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## NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009 ISSUE

**Welcome!** to the NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER, a vehicle for communication for the National Association of Women Business Owners - Los Angeles Chapter (NAWBO-LA).

In this special issue, we focus on the **23rd Annual NAWBO-LA Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon Honorees and Hall of Fame Inductee**, who will be recognized on Friday, March 13, 2009, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. All of the honorees have established a legacy of entrepreneurial excellence and contributed significantly to the community, while demonstrating how women entrepreneurs become an even greater force for influence and change when they are driven by a common purpose, speak with a collective voice and stand – steadfast and resolute – together.

- [23rd Annual Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon](#)
- **Honoree Profiles:**
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  - Legacy Award: [Janice Bryant Howroyd](#)
  - Woman Business Owner of the Year: [Jane Wurwand](#)
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### About the NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter

*In each issue of the NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter, we strive to provide timely and valuable information and resources to the entrepreneurial community and share our mission of empowering and inspiring women entrepreneurs into economic, social and political spheres of leadership. The NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter is published six times yearly by NAWBO-LA and written by Mindy Berman/Mindy F. Berman Communications. The publication months are February, April, June, August, October and December. NAWBO-LA's Online Newsletter editor may be reached at [newsletter@nawbola.org](mailto:newsletter@nawbola.org).*

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**Standing Together: NAWBO-LA Hosts 23rd Annual Awards Luncheon**

*A celebratory and inspirational afternoon awaits the attendees at the 23rd Annual NAWBO-LA Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon, taking place Friday, March 13, 2009, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Beverly Hilton Hotel*

The gala luncheon will pay tribute to seven outstanding women achievers who have established a legacy of entrepreneurial excellence and contributed significantly to our communities:

- **Leadership Award:** Geraldine Knatz, Ph.D., Executive Director, Port of Los Angeles
- **Legacy Award:** Janice Bryant Howroyd, President and CEO, ACT•1 Group
- **Woman Business Owner of the Year:** Jane D. Wurwand, Founder, Dermalogica, Inc.
- **Inspiration Award:** Chef LaLa, Chef/Author/Nutritionist/Humanitarian/TV Personality, JSB Management
- **Member of the Year:** Bonnie Nijst, President and CEO, Zeesman Communications, Inc.
- **Rising Star Award:** Carmen Rad, President, CR&A Custom, Inc.
- **Hall of Fame Honoree:** Bettye Dixon, President and CEO, Concourse Concessions, Inc.

One of the most noteworthy and anticipated business events in Los Angeles, the luncheon is expected to draw a powerhouse gathering of more than 1,200 business owners, community leaders, media, dignitaries and celebrities – all interested in recognizing the ever-rising power of women entrepreneurs.



**NAWBO-LA: Standing Together**

The theme of the 2009 event, “**Standing Together**,” speaks to NAWBO-LA’s purpose in helping women business owners become an even greater force for influence and change when being driven by a common purpose and speaking with a collective voice. It also serves as a reminder of women entrepreneurs’ courage and willingness to take action

– to take a stand in business, in life and in their communities.

Said new NAWBO-LA CEO Jane Pak, “The theme of ‘Standing Together’ is a call to action, and is especially timely given today’s challenging business climate. It speaks to our collective commitment to educate, communicate and engage in the important mission of propelling women into political, economic and social spheres of power. We’re proud to celebrate the interconnectedness of our past triumphs as women and as leaders, and the shared future we will create through our successes to come.”

Added NAWBO-LA President-Elect/Event Chair Daphne Anneet, a partner in the law firm of [Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP](#), “This luncheon represents NAWBO-LA’s opportunity to shine the light on the brightest, bravest and boldest of women. The stories of our incredible honorees will electrify the room and create an atmosphere of celebration, inspiration and hope.”

Many innovative corporations support NAWBO-LA’s efforts to create opportunities for women business owners through their sponsorship of the Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon. Union Bank of California, a NAWBO-LA corporate partner for more than a decade, will once again serve as the luncheon’s Presenting Sponsor – a continuation of the bank’s three-year pledge to do so in an unprecedented level of commitment.

“This pledge reflects our strong belief in partnerships that embrace, inspire and support aspiring female entrepreneurs, as well as established women business owners,” said JoAnn Bourne, Senior Executive Vice President with Union Bank. “NAWBO-LA’s outstanding work to serve as a catalyst for the success of women entrepreneurs is integral to the bank’s mission to invest in the communities it serves. As a result of partnerships like this, the economic landscape of the greater Los Angeles region will change with the increase of thriving women-owned businesses.”

Additional event sponsors include DeDominic & Associates (Legacy Partner); Southern California Edison and Zeesman Communications, Inc. (Gold Sponsors); AEG (Silver Sponsor); and Dermalogica, Inc., Southern California Gas Company (a Sempra Energy utility), and Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc. (Bronze Sponsors).

