



 **TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME**

Annual Future Texas Business Legend Awards Luncheon

Houston | October 29, 2025



**Warren Buffett (2016):** “We don’t have to be smarter than the rest. We have to be more disciplined than the rest.” — **Greg Armstrong (2015):** “Approach everything with a sense of urgency—at least one of your competitors will.” — **Whitney Wolfe Herd (2022):** “Put relationships at the forefront of your businesses.” — **David B. Miller (2024):** “Make time for family and give back to your community.” — **John L. Nau, III (2012):** “If you can’t have fun selling Budweiser, you are doing something wrong.” — **Jack Martin (2023):** “I got here because of other people.” — **Jeffery D. Hildebrand (2022):** “Be remarkable at something. Be an inch wide and a mile deep.” — **Mark Cuban (2020/2021):** “Just ask yourself – Why not me? Why can’t I be that person to change the world?” — **Martha Turner (2009):** “I have learned to lead by example.” — **Christopher “Kit” Goldsbury, Jr. (2023):** “This place inspired me to dream big to make an impact.” — **John Paul DeJoria (2020/2021):** “When you give and want nothing in return, it’s the greatest high ever.” — **Doug Foshee (2012):** “These are the things that make Texas unique: hard work, entrepreneurial spirit, and judgment based on what you’ve done and not where you come from.” — **John C. Goff (2020/2021):** “Always have an escape hatch.” — **Kathleen S. Hildreth (2024):** “When someone tells me no, I hear it as a challenge.” — **Clayton Williams (2007):** “One thing that humbles me is nearly every step with someone helping me.” — **Jim McIngvale (2018):** “We are Texans, and we take care of each other.” — **Morton H. Meyerson (2020/2021):** “Embrace failure.” — **Alan Dreeben (2023):** “If you want a more productive world, a safer world, educate the masses.” — **Jim Crane (2018):** “If you have great people with you, that’s what makes it work.” — **John Arnold (2022):** “The best way that we could give back to the society that did so much for us was to make sure as many other people as possible also had that opportunity.” — **Lee Roy Mitchell (2011):** “Success is not a reward, it’s a responsibility.” — **Gary Dudley (2013):** “Transparency breeds trust. Trust builds relationships. Relationships drive success.”

# OUR MISSION

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## TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME

Founded in 1982, the Texas Business Hall of Fame Foundation honors the accomplishments and contributions of outstanding business leaders in our state by celebrating their impact on both business and community. We tell their stories to inspire and instill the same sense of enterprise, community, and excellence in all generations of Texans.

In addition to recognizing transformational business leaders each year, the Future Texas Business Legend Awards program recognizes up to 40 outstanding individuals annually from the education and Veteran communities who have demonstrated entrepreneurial and business leadership excellence. Each recipient is awarded a cash prize ranging from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

# AFTERNOON PROGRAM

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## WELCOME

Meredith Walker  
Executive Director, TBHF

## INTRODUCTION

Natalie Garza  
Houston Market CEO, Bank of Texas

## INVOCATION

LaRhesa Moon  
Director and Chairman-Elect, TBHF

## LUNCH

## FUTURE TEXAS BUSINESS LEGEND AWARDS

Jessica Whitacre Thorne  
VP New Initiatives, TBHF

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Moderated by Amanda Brock  
2025 Chairman of the Board, TBHF

# ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

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## KEN FISHER

Founder, Fisher Investments – Dallas  
Visionary global investment pioneer

## RICH KINDER AND BILL MORGAN

Co-Founders, Kinder Morgan – Houston  
Legendary partners in U.S. energy infrastructure

## CHRIS PAPPAS AND HARRIS PAPPAS

Co-Chairmen of the Board,  
Pappas Restaurants, Inc. – Houston  
Hospitality trailblazers

## GARY PETERSEN, MARTY PHILLIPS, AND BOB ZORICH

Co-Founders, EnCap Investments – Houston  
Pioneering providers of energy growth capital

## HOLLY THAGGARD

Founder, Supergoop! – San Antonio  
Lifestyle disruptor and skincare innovator

# VETERAN HONOREES

*"I want to encourage other Veterans to take the skills they had shaped in the service and translate those to business success—living and working with a purpose."*



**JOHN ALBERS**  
**CHAIRMAN AND CEO, ALBERS AEROSPACE**  
**McKINNEY**

**The Miller Family Future Texas Legend Veteran Award**  
**Retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel**  
**Texas A&M University, Northcentral University**

John Albers is the Majority Owner of Albers Aerospace Holdings (AAH), a defense company headquartered in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. With over 500 employees nationwide, AAH is recognized for its rapid innovation and commitment to delivering high-impact technologies that support the Warfighter. John's leadership philosophy—"Inspire Others, Deliver Value"—drives both company culture and growth. Before founding AAH, he served 24 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he led global aviation missions and defense acquisition programs. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School, John became the first Marine to command the Navy's VX-20 test squadron. He has logged over 5,000 flight hours in 59 aircraft, including 140 combat hours in the KC-130J during Operation Iraqi Freedom. John earned a BS in Industrial Engineering from Texas A&M University and continues to lead with purpose at the intersection of national security and entrepreneurship.

