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*The truth is, you're only as good as your support. At Real Vegas, we are immensely grateful and appreciative of all our local readers! Without the contributors listed here, this publication would be next to impossible. This special feature issue is dedicated to our **2026 Women Who Wow**. We are honored to have had the opportunity to get to know and learn about these outstanding leaders and their respective businesses and organizations. These are truly innovative and hardworking individuals in our community!*

This special feature is the result of our collective hard work, dedication, and passion. Every contribution to each issue is a labor of love from the bottom of our hearts. We proudly thank every advertiser, writer, photographer, and contributor in every way. Without you, we couldn't share these stories or provide rich content, including current events and the rich history of Las Vegas, which is extremely important to us.

Feel free to submit any editorial pieces for consideration to: info@realvegasmagazine.com. Don't forget to follow and like us on social media and visit our website: realvegasmagazine.com. We host many local Real Vegas community events and would love for you to join us! Stay tuned for information on our upcoming events, promoted and shared on social media.

THANK YOU all, we hope you enjoy reading Real Vegas as much as we enjoy creating it!

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VEGAS NONSTOP



By Jonathan Scott and Melissa Redford

Las Vegas has always thrived on reinvention. New doors open, fresh voices take the stage, and familiar faces evolve into something unexpectedly new. In this quarterly edition of **Vegas Nonstop**, we spotlight the restaurants, shows and experiences that recently caught our attention — places where the energy feels authentic, the talent is undeniable, and the experience delivers more than it promises. In other words: Real Vegas, right now.

DINING: NEW TABLES WORTH PULLING UP A CHAIR TO

We begin with a warm welcome to D'Agostino's Trattoria, a newly opened Italian gem led by Chef Dan Thompson. This is classic Italian comfort executed with modern confidence — rustic, welcoming and clearly built with love. What truly earns repeat visits is the food: bold flavors, generous portions and a vibe that invites you to linger. In a city of flash, D'Agostino's succeeds by being sincere — and delicious. (They also have our caricatures on their Celebrity Wall of Fame.)

High above the Strip, another culinary statement has arrived. High Steaks at the Rio Hotel & Casino marks the latest evolution from acclaimed Chef James Trees. Known to *Insomniac Television* audiences, Chef Trees continues to define contemporary Las Vegas dining through concepts including *Ada's Kitchen*, *Esther's Kitchen* and *Le Boheme* in downtown Las Vegas. High Steaks elevates the classic steakhouse experience with refined technique, panoramic views, and a Black Forest pie cake to die for. Seriously amazing.

We would also be remiss not to mention Steiner's — A Nevada Style Pub, our go-to destination for watching all Las Vegas sports teams in a relaxed, locals-first environment. Steiner's delivers exactly what it promises: casual dining done right, standout lamb chops that rival any steakhouse in town, and strong promotions for video poker players. It's a place where the games are always on, the service is friendly, and the experience feels authentically Las Vegas.



Another highly recommended stop is iconic Mae Daly's Steaks & Whiskeys, located across from The STRAT, where classic Vegas meets modern polish. Thursday night jazz sets the tone for an easy, upscale evening, and a visit is never complete without sitting at the bar with our favorite bartender, Tommy Valentine, who crafts what we consider the best Old Fashioned in Las Vegas. This neighborhood classic continues to deliver timeless hospitality, and cigars can be enjoyed on the patio.

WINE, COMEDY AND CONTROLLED CHAOS

"In Pour Taste" at Lighthouse ArtSpace at ARIA Hotel & Casino delivers a refreshingly original night out, pairing comedy with a guided tasting of five wines. Hosted occasionally by Big Bob Cranston, also known as Bordeaux Bob, this experiential show blends humor, audience participation and wine education into one lively evening.

COMEDY AND RESIDENCY HIGHLIGHTS

Stand-up comedian Luenell, the Original Bad Girl of Comedy, appears Sunday and Monday nights at Jimmy Kimmel's Comedy Club, delivering fearless, fast-paced comedy. Also appearing regularly is the hilarious Vicki Barbolak, host of Trailer Park Tuesdays, bringing heart, humor and relatable storytelling to the stage.



MAGIC, MYSTERY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Congratulations to Damian Costa on the opening of his new Magician's Room at The LINQ Promenade. Featuring late-night magic and appearances by David Goldrake and The Conjurers, this intimate venue delivers close-up magic with maximum impact.

For something completely different, Ghost Stories, starring Kent Axell at Mandalay Place, offers an immersive paranormal experience in an intimate setting of fewer than 50 guests.

MUSIC, TRIBUTE AND TIMELESS TALENT

Music lovers, take note. The Composer Showcase, produced by musical director Keith Thompson at Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, showcases original music performed by its composers once a month. Ranging from country music to Broadway, TCS is a bargain at just \$25 in one of the most beautiful showrooms in Las Vegas.

We also love Memories of Barbra Streisand, a tribute starring the incredible Sharon Owens at Alexis Park Resort's Modern Showrooms. Jazz enthusiasts should check out the Jazz Vegas Orchestra, appearing the first Wednesday of each month at Notoriety at Neonopolis and regularly at Vic's Supper Club.



FINAL TAKE

From trattorias to tasting rooms, comedy clubs to cabarets, Las Vegas continues to prove that its best stories are happening live — right now — and often just off the beaten path. As always, Vegas Nonstop is about sharing the experiences that move the needle, where talent meets timing, and the town shows off its soul.

Stay awake and tune in to Insomniac Television, the comedy talk show celebrating its second year, hosted, and produced by Jonathan Scott, airing after Saturday Night Live on NBC Channel 3 Las Vegas. Subscribe to the YouTube channel at [youtube.com/@jonathanscott5377](https://www.youtube.com/@jonathanscott5377)

— Jonathan Scott and Melissa Redford

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PAGE
6-7



PAGE
12-13



PAGE
26-29



PAGE
41

Vegas Nonstop Dining, Entertainment, and the Best of the Strip 2-3

The Native Juice A Life of Quiet Strength: Pamela "Mimi" Decker 6-7

Emerging and Hot Skin Treatments to Know in 2026 10

Real Eats by Chef Vic Butcher & Thief 12-13

From Diner Floors to Prime-Time Plates The Rise of Chef Kesha Tatro 14

From Superfoods to Peptides The Visionary Evolution of Bodela 16-17

The Voice. The Heart. The Standard of Las Vegas Giving Chet Buchanan Takes the Helm at Project 150 18-19