For more information on the 2009 NAWBO-LA Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon, visit [www.nawbola.org](http://www.nawbola.org). Seating is limited at this "sellout" event and early registration is strongly encouraged.



NAWBO-LA's new CEO is Jane Pak. More details *coming soon!*

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**Leadership Award**

The Leadership Award recognizes an exemplary individual who has distinguished herself by achieving a level of success well beyond the standards of her industry and the business community



**Geraldine Knatz, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Director**  
**Port of Los Angeles**

*"It's about **we** the team, the organization and sharing the credit. No one person can do it on his or her own."*

An innovative and inspirational leader, Geraldine Knatz, Ph.D., is blazing new trails as the first female Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles, the nation's No. 1 container port.

Since becoming Executive Director three years ago, Dr. Knatz has focused on new ways to achieve "green growth." Working with her team to "think outside the box," she has overseen the development of initiatives that reduce air

emissions and lessen health risks to local communities, while expanding capital development programs to accommodate the Port's future growth as a premier Pacific gateway and national economic engine.

For example, Dr. Knatz has been instrumental in the creation and implementation of the landmark San Pedro Bay Ports *Clean Air Action Plan*, a comprehensive strategy for reducing air emissions from operations at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach by roughly 50% over five years.

Her efforts facilitated the first joint meeting of the two ports' Board Presidents and Vice Presidents since the 1920s and the first-ever public meeting of the Los Angeles and Long Beach Harbor Commissions. Already, the plan has paved the way for the Los Angeles Harbor Commission to approve two major container terminal expansion projects and a new deep-draft marine oil terminal on Pier 400.

A key element of the *Clean Air Action Plan*, the *Clean Truck Program*, is designed to encourage rapid improvement of air quality at the Port by progressively banning older trucks from Port access and through use of grants and financial incentives that will allow trucking companies to accelerate the replacement of older, high-polluting trucks with newer, cleaner versions. The Port recently began the process of distributing an estimated \$44 million in incentive checks to the Clean Truck Program concessionaire applicants.

For several years before her arrival, regulatory issues kept the Port from approving projects. But with her take-charge approach and relentless energy, Dr. Knatz has broken the gridlock.

**From Impossible to Done**

The idea of the *Clean Air Action Plan* seemed "rather radical," but she noted that "nothing is off the table. I came here thinking that we have to eliminate health risks to the community. Everyone said it's impossible. So I picked up the expression, 'It's impossible, it's difficult, it's done.'"

While she's overseen great strides in environmental initiatives, Dr. Knatz also has spearheaded the implementation of the Port's Small Business Development Program, which in its first year exceeded its 25% contract goal, with 34% of contracts going to Small Business Enterprises. Today, in the midst of a severe economic downturn, she continues to look for ways to partner with the Port's customers to keep business in the region.

Although she's spent nearly her entire career in the port industry – including her last role as Managing Director of the Port of Long Beach – Dr. Knatz discovered new energy when she became Executive Director at the Port of Los Angeles. Realizing she could set the vision and help "really affect change and make things happen" has "opened up a whole new world of possibilities" and proved extremely invigorating.

Even with her 12-hour work days in the office and then bringing home her "homework," Dr. Knatz taps into her boundless energy to pursue other endeavors, such as teaching in the Civil Engineering School at USC (where she earned two degrees); volunteering at the

Phineas Banning Residence Museum in Wilmington during the Christmas holidays; and engaging in her passion for history by helping to document and preserve the Port's archives and photos for future generations. Plus, she makes sure to mention, she takes great care of her pink 1957 T-Bird convertible, which has appeared in local parades and events.

#### A Focus on "We," Not "I"

In addition to all she manages both professionally and personally, Dr. Knatz ensures she makes the Port a positive, team-oriented place to work. From upping tuition reimbursement and encouraging staff members to submit new ideas, to directing a remodel of the Port cafeteria and personally baking for employees, Dr. Knatz feels strongly about investing in the organization's future and building loyalty.

One of her key rules of management, she noted, involves a focus on "we," not "I" – a lesson passed on by a manager early in her career.

"It's about **we** the team, the organization and sharing the credit," she said. "No one person can do it on his or her own."

Dr. Knatz sees this same focus in NAWBO-LA, where women share, mentor and do more than just build their own businesses. Although she's received numerous awards and accolades – including the Chinese Friendship Award, Volunteers of America (2009); Compass Award, Women's Leadership Exchange West Coast (2008); Woman Executive of the Year, *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2007); one of the "Outstanding Women in Transportation," *Journal of Commerce* (2007); and one of "The West 100," *Los Angeles Times Magazine's* list of the most powerful people in Southern California (2006) – she views her NAWBO-LA Leadership Award with a special appreciation.