*"My hope is to scale our service model across Texas and beyond, proving that great culture, accountability, and care can redefine an industry."*



**JOHN ELMORE**  
**CO-FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER, RISE ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT GROUP |**  
**RISE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP | ARCHER RISK SERVICES**  
**HOUSTON**

**Nau Future Texas Legend Marine Corps Veteran Award**  
**U.S. Marine Corps Veteran (Sergeant)**  
**The University of Texas at San Antonio**

John Elmore is a former U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant and entrepreneur committed to elevating the standards of community association management across Texas. He is the Co-Founder of Rise Association Management Group, Rise Facilities Management Group, and Archer Risk Services—three integrated companies that serve over 23,000 homeowners across Texas. He leads a mission-driven organization dedicated to redefining the experience of condominium and homeowners' association governance through professional systems, leadership development, and operational excellence. Under John's leadership, Rise has scaled from two employees to over 160, earning multiple nominations for Houston's Best Places to Work while gaining some of the highest ratings with customer feedback within the industry. John holds a BBA from The University of Texas at San Antonio. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Purple Heart recipient, John draws on the principles of discipline, accountability, and service forged in the Marine Corps to build strong teams and resilient communities. Beyond business, he remains deeply involved in service through F3, Camp Hope, and the Boy Scouts of America, continuing his lifelong commitment to purpose-driven leadership.

*“Our goal is to make the world a better, safer place. And we believe our companies can build technology to defer the next war.”*



**BRAD HARRISON**  
**MANAGING PARTNER, SCOUT VENTURES**  
**AUSTIN**

**Future Texas Legend Army Veteran Award  
in Honor of James Galloway  
Retired U.S. Army Infantry Officer, Army Ranger  
West Point, Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

Brad Harrison is the Founder and Managing Partner of Scout Ventures, an early-stage venture capital firm investing at the intersection of national security and frontier technology—including AI, autonomy, cybersecurity, quantum, space, and energy. A former Airborne Ranger and West Point honor graduate, Brad served five years in the U.S. Army before earning his master’s from the MIT Sloan School of Management. At Scout, he has helped incubate and scale multiple companies, including Unite Us and Tomahawk Robotics, acquired by AeroVironment. Brad is a pioneer in connecting innovative startups with the Department of Defense and has been invited to the White House and Pentagon for his work in national security innovation. A patent co-author and startup mentor, Brad champions dual-use technologies that strengthen both defense and commercial sectors. He remains active in the West Point Entrepreneur community and serves on the Board of the Jewish Chapel at West Point.

*“After 20 years in the Army defending the dream of American free enterprise, this chapter of my life is about participating in it—and helping others succeed through business, service, and bold action.”*



**JOSEPH KOPSER**  
**PRESIDENT, GRAYLINE GROUP**  
**AUSTIN**

**The Greg Armstrong Future Texas Legend Veteran Award  
Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel  
West Point**

Joseph Kopser is a seasoned entrepreneur, Army combat veteran, and technology innovator with over 30 years of leadership experience. He is President of Grayline Group, where he advises organizations on growth, innovation, and strategic transformation. Joseph co-founded RideScout, a mobility startup acquired by Mercedes-Benz, and has served as an Executive-in-Residence at the McCombs School of Business. He is currently a special advisor for military and Veteran affairs at The University of Texas and an active board advisor to several companies. A 20-year U.S. Army Veteran, Joseph earned the Bronze Star, Combat Action Badge, and Ranger Tab. He holds a BS in Aerospace Engineering from West Point and a Master’s in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School. Recognized by the White House as a Champion of Change and winner of the DOT Data Innovation Award, Joseph is also co-author of *Catalyst*.

*"These experiences drive my passion for building businesses and a non-profit that serve Veterans and communities, reflecting the leadership I developed in uniform."*



**JAKE NEWBOLD**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, TRIDENT 1 FFL SOFTWARE**  
**DALLAS**

**The Douglas L. Foshee Future Texas Legend Veteran Award**  
**Retired U.S. Navy Senior Chief Navy SEAL**  
**Cornell University**

Jake Newbold is a retired Navy SEAL and accomplished entrepreneur with a 20-year record of distinguished military service. He currently serves as President and CEO of Trident 1, the leading software platform for the firearms industry. Under Jake's leadership, the company has experienced rapid national expansion and market adoption. His business journey began at 19 as a licensed real estate professional and has included leadership roles at JPMorgan, founding multiple ventures, and building award-winning teams. He is also the Co-Founder and Vice Chairman of the SEAL Legacy Foundation, a nationally recognized nonprofit that has distributed over \$25 million in support of SEALs and Gold Star families. Jake holds dual MBA degrees from Cornell University and Queen's University, is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, and has received numerous military honors—including the Bronze Star with Combat "V" and induction into the Ohio Military Hall of Fame.

## SCHOLAR AWARDEES



**LUIS MONTERO**  
**CO-FOUNDER & HEAD OF INVESTMENTS, TAURSAS INVESTMENTS**  
**HOUSTON**

**T.T. & W.F. Chao Chairman's Award**  
**Rice University**

Luis Montero is the Co-Founder and Head of Investments at Taurus Investments, a Houston-based advisory firm offering a simple, sound, and stoic approach to investment management. Guided by the principles of Graham, Dodd, Munger, and Buffett, Luis blends disciplined value investing with deep expertise in technical accounting and financial analysis to create long-term value for clients. Luis embraces the Latin motto Plus Ultra—"Further Beyond"—a maxim that inspires Taurus' core principles: patience, logic, loyalty, safety, temperance, and accountability. A member of the "Twice Rice" club, Luis earned both an MBA ('25) and Master of Accounting ('20) from Rice University, along with a BS in Business from the University of Minnesota. His approach to business and life is rooted in long-term thinking, ethical leadership, and societal impact, exemplified by his commitment to developing future leaders through education and sport.