Finding Faith and Mentorship on the First Night of Hanukkah 20-21

Tell Us Your Real Story 26-29

Global Businessman and Business Leader 28-29

Cabinets Now Quality Craftsmanship for Las Vegas Homes 30-31

How Tiffanie Craddock Quietly Built the Power Engine Brands 34-35

Homelessness Isn't a Failure 36-37

The Ultimate Las Vegas Entertainment Experience 40

From Zero to \$100 Million in 2½ Years 41

Mayra Estrella: The Woman Who Stands Between Crisis and Clarity 44-45

The Heart Behind the Steakhouse 46-47

A True Force of Heart, Hospitality, and Leadership 49

How Randi Garrett Cultivates Style, Soul, and Community 50

Designing Elevated Outdoor Living for Las Vegas 51

The Power of the Collective 52

From Family Fracture to Shared Future 56-57

Regenerate Like a Pro Athlete, Now in Las Vegas 58

How Social Darts Is Automating Connection in a Post-Zoom Las Vegas 60

Vegan in Vegas Las Vegas No. 1 for Vegan Donuts 62-63

Leading with Heart Maho Sugai and the Legacy of Ichiza Restaurant 64



PAGE
34-35

The Native Juice

A LIFE OF QUIET STRENGTH, BOUNDLESS LOVE, AND EVERLASTING GRACE



Pamela "Mimi" Decker

October 15, 1950 ~ December 26, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada

**FROM HER LOVING NIECE
BY CANDICE WIENER**



There are women in this world who speak loudly and leave a mark.

And then there are women like my Aunt Mimi, who loved quietly, stood firmly, and changed lives without ever needing recognition.

To call her the "cool aunt" would be an understatement. Mimi was more than an aunt. She was a safe place. A protector. A steady light in seasons that were anything but steady.

On my maternal side of the family, she was our matriarch in spirit



long before we ever understood what that word meant. She carried herself with grace, humor, and a softness that disguised an unshakable strength. And for us kids, especially those of us who endured tumultuous abuse and instability at home, Mimi and Grandma Blondie's house was more than a home.

It was sanctuary.
It was safety.
It was survival.

There is no exaggeration in saying that without that refuge, without the love that lived inside those walls; some of us may not have made it through the damage we were navigating. Mimi had an uncanny ability to make each of us feel protected, heard, and deeply valued. She listened. She truly listened. She created a space where we could breathe.

She picked us up from school. She let us stay up too late watching movies. She gave us ice cream. She let us play dress-up in her room. She cuddled us when we were scared. She loved us as if we were her own children, and in many ways, she mothered us when we needed it most.



Mimi had a heart of gold; not the cliché kind, but the kind proven in action. The kind that shows up. The kind that sacrifices. The kind that holds children who are hurting and makes them believe they are worthy of something better.

She adored animals with a tenderness that mirrored her own spirit. She loved the color purple: bold yet regal, soft yet powerful. just like her. And she loved chocolate with joyful enthusiasm. Rocky Road was her favorite, and every Christmas, we waited for her legendary fudge- the kind so rich and perfect that no one has ever quite replicated it. Her chocolate chip cookies? Unmatched.

With Grandpa Decker having been an executive chef on the Las Vegas Strip, culinary excellence ran in the family, but Mimi's magic ingredient was love. Everything she made felt like comfort.

Professionally, Mimi spent her life in food and beverage. She waitressed for years, though she much preferred being a hostess, and she truly was the hostess with the mostest! She had a way of making people feel welcomed, seen, and important the moment they walked into a room. Hospitality wasn't just her job. It was her gift.

Her love extended far beyond family. When Mimi loved you, friend, or family; she loved you with her whole heart. She supported, encouraged, and showed up. She advocated for the people she believed in. She celebrated your wins as if they were her own.

She was a woman of faith... a lover of God and Jesus, but she never needed to preach. She lived her belief system through kindness, resilience, and unwavering devotion. Her faith was visible in how she treated people.

One memory captures her spirit perfectly. During a frightening moment at a grocery store when someone attempted to steal her purse, she wasn't afraid for herself. She was afraid because two of her beloved nieces were with her. Even shaken and embarrassed, her concern was protection, always protection.



That was Mimi.

Tears come to my eyes thinking of all the moments I missed while building my career. The time I could have spent sitting beside her, absorbing more stories, more laughter, more of her quiet wisdom. But I also know, without question, how proud she was and continues to be of the positive impact my work brings into the world. She believed in us long before we believed in ourselves. She reminded us that we could do anything.

Grandma Blondie and Mimi's home was our haven; a place where we were made to feel like superstars, rockstars, and spiritual warriors all at once. She helped us forget what was heavy and reminded us who we truly were underneath it all. Mimi may no longer be physically here, but energy does not die. We feel her in sunrises. In the softness of animals that cross our paths. In the scent of chocolate at Christmastime. In every shade of purple that catches our eye. In every hostess who greets guests with warmth. In every act of protection and unconditional love.

Her matriarchal legacy lives on in us.
We will make her proud.
She will never be forgotten.





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To Our Real Vegas Family,

As winter gives way to spring, I find myself reflecting on the past six months, a season that felt, at times, like a whirlwind. And yet, even the fiercest storms deliver clarity. The most breathtaking growth often follows the strongest winds.

The close of 2025 brought unexpected challenges, but it also delivered necessary perspective. There were moments when creativity and operational momentum felt paused. Moments when I questioned whether I was doing enough, moving fast enough, or standing strong enough.

The truth? Growth rarely feels graceful when you're in the middle of it. But on the other side, it's powerful.

This winter also required me to walk through grief; first with the passing of the matriarch of our family, my beloved Aunt Mimi, followed closely by the loss of a dear friend and mentor, Larry Swecker. I hold them both in my heart. Loss has a way of reshaping you. But I believe what we love never truly leaves us. Energy does not die; it transforms.

This past year became one of mind, body, and soul alignment. A return to my spirituality and health. A recommitment to clarity. A deeper understanding of divine timing, protection, and purpose. It also ushered in something I deeply prayed for; strategic, aligned partnerships with phenomenal locals in our community whose integrity, brilliance and strength are helping elevate Real Vegas Magazine in extraordinary ways. Building alongside strong, value-driven leaders is not just powerful; it's transformative.

To our real ones ~ (including but not limited to) my beloved mother, Marsha Wiener, my beautiful Madison Wiener-Evans, Eden Elise, and my precious grandson, Ash Adam, youngest sibling, Delila Wiener, who is expected to arrive any day now, my future son in law, Stephon Viera, and family, Vic Vegas, Donnie Fobbs, Hekili Apao, Alexio Ramirez, Rory McShane, Darin Notaro, AKA, Steve Stevens, Joe & Bobbi Vargas, Henry Black, Talha, Syed & Andrew, Michael Rogers, Charlie Polston, Swetta Kathuria, Abrar, and so many others who are our chosen family, please know you are loved, respected and appreciated more than you can imagine. It is truly my honor to build Real Vegas alongside you.

Speaking of family, this past Valentine's Day was one of the most meaningful of my life, spent with my granddaughter, Eden Elise. Now that she lives in another state, every moment together is treasured. She is a worldly little sweetheart who reminds me daily why legacy matters. And legacy is exactly what we are building.