"NAWBO-LA is an organization that is really at the forefront," she said, citing its magnitude and dynamic leaders and members. "I'm extremely impressed with the women. It's not just the honor of receiving the Leadership Award from NAWBO; it's been a great experience getting to know them."



The Port of Los Angeles has a strong commitment to developing innovative strategic and sustainable operations that benefit the economy and quality of life for the region and the nation it serves. A recipient of numerous environmental awards, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2007 Clean Air Excellence Award, the Port is committed to innovating cleaner, greener ways of doing business. As the leading seaport in North America in terms of shipping container volume and cargo value, the Port, a self-supporting proprietary department of the City of Los Angeles, generates 919,000 regional jobs and \$39.1 billion in annual wages and tax revenues. For more information: [www.portoflosangeles.org](http://www.portoflosangeles.org).

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**LEGACY AWARD**

*The Legacy Award recognizes an individual who has had a significant impact on the well-being of her community and who has the foresight and generosity to recognize that her success is best savored when she “pays it forward.” This award honors a woman who, through her leadership and vision is changing lives today, and at the same time impacting generations to come*



**Janice Bryant Howroyd  
President and CEO  
ACT•1 Group**

*“Never compromise who you are personally to become who you wish to be professionally.”*

While growing up in North Carolina, seeing families in her neighborhood from all different socioeconomic levels, Janice Bryant Howroyd gained an early awareness of how income influences lifetime opportunities, and of how individual workers impact the communities in which they live.

Now, 30-plus years after using a small family loan to establish the ACT•1 Group, today a multi-million-dollar global human resources

organization, Howroyd continues to draw on that awareness to create a powerful legacy that supports today’s workers and workforces. For her generosity and stewardship of a future above and beyond herself, including her strong advocacy for women-owned businesses and diversity, Howroyd becomes just the third-ever recipient of NAWBO-LA’s Legacy Award.

“My best accomplishments in business have been the ability to create a solutions-based organization that supports companies in hiring and managing the workforces they need, while making sure that we keep the workers at the center of our universe,” she said. “During this current economy, I am especially proud that our company has stayed true to this discipline, because we’re truly critical to so many people who are in need of work!”

Noting the inherent stress in interviewing for, and in finding a job, she added, “We need to make sure that our sophisticated systems and wide range of clients do not overwhelm our ability to treat each person we speak with as the most important person in our lives, because they are! This is something that I’m very passionate about, and proud of.”

**Living the Example That Will Inspire**

Howroyd’s passion for helping others manifests itself in myriad ways. She funds scholarship opportunities at several universities to educate future workers; serves on several high-profile Boards of Directors, including the Minority Business Roundtable (as Chair) and the Women’s Leadership Board, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government; and gives her resources, including her time and talent, to many organizations.

She explained, “Hopefully I’m living the example that will inspire, support and create continuing generations of women who participate as fully in a free world as they desire.”

Her example already has inspired two young entrepreneurs who hold a very special place in her heart – her children, who “two years ago shared their career goals with me in a way that explained what my work has meant to them in their decision-making.”

Her daughter Katharyn earned a degree from USC and started the process of establishing her own design business, “telling me that she is confident of her own success because she has grown up with the experience of me treating the challenges of my business as opportunities.”

Howroyd continued, “Our son, within this same timeframe, graduated from USC with a business degree because he naturally decided that he wants to be a part of our business. These decisions made by my children were highly pivotal for me. Not only did they influence the dynamic of how I see myself personally; I know that my business will be multi-generational for my children and for the children of many of our employees.”

**Never Compromising Who You Are**

Ever enthusiastic about growing her own business while sharing her knowledge and helping

others, Howroyd plans to expand the operations of the ACT•1 Group – a \$900-million-a-year firm with more than 2,000 full-time employees – to Brazil and Germany in 2009. (The firm already services companies throughout the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, India and the United Kingdom.) And she recently wrote a book titled, *The Art of Work – How to Make Your Work, Work for You*, which will be available within the year.

With all of her success, she doesn't ever forget her personal mantra: "Never compromise who you are personally to become who you wish to be professionally." And she takes to heart advice from her brother, Carlton, about how he approaches golf: "Measure your success not by how much you beat the guy you're playing, but by how well you beat your own last performance." As she explained, "I love this approach to business because it allows you to stay on track about the things that really matter and about the things you have the ability and strength to do."

Her ability to maintain her vision and expert leadership has earned her many, many awards – 2008 BET Honors, Entrepreneur Award; Los Angeles County Commission for Women, Woman of the Year; Spirit of American Enterprise Presidential Award, Inaugural Ball; and several others.

For the woman who's never lost her awareness of work's value to our emotional, physical and financial health, add to that the 2009 NAWBO-LA Legacy Award.

