

Texas Trailblazer

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the

★ TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME



A letter from LaRhessa Moon, 2026 TBHF Chairman

Dear TBHF Network,

We are off to a strong start in 2026, building on the progress and achievements of 2025. We just finished reviewing our 2026 nominations for the Texas Business Hall of Fame's November 12, 2026, Induction, and we have much to accomplish in the months ahead. This year, we are launching a new Veterans Forum for our Veteran Award Recipients, led by TBHF Legends; expanding our Executive Leadership Groups (ELGs) to provide former scholars with elite peer-to-peer mentoring; and pursuing an ambitious slate of public outreach events that spotlight innovative and transformational business leaders across Texas.



As we continue to grow, it is clear that our network now extends well beyond the Texas Business Hall of Fame itself. It includes a growing community of Texas business leaders who recognize both the opportunity and responsibility to use the vision that fueled their professional success to strengthen communities statewide. Through our programming, we are engaging these leaders with our scholars, former scholars, and Veteran Award recipients, encouraging them to lead with the same integrity and deep commitment to service.

Thank you to our Alumni, Directors, and Legends for your steadfast support of our mission. We hope this look back at the impact you helped make possible in 2025 inspires you to play an active role in all that lies ahead in 2026.

Sincerely yours,

LaRhessa Moon
2026 TBHF Chairman

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LOOKING BACK AT 2025

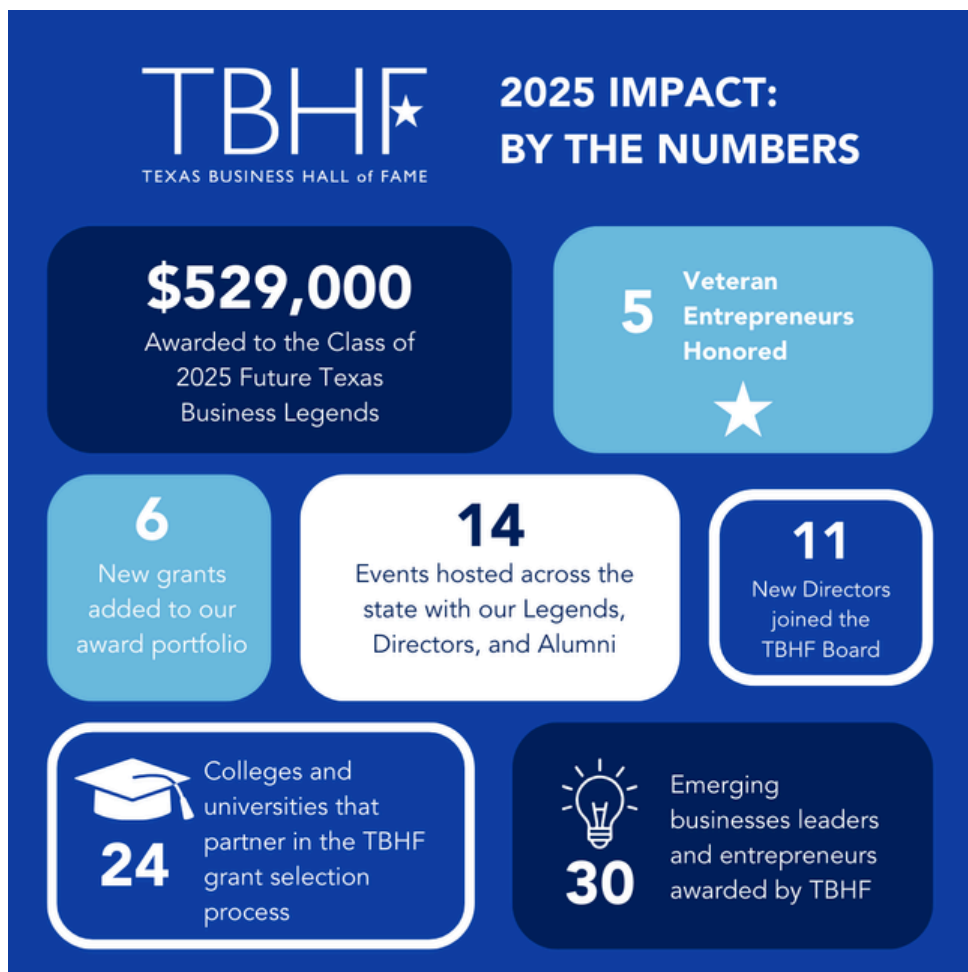
2025 Year in Review

You would not think it's possible, but the Texas Business Hall of Fame Foundation continued to grow in reach and impact in 2025. Educational and networking opportunities were plentiful with three Alumni Breakfast across the state, two Creators events featuring Legends and industry titans, and the formation of three exclusive Executive Leadership Groups (elite peer mentoring groups for former grant recipients). TBHF took great strides towards being the most-influential statewide business organization in the nation.