I am deeply honored to share that I have been nominated for the 2026 Silver State Awards' Entrepreneur of the Year. After years of spotlighting and celebrating others, to be recognized myself is profoundly meaningful, especially knowing that many may not even be aware of the multiple businesses and strategic ventures currently launching behind the scenes. Voting remains open through May 15, 2026, and I sincerely appreciate your support from the bottom of my heart. You truly cannot go wrong voting for any



of the admired and distinguished women nominated this year, but I'd be remiss if I didn't say, it does feel like it's finally my time, and I am grateful and honored for this prestigious consideration and nomination. Please take 15-30 seconds to scan the QR code and give me your vote of confidence. You can vote once a day, and I'm forever grateful for your belief in me!

On that note, I am thrilled to officially announce the launch of Real Vegas Catering & Events, powered by award-winning Food Network Chef Vic Vegas. This upscale, fully customizable catering and events company is designed to execute experiences at the highest level, and we are just getting started. Additional food and beverage concepts are already in development, but for now... we'll keep that under wraps.

Inside this issue, you'll also discover our special initiative, "Tell Us Your Real Story." I invite you to drop it down 12 inches; from your head to your heart, and really share transparently. Vulnerability is not easy. If it were, everyone would do it. But your story may inspire someone in ways you will never fully know. Submit your story or nominate someone whose voice deserves to be heard online, go to: realvegasmagazine.com/nominate, and tell us of the positive impact the individual had on you personally, professionally, or in our community.

We are proud to continue supporting impactful community events and initiatives, including Vegas AutoFEST, MOJAVE MAYHEM, the West Coast Celebration for Fallout Fans, the Nevada Chefs for Kids Annual Gala, the Grant a Giff for Autism Foundation Gala and, of course, our 2026 Women Who Wow. Championing strong, fearless women will always be central to the RVM mission.

And personally, after more than 40 years of writing, journaling, creating, and documenting life's lessons; this is the year I intend to publish my book. Writing has always been my safe place, dating back to winning the 'Wiener Award' in fourth grade at Pat Diskin Elementary School. When you are silenced, you pivot and adapt. For me, that adaptation became purpose.

To our readers, advertisers, partners, and supporters, simply thank you. You are the reason Real Vegas Magazine continues to thrive, evolve, and lead. Please continue engaging with us online, at events and within these pages. Your stories, your businesses, and your voices matter.

Publisher's Side Note: Built on Loyalty. Powered by Vision.

There are business partners... and then there are real friends who become partners.

Today, I'm proud to introduce someone who is both: a real friend who has become family and a partner I know I will stand beside for a lifetime.

Real Vegas Magazine and our entire team are honored to officially welcome our new Partner and Director of Sales, Vic Vegas.

This next chapter isn't just about growth; it's about repair, rebuilding, scaling with intention, and rising stronger than ever. We are committed to doing it with hustle and heart, discernment and dedication, wisdom and grit, and always with the winning formula for success.

Vic Vegas brings passion, loyalty, leadership, and a relentless drive to serve our community at the highest level. I have no doubt you'll feel that energy immediately if you're not already aware of the 'real' him. Not what you think you see on TV, or just the award winning Chef that he is. He's also an award winning friend and partner, whose support was invaluable to me during some really trying times. We hope you'll welcome him into the Real Vegas family with open arms as we continue building something extraordinary together.

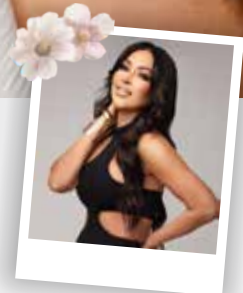
If Vic Vegas, myself, or anyone on our team can be of service to you, please reach us at marketing@realvegasmagazine.com.

And as always, we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we laughed, learned, and endured putting it all together for you.

With gratitude and forward momentum,



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By Lissette Waugh
lmi.edu

EMERGING AND HOT SKIN TREATMENTS TO KNOW IN 2026

Skincare is entering a new era and 2026 is all about working with your skin not against it. Instead of aggressive treatments and complicated routines the focus has shifted to regeneration barrier repair and long term skin health. Think fewer steps smarter ingredients and treatments that support longevity rather than quick fixes. Here are the skin treatments and trends everyone is talking about right now and what you actually need to know.

Exosomes The Buzzword Clients Are Already Hearing

Exosomes are quickly becoming one of the most talked about skincare technologies. While they are often hyped as a miracle solution the reality is more nuanced. Exosomes are best viewed as supportive boosters not replacements for solid skincare basics like sunscreen retinoids and consistent hydration.

When used correctly some people notice calmer skin and reduced redness fairly quickly while improvements in texture and tone can take four to six weeks. The key is managing expectations and understanding that not every skin type or health history is a candidate.

Peptides The Smart Skin Signal

Peptides are having a major moment and for good reason. These powerful ingredients act like messengers signaling the skin to produce more collagen and elastin. Firmer smoother looking skin develops over time with consistent use.

Different peptides target different concerns from aging and sensitivity to acne prone or healing skin making them one of the most versatile ingredients in modern formulations. Look for them in serums and moisturizers paired with hydrating ingredients like hyaluronic acid or niacinamide.



Red Light Therapy From Trend to Staple

Red light therapy has officially moved beyond does this really work status. It is now widely recognized as a long term skin health tool especially for reducing inflammation calming redness supporting acne care and aiding post treatment recovery.

Consistency is key. This is not an overnight fix but when used regularly red light therapy can be a powerful addition to a well rounded skincare routine.

Makeup That Corrects Skin Not Just Covers It

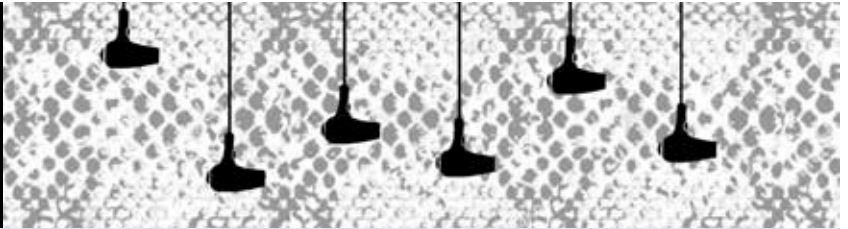
Skincare and makeup are blending more than ever. If redness or rosacea is a concern green color correctors are a simple but effective solution. Green neutralizes red tones creating a more balanced canvas before foundation and when applied sparingly the result looks natural not heavy.

Dermaplaning and HydraFacial Customization Is Everything

Dermaplaning continues to surprise people with how gentle and instantly effective it is. By removing dead skin and peach fuzz it leaves skin visibly smoother and brighter right away. HydraFacials when properly customized offer deep cleansing and hydration but both treatments require professional assessment to ensure they are right for your skin.

The Bottom Line

Skincare in 2026 is less about chasing trends and more about understanding what truly supports healthy resilient skin. Whether it is regenerative ingredients advanced devices or smarter treatment planning the goal is balanced calm and well cared for skin.