"Being honored by the women of NAWBO-LA, whom I phenomenally respect, is tremendous," said Howroyd, who serves on the Board of Directors of the Enterprise Institute of NAWBO-LA. "[This award] encourages me that I'm making a difference in the most positive individual manner that I can. This luncheon theme is 'Standing Together,' and I'm proud and honored to stand with the women of NAWBO-LA as we keep intact the values that we are organized around."



A global organization established in 1978, the ACT•1 Group is leading the human resources industry with innovative services and tools to partner with firms in optimizing human resource talent management. It is a conglomerate offering services matching the growth of today's future-focused industry needs, with three major components: AppleOne Staffing Solutions, the business services solutions, and the group's flagship, Agile•1 Workforce Solutions. For more information: [www.act-1.com](http://www.act-1.com).

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**WOMAN BUSINESS OWNER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*The Woman Business Owner of the Year Award recognizes an exemplary woman entrepreneur who demonstrates her leadership skills by example, is committed to entrepreneurial excellence and has made a significant impact in the business community*



**Jane Wurwand  
Founder  
Dermalogica, Inc.**

*"I think we have a responsibility to the next generation of women who will stand on our shoulders, and a debt to pay to the women who came before us who ensured that no opportunity would be denied to us."*

By creating products that have redefined skin health, 2009 NAWBO-LA Woman Business Owner of the Year, Jane Wurwand, has redefined an industry.

Owner of the Dermalogica skin product line, Dermalogica Skin Treatment Centers worldwide and The International Dermal Institute

post-graduate training centers, Wurwand – today one of the world’s most recognized and respected authorities in professional skin therapy – has refocused the view of skin care as a health issue vs. as a cosmetic concern.

Over two-plus decades, Dermalogica has become the most prescribed skin care product across the globe. In the process, the company also has helped tens of thousands of women entrepreneurs achieve success as professional skin therapists.

"I came into the professional skin therapy business and it was entirely centered on beauty and pampering," Wurwand said. "Through our educational programs and schools and the fact that Dermalogica is used in 50 countries, we have turned that image toward health, wellness and taking care of the skin as a necessity, not a luxury.

"In that journey over the past 25 years, I am proud to have been a part of building the businesses of over 90,000 professional skin therapists around the world who count on Dermalogica as their revenue stream. Ninety-eight percent of all skin therapists are women and we put more women into business than any other profession. Pretty cool!"

**Seizing the Opportunity**

Wurwand launched her impressive career by recognizing a need and staying focused on the task at hand. After emigrating in 1983, the United Kingdom native saw a huge gap in U.S. skin and body therapy education. So she opened a small classroom in Marina del Rey, Calif., under the name The International Dermal Institute (IDI), to provide skin care therapists with post-graduate training.

"By identifying the greatest pain in my industry [lack of training], I also identified the greatest opportunity and seized it," Wurwand said. "Opening the IDI, our first post-graduate training center, in Los Angeles in late 1983 sealed the direction of my career and laid the foundation for the launch of Dermalogica in 1986."

She added, "I had no idea that over 92% of small businesses fail in their first year – no one told me that. Because failure didn't enter into my head, I just went for it and built the business with my partner [now my husband], with us keeping each other focused with self-repeated enthusiasm!"

That can-do approach clearly paid off. Today Dermalogica generates in excess of \$200 million annually and employs about 1,200. Meanwhile, the IDI – considered the international gold standard for post-graduate skin and body therapy – operates 40 locations worldwide.

Wurwand, who serves as a regular columnist for industry magazines on three continents and as a sought-after keynote speaker and guest lecturer, has been voted "The Most Influential Industry Leader" by the readers of *American Spa Magazine* for numerous years. She was one of the only women appointed to the Board of Directors of the Price Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at UCLA's Anderson School of Management and gave the keynote address at its annual Entrepreneurs Conference.

In addition, she currently sits on the Board of Directors of S.K.I.N. (Skin Care for Kids in Need) and works closely with the organization to provide products and education to improve skin health and create career opportunities for teens in foster care. Her Dermalogica Foundation also provides financial and volunteer support to grassroots organizations that benefit women and children in need.

### Setting the Example

It's all part of Wurwand's belief that women business owners and leaders must stand together to support others.

"I think we have a responsibility to the next generation of women who will stand on our shoulders, and a debt to pay to the women who came before us who ensured that no opportunity would be denied to us," Wurwand said. "We not only have a responsibility to women in our own country, but also to the women in so many other countries who do not even have basic rights. We must set the example and provide the leadership and voice to create change in our global marketplace."

Wurwand believes that NAWBO-LA fills a pivotal role in this effort by providing a forum for sharing and discussing ideas and issues, and by offering other women access to role models who have the resilience to succeed in their own way – just as her own mother did when she was widowed before 40 with four young children, and worked as a nurse while raising them singlehandedly.