*"I am excited to be part of a community of unconventional, outside-the-box thinkers who have paved their own paths to success by doing things the right way."*



**AYODEJI DARAMOLA**  
**INVESTMENT BANKING ASSOCIATE, BANK OF AMERICA**  
**HOUSTON**

**AT&T Future Executive Leader of Distinction Award in Honor of Randall Stephenson**  
**Rice University**

Ayodeji Daramola is an Investment Banking Associate at Bank of America Securities and a 2025 MBA graduate of Rice University's Jones Graduate School of Business, where he served as Co-President of the Finance Association. Prior to transitioning into finance, Ayodeji spent 12 years at Halliburton, advancing through technical and leadership roles across the Completions & Production and Drilling & Evaluation Divisions. Most recently, he served as Climate Manager in Halliburton's Sustainability Reporting group, where he led cross-functional efforts to align greenhouse gas reporting with the company's strategic goals. Ayodeji holds a BS in Mechanical Engineering from The University of Texas at San Antonio and is a graduate of Halliburton's College of Completions Engineering. He also completed an executive leadership program through Texas A&M's Mays Business School. A dedicated civic leader, Ayodeji previously served as President of the Emerging Executives Committee for the Energy Workforce & Technology Council.

*"This recognition reinforces my commitment to continuous growth and will be pivotal as I continue to navigate the complexities of business leadership."*



**KAELIN NGUYEN RUBENZER**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LIFELONG LEARNING WITH FRIENDS**  
**AUSTIN**

**Shaun D. Kennedy Award of Excellence in Empathy & Innovation**  
**The University of Texas at Austin**

Kaelin Rubenzer is the Executive Director of Lifelong Learning with Friends (LLwF), Texas' largest inclusive postsecondary program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs). Based at UT Austin, LLwF serves over 300 adults annually and has trained over 1,700 UT student and faculty volunteers. Kaelin blends her academic foundation in neuroscience—where she researched autism using worms and Fragile X syndrome in mice—with lived experience as a sibling and daughter of autistic family members. Her research has earned local and national recognition, including multiple Women in Neuroscience fellowships, departmental honors, and a role on a top-scoring NIH R01 grant. She co-leads UT's Best Buddies chapter, mentors future researchers, and has published work on both neurodevelopmental disorders and inclusive education. She is now pursuing a Master's in Special Education at UT, where she continues to champion inclusive innovation in higher education.

*"This award affirms that social impact and entrepreneurial innovation can and should go hand in hand."*



**JASMINE CURNEL**  
**FOUNDER & CEO, CONCEITED LUXE**  
**DALLAS**

**The Future Texas Business Legend Scholar of Exceptional Valiance Award**  
**The University of Texas at Dallas**

Jasmine Alysse Curnel is the founder of Conceited Luxe, a luxury haircare brand dedicated to serving individuals with textured hair and acne-prone skin. A student at The University of Texas at Dallas, she is pursuing a degree in Supply Chain Management and Analytics while building a purpose-driven company that addresses a critical gap in the clean beauty industry. Jasmine's entrepreneurial journey began with custom wig services and has since evolved into a full-fledged brand focused on confidence, wellness, and inclusivity. Her leadership is marked by resilience, resourcefulness, and a commitment to community—mentoring peers, supporting local businesses, and creating future job opportunities for fellow students. A proud Texas native, Jasmine is building more than a brand; she's creating a legacy rooted in empowerment, health, and impact.

*"Receiving this award validates my vision and gives me confidence to keep pushing through challenges."*



**SEAN FINNEY**  
**FOUNDER & CEO, TANO SKINCARE**  
**AUSTIN**

**The Brett Wiggs Innovative Leadership Award**  
**Former U.S. Navy Lieutenant, Civil Engineer Corps**  
**U.S. Naval Academy, The University of Texas at Austin**

Sean Finney is the Founder and CEO of Tano Skincare, a consumer brand pioneering the patented, first-of-its-kind use of banana sap in skincare—proving that natural ingredients can outperform synthetic alternatives. A Naval Academy graduate and former Civil Engineer Corps officer, Sean served seven years managing global construction, logistics, and humanitarian missions. Following his military service, he played a pivotal role at Tesla, helping lead the high-speed construction of the GigaTexas factory. Sean earned his MBA from The University of Texas at Austin, where he won the Texas Venture Labs Investment Competition and was named to Poets & Quants’ Most Disruptive MBA Startups of 2024. A TBHF Veteran Award finalist, Sean is also an active mentor to early-stage entrepreneurs and a vocal advocate for innovation in the better-for-you CPG space.

*“To me, business is a tool for creating a rising tide that lifts everyone.”*



**PRANATHI BINGI**  
**CEO & CO-FOUNDER, PILLMED**  
**LUBBOCK**

**Gary R. Petersen Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**Texas Tech University**

Pranathi Bingi is a driven entrepreneur, CEO, and medical student with a deep passion for merging healthcare innovation and business. As the co-founder of PillMed, she is committed to improving patient outcomes through the development of an automatic portable pill dispenser that enhances medication adherence and pill management convenience. She believes that entrepreneurship is not just about building a business – it’s about transforming healthcare for the better. Her entrepreneurial journey is supported by her academic pursuits, including research on healthcare-related topics, and a commitment to improving healthcare systems. She continues to contribute to her community through various volunteer activities and mentorship, focusing on care for underserved populations and advancing healthcare innovation in Texas. Pranathi aspires to leave a lasting legacy in the healthcare field by pioneering solutions that enhance patient care, streamline healthcare delivery, and empower individuals to take control of their health.

*“Joining the TBHF Network is a transformative milestone in my entrepreneurial journey... it fuels my confidence to grow PillMed and future ventures aimed at improving care for vulnerable populations.”*



**REESE BOOKOUT**  
**OWNER & OPERATOR, DIAMONDBACK DETAILING |**  
**AMERICAN DRONE COMPANY**  
**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**The Carlos & Malú Alvarez Award**  
**The University of Texas at San Antonio**

Reese Bookout is an entrepreneur, engineering student, and creative thinker committed to innovation and craftsmanship. He is currently pursuing a degree in Mechanical Engineering at UTSA's Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design, where he specializes in 3D modeling, engineering design, and advanced manufacturing. Reese recently founded American Drone Company, a UAV hardware startup that applies biomimicry and advanced drone technology to redefine autonomous flight. He leads a team of 14 multidisciplinary engineering students united by a shared vision for innovation and real-world impact. Reese’s first business, Diamondback Detailing, has grown into a six-figure enterprise, earning over \$500,000 in revenue through strategic leadership and customer-centered service. Outside of these endeavors, he is an accomplished musician, avid automotive enthusiast, and community advocate. Reese’s work embodies a commitment to longevity, creativity, and purposeful design.