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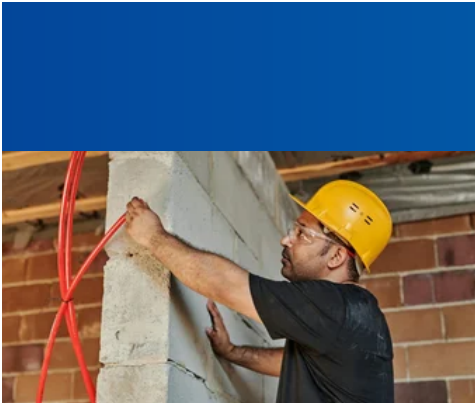
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REAL EATS

BY CHEF VIC



Happy New Year, RVM family. I hope everyone had an incredible holiday season and that 2026 is prosperous, successful and—most importantly—healthy.

Now let me start with a news flash for everyone reading this. OK, 2026... here we go.

News Flash

Southwest Las Vegas is officially experiencing a culinary sonic boom.

High-level chefs are joining forces to create a food-and-beverage experience that fuses elevated dining with real-world affordability—and it's changing the game. This time, elite culinary professionals are dialing in high-class execution without high-barrier pricing. Finally, the "thief" has become the hero, and the "butcher" has taken center stage.

If you haven't heard yet, a new restaurant has opened in Southwest Las Vegas that delivers Strip-level quality with prices locals can love. Let me emphasize this: when you've been in the industry as long as Cory Harwell—and when you love it as deeply as he does—passion evolves into business mastery, creativity, flavor, and accessibility, all folded into one. I've watched this team build, and it was clear from the beginning this was a well-thought-out plan.



The Backstory You Need to Know

At the heart of this movement is a group of chefs led by Cory Harwell, many of whom were personally mentored by the late, ultra-legendary Chef Kerry Simon. Cory has been instrumental in shaping some of the most respected food-and-beverage talent in Las Vegas and beyond, helping bring to life iconic concepts such as Carson Kitchen in Downtown Las Vegas, which he opened alongside the late Chef Kerry Simon, followed by a location in Salt Lake City and the ultra-trending Butcher & Thief.

Calling this an all-star lineup is an understatement.

Chef Scott Simon is also closely involved as the Executive Chef, ensuring the Simon family's creative legacy and culinary magic remain deeply embedded in the DNA of the restaurant. That signature balance of fun and sophistication is unmistakable—and it's why everything coming out of the kitchen feels intentional, elevated, and special.



Inside Butcher & Thief

The concept is simple but powerful. The chefs—our culinary scientists—have taken overlooked cuts of meat and brought them front and center, applying precision technique and sourcing top-tier proteins to match. That's the butcher showing up loud and proud.

Every detail works in harmony, from the layered flavor profiles to the beverage program to the design and décor. This place is poised to become a Southwest staple.

Our Night at the Table

We dined on a Saturday night, and the team graciously made time for us. I was joined by Real Vegas Magazine's boss lady—Editor-in-Chief and owner Candice Wiener—and my big brother and Talk and Chew podcast co-host, Donnie "Big D" Fobbs. I promised Donnie when he joined the podcast that he'd meet the best chefs and eat at the best restaurants. Bullseye achieved.

After pulling into The Bend and finding surprisingly easy parking for dinner time, we spotted the restaurant immediately. Inside, the décor was breathtaking. Cory Harwell himself greeted us, treating us like family—a consistent hallmark of everything he does.

We grabbed an elevated corner of the bar with a clear view of both the restaurant and the kitchen. Before things got busy, Cory started rapid-firing handcrafted cocktails made with beautifully sourced ingredients. Even the drink names delivered: Nice Pair, Dirty Sanchez, Side Piece, More Cowbell, Pretty Fly for a Rye Guy, and Rose-Colored Glasses.

Then came the appetizers—and Donnie's eyes started twitching.

Philly cheesesteak egg rolls with au jus. Thick-cut bacon with peanut butter and jalapeño cucumber jelly (yes, you read that right). A hamachi crudo that could give Nobu a run for its

“ This is steakhouse quality without steakhouse intimidation. ”

money. Blackberry and burrata with almonds, grapes, and basil vinaigrette. Chef specials followed, each more impressive than the last.

By now, the bar was full. The energy was undeniable.

Main Event Magic

Steelhead trout glazed with miso, soy and honey hit the table first. Then came premium cuts from Creekstone Farms and Allen Brothers, including a stunning 10-ounce Zabuton/Ushi Wagyu at a price that feels almost criminal—in the best way. This is steakhouse-level quality without steakhouse intimidation.

The Angus bavette—expertly cooked and sliced—was another standout, though Donnie and Candice guarded that one closely. Add scallop piccata, a double-cut pork chop, dirty rice, house mac and cheese, spinach Rockefeller, mushrooms, and asparagus, and suddenly the bar top was endcap to endcap with a phenomenal and generous spread with some of the best food we've ever had.

The Final Chapter

Espresso, coffee, and after-dinner drinks led us into dessert: chocolate panacotta cake, banana cream pie and—yes—cranberry Jell-O. Cory is a wizard. He understands nostalgia, memory, and comfort, transforming childhood favorites into elevated culinary moments that make guests feel at home and eager to return.



Final Thoughts

Thank you to Cory Harwell and the entire Butcher & Thief team for an unforgettable welcome. We'll support these guys forever—because trust me when I say this: There's always more to come.

Thanks for reading Real Eats by Chef Vic. We'll see you next issue. Until then, get out there and kick some serious **ARSE**.

You can follow the Talk & Chew Podcast on Instagram at @talkandchewpodcast, and don't forget to like, follow, and share the podcast.

Be sure to follow Butcher & Thief on IG @butcherandthief



FROM DINER FLOORS TO PRIME-TIME PLATES: THE RISE OF CHEF KESHA TATRO.



Born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Kesha Tatro's love of food began long before she ever stepped into a professional kitchen. As a child, she spent long days at the mom-and-pop diner where her mother worked as a server, captivated by the rhythm, energy and community that defined restaurant life. Though she wasn't allowed behind the kitchen doors, she found her place serving coffee and desserts, absorbing the sense of connection that food creates.

That early spark quickly grew into curiosity and independence. By age 8, Tatro was cooking for herself, creating what she jokingly calls "upscale innovations" of Hamburger Helper, experimenting with PBS cooking shows and adding her own creative twists using whatever ingredients were on hand.

By 16, she knew she wanted to be a chef. A strong academic performance in high school earned her scholarships to The Art Institutes International Minnesota, where she studied from 2000 to 2002 and graduated with an associate degree in culinary arts. After completing her formal training, Tatro honed her skills under respected Twin Cities chefs, including Philip Dorwart, and at D'Amico Catering before landing a career-defining opportunity with the Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining Group at the Walker Art Center in 2005. There, she refined her technique and developed a deep appreciation for both fine dining and large-scale event catering.