"Men are terrific and have their own strengths as do we all, but a woman's style in running a business, managing people, solving problems and creatively developing ideas is unique and must be explored and expanded and celebrated," Wurwand said, concluding, "Life is all about resilience – the strength both emotionally and physically to have a steely resolve to face down whatever challenges us and emerge the other side empowered."

**dermalogica**<sup>®</sup> Dermalogica skin care products are the most widely used in the professional industry and available in 50 countries. The health-focused products, free of common irritants and ingredients that can cause breakouts, are sold only where consultation and treatments are performed by professional skin therapists. For more information: [www.dermalogica.com](http://www.dermalogica.com) and [www.dermalinstitute.com](http://www.dermalinstitute.com).

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**Inspiration Award**

The Inspiration Award recognizes someone who has made a tremendous impact on those around her and serves as a true role model for others to follow



**Chef LaLa**  
**Chef/Author/Nutritionist**  
**/Humanitarian/TV Personality**  
**JSB Management**

*"I am always, always grateful," said LaLa, who inspires with both deeds and words. "Even for the bad days. That's why they call it the present – because every day you get a new one. Happiness is not money, it is not a career. As an entrepreneur you get to live your dream. You get to see the fruits of your success every day. You get to realize what you envisioned."*

The ever-vibrant Chef LaLa combines resiliency and dedication with passion and compassion to live her dream as a successful entrepreneur and inspire others through her philanthropy and dedication to the community.

The third-generation restaurateur, whose life changed course after a serious car accident, remains relentlessly positive about her ability to see the fruits of her success every day – whether in her business or in her humanitarian endeavors.

"If you love what you do you're passionate about it. If you're passionate you're going to be dedicated, and if you're dedicated you're going to be successful," said LaLa (full name Laura Diaz Brown), adding, "When someone tells you 'no' it's because he or she can't spell. You need to ask, 'What do I need to 'know' to get this done?' Knowledge is power."

That philosophy extends to LaLa's extensive philanthropy work, where she aims to show individuals, particularly women, how to eat well and take proper care of their bodies. She takes special interest in addressing heart disease, the No. 1 killer in America today, and diabetes, which contributed to the deaths of three of her four grandparents.

LaLa serves as a spokesperson for the American Diabetes Association, and teaches about nutrition or shares other support to organizations like the American Heart Association, the American Liver Foundation, Para Los Niños, Project Amiga and many more. She also mentors kids through the Step Up Women's Network, LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) and Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca's VIDA (Vital Intervention and Directional Alternatives) Program.

"The giving attitude is contagious," LaLa noted. "My strongest and best moments come when I can stand up and remind someone, 'You're worth it.'"

**Defining Moments**

LaLa takes pride in her and other women's resilience, which for her manifested itself most clearly in her early 20s. A former member of Pares y Nones, a girl band that opened for the group Menudo, she had a record deal and seemed poised for solo stardom. But then came a fateful day, when as a passenger in a vehicle broadsided by another, LaLa suffered severe injuries that left her physically unable to perform on stage, and she found herself losing her ongoing battle with her weight.

At this pivotal moment, though, despite the initial sense of overwhelming helplessness, she was able to recreate herself. "Life's most defining moments are taken when you grow," she noted of that time, which she said made her more empathetic to those who struggle due to any sort of physical ailments. She thought about what else she truly loved to do, and found the answer: cooking.

Despite the challenges caused by her accident, it was a natural transition for LaLa, as she came from a long line of chefs and business owners and demonstrated her own entrepreneurial spirit at a young age – in fact, she recalls selling lemonade in front of her house to waiting motorists in the 1970s' gas shortage, and setting up a store with her brother, Danny, and sisters Myrna and Veronica to sell "American goodies" in a makeshift *tiendita* (store) during childhood summer visits to her grandmother's home in Mexico.

With that foundation, LaLa enrolled in the prestigious Le Cordon Blue and went on to found her own catering company, Savor! Catering, and along with her parents, Luis and Raquel, served well-known celebrities and officials, including two U.S. presidents and former Mexican President Vicente Fox.

Today, with certifications as a specialist in fitness nutrition, kids' nutrition, and lifestyle and weight management, LaLa provides catering, recipe development and food service consulting. She's the author of three books, *Latin Lover Lite*, *Chef LaLaPresents Best Loved Mexican Cooking* and *Yummy for Your Tummy*, and shares her healthy-eating insights through appearances on TV and in the community.

### Respect for Yourself

Besides her success as a businesswoman and philanthropist, LaLa relishes her role as wife and mother (to 2-year-old son Maddox), advising other women, "It's really important to balance home, business and self. Respect yourself, respect your body and treat yourself well."

For all of her innovative giving and volunteering, LaLa has received Macy's "Community Star Award," as well as General Mills' "Corazón de Comunidad" (literally "Heart of the Community"). In addition, California First Lady Maria Shriver inducted LaLa into the State's Museum for History, Women and the Arts.