*“My main venture has grown from a one-man operation to a thriving business serving hundreds of customers. My new venture seeks to design and build an endurance drone. The networking opportunities at TBHF will be invaluable in this new pursuit.”*



**CRAIG BRENTLINGER**  
**OWNER, DRINKWATER PRODUCTS**  
**THE WOODLANDS**

**The Paul Foster Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**Baylor University**

Craig Brentlinger is the Co-Owner and Director of Operations at Drinkwater Products, a company specializing in pipeline maintenance solutions for the oil and gas industry. Under Craig’s leadership, the business has doubled sales and tripled profits over the past decade. He has spearheaded operational enhancements including ERP software implementation, supply chain modernization, and the launch of a second location. Known for his strategic mindset and collaborative leadership style, Craig is deeply committed to fostering a culture of excellence, teamwork, and inclusivity. His passion for sports informs his approach to leadership, emphasizing integrity, accountability, and continuous improvement. Craig holds a BBA from Baylor University and is currently pursuing his MBA at Baylor, with an expected graduation in Fall 2026. He is dedicated to driving positive organizational change and advancing innovation within traditional industries.

*“By inspiring a culture of service, we aim to improve lives and encourage others to volunteer, enhancing the well-being of those around us.”*



**JOSEPH F. COTIE**  
**OWNER, COTIE BROTHERS SHOW CATTLE**  
**HOUSTON**

**The McFerrin Center for Entrepreneurship Future Texas Business Legend Award in Honor of James Galloway, '29**  
**Texas A&M University**

Joe Cotie is the owner of Cotie Brothers Show Cattle and a Texas A&M agriculture student whose entrepreneurial journey began at just 15 years old. What started as a small cattle operation quickly became a full-fledged business, where Joe mastered bookkeeping, customer relations, and brand-building before the age of 18. While pursuing his degree, Joe interned with Vaughn Construction and discovered a deep passion for project management and building infrastructure. Today, he is focused on forging a future that combines his love for agriculture with his excitement for construction—two industries rooted in growth, grit, and vision. Joe's entrepreneurial mindset is fueled by a passion for seeing ideas come to life, whether raising livestock, managing teams, or contributing to the built environment. With a strong sense of purpose and a builder's heart, Joe is committed to shaping a future that reflects his values and drive.

*"...winning this award means my entrepreneurial journey no longer looks like a light at the end of a long tunnel but has become an entire ecosystem with knowledge at every bend in the road."*



**EMILIANA M. ESCOBAR**  
**CEO & FOUNDER, ELECTRA XR**  
**BROWNSVILLE**

**James and Kathleen Collins & Vantage Bank Texas**  
**Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

Emiliana Escobar is a Master Electrician and education innovator transforming vocational training through Electra XR, a bilingual, culturally relevant XR platform redefining how electrical skills are taught. Raised in one of Brownsville's toughest neighborhoods, Emiliana credits her success to her mother's perseverance and her stepfather's early mentorship in the trades. Despite facing discrimination in a male-dominated field, she earned the title of Master Electrician and pursued advanced education, including a master's degree in educational technology and ongoing doctoral research. Her company, Electra XR, bridges the gap between hands-on training and immersive tech to empower underserved communities. Emiliana's mission is to challenge stigmas around skilled trades and prove they are just as worthy as college degrees. She is building a future where access, equity, and technical excellence coexist and where the next generation of electricians can thrive.

*"I believed that truly equitable, affordable, and accessible training would have to come from someone like me... helping bilingual electrical workers advance their careers."*



**CLARA GUERRERO**  
**FOUNDER & CEO, CLARAQUESÍ MARKETING**  
**SAN ANTONIO**

**The William E. "Bill" Greehey Award**  
**St. Mary's University**

Clara Guerrero is a visionary marketing strategist and founder of ClaraQueSí Marketing, a purpose-driven consultancy supporting brands through impactful partnerships and community engagement. With 20+ years of experience leading campaigns for companies like Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and USAA, Clara now advises clients such as Susan G. Komen and influencer Cynthia Carter—recently helping secure partnerships with the Witte Museum and La Panadería. She also mentors emerging leaders, including a St. Mary's graduate now working for the Colorado Rapids. Clara serves as an advisor with United Way's Emerging Leaders, which added 716 new members and raised \$2.3M last year. As an HCA Healthcare MBA Scholar, she supports recruitment and professional development and dreams of one day combining her healthcare, wellness, and sports passions into bold campaigns—like her dream client, Formula 1. Clara is currently building her brand identity and business platform, with a long-term vision rooted in service, creativity, and connection.

*"I plan to use our business success to show that purpose and profit can go hand in hand. When brands align with causes that matter, real change happens."*



**ELIAS HANSEN**  
**OPERATIONS MANAGER, NOLAN PRACTICE MANAGEMENT**  
**SAN ANTONIO**

**The Doug & Martha Hawthorne Family Fund Award**  
**Trinity University**

Elias Hansen is an MHA candidate at Trinity University and the Operations Manager at Nolan Practice Management, a healthcare operations consulting firm based in San Antonio. He was recently named a National Finalist in the Cornell x UCI Health Case Competition, reflecting his strong foundation in healthcare strategy and innovation. Elias graduated magna cum laude from Rice University, where he studied Religion, Sport Management, and Business. He was recognized as the most outstanding senior by Rice's Department of Religion and served as lead teaching assistant for the undergraduate Business Communication course. He also worked with the sports psychology startup MindReady, supporting athlete performance and mental wellness. A dedicated mentor and personal tutor, Elias values lifelong learning and service. Outside the classroom and clinic, he is an accomplished pianist, having earned top honors from the National Federation of Music Clubs for 15 consecutive years.