In 2008, Tatro followed mentor Scott Irestone to Las Vegas, joining Wolfgang Puck's restaurant group on the Strip. Immersed in one of the world's most competitive culinary landscapes, she quickly distinguished herself through discipline, leadership, and creativity. In 2011, she was promoted to sous chef at Wolfgang Puck Pizzeria & Cucina, a role that challenged her to balance artistry with operations while leading high-performing teams. It was here that she began developing the skills that would later define her career beyond the kitchen: quick thinking, storytelling through food and the ability to execute flawlessly under pressure.

After several successful years with Wolfgang Puck, Tatro joined Gordon Ramsay Steak in 2013, where she mastered the fusion of fine-dining presentation with high-volume execution. Despite the momentum of her culinary career, she felt drawn to explore new creative outlets. She took a year away from the kitchen to pursue interests in fitness, modeling, and product promotion—until an unexpected opportunity reignited her passion for food in a new way.

In 2015, Tatro received a call to join the production team for Gordon Ramsay's *Hotel Hell*, marking her entry into culinary television. The experience proved transformative. Since then, she has produced eight seasons of *Hell's Kitchen* and appeared on-camera as a sous chef during multiple finale challenge episodes. Her extensive television credits also include *MasterChef*, *MasterChef Junior*, *Iron Chef* and *Next Level Chef*. Beyond television, she has served as a food stylist for Apple TV+'s *Lessons in Chemistry*, starring Brie Larson, and supervised nine Culinary MasterClasses for chefs including Wolfgang Puck, Roy Choi, and Gordon Ramsay. She has also worked as a culinary producer and food stylist for leading brands such as Breville and HexClad.

Today, Kesha Tatro is a force in culinary entertainment—bridging food and storytelling through a signature blend of authenticity, creativity, and star power. From diner floors to prime-time television, her career is a testament to curiosity, adaptability, and the power of following passion wherever it leads.

Kesha Tatro @chefkeshatatro
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From Superfoods to Peptides:

The Visionary Evolution of *Bodela*
Designed for Those Who Expect More

By *Bobbi Vargas, Founder of Bodela*



Bodela was born from a moment that demanded a deeper understanding of health, resilience, and purpose.

Founder Bobbi Vargas faced a life-altering cancer diagnosis while simultaneously advocating for her son following his diagnosis of severe autism. These defining experiences reshaped her relationship with wellness and revealed a fundamental truth: healing must be intentional, accessible, and deeply human.

With a professional background as a sales trainer for some of the world's most renowned luxury houses — including Chanel, Versace, Christian Dior, and Dolce & Gabbana — Vargas cultivated a refined understanding of excellence, brand integrity, and elevated consumer experience. She founded Bodela with the conviction that wellness should never feel overwhelming or punitive, but intuitive, intentional, and beautifully designed.

Bodela first made its mark with all-natural, functional superfood gummies formulated without artificial ingredients, fillers, or excessive sugar. The products proved that nourishment can be both effective and enjoyable, reinforcing Vargas' belief that wellness, when done correctly, should integrate seamlessly into everyday life.

Today, Bodela is entering its most ambitious chapter yet with the launch of Bodela Peptides. Developed in collaboration with leading scientists and world-class laboratories, these ethically sourced, third party tested formulations represent the convergence of nature, precision science, and uncompromising standards.

At its core, Bodela is more than a product line — it is a movement rooted in community and responsibility. The brand is actively involved in philanthropy supporting the autism community, as well as the broader health and wellness landscape of Las Vegas. Looking ahead, Bodela's vision extends globally through curated retreats, immersive experiences, and collaborations with leading minds in health, longevity, and human optimization.

Bodela is not simply a wellness brand. It is a philosophy built on integrity, innovation, and intention — redefining what it means to live well in a modern world.

For product inquiries, contact Bobbi at Bobbi@bodela.com



“
Wellness should never feel punitive – it should be intuitive, intentional and beautifully designed.”

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CHET BUCHANAN

*The Voice.
The Heart.
The Standard of
Las Vegas Giving.*

Chet Buchanan Takes the Helm at Project 150

By Gerard Ramalho



When Chet Buchanan first arrived in Las Vegas in 1999, he wasn't exactly unpacking with intention.

"I remember being skeptical of Las Vegas," Buchanan laughs. "I even asked my agent; how long do you think I have to stay?"

Like many who arrive in Southern Nevada thinking it's a temporary stop, Buchanan planned to stay a couple of years. That plan lasted... well—more than two decades now.

"I have the place I grew up," he says, "and I have the place I call home. Vegas is home. I even tried moving back to the Northwest once and missed Vegas too much."

After more than 25 years on the airwaves, in packed arenas, and at the center of countless community fundraisers, Buchanan has added another title to his already storied résumé: Board President of Project 150, the nonprofit devoted to supporting homeless and disadvantaged high school students throughout Southern Nevada.

And if anyone thinks he's easing into the role, they don't know Chet Buchanan.

"It's all I can think about these days," he says. "I can't wait to get my hands dirty."

A Natural Fit

Project 150 has long been close to Buchanan's heart. After years of service as a board member and advisor, stepping into the role of president felt less like a promotion and more like a natural progression.

"It's a perfect fit for me," he says. "I plan to look at it like running a business—leveraging my connections and my understanding of this community to help the organization grow."

That approach is exactly why Project 150's leadership couldn't be more confident.

"Chet has been with us as a board member and advisor for years," says Kelli Kristo, executive director of Project 150. "Having him now serve as board president just makes perfect sense. He is genuinely committed to the mission of serving our youth, and we are grateful to have him."

Why Project 150 Matters

Founded by community visionaries Pat Spargur and Don Purdue, Project 150 provides food, clothing, hygiene supplies, scholarships—and, just as importantly, confidence—to students who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

"Every city should have a Project 150," Buchanan says. "What



they created has had a lasting impact on countless young people."

Two programs, in particular, resonate deeply with him.

The Scholarship Program, which provides financial assistance to students attending Nevada institutions of higher learning, has changed life trajectories.

"We've had students who weren't even planning to go to college because they couldn't afford it," Buchanan says. "Fast forward a few years, and they're doctors and engineers."

Then there's the Prom Closet, which provides dresses, tuxedos, and accessories at no cost.

"It removes a worry that shouldn't exist in the first place," he explains. "We're not just providing supplies—we're providing confidence. You can't put a price on making someone feel great."

A Voice and Heart Las Vegas Knows Well

For most Las Vegans, Chet Buchanan is a voice that has become part of the city's rhythm. He's been on the radio since age 15 and has hosted The Chet Buchanan Show! on 98.5 KLUC since 1999.



Each holiday season, his 98.5 KLUC Toy Drive stands as one of Southern Nevada's most enduring traditions. Over its nearly three-decade history, the drive has raised more than \$60 million in toys, cash, and resources—donating tens of thousands of bicycles and bringing joy to families across the valley year after year. For countless locals, the holidays don't truly begin until Chet is live on the air, giving back.