LaLa takes immense pride in recognition – particularly from her female peers – that teaches the lesson that the more you share with others to better the world, the more you find that others want to be a part of it.

That's why she "gets chills" thinking about her 2009 NAWBO-LA Inspiration Award, noting it's "amazing" to have an organization with such a strong vision and mission to support entrepreneurial women recognize her own efforts and achievements.

"I am always, always grateful," said LaLa, who inspires with both deeds and words. "Even for the bad days. That's why they call it the present – because every day you get a new one. Happiness is not money, it is not a career. As an entrepreneur you get to live your dream. You get to see the fruits of your success every day. You get to realize what you envisioned."



In addition to sharing her insights via media appearances and in the community, Chef LaLa provides catering, recipe development and food service consulting. For example, she helps new restaurants develop healthy menu options; evaluates menus for content; and creates marketing plans, brand and merchandising strategy, and promotional marketing and analysis within the Latino market for the foodservice industry. For more information: [www.cheflala.com](http://www.cheflala.com).

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## NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009 ISSUE

### MEMBER OF THE YEAR

*The Member of the Year award recognizes someone for her outstanding contributions, leadership and achievements in service to the organization. Her dedication and active participation make her the quintessential member*



**Bonnie Nijst**  
**President & CEO**  
**Zeesman Communications, Inc.**

*"Whatever success or influence any of us has achieved as individuals has been predicated on the breakthroughs, accomplishments and sacrifices of others...It's really about paying it forward – someone has done something for me so I do something for someone else."*

Vice President of Membership of NAWBO-LA in 2004-05. Event Chair of the Annual Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon in 2005-06. President of NAWBO-LA in 2006-07. Vice Chair of the Enterprise Institute of NAWBO-LA and Chair of the NAWBO-LA Nominating Committee in

2007-08.

As impressive as it reads, this list doesn't come close to reflecting the contributions of 2009 honoree Bonnie Nijst. During this decade, the President and CEO of Zeesman Communications, Inc. (a marketing, advertising and design firm) has applied her talents and dedication to benefit NAWBO-LA, making her just the fifth Member of the Year Award recipient in the organization's 30-year history.

#### Paying It Forward

"When I became a member of NAWBO-LA, the objective was to be part of its vitality, to take part in not only getting what I needed, but also in giving something back in return," Nijst said. "This honor is an extraordinarily humbling acknowledgement that I have, through my involvement, contributed something that matters in the life of the organization."

A few of these contributions include providing marketing research, messaging and strategy; developing marketing collateral materials for a wide array of events and initiatives; and redesigning the NAWBO-LA website. In addition, Nijst's firm has done extensive marketing work for NAWBO National.

For Nijst, it's part of making a difference, and recognizing that women entrepreneurs succeed when they stand together.

She explained, "Whatever success or influence any of us has achieved as individuals has been predicated on the breakthroughs, accomplishments and sacrifices of others. It's a notion that goes beyond a one-to-one show of gratitude, where someone does something for me so I do something for her. It's really about paying it forward – someone has done something for me so I do something for someone else."

While she has given her time and expertise to NAWBO-LA, Nijst also has built a thriving business career over 20-plus years. Prior to joining Zeesman in 2000 and becoming President and CEO in 2003, she held senior management positions with Medialink, MCTV, PR Newswire and Marketwire.

Nijst, whose family came to California from Indonesia by way of the Netherlands, said her father established three businesses within the first 15 years of having immigrated. He instilled this emphasis on entrepreneurship in his family, as today all three of his children and two of his grandchildren own their own businesses.

As a business owner, Nijst does not look at doing business as merely conducting transactions. Rather, she sees business as a complex network of interconnected relationships that grow incrementally in scope and strength with each interaction. This approach extends to the direct marketing programs Zeesman creates – programs that transform over time their clients' relationships with their customers.

Under Nijst's leadership, the 12-employee firm has received dozens of awards for exceptional marketing and design, and Nijst earned the Los Angeles Small Business

Administration's Women in Business Champion Award in 2007. She also sits on the Board of Directors of the California Family Health Council, is a member of the Economic Development Council of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce, and serves on the Minority Business Enterprise Input Committee of the Southern California Minority Business Development Council.

### Creating a Sense of Community

Nijst, though, sees her impressive achievements in more personal terms, noting, "My greatest accomplishment is to have had the opportunity to meet, know and learn from such a diverse network of incredibly talented and generous people over the years. It's something that keeps me grounded in my past and connected to all of the possibilities for the future."

As for NAWBO-LA, Nijst plans to continue her involvement in "this vehicle for creating a sense of community among a group of people – women entrepreneurs – for whom the building of a business can be a solitary endeavor."

For other women business owners who seek to further their own success, the Member of the Year added, "I would like more women business owners to see their memberships in organizations like NAWBO-LA as something to be actively exercised and as an investment in their professional and business development that is held over the long term."

