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# SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL


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THE 2024 SAN DIEGO

500

MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO

*Presented by*  
 KAISER PERMANENTE®

 MarshMcLennan  
Agency

**JOHN VAN CLEEF**

**CEO, COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER**

**WHY:** Van Cleef has led CRC since 2018, helping create paths to healthy food, stable homes and safe relationships. **NOTABLE:** His tenure has created greater program accessibility via new centers in Carlsbad and San Marcos and plans to renovate CRC's Encinitas campus. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He previously led The Salvation Army, YMCA and Palomar Health. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits." – *Martin Luther King Jr.*



**SIDD VIVEK**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Vivek has led JASDC since 2019, working to empower youths to achieve future economic success. **NOTABLE:** Vivek was SD Business Journal's CEO of the Year in 2022. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He's a member of the board of directors for the San Diego Regional EDG and on the board of the NTC Foundation. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Talent is universal; opportunity is not.' Let's be the opportunity for talented people, who may not be as privileged as us, and who will ultimately make us all better together."



**DEACON JIM VARGAS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, FATHER JOE'S VILLAGES**

**WHY:** Vargas leads FJV, the largest homeless services provider in Southern California. **NOTABLE:** Under his tenure, FJV has helped bring affordable housing, comprehensive medical and behavioral health care, detox and shelter to the most vulnerable. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** He is a deacon of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego, serving Mary, Star of the Sea in La Jolla. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Reflection and discernment leads to prudent decisions." Favorite quote: "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." – *St. Teresa of Calcutta*



**BRENT WAKEFIELD**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, MEALS ON WHEELS SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**WHY:** Wakefield has led MoWSD since 2020, ensuring seniors receive meals and personal connection. **NOTABLE:** Under Wakefield's leadership, the organization opened the Kitchen and Senior Innovation Hub, aiming to deliver 1 million meals annually by 2026. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** MoWSD supports more than 2,100 seniors daily, delivering nearly 60,000 meals monthly. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Leadership is about building systems that make a lasting difference. At Meals on Wheels, it's not just about delivering meals—it's about delivering dignity, connection, and care to those who need it most."





SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

**SD500**

MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO 2024

**CONGRATULATIONS**

**Julie Lowen**

Founder & President

With a team serving hundreds of children every day, Julie Lowen continues to inspire, innovate and grow the definition of early education and childcare.



**Children's Paradise**  
preschool and infant centers

Come work for one of SDPJ's MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADERS



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**CONGRATULATIONS**

**Laura Tancredi-Baese**

Home Start CEO



Laura, your steadfast commitment to enhancing the lives of San Diego's most vulnerable children, individuals, and families distinguishes you as a true leader in the community.

*We are grateful for your visionary leadership.*

— Home Start's Board of Directors & Staff



**HOME START**

Strengthening Families Protects Children

Learn more or make a gift: [home-start.org](http://home-start.org)

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SAN DIEGO 500

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**GREGG LANDERS**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CAAS & INTERNAL CONTROL SERVICES, CBIZ**

**WHY:** Gregg Landers is a managing director with CBIZ, overseeing the firm's accounting and advisory services across Southern California. In 2024, CBIZ became the largest professional service provider of its kind after acquiring non-attest business Marcum LLP for \$2.3 billion. **NOTABLE:** He previously worked for a Fortune 100 firm, a startup and a rapidly growing mid-sized firm. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Landers is a member of multiple professional organizations and sits on the advisory board for the Cal State San Marcos College of Business.



**JULIE LOWEN**

**FOUNDER & CEO, CHILDREN'S PARADISE PRESCHOOL**

**WHY:** Julie Lowen leads Children's Paradise, a collection of early-childhood education centers. **NOTABLE:** Children's Paradise expanded its footprint in 2024, adding centers in Carlsbad, Escondido and Poway, with another planned in Ramona. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** She chairs the Smarty Patch Foundation, a nonprofit that provides financial and resource "patches" to promote continuous early learning of children in troublesome situations. **QUOTABLE:** "Childcare empowers families to work. Productivity is also increased when parents are not worrying about their children."



**ALESSANDRA LEZAMA**

**FOUNDER & CEO, TOOTRIS**

**WHY:** Alessandra Lezama founded TOOTRIS, an on-demand childcare technology platform. **NOTABLE:** TOOTRIS was designated a Live Well San Diego partner organization. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Lezama is a board member of the San Diego Foundation and chair of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce board. **QUOTABLE:** "The entire business community and communities at large recognize that childcare is kind of like that sticky glue that holds everything together."



**LOU MANSO**

**FOUNDER, PRESIDENT & CEO, LOU MANSO AGENCY**

**WHY:** Lou Manso leads the Lou Manso Agency, the creative and branding arm of The Media Buying Company, Inc. **NOTABLE:** The Media Buying Company's past and present clients include Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Dell, Dolce & Gabbana and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **SOCIAL IMPACT:** Manso is a frequent volunteer in the Scripps Ranch community. **QUOTABLE:** "We go where we think the client will be best served." (from September 2024 interview on KUSI's Good Business San Diego)



**Celebrating San Diego's Finest!**

From all of us at Apex 365 Workforce Solutions, congratulations to this year's SD500 leaders! Your contributions to San Diego's economy are commendable, and we are inspired by your leadership. At Apex 365 Workforce Solutions, we're dedicated to helping businesses thrive by supporting compliance, safety, and operational efficiency. Together, let's continue to make a positive impact across our vibrant business community.



**BLANCA RINCON**  
CEO & Founder, Apex 365 WS Team



**Apex 365 Workforce Solutions, Inc.** | Address: 2244 Faraday Avenue., Suite #165  
Carlsbad, CA 92008 | Toll Free: 877-778-4544 | Email Address: Sales@Apex365ws.com

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