*"This commitment to my home state is what brought me to study healthcare administration, and it motivates the creative problem-solving I hope to leverage."*



**CANDACE D. JONES**  
**CO-FOUNDER & CEO, THE KHEE REALTY GROUP**  
**PORTER**

**The Ben J. Rogers Award**  
**Lamar University**

Candace D. Jones is the Co-Founder of The Khee Realty Group, a Texas-based real estate company focused on delivering sustainable housing solutions in underserved communities. With over 15 years of experience in supply chain operations, Candace brings strategic insight and a collaborative leadership style to every venture. Her entrepreneurial journey began at age seven with a lawn care and cleaning business—rooted in service to her family and community. A dedicated public servant, she contributed more than 3,700 hours through AmeriCorps, including as a founding corps member with City Year in Little Rock and Baton Rouge. Candace’s leadership is grounded in the values of service, accountability, and creating environments where people feel valued and empowered. She is currently pursuing her MBA at Lamar University. Known for her resilience and adaptability, Candace is passionate about building inclusive teams and transforming challenges into long-term community impact.

*“We are building more than a business—this is a movement to reinvest in underserved communities, create pathways to homeownership, and promote long-term stability.”*



**SCOTT LUDWIG**  
**OWNER & ADMINISTRATOR, VISITING ANGELS**  
**IRVING**

**The Mitchell Family Foundation Award**  
**The University of Texas at Arlington**  
**Civil Affairs Office, Retired Major, U.S. Army and Army Reserves**

Scott Ludwig is a U.S. Army Veteran, entrepreneur, and CEO of Visiting Angels-Irving, a leading North Texas home care agency serving seniors and disabled adults. Under his leadership, the company has achieved 300% growth—from \$500K in 2020 to \$1.3M in 2024, with \$1.5M projected in 2025. He is driving strategic expansion through added staff, veteran-focused community outreach, and operational enhancements informed by his Executive MBA studies at UT Arlington. Scott is also Co-Founder of Hemp Oil Technologies, Inc., pioneering a novel full-spectrum hemp oil extraction process. The company’s proof-of-concept extraction machine is scheduled for completion in October 2025. A graduate of UT Arlington’s BBA program, Scott served 22 years in the U.S. Army, including a deployment to Afghanistan with the 101st Airborne Division, retiring as a Civil Affairs Officer in 2025. A lifelong Texan, he is committed to service, faith, and community, and lives in Arlington with his wife, Stephanie, and their six children.

*“Joining the Texas Business Hall of Fame Network represents a turning point [in] seeking guidance from experienced mentors who can help me reach my full potential.”*



**CAROLINE LUTHER**  
**FOUNDER, COOKIES BY CAROLINE**  
**DALLAS**

**The Robert H. Dedman Award**  
**Southern Methodist University**

Caroline Luther is the founder of Cookies by Caroline, a Dallas-based cookie company known for its dough-like texture, thoughtful design, and joyful spirit. Since launching in 2023, Caroline has grown the business from a weekend of 25 orders to producing over 1,000 cookies in a single day. After turning down an offer from Citibank to pursue her venture full-time, she moved operations from her 300 sq. ft. apartment kitchen into a commercial space and began building a full production team. In addition to daily customer and corporate orders, Cookies by Caroline has expanded into high-profile collaborations with brands like Oscar de la Renta and Missoni x Hotel Swexan. A Nebraska native, Caroline graduated magna cum laude from Texas Christian University and is currently earning her MBA at SMU’s Cox School of Business. Her business reflects her belief that great hospitality—and great cookies—bring people together.

*“I’ve learned so much from listening to the stories of those who came before me, and I look forward to sharing my own in ways that encourage and inspire the next generation.”*



**CORA MONCIBAIZ**  
**FOUNDER, IMAGO DEI EVENTS**  
**DALLAS**

**The Mitchell Family Foundation Award**  
**Dallas Baptist University**

Cora Moncibaiz is the Founder of Imago Dei Events, a floral and coordination company serving the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Since launching in 2022, she has built a brand known for its intentional service and thoughtful design. Her work has earned her recognition as an Official Partner of Wed Society North Texas and a featured vendor in the 2025 Book of Weddings. In addition to her entrepreneurial success, Cora serves as Administrative Assistant to the Senior Vice President at Dallas Baptist University. A graduate of DBU with a BS in Public Relations, she is currently pursuing her MBA in Management. Cora has been honored as a Presidential Fellow, recognized on the President’s List, and inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa. With a deep commitment to faith, leadership, and community, Cora is passionate about creating meaningful experiences, both in her business and beyond.

*“I believe business is a powerful tool to influence culture, build connection, and create lasting change.”*



**ARSALAN MONSHIZADEH**  
**FUTURE FOUNDER, CLEATIES**  
**DALLAS**

**The Mitchell Family Foundation Award**  
**The University of Dallas**

Arsalan Monshizadeh is an aspiring entrepreneur and recent graduate of the University of Dallas, where he earned a BA in Business. Over a four-year period, he built and operated a resale business focused on sourcing high-demand, limited-availability merchandise and delivering it through direct-to-consumer channels. By leveraging social media and word-of-mouth marketing, Arsalan provided reliable access to sold-out products—building trust and value within his local community. He currently works full-time at Fidelity Investments as part of the FidYou Operations Program, where he previously interned and helped develop automation strategies to enhance file management efficiency. Arsalan also brings experience from collegiate athletics, having played on the NCAA men’s soccer team for two years before transitioning to a team manager role, where he focused on scouting and analytics. He is the founder of a new venture currently in development and remains committed to creating accessible, customer-focused solutions through innovation and entrepreneurship.