From having the opportunity to learn from the experiences of "women who've been there," to being surrounded by other entrepreneurs who champion each other's success, to having the rare privilege to impact the growth and development of someone else's business, she believes that being part of a community has its benefits and its responsibilities. Said Nijst: "That's the give and take that makes it interesting – the small and large opportunities to learn, to grow, to contribute ... to do something that matters. And isn't that what life is all about?"



**ZEESSMAN**  
COMMUNICATIONS  
MARKETING ADVERTISING DESIGN

Los Angeles' leading full-service marketing, advertising and design firm, Zeesman Communications, Inc. offers a thoughtful approach to the strategies it develops and the solutions it crafts for its clients. The firm is known for its branding expertise; strategic thinking; focused creative; ongoing, incisive analysis; intimate collaboration; agile account management; and ownership of client objectives. For more information: [www.zeesman.com](http://www.zeesman.com).

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## NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009 ISSUE

### RISING STAR AWARD

*The Rising Star is a woman entrepreneur who has established a critical milestone in her business and has displayed high potential for enduring entrepreneurial success*



**Carmen Rad**  
**President**  
**CR&A Custom, Inc.**

*"If you just work for the money you will be unhappy. You have to have a passion for whatever you do."*

About 15 years ago, Carmen Rad took the first step – albeit a hard one – on the road to entrepreneurial success. Frustrated by not getting compensated fairly for the collection she developed for her employer, a garment industry distributor, and feeling she'd never have the opportunity to work as more than an assistant to the men who stayed in the field for years, she struck out on her own.

Then still in her 20s, Rad started CR&A Custom, Inc. out of her home with just two employees, using her background in fashion design and marketing to produce custom clothing, embroidery work and promotional items. With no outside funding, and no equity to secure a loan, she turned over income received to make more purchases and meet payroll.

#### Pride in Survival and Growth

"I was pregnant when I started my business and it was a challenge, but somehow with the support of everyone around me I was able to grow the business and manage my personal life," Rad noted.

And grow the business she did. Today CR&A Custom operates out of a new 25,000-square-foot facility in downtown Los Angeles, with 29 full-time employees and annual revenues of about \$2.5 million. Now specializing in large-format digital printing, the firm works with major corporations across the United States, as well as in Puerto Rico and Dubai. Showcasing its market leadership as an eco-friendly firm, CR&A Custom recently manufactured its first environmentally friendly biodegradable banners, using inks and equipment to create a fully "green" printing process.

Rad humbly noted, "I have been blessed with wonderful clients who give me time after time the opportunity to bid and the chance to grow. I am most proud of just being able to be in business today and continue to survive these difficult and changing times."

For the firm's accomplishments, in 2007 the U.S. Department of Commerce named CR&A Custom "Manufacturer of the Year." The company also earned the "Latina Business of the Year" honor from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, as well as the "International Interior Design Association Award" for a wallpaper mural.

While her business grows, Rad also gives back to the community, donating banners and embroidery work to the Los Angeles Fire Department, the Boys & Girls Club of Hollywood, the Muscular Dystrophy Association in Puerto Rico and several other organizations.

Rad achieved such impressive results at CR&A Custom while making a major transition in her business focus in 2002. After 9/11, she found clients cutting back on orders for her company's products, and also felt the squeeze from items produced less expensively in China. But, she also heard from many clients that they had difficulty getting high-quality banners produced on time.

So, Rad decided to migrate from textile printing for apparel to digital printing. It meant downtime for orders and production for almost a year, plus investment in expensive equipment. But she made it work, remaining flexible and maintaining strategic options. She also accomplished the change without letting any of her employees go, instead retraining them in the new trades needed for CR&A Custom's revamped business.

"When you find great people, you want to keep them, you want to train them, you want to help them get to another level," she said. "It's about having a great team of people. That's what keeps a company alive."

## Passion for What You Do

Rad takes great pride in seeing her employees succeed, but for her, it's not about the money. "If you just work for the money you will be unhappy," she said. "You have to have a passion for whatever you do."

For other women entrepreneurs passionate about what they do, Rad recommends they tap into the opportunities provided by organizations like NAWBO-LA, which offers access to decision-makers they might otherwise not have the opportunity to meet, as well as to other women entrepreneurs facing similar issues and challenges.

As she's built her firm, Rad has learned important lessons. Recalling a time when she didn't get a job and complained about it, her mom told her to stop putting her energy into that one client, and to instead go out and find new ones. "Positive energy throughout the day makes such a difference," she said.

Rad also advised, "Don't try to be perfect. If you can't make dinner or the bed, don't worry about it. Order in and enjoy yourself."

"Also find support," she added. "Don't try to do everything yourself. Find experts in the field of accounting or taxes, and be the creative person in the company. That's who the entrepreneur really is."