Beyond radio, Buchanan is an Emmy Award-winning PA announcer for the Las Vegas Aces, the voice of the Seattle Kraken, a familiar presence at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and a celebrity auctioneer who has helped raise tens of millions of dollars for charitable causes nationwide.

And still, he shows up—every time.

That spirit was on full display when Buchanan graciously agreed to emcee and host Real Vegas Magazine's very first inaugural Real Vegas Strong event, held on the streets of Tivoli Village. The evening marked one year since the tragic event that forever changed our city, honoring the moment with 58 seconds of silence and 58 glowing votives, surrounded by community, remembrance, and unity.

It was a powerful reminder of who Chet Buchanan is at his core: someone who steps up without hesitation, leads with heart, and shows up when Las Vegas needs him most.

Which brings us back to Project 150—and the future.

"I can do stuff," Buchanan says with a grin. "And I plan to."

With his energy, integrity, and unwavering love for the city he calls home, Project 150's next chapter—and Las Vegas'—is in very capable hands.

Publisher's Note

*At Real Vegas Magazine, the utmost respect and admiration we have for **Chet Buchanan** runs deep.*

Chet is more than a household name; he is part of the fabric of this city. From the legendary 98.5 KLUC Toy Drive that has become a staple of every Las Vegas holiday season, to the countless hours, dollars, bikes, and opportunities he has helped provide for families and youth, his impact cannot be overstated.

*When Chet so kindly agreed to emcee and host our inaugural **Real Vegas Strong** event, he didn't hesitate. He stood with us, led with grace, and helped create a moment of collective healing; 58 seconds, 58 votives, one united community.*

Chet always steps up to the plate. Always. That's why we consider him family.

*And yes, our readers make it abundantly clear year after year during voting for **Most Magnificent Men of Las Vegas**: they want Chet. They admire Chet. They trust Chet. That admiration is no understatement.*

He is one of the real ones, and we are truly honored to feature him in this issue.

—Publisher, Real Vegas Magazine

WHERE LIGHT MEETS LEGACY:

Finding Faith, Family and Mentorship on the First Night of Hanukkah

By David Montalvo



On the first night of Hanukkah, light does more than flicker — it gathers people. It calls families, cultures, and generations together to reflect on resilience, faith and unity. In Chicago last year, that light carried a deeper meaning, illuminating not only a sacred tradition, but the transformative power of mentorship.

Hanukkah is a celebration rooted in perseverance. The story of a small amount of oil lasting eight days after a devastating battle reminds us that even in moments of scarcity, faith can defy expectation. For me, that miracle has always felt personal. It mirrors what mentorship can do — how one steady presence, one guiding voice, can change the direction of a life.

That mentor was Rabbi Capers Funnye, Michelle Obama's first cousin and a spiritual leader whose influence shaped my understanding of faith, responsibility, and identity. Growing up, Rabbi Funnye taught me how to be a man and a son, how to navigate the complexity of the Torah, and how to build a genuine relationship with God. His guidance anchored me during formative years when direction mattered most.

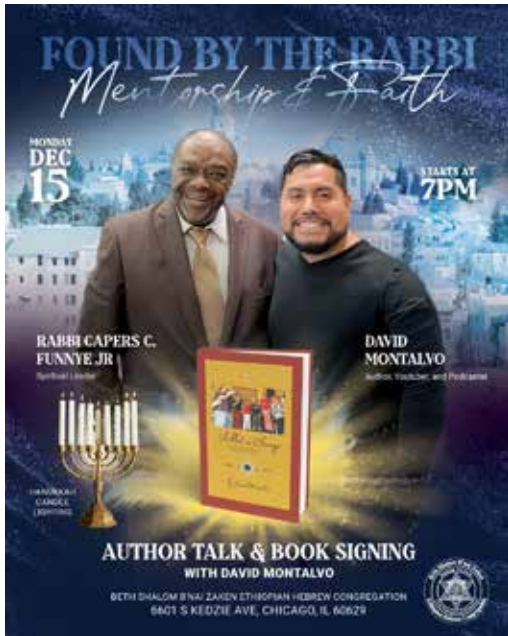
That is why celebrating Hanukkah alongside him carried such meaning. On Dec. 15 at Beth Shalom Hebrew Congregation, Rabbi Funnye joined me as co-host for an evening centered on mentorship, faith and cultural connection. The event brought together Jewish and Latino communities in a shared celebration of light, learning and purpose. For many in attendance, it was their first time inside a synagogue — and their first-time celebrating Hanukkah in unity.

More than 100 people filled the sanctuary that night. Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Ethiopian Jews from all walks of life prayed together, breaking barriers, and building understanding. What unfolded was not just a religious observance, but a moment of human connection.

Mentorship was at the heart of the evening. Many of us crave guidance, belonging and reassurance that our path matters. Faith and mentorship provide that grounding. They remind us that no one is meant to walk alone.

The night also held profound personal significance. I reunited with my father after more than a year without speaking and embraced my younger brother for the first time in nearly 15 years. In a space filled with prayer and reflection, we set aside differences and chose forgiveness. My mentor was there. So was an unexpected guest, Edgar-O, one of Chicago's most influential YouTubers, reminding us that inspiration often arrives in surprising ways.





Why It Matters

In a city known for spectacle and speed, moments of meaning often happen quietly — around a table, a candle, or a shared story.

This Hanukkah gathering at Beth Shalom Hebrew Congregation was more than a cultural event. It demonstrated how faith and mentorship can create bridges across communities that rarely intersect. By bringing together Jewish and Latino families, spiritual leaders and first-time synagogue visitors, the evening challenged assumptions and replaced them with connection.

At a time when many young people are searching for guidance, mentorship offers more than advice — it offers belonging. When paired with faith, it becomes a stabilizing force, helping individuals navigate identity, resilience, and purpose.

For Chicago, a city built on reinvention, this story resonates deeply. It reminds us that transformation is not always loud. Sometimes it begins with a single flame, a willing mentor, and a space where people feel seen.

Because when light is shared, communities do not just gather — they grow.

This event reflected the heart of my book, *Shabbat in Chicago* which explores faith, identity and the mentors who help us illuminate our path. The book is available nationwide through Amazon, as well as select independent bookstores.

As the menorah was lit, the message was clear: Each of us carries a light within. When shared, that light has the power to heal families, bridge cultures and transform generations. Sometimes, all it takes is one flame — and someone willing to help it burn brighter.

“ Hanukkah reminds us that even the smallest light — when protected and shared — can heal families, bridge cultures and transform generations.

— David Montalvo



An Evening of Light, Legacy and Mentorship

On the first night of Hanukkah, Beth Shalom Hebrew Congregation became a gathering place for faith, culture and connection. More than 100 guests came together to celebrate a tradition rooted in resilience while exploring the power of mentorship to shape identity and purpose.