*“By reinvesting in the community that supports us, I hope to turn business success into lasting social impact.”*



**GRAHAM PRESTON**  
**MANAGING CONSULTANT, INVESTED CONSULTING CO.**  
**AUSTIN**

**The Alan and Barbara Dreeben Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**Texas State University**

Graham Preston is a former live sound engineer turned entrepreneur with a passion for using business to create value and improve lives. From 2019 to 2022, he owned and operated Preston Audio & Event Production, a turnkey AV business that serviced over 100 events across Texas, including a multi-city tour. Known for delivering exceptional customer service and fostering strong client relationships, Graham led a team that consistently earned high marks for quality and reliability. He holds a degree in Economics from the University of Texas and recently received his MBA from Texas State University, where he maintained a 4.0 GPA while working full-time as an IT Analyst. Graham believes in the power of well-run businesses to help people thrive and aspires to help small businesses grow—while launching even more new ventures of his own.

*“This award has been encouraging and empowering for me to engage with the many ideas I have day in and day out and see their potential more clearly.”*



**IMAN SALAFIAN, PhD, PMP**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO, IMAGINE DEVICES INC.**  
**AUSTIN**

**The Morton H. Meyerson Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**The University of Texas at Austin**

Iman Salafian is the Co-Founder and CEO of Imagine Devices, an Austin-based medical technology company developing the Trinity Tube, a neonatal feeding and monitoring device. With over 15 years of experience in medical device innovation, product design, and manufacturing, he leads company operations, regulatory strategy, fundraising, and product development. Under his leadership, Imagine Devices has secured more than 30 competitive grants and awards. Iman actively supports Texas’s entrepreneurial ecosystem through Texas Entrepreneurship at UT Austin, where he leads the Small Business Impact Program and the SEAL Accelerator—programs that help small businesses and venture-backed startups grow and scale. He is a PMP-certified professional and holds a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin. Known for his mission-driven leadership, Iman is committed to creating accessible, life-saving technologies that address urgent needs in pediatric and neonatal care.

*“I am committed to leveraging my business success to foster meaningful social impact through mentorship, education, and community empowerment.”*



**MIGUEL SALINAS, MA, LPC**  
**OWNER, CLEAN SLATE COUNSELING**  
**SAN ANTONIO**

**The Harvey Najim Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**The University of Texas at San Antonio**  
**Former U.S. Navy Gunner’s Mate**

Miguel Salinas is a U.S. Navy Veteran, Licensed Professional Counselor, and founder of Clean Slate Counseling, a mental health practice rooted in innovation and purpose. A devoted father and lifelong learner, Miguel has developed a unique therapeutic modality that blends Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, narrative therapy, and solution-focused techniques—empowering individuals to build lasting, strengths-based habits. He is the author of *Clean Slate Counseling: Beginning the Journey to Mental Health*, a guide to his clinical framework. Expanding access to care in creative ways, Miguel also developed a groundbreaking Minecraft-based therapy realm that integrates mental health concepts into an interactive gaming experience. His work combines clinical expertise with empathy, cultural relevance, and forward-thinking delivery methods. Miguel’s mission is not only to help others progress in mental health but also to ensure they know they’re never alone in the journey.

*“I see this as an opportunity to invest in both the present and future of mental health entrepreneurship—and I’m honored to be part of that legacy.”*



**ASHLEE SAWTELL**  
**CEO, AZ MOBILE PET VACCINES**  
**HOUSTON**

**The SWBC Foundation Award**  
**Sam Houston State University**

Ashlee Sawtell is a mission-driven entrepreneur and the founder of a growing network of veterinary care providers focused on delivering affordable, high-quality care for pet owners through more than 75 monthly mobile vaccination clinics. With a commitment to accessibility and innovation since 2021, she has served over 100,000 pets and built a team of like-minded professionals who share her belief in the power of trust, collaboration, and community. As a Chancellor's Fellow and Terry Scholar Alumni, Ashlee has a servant-leader mindset—empowering others while advancing best practices in the veterinary field. She actively shares her expertise through workshops and seminars, championing new technologies and forward-thinking approaches to animal care. Her leadership has earned the respect of peers, clients, and industry partners alike. Ashlee's journey as a business owner is defined by her passion for continuous learning, compassion for animals and people, and a clear vision to transform the future of veterinary care.

*"[Receiving this award] inspires me to continue pushing boundaries in making veterinary care more accessible and affordable."*



**DAVIAN SERNA**  
**CO-FOUNDER, CDTV MEDIA PRODUCTIONS LLC**  
**FORT WORTH**

**Future Texas Business Legend Directors' Award**  
**Supported by Amanda and Robert Brock**  
**University of North Texas**

Davian Serna is the Founder and CEO of CDTV Media Productions LLC, a creative media company empowering small businesses and individuals to tell impactful stories through cinematic videography and photography. Raised in a low-income household in Fort Worth, Davian co-founded CDTV in 8th grade with a childhood friend and an iPhone—turning a dream into a full-service production company with a dedicated office in North Richland Hills. Today, CDTV serves clients across Texas with brand videos, social content, weddings, and more. Davian is also a part-owner of Santana & Co., a scalp micropigmentation and hair-loss education company. While growing his businesses, he is pursuing a degree in Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Management at the University of North Texas. His journey reflects a powerful mix of creativity, persistence, and purpose. Davian is driven by the belief that no matter where you come from, you can create something extraordinary.