**CR&A Custom Inc.**

CR&A Custom is the only minority- and woman-owned, large-format digital printer and outdoor advertising company in America with the full-service capability to design, print, manufacture and install all types of printed commercial signage and outdoor advertising formats, including biodegradable billboards, building wraps, traditional billboards, transit ads, trade show exhibits, point-of-purchase displays, wall/window/floor graphics, and vehicle wraps and/or fleet graphics, among others. For more information: [www.cracustom.com](http://www.cracustom.com).

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### HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

*Each year, NAWBO-LA inducts into our Hall of Fame women who represent the quintessential entrepreneur who strives for excellence in everything that she does and has given back extensively to her community*



**Bettye Dixon**  
**President & CEO**  
**Concourse Concessions, Inc.**

*"I would like to see more women business owners join and support organizations like NAWBO-LA, where their voices can be heard, their experiences valued, and their achievements appreciated and duplicated by the young women following in the paths they have made."*

NAWBO-LA proudly inducts Bettye Dixon into its Hall of Fame in 2009 for being a well-respected strategic entrepreneur, a role model and a pioneer of her time.

Dixon's distinguished career has seen her serve as an industry and community leader who achieves success and supports others by building alliances with the business sector and local communities. Today, as President and CEO of Concourse Concessions, Inc., Dixon runs one of the most experienced and successful companies doing business with some of the largest airports in the nation. Her firm, established in 1992, is one of the few Disadvantaged Business Enterprises that owns and operates duty-free stores in international airports.

Despite facing several challenges, she's continued to grow Concourse Concessions, with many of her employees staying with her from the beginning.

"I am most proud of being able to guide my company through the economic problems that arose after the tragedy of 9/11 to its current status as an emerging Disadvantaged Business Enterprise with gross sales of over \$20 million per year," Dixon noted.

### Guidance and Counsel to the Next Generation

While she's steered her company to new heights, she's also given her time and effort to many organizations, including the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce (President-Elect and Board Member); Otis College of Art and Design (Vice Chair, Board of Trustees); Airport Minority Advisory Council; and Airports Council International.

In addition to Concourse Concessions being recognized as the 2006 African American Business of the Year by the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, and as 2006 Minority Retail Firm of the Year by the University of Southern California's Minority Enterprise Department, Dixon has received special commendations for her achievements from both Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Plus, she garnered the prestigious 2007 "Women in Action" Award from The Los Angeles African American Public Policy Institute, showcasing her commitment to motivating other women to succeed.

"Today's women business owners and leaders should support each other, be fair with each other, give quality goods and services to each other, and provide guidance and counsel to help the next generation not repeat the mistakes of the past," Dixon noted.

She added, "My advice to the next generation of women entrepreneurs and leaders is to learn from the past, seek advice and seek a mentor willing to give of her/his time to walk you through the difficult times and difficult issues. Don't be afraid to reach out to those who have succeeded!"

Dixon got her own entrepreneurial inspiration from her family, as her father and his brothers all had their own companies, and "at an early age I was exposed to the concept of owning and running your own business."

Her path to business ownership took her through many high-level positions for federal agencies, including Director of Consumer Outreach for the Healthcare Financing Administration under the Department of Health and Human Services, and Director of Consumer Outreach for the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Before founding Concourse Concessions, Dixon served as Chief Operating Officer and managing partner of Mir Kanon/Peideau, Inc., an airport retailer that graduated its status as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise with average annual gross sales exceeding the \$30 million standard for more than three consecutive years.

However, when the opportunity presented itself to move on, "I was psychologically prepared to do as my family had done throughout my life and be my own boss."

Today, as she looks at women who are following in her footsteps to become their own bosses, she highlights the value of organizations like NAWBO-LA to help them achieve their goals.

### **Knowledge, Experience and Influence**

"NAWBO-LA is one entity that tries to ensure that women-owned businesses are recognized as a formidable economic force to be reckoned with and are effective agents for change," she said, expressing her honor at her Hall of Fame induction. "It is a group of knowledgeable, experienced and influential women who understand the obstacles that women face as entrepreneurs. Through their combined knowledge they are an essential resource for those who are trying to make the playing field more level."

Dixon concluded, "I would like to see more women business owners join and support organizations like NAWBO-LA, where their voices can be heard, their experiences valued, and their achievements appreciated and duplicated by the young women following in the paths they have made."

	<p>Concourse Concessions, Inc. ( a privately held, woman- and minority-owned corporation) operates a chain of top-quality retail and duty-free stores in major U.S. airports, including Los Angeles International, Phoenix Sky Harbor International, Washington Dulles International, JFK International and Miami International. It is a full-fledged store operator and creates the highest standard of excellence in airport concessions. For more information: <a href="http://www.concourseconcessions.com">www.concourseconcessions.com</a>.</p>
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