhouse communications consultant Duarte to offer our network two of its most prized courses: VisualStory® and Captivate™.

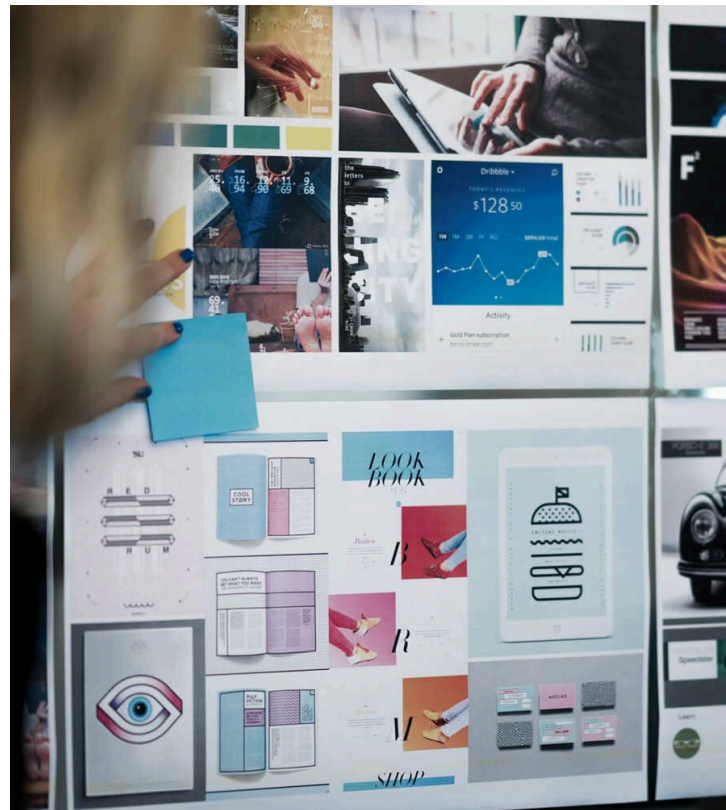
In May, the VisualStory® workshop will empower participants to transform their complex ideas into impactful visual stories. Through the application of design thinking, TBHF members will learn to structure content effectively and transform ideas into compelling visual storyboards for future presentations.

The May VisualStory® course has two spots left. Read a course overview [here](#), and contact Patrice at pbartlett@texasbusiness.org to reserve a spot.

More details about the Captivate™ workshop will be announced this summer. Look for a registration email in early August and don't wait to reserve your spot.

The Duarte Method is often cited as a leading empathy-based approach to crafting compelling presentations that resonate deeply with audiences.

Thank you TBHF Legend Graham Weston for his introduction to Duarte and for making these learning opportunities possible for our Alumni and Directors.





Cuba - December 4 - 9, 2025
Alumni Pricing - \$2,825
Director Pricing - \$3,125



Guatemala - January 15 - 20, 2026
Alumni Pricing - \$1,670
Director Pricing - \$1,970

NEW! Volunteer Service Trip Opportunities with TBHF

TBHF is proud to announce our partnership with GlobeAware, founded by Kimberly Haley-Coleman (University of Dallas, 1995 TBHF Award recipient). Featured in CNN, BBC, WSJ, NYT, and The Today Show, GlobeAware is a world-renowned service trip provider that combines tourism with volunteer work.



TBHF will be offering two unique service trip opportunities exclusively for our members: Cuba in December 2025 and Guatemala in January 2026. This is a great way to connect with TBHF Alumni and Directors while making a meaningful impact in the communities you visit. GlobeAware takes care of all logistics, including meals, accommodations, service projects, and cultural activities. You can focus on giving back, building connections, and fully immersing yourself in the experience.

Cuba Service Opportunities:

- Support moms of children with special needs.
- Work on elementary infrastructure projects.
- Build homes for families in need.
- Dig in at community farms.
- Contribute to Fusterlandia, a Picasso-inspired community art project.

Guatemala Service Opportunities:

- Build cement floors in homes.
- Assist students at the only area library.
- Teach students from low-income families.
- Help local women set up home gardens.
- Support jungle preservation efforts.
- Aid local clinics serving diabetes patients.

Be sure to carefully review the program brochures for full details: [Cuba](#) and [Guatemala](#). Space is limited. To reserve a spot for one of the trips, please complete this [interest form](#)* BY MAY 1, 2025.