There were also Induction Announcement events in three cities, a Welcome Reception hosted by John L. Nau, III for Inductees, Legends, Directors, and Award Recipients the night before the Luncheon & Dinner, and plenty of mentoring, building and connection along the way.

In 2025, TBHF placed an emphasis on developing Veteran programming and acknowledging the remarkable achievements of our Veteran Award Recipients. As such, a fund for Veteran programming has been established (and events will commence in 2026), and this year's Veteran honorees were introduced on the stage at the Induction Dinner.

TBHF continues to honor the accomplishments and contributions of outstanding business leaders while telling their stories to inspire the next generation of dreamers, leaders and change-makers. Thank you for joining us in this mission.



2025 Induction Dinner

The Induction Dinner is always a true “who’s who” of Texas industry—past, present, and future. Yet the most powerful moments come from the Inductees themselves, as they share not only their successes and career milestones, but also the failures that shaped their journeys. For these five Inductee groups, their accomplishments represent close to \$18 billion into our economy and \$1 billion in philanthropic support. We proudly celebrate these Texas trailblazers as they take their place in the Hall of Fame.



Bob Zorich: “Much like a marriage, there has been a lot of forgiveness, compromise and perseverance.. I never considered EnCap to be work, but rather..a joyful process of getting our skills sharpened by working together.”



Ken Fisher: “Said simply—in my soul, most of my life, [I have had] a core faith in capitalism’s benefits. Every good possession you have somehow, some way came from capitalism.”



Holly Thaggard: “...as is usually the case, this unexpected pivot was the best thing that could have ever happened to me, because it turns out that the universe had something BIG - Texas Big - in store for me.”



Rich Kinder: “The work that the [Texas] Business Hall of Fame does with young entrepreneurs is truly astounding. If we can’t get our younger generation involved in capitalism as it’s best, we don’t have much of a future. So, I’m very proud of that.”



Chris Pappas: “Our dad said, ‘Why don’t you use your own name?’ If you’re willing to put your name on it, you’ll stand behind it.”

2025 Future Texas Business Legend Luncheon

The Awards Luncheon, sponsored by Bank of Texas in 2025, is a highlight of the TBHF experience, honoring Award Recipients at an exclusive gathering with TBHF Legends, Hall of Fame Inductees, and Directors. The Awardee Class of 2025 is impressive:

91% are founders; 72% have started two or more businesses; 28% have businesses earning over \$1 million annually; and together they employ more than 2,000 people.

The Luncheon also featured a live Q&A with the year's Hall of Fame Inductees, moderated this year by Chairman Amanda Brock and driven by questions from the Award Recipients. The result was a candid, engaging conversation filled with insights and inspiration for the next generation of Texas business leaders.



Amanda Brock moderated the Inductee Q&A discussion.



The 2025 Future Texas Legend Veteran Honorees.



Award Recipients Ayodeji Daramola, Luis Montero, Jasmine Curnel, and Clara Guerrero.

Some 2025 Award Recipients share thoughts on the Luncheon's impact:

Reese Bookout, Founder of American Drone Company

"... in that room, surrounded by accomplished entrepreneurs, I had the chance to pitch my business idea to those who truly understood the stakes."

Candace D. Jones, Co-Founder & CEO of The Khee Realty Group

"The moment that meant the most to me was meeting my award sponsor, Regina Rogers, and spending time with her. She is truly amazing!"

Sean Finney, Founder & CEO of Tano Skincare

"One moment I loved in the Q&A was the answer about what habit or routine helped with your success. Ken Fisher's answer really resonated with me. He allows himself to think crazy thoughts (actually encourages himself to) and then uses small, low-risk tests to see if they'll work."



Director Perspective: Bill Zartler

Bill Zartler is the Founder, Chairman and Co-Chief Executive Officer of Solaris Energy Infrastructure, Inc. ("Solaris"). Bill has over 30 years of experience, with an extensive background in both building and managing growth businesses and energy industry investing. Prior to founding the Solaris family of companies in 2014, Bill was a Founder and Managing Partner of Denham Capital Management, a global energy and commodities private equity firm.

From TBHF Award Recipient to builder of multibillion-dollar energy and infrastructure businesses, Bill Zartler's successful career reflects a consistent focus on fundamentals, people, and long-term strategic thinking. In a recent conversation, Bill shared lessons from his early career, his approach to entrepreneurship, and advice for the next generation of business leaders.

Bill, your connection to the scholarship program goes back decades. Why has it remained so important to you?