*"Our content doesn't just promote businesses—it uplifts stories, spreads positivity, and strengthens the local economy."*



**TYLER STROTHMAN**  
**FOUNDER & CEO, VELOCI RUNNING**  
**HOUSTON**

**T.T. & W.F. Chao Award**  
**Rice University**

Tyler Strothman is former track student-athlete at Rice University Class of 2025 and the Founder of Veloci Running, an innovative footwear brand disrupting the industry with purpose-driven design and elite performance. Identifying a key gap in the market, Tyler created a product line that is now competing alongside top global brands, generating \$1.25 million in revenue to date. With a focus on functional design and brand authenticity, Tyler has built a strong following within the running community and retail ecosystem. His passion for the sport extends beyond business—he volunteers regularly at major events such as the Houston Marathon and remains deeply engaged in the running specialty retail world. As a student-athlete and founder, Tyler brings a unique blend of discipline, vision, and community-minded leadership to every step of his entrepreneurial journey.

*"We are excited to pour back into the running community and youth athletics and create opportunities for future generations to find lifelong growth through sport."*



**IVAN TONG**  
**CEO, MEDCEPTOR, EMT CAPTAIN, UEMR**  
**HOUSTON**

**The Mitchell Family Foundation Award**  
**The University of Texas at Dallas**

Ivan Tong is a Biochemistry and Entrepreneurship student at UT Dallas and the founder of Medceptor, a company revolutionizing EMT training through an AI-powered platform that simulates emergency medical scenarios. A National Merit Scholar and former valedictorian, Ivan brings over two years of hands-on experience as an EMT and currently serves as Captain for UTD's nationally top-ranked University Emergency Medical Response (UEMR) team. His ventures also include Adventurefy, a gamified productivity app, where he built a thriving community and amassed over 41 million organic views. Ivan is also the author of Productivity 101, a bestselling student guide, and shares evidence-based learning and life optimization strategies with an audience of over 74,000 followers. Originally pre-med, Ivan discovered a stronger passion for entrepreneurship and continues to combine technology, leadership, and innovation to create tools that help people grow and thrive.

*"With help, we can turn our lean prototype into a scalable, impact-driven solution."*



**ZACH TRAYLOR**  
**FOUNDER & OWNER, ROLL 'N' REEL PHOTO BOOTH**  
**HOUSTON**

**T.T. & W.F. Chao Award**  
**University of Houston**

Zach Traylor is a finance professional, entrepreneur, and graduate of the Master's in Finance program at the University of Houston's C.T. Bauer College of Business. His career spans corporate procurement, consulting, and strategic advisory, with experience at Phillips 66, Baringa Partners, and Pickering Energy Partners. Zach has participated in commercial due diligence for multimillion-dollar deals, delivered millions in operational savings, and advised clients on organizational and regulatory strategy. A serial entrepreneur, he is the founder of Roll 'N' Reel Photo Booth, a Houston-based event equipment rental business, and supports his family's Texas-based logistics company, Roy Young Trucking. Zach is deeply involved in social impact, mentoring underrepresented founders through the UH SURE Program, supporting impact-focused startups through the Houston Chapter of the Prison Entrepreneurship Program, and coordinating community events with the Joshua Chamberlain Society. Passionate about driving change through business, Zach thrives at the intersection of finance, entrepreneurship, and service.

*"For me, entrepreneurship is not just about building businesses; it is about building people and communities."*



**FORREST WILLIAMS**  
**FOUNDER AND CEO, WATERWATCH**  
**DALLAS**

**Future Texas Business Legend Award**  
**Texas Christian University**

Forrest Williams is the Founder and CEO of WaterWatch, a wearable safety technology company delivering real-time drowning alerts to parents through smartphone integration. Inspired by his upbringing around lakes and the tragic impact of childhood drownings in his community, Forrest set out to develop life-saving innovation that brings peace of mind to families. Under his leadership, WaterWatch has advanced from concept to functional prototype, secured non-dilutive grant funding, earned support from the TCU Create program, and built partnerships with leading children's hospitals and safety organizations. A finance and real estate major at Texas Christian University and consistent Dean's List honoree, Forrest blends academic achievement with entrepreneurial drive. He has represented TCU nationally in the Hult Prize and the Values & Ventures Competition and was recognized by Poets & Quants for founding the "Most Disruptive Startup" of 2023. Forrest remains committed to creating ventures that address critical safety challenges and improve lives.

*"I truly believe the best way to grow is by surrounding yourself with people who've done it before. That's why joining the TBHF Network means so much to me."*



**BRIADY HUTCHINSON**  
**OWNER AND OPERATOR, BEE'S ROLLED ICE CREAM**  
**WICHITA FALLS**

**The TBHF Alumni Association Outstanding High School Entrepreneur Award in Honor of Coulter & Lily Rush Hoppess Homeschool**

Briady Hutchinson is a 17-year-old entrepreneur from Wichita Falls, Texas, and the Founder of Bee's Rolled Ice Cream, the only rolled ice cream business in North Texas. Launching at just 14, she grew the venture into a thriving mobile dessert company with more than 12,000 units sold and \$100,000 in revenue to date. Operating from a custom trailer she designed and renovated herself, Briady offers preservative-free rolled ice cream, sodas, cold brew, and baked goods. Balancing high school and college coursework, she plans to expand with a storefront, additional trailers, and eventually a welding and fabrication company.