The evening was co-hosted by author David Montalvo and Rabbi Capers Funnye, a nationally respected spiritual leader and mentor whose influence has guided generations. The event welcomed a diverse audience, including Sephardic, Ashkenazi and Ethiopian Jewish communities, alongside Latino families and first-time synagogue visitors.

At its core, the celebration focused on unity — breaking down cultural barriers, honoring shared values and creating

space for reflection and forgiveness. For Montalvo, the night held personal significance, marking moments of family reconciliation and spiritual renewal.

The event also spotlighted Montalvo's book, *Shabbat in Chicago*, a reflection of faith, reliance and the guiding relationship that help illuminate life's path.

Book Availability

Shabbat in Chicago is available nationwide through Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and select independent stores. Also, you can find his documentary based on his book on YouTube called "Shabbat in the Chi."

Location Highlight:

Beth Shalom Bnai Zaken Hebrew Congregation
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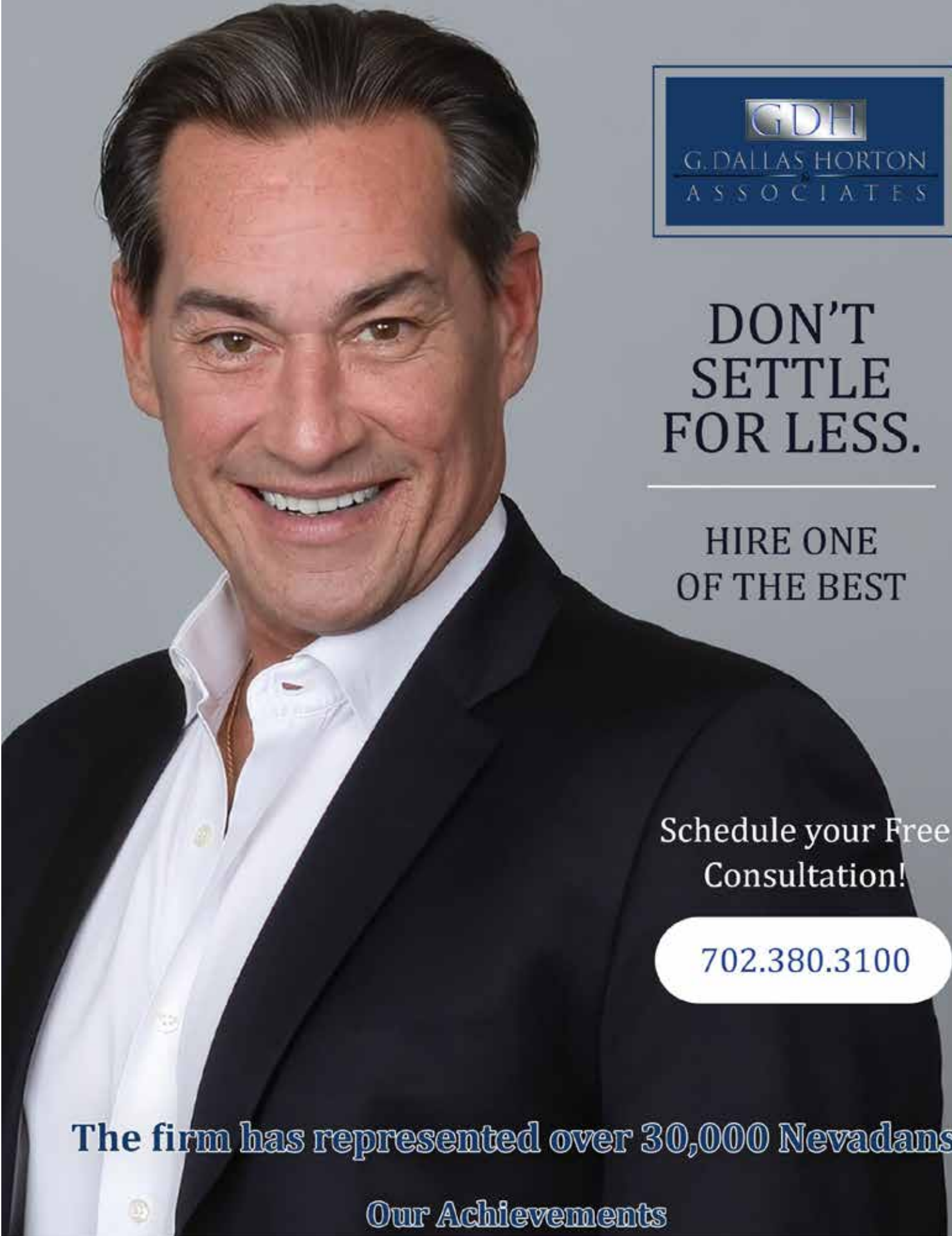
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The Verdict Maker

When the stakes are high and the outcome matters, Mike H. T. Nguyen doesn't just show up – he delivers.



Las Vegas is built on risk. Mike H. T. Nguyen is built on results. As managing attorney of Nguyen & Associates, Nguyen has established himself as one of Nevada's most formidable personal injury litigators, securing multimillion-dollar verdicts and settlements in some of the region's most complex cases. From catastrophic auto accidents to high-exposure medical malpractice claims, his approach is aggressive, calculated and unapologetically strategic.

By 28, he was already arguing before the Nevada Supreme Court — and winning. His unanimous decision on an issue of first impression remains part of academic case studies at Boyd Law School, a rare distinction for any attorney, let alone one so early in his career.

Nguyen's résumé reads like a checklist of elite recognition: Million Dollar Advocates Forum. Multimillion Dollar Advocates Forum. Super Lawyers. The National Trial Lawyers. Best of Vegas. But accolades are secondary to impact.

Inside his firm, every case is built for leverage. Every negotiation is built for strength. And every client receives direct access to Nguyen himself — a deliberate departure from high-volume, assembly-line law practices.

Outside the courtroom, he leads with the same intensity. As chairman of the Vietnamese American Community of Las Vegas, Nguyen has organized major civic initiatives and championed community engagement across Southern Nevada.

Calculated. Commanding. Consistent.

In a city that respects power, Mike Nguyen has earned it.

“Every case is built for leverage.”



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Candice Wiener:

Going First, Not for
Spotlight, but for Purpose



How One Las Vegas Woman's Unfinished Memoir Became a Movement; and Why the City Is Being Called to Keep it Real Together

An Invitation to Drop In, Go Twelve Inches Deeper, and Remember Who We Are, and the Simple Notion That we are all in this Together.

There is a moment; quiet, unannounced, and unmistakable. Life starts asking you to stop performing and start being uncandidly open, honest, and real by being fully transparent and telling the truth. Especially in the entertainment capital of the world, our beloved Las Vegas, we know the real deal... The show must go on.

Not the curated truth.
Not the polished truth.
But the real one.

The one that lives twelve inches below the surface, directly and divinely correlated from the head to the heart.