I received the scholarship in 1988 when I was in graduate school at Texas A&M, and at the time it really helped financially. Many recipients are working multiple jobs while trying to get an education, and that support can be the difference between struggling and succeeding. When I re-engaged with the program around 2012, that mission still resonated with me. Identifying talented, driven students and helping remove barriers so they can focus on learning and growing their business is incredibly meaningful.

Looking back, how did those early experiences shape your approach to success?

Early on, I made a conscious decision to prioritize experience over compensation. I took a lower-paying role at Dow Chemical, because I wanted hands-on exposure and to learn from great people. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I ever made. One of my key mentors there, Jim Teague, had a huge early influence on how I think about leadership, fundamental business economics and problem-solving. Those foundational years taught me the value of understanding how things actually work both physically and financially before trying to scale or optimize them.

What lessons carried forward as you moved into entrepreneurship and private equity?

After Dow, I joined Natural Gas Clearinghouse, where we were building midstream assets and fundamentally reshaping the industry while learning how to manage fixed assets, risk, trading, and commercialization. That environment was very entrepreneurial. Later, when I moved into private equity and eventually co-founded Denham Capital, I learned how critical it is to align capital with the right businesses and leadership teams while always understanding the underlying business fundamentals and risk. One lesson that stayed with me is that success isn't about chasing deals; it's about building durable businesses with the right partners and teams.

Solaris and Aris Water Solutions both became major success stories. What was your strategy in building those companies?

When I started Solaris Energy Capital after retiring from Denham in 2013, the goal wasn't to raise a traditional fund. It was to match businesses with the right capital sources and then build them thoughtfully. Finding differentiated businesses that can solve multiple issues for your customers at once seemed to be a winning approach.

With Solaris, we took a nascent sand-handling equipment business grew it into a position that we could take public in 2017 and later expanded into power in 2024. That combination ultimately created a public company with an enterprise value currently around \$4.5 billion and rapidly scaling — well beyond what we originally expected. In water, (Solaris Water Midstream renamed Aris Water Solutions followed a more traditional path, but even there, execution mattered.

[**READ FULL ARTICLE**](#)

Directors in the News

Nancy Barnes launched her new podcast, She Laughs, featuring honest conversations with women who have overcome fear and embraced their gifts to live authentically.

Gary Farmer received a Texas Exes Distinguished Alumnus award this fall, honored for his dedication to serving his profession, community, and the University.

Kerry Hall was named 2025 Austinite of the Year by the Austin Chamber of Commerce for her transformational leadership and dedicated service to Central Texas.

Jason Signor, CEO at Big Sky Medical, was featured in the September 2025 issue of D Magazine in an article detailing how he grew Big Sky to a \$1.2 billion company and helped create a real estate program at Texas A&M.



Nancy Barnes



Gary Farmer



Kerry Hall



Jason Signor

Three New Directors Join the TBHF Board

The Texas Business Hall of Fame welcomed three new members to our Board of Directors. We look forward to what their incredible experience and energy bring to our organization. To read their full bios, please visit our [Leadership](#) page.



John Barden,
CPA, CFE, CGMA
The University of Texas at
Dallas, Naveen Jindal
School of Management
Dallas



Mohammad Elashi
Synaptic Pediatric
Therapies & Dynamic
EcoHome
Dallas



Brett Sandstrom
4D Capital
Austin

Veteran Award Recipients In the News

Dennis Cail (2024) and Edward Crawford (2024) were again named to D CEO's Dallas 500, recognizing their influential business leadership.

Edward Crawford's Coltala Holdings LLC was named Dallas Business Journal's largest Veteran-owned businesses in the region with \$330 million in revenue in 2024.

Brad Harrison (2025) was an associate producer on the 2025 film "Brothers on Three," which was written, directed, and produced by Veterans. The documentary by Director Sean Mullin (one of Brad's Army Rugby teammates) takes a deep look at West Point's rugby program and the men and women who continue to make it unique.

Joseph Kopser (2025) announced his campaign for Texas House District 47.

Samantha Snabes' (2020) re:3D Inc recently participated in the fall cohort with Fuse Accelerator and Sam herself was named a 2025 Ambassador by America Makes. The company invites anyone to schedule a tour of the re:3D Inc factory in Austin to see how Gigabot is 3D printing with pellets and reclaimed plastic waste.

Robert Strong's (2021) Wingman Kitchen (now located in San Antonio) was named "Shared Kitchen of the Year" at the Shared Kitchen Summit presented by @thefoodcorridor. Wingman gives food entrepreneurs a place where they can grow, feel supported, and be part of something that feels like a team.



Veteran honorees past and present with TBHF Legend Kathy Hildreth celebrate at the 2025 Induction Dinner.