*"As the business expands, I'd love to continue creating opportunities for local youth through part-time jobs and mentorship, showing them that with hard work and creativity, they can build something of their own too."*



**HUDSON PIETSEK**  
**FOUNDER, HUDSON'S PRESSURE WASHING**  
**ABILENE**

**Ishaan Thakur Outstanding High School Entrepreneur Award**  
**Abilene High School**

Hudson Pietsek is a senior at Abilene High School and the Founder of Hudson's Pressure Washing and Window Cleaning, a growing home exterior cleaning company. Launching just a year ago with \$30 and a single squeegee, he quickly scaled the business to \$35,000 in revenue, more than \$10,000 in equipment, and a four-person team. Known for his scrappy approach and strong sales skills, Hudson continues to drive growth door to door while securing partnerships with contractors for large-scale jobs. With consistent monthly revenue of \$6,000-\$8,000, he is preparing to expand into new markets and add complementary services..

*"I want to prove that local businesses can make a big difference when they invest in their communities."*

## TEACHER AWARDEES



*"I want students to see entrepreneurship as more than profit—it's a way to solve problems and uplift others."*

**LEE GEFFERT**  
**MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TEACHER**  
**RICHARDSON HIGH SCHOOL**  
**RICHARDSON**  
Texas Business Hall of Fame Teacher of Excellence Award  
Supported by Jason and Jean Signor

Lee Geffert is an accomplished educator and business leader with over 15 years of experience in marketing education and more than a decade in management. As a Marketing and Entrepreneurship Teacher at Richardson High School, he has grown the DECA chapter to nearly 400 members, earning EPIC Level recognition and guiding students to state, national, and international success. He also serves as Texas DECA District 11 Director and Board Member, leading districtwide initiatives. A Texas State University graduate, Lee blends real-world business expertise with classroom innovation to inspire and prepare the next generation of entrepreneurs.



*"I teach my students that being a force for good is not a result of success, but a starting point."*

**MICHELLE MOORE**  
**CTE MARKETING TEACHER**  
**RONALD REAGAN HIGH SCHOOL**  
**SAN ANTONIO**  
Texas Business Hall of Fame Teacher of Excellence Award  
Supported by Alan & Barbara Dreeben

Since 2013, Michelle Moore has taught marketing and advised the DECA chapter at Ronald Reagan High School in San Antonio. Recognized for her passion and high-energy approach, she is a strong advocate for educational technology and professional certifications. Michelle played a pivotal role in securing state approval for the Meta Digital Marketing Associate Certification, leveraging her LinkedIn network to connect with Meta and championing the certification for Texas students. A Texas A&M marketing graduate, she previously worked in commercial real estate and sales before discovering her true calling—teaching and mentoring high school students through her church's youth program.

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2025 TEXAS BUSINESS  
HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEES



“ Best practices are only useful in business categories unimportant to dominance. To change the world, you need never-yet-done practices that drive your differentiated superior value added in customers’ minds. ”

– KEN FISHER  
Founder, Fisher Investments  
Dallas



“ There’s no limit to what can be accomplished if you don’t care who gets the credit ”

– RICH KINDER  
Co-Founder, Kinder Morgan  
Houston



“ Ignore the intramurals; focus on what will help the company succeed. ”

– BILL MORGAN  
Co-Founder, Kinder Morgan  
Houston



“ ‘If it is to be, it is up to me.’ – William H. Johnson ”

– CHRIS PAPPAS  
Co-Chairman of the Board,  
Pappas Restaurants, Inc.  
Houston



“ If you find what you love to do, every day will be fun and you’ll never work a day in your life. ”

– HARRIS PAPPAS  
Co-Chairman of the Board,  
Pappas Restaurants, Inc.  
Houston



“ One of the key ingredients necessary in life to build a business is strong work ethic. To build a successful business you need God’s help, vision, some brains, a lot of luck and unwavering work ethic. Once you are told no is when you truly go to work. Never ever quit no matter the odds. ”

– GARY PETERSEN  
Co-Founder, EnCap Investments  
Houston



“ Develop a meaningful definition of success. Don’t let others define it for you. Pick good partners. Outwork the competition. ”

– MARTY PHILLIPS  
Co-Founder, EnCap Investments  
Houston



“ Stay focused on what makes you the best, be persistent and adaptable and keep your life balanced. ”

– BOB ZORICH  
Co-Founder, EnCap Investments  
Houston



“ Passion is the most critical ingredient for building a brand or business. When work is built on a foundation in passion, it does not feel like work. Be so passionate about your idea and plans that you literally cannot sleep at night. ”

– HOLLY THAGGARD  
Founder, Supergoop!  
San Antonio

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**Michael M. Boone (2024):** "None of us is as strong or as productive or as smart as all of us working together as a unified team." — **Joe Gebbia (2024):** "The deepest source of motivation comes from solving your own problem." — **David Robinson (2024):** "A good sustainable business, an ethical business, is one where both parties really walk away with something." — **Taylor Sheridan (2024):** "The key to success is daring to fail. And, the one ingredient you and you alone control is how hard you work at it." — **Daniel Lubetzky (2023):** "It's not just about what you've achieved but how you've achieved it." — **Alan Dreeben (2023):** "If you want a more productive world and a safer world, educate the masses." — **Ernie Cockrell (2018):** "People first, people always first." — **Robert C. McNair, Sr. (1997):** "Out of adversity comes opportunity." — **Mary Kay Ash (1986):** "If you will do for others what you would like done for you." — **Janet Gurwitch (2023):** "I thought if not now, when?" — **Arch "Beaver" Aplin, III (2023):** "I'm here to tell you there's no place like Texas." — **Ric Campo (2022):** "All the challenges you have along the way create value and make us stronger and smarter." — **Paul W. Hobby (2022):** "Do the next right thing." — **Paul Foster (2013):** "None of us get anywhere in life without getting a little help from somebody." — **David Weekley (2018):** "Start from a position of gratitude." — **Randall Stephenson (2020/2021):** "Business and community go hand in hand." — **Kendra Scott (2019):** "Don't be afraid of the men in the suits." — **Charlie Amato (2013):** "Success always comes disguised in the form of preparation and hard work."



# TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME

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