Questions? Contact Kyle Klose at kklose@texasbusiness.org.

Creators 2025: Janet Gurwitch and Tiffany Masterson

On February 11, we launched our Creators series in Houston with beauty industry experts Janet Gurwitch (Laura Mercier Cosmetics) and Tiffany Masterson (Drunk Elephant). In partnership with the Ion, Gurwitch and Masterson shared stories, wisdom and hard lessons from their respective journeys as founders of two iconic global brands. Thank you to JPMorganChase for sponsoring our Creators 2025 series of events. Click [here](#) to watch the recording.



Brad Burke (Associate Vice President for Industry and New Ventures, Rice University, Office of Innovation Executive Director, Rice Alliance), TBHF Chairman Amanda Brock, TBHF Legend Janet Gurwitch, Tiffany Masterson, and Jennifer Beaupre (Region Manager, South Texas & New Mexico, Chase / J.P. Morgan Securities LLC)



Brad Burke served as moderator for this conversation with Janet and Tiffany



Brad Burke, Janet Gurwitch and Tiffany Masterson



Tiffany Masterson reflecting on the early days of Drunk Elephant and her inspiration for starting the brand



Meredith Beaupre delivering welcoming remarks to the audience



The forum stairs at the Ion were packed full with attendees from TBHF, Rice, BETA Academy, The Kinkaid School, and VIP guests from JPMorganChase

Creators 2025: John Arnold and Mark Cuban

The second stop in our Creators 2025 tour, sponsored by JPMorganChase, took us to Dallas on March 5 for a timely conversation on healthcare costs. Featuring TBHF Legends John Arnold (Arnold Ventures) and Mark Cuban (Cost Plus Drug Company), the conversation allowed for an intimate look at how two entrepreneurs are using their wealth and vision to help tackle rising healthcare costs. To watch the event recording, please click [here](#).



John Arnold (TBHF Legend and Founder of Arnold Ventures)



Mark Cuban (TBHF Legend and Founder of Cost Plus Drug Company)



Dr. Vivian Ho (Baker Institute) moderated the healthcare conversation



It was a packed house in the Debate Room at Dallas' Old Parkland



John Arnold, Mark Cuban, Elaine Agather (JPMorganChase), Amanda Brock, and Dr. Vivian Ho



Former TBHF Chair, JPMorganChase's Elaine Agather made introductions

Grant Alumni Milestones & Updates

If you have any exciting news you'd like to share, we want to hear it!

Please email

jfernelius@texasbusiness.org

- In February, "YPO" met TBHF in a one-day training for our elite alumni mentoring groups known as our ELGs (Executive Leadership Groups). Thank you to John Goff, Sam L. Susser, and Graham Weston for being guest expert leaders in this effort.
- Olera, co-founded by TJ Falhoun (TAMU 2021) recently received a \$3 million Phase 2B SBIR grant from the National Institute on Aging.
- Congratulations to Lauren Cornell (UTSA 2018). Her company, NovoThelium, was awarded the Audience Choice Award and Judge's Choice Award at Aesthetics Tech Forum 2025!
- Kimberly Haley-Coleman, (University of Dallas 1995) and founder of GlobeAware, recently had the honor of sharing the stage with renowned author and travel entrepreneur Rick Steves at Auburn University, where they spoke on the intersection of travel and philanthropy.

Join the TBHF Alumni Association

The Alumni Association connects TBHF Scholars, Veterans, Directors, and Legends, to foster a lasting sense of community and inspiration beyond the Future Texas Business Legend Award.

If you are a former Scholar or Veteran award recipient, joining is a meaningful way for you to pay forward TBHF's investment in your success. It also enables you to access exclusive TBHF programming.

Read more about Alumni Association Membership Benefits [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Breakfast Club Speaker Series:
Jay Steinfeld, Founder of Blinds.com
April 11 at Bean & Bottle (Houston)

Breakfast Club Speaker Series:
Gay Gaddis, Founder of T3
April 23 at San Antonio Country Club
Contact kklose@texasbusiness.org to RSVP

GlobeAware Service Trip Opportunities
December 2025 (Cuba)
January 2026 (Guatemala)
Interest form deadline is May 1, 2025

Duarte VisualStory® Workshop
May 5 at Baker Botts Austin

2025 Hall of Fame Induction Dinner
October 29 at Hilton Americas-Houston
Learn more or reserve your place [here](#).