New Veteran Award Nomination Process

The Future Texas Legend Veteran Award is highly selective and nomination-based. Members of the Texas Business Hall of Fame network are eligible to nominate outstanding Veteran entrepreneurs.

Read more on our new Veterans page at texasbusiness.org/veterans.

Veterans who have questions about the process or wish to be considered without a nomination may contact Patrice at pbartlett@texasbusiness.org.

Alumni News & Milestones

- Katie Calderon (A&M 2025) is the second Texas Aggie/TBHF Scholar to be named to the prestigious Forbes 30 Under 30 list for her company Club Girl Golf.
- Tori Clarke (Baylor 2024) announced the opening of Spa Luxe's first Austin location. This is the brand's first full-service day spa and med spa.
- Takeya Cloud (Rice 2022) on her recent promotion at Citi to Investment Banking Vice President.
- Lauren Cornell (UT San Antonio 2018) was named to the 2026 San Antonio Business Journal's 40 Under 40 list.
- Nicholas Lira's (UT Arlington 2017) ProScoop protein ice cream became available in 20 locations.
- Jason McCann (UH 1996) was again named to D CEO's Dallas 500, recognizing his influential business leadership in North Texas.
- Bryton Praslicka (A&M 2022) was selected for the 2026 Praxis US Business Accelerator Cohort for his work with FluxWorks.
- Iman Salafian (UT Austin 2025) and Imagine Devices' Trinity Tube™ won the Silver Award at the Pediatric Device Accelerator Pitch Competition at Stanford Biodesign, in addition to \$50,000 at the UCSF–Stanford and Midwest Pediatric Device Consortium Pitch Competition.
- Siddharth Thakur (UT Austin 2024) and his invention, Firebot, were featured on CNN's Tech For Good. FireBot is the world's first high-temperature-resistant rescue robot.

TBHF Alumni Brands



All 35 of the 2025 Future Texas Business Award recipients with Chairman Amanda Brock.



Alumni: if you have exciting news to share, please email Jennifer at jfernelyus@texasbusiness.org.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

New TBHF Award Announced for 2026

AT&T Future Executive Leader of Distinction (FELD) Award, In Honor of Ed Whitacre

This is one of two 2026 awards supported by AT&T that will recognize excellence in MBA students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership on their path to the c-suite and wants to continue working in a corporate environment. Each FELD recipient will receive a \$15,000 award.

NEW DATE: Austin Creators

Mark Your Calendars for Friday, March 6, 2026

TBHF is thankful to Joe Lonsdale and Graham Weston for being willing to reschedule the January event so soon! We hope to see you all in March--same time and location. Check your email for the new Greenvelope invitation to RSVP.



★ TEXAS BUSINESS HALL of FAME
CREATORS 2026

JOE LONSDALE
Founder and Managing Partner, 8VC
Founder, Palantir

In Conversation with

GRAHAM WESTON
TBHF Legend
Weston Urban, Rackspace

Friday, March 6, 2026
Austin, TX

Community Partner
Austin Technology Council

Sponsored by
JPMorganChase

Voting Underway for 2026 Hall of Fame Inductees!

TBHF Legends:

Please be sure to vote for your top 5 Inductees by February 4. This is your unique opportunity to elect the next class of Texas trailblazers and philanthropists to join the Hall of Fame.



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Number of 2026 Hall of Fame Nominations

TEXAS BUSINESS HALL OF FAME
ESTABLISHED 1992

BEFORE WE GO

2026 Awards Deadlines

Please note the deadlines for the Scholar award and high school teacher applications:

Scholar Applications→Sunday, Feb. 8

HS Teacher Applications→Sunday, Feb. 22

2026 FUTURE TEXAS BUSINESS LEGEND AWARDS

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

APPLY ONLINE

texasbusiness.org/awards

Questions? Contact Patrice Bartlett
pbartlett@texasbusiness.org

CHARITYBUZZ



Recently, TBHF Legend Mark Cuban helped TBHF raise \$32,000 from a Charitybuzz Celebrity Auction. Two winning bidders now have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one “Ask me anything” Zooms with Mark.

Thank you, Mark, and congrats to your Hoosiers.

Thank you to TBHF Legends for Hosting ELGs

Legend Sam Susser (2009) recently hosted one of TBHF’s Executive Learning Groups (ELGs) at Susser Bank in Dallas, and Legend John Goff (2020/2021) hosted another ELG at Goff Capital. While primarily peer led, the groups enjoy hearing from Legends who can offer insight and experience to help solve challenges.



Sam Susser and 2025 ELG in Dallas.



John Goff and 2025 Real Estate ELG in Dallas.