That is where Real Vegas Magazine begins its newest; and one of its most significant and important chapters.

This is not a campaign about perfection.
This is not a platform for highlight reels.
This is a movement rooted in vulnerability, lived experience, and radical honesty, born right here in Las Vegas.

And it begins with the courage of one woman willing to go first.

Candice Wiener | CEO, Owner, and Publisher of Real Vegas Magazine—has spent her career amplifying the voices, stories, businesses, and heartbeat of Las Vegas. Yet for decades, one story remained largely untold: her own.

Not because it wasn't written.

But because it was being lived.

For more than **20 years**, Candice has been writing a book; slowly, intentionally, between chapters of motherhood, loss, leadership, grief, faith, resilience, and rebirth. A memoir not meant to glorify the author, but to serve the reader. A book rooted in the belief that:

If even one person finds healing, clarity, or hope through these stories, then every ounce of pain was worth it.

This inaugural **"Tell Us Your Real Story"** segment is not an announcement for attention. It is a **threshold**. A doorway. An invitation.

Candice steps through first—so others know it's safe to follow.

Tell us your real story, Candice...



Las Vegas: A City That Teaches You How to Lose Track of Time—and Find Yourself Anyway

Growing up in Las Vegas and within the casino walls as a kid is unlike growing up anywhere else in the world.

No clocks.
No windows.
Endless light. Endless motion.

As a child, wonder thrives easily here. Casinos feel like labyrinths of magic; where time disappears, colors glow brighter, and the ordinary rules of day and night don't quite apply. It's easy to understand how that same enchantment can follow you into adolescence... and adulthood.

In Las Vegas, you can lose track of time.

And sometimes; if you're not careful, you can lose yourself too. Las Vegas can make or break you; this rings especially true for those who have relocated to call Vegas home. "Vegas has the power and ability to chew you up and spit you out," says Candice. "You have to have a really strong balance, discipline, and quite frankly, discernment to navigate our wondrous and blessed city of lights."

Candice knows this terrain intimately. Her roots in Las Vegas stretch **five generations**. This city isn't just where she lives; it's where her family history breathes, where legacy and loss coexist, where tradition meets transformation.

Her forthcoming memoir weaves stories of **Vegas past and present**, both the grit and the glamour, the community beneath the neon, the beauty, and the bruises.

There will be laughter.
There will be heartbreak.
There will be chapters soaked in moonlight and chapters forged under the relentless desert sun.

Because both matter.

The Moon, the Sun, the Stars, and the Long Road Back to Wholeness

Throughout Candice's life, **the moon, the sun, and the stars** have carried deep symbolic weight, markers of time, healing, endurance, and renewal.

The moon reminds us of cycles: that darkness is never permanent. The sun reminds us of truth: that light always returns.

The stars remind us that our Maker has and always will be in total control; he placed the stars in position at the exact time of your birth, and even the wise men followed them for guidance on their destination.

Her healing and wellness journey, in her own words; has been nothing short of **miraculous**. Not because it erased the pain, but because it transformed it.

Widowed almost two decades ago.
A single mother most of her adult life.

A caretaker through and through since a very young age. No stranger to a struggle, tragedy, hospital rooms, or seasons that demand strength when strength feels next to impossible.

And yet; here she stands. Not hardened. Not bitter. But open. Grateful. Alive.

This is not toxic positivity.
This is earned hope.

It is the kind of hope forged when you keep showing up; when the light switch flips on and, no matter what you carried in with you, the show must go on.



From Pain to Purpose: Why This Story Is Bigger Than One Life

Candice will tell you plainly: this book is not about her.

It is about **life**.

It is about **Las Vegas**.

It is about **what happens when people stop pretending and start being both transparent and REAL**.

Her writing reflects a simple but powerful transformation:

- Pain becomes **purpose**
- Negatives become **positives**
- Poverty becomes **power**

Not overnight.

Not without struggle.

But always with intention.

She writes not as a therapist, but as a witness. Not as a guru, but as a human being who has lived enough to know that healing does not come from avoidance; it comes from unpacking the luggage. And she self-admittedly adds, "**Unpacking the luggage** from a quick trip has never been my favorite thing to do. I enjoy it just about as much as I enjoy doing laundry, and growing up in a linen family; I can say I really don't like laundry, let alone dirty, soiled laundry!"

Some people lock their stories away forever. Others open the suitcase slowly, piece by piece, when the moment is right.

This moment is right for her, and a long time coming.

The Real Fruit of the Spirit: A Life Lived Forward

The message threaded through Candice's life; and through every page in her tell all book to come, is rooted in what she calls the real fruit of the spirit, not as an abstract concept, but as lived evidence:

- **Love**
- **Joy**
- **Peace**
- **Patience**
- **Kindness**
- **Goodness**
- **Faithfulness**
- **Gentleness**
- **Self-Control**

These are not ideals on paper.

They are qualities forged through loss, service, faith, forgiveness, and perseverance.

They are the quiet victories no one sees, and the ones that change everything, all whilst helping us cope and endure.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again: don't mistake my kindness for weakness. In the end weakness is not what you are going to remember about me. I'm certain there were a couple other gangsters that had similar quotes that clearly and deeply resonated with me," adds Candice.

This quote carries weight because it speaks to controlled power, not unchecked aggression. On the surface, it sounds like a warning; but underneath, it's a philosophy about strength with restraint creating room for resilience.

Don't mistake my kindness for weakness...

Kindness here isn't softness; it's a simple and fundamental choice. It implies she can be ruthless and possesses that innate ability, but deliberately isn't, and chooses not to be. True power doesn't need to posture. Those who possess real leverage, whether emotional, physical, or strategic, often move quietly. They allow space. They give grace. That grace, however, is conditional. When kindness is misread as vulnerability, it invites disrespect and abuse, and that's when the balance shifts.

"...in the end, weakness is not what you will remember about me."

This line reframes legacy. It suggests that when the story is over, what remains won't be gentleness, but a calm and definitive resolve that simply needs no closure. Candice continues, "The kindness was temporary; the strength is permanent. It's a reminder that restraint should never be confused with incapacity. When pushed past the line, the response is decisive and unforgettable. Never look back. Praying for those who you trusted with the depths of your being even after they literally preyed upon you, isn't for the weak-minded. To me that embodies real dignity and true strength through being capable of what transcends understanding and for most would be completely impossible. I also do not pat myself on the back for that kind of alchemistic grit, I know where that gift comes from, and it's not myself," Candice continues.



The Gangster Code: Loyalty as Currency

In traditional gangster methodology; especially within early 20th-century organized crime: **loyalty wasn't emotional, it was transactional and sacred**. Protection, money, and survival were exchanged for unwavering allegiance.

To figures like Al Capone, loyalty was everything:

- You took care of your people **first**.
- You rewarded those who stood by you.
- You eliminated those who betrayed you without hesitation.

Capone famously funded soup kitchens during the Great Depression, not out of pure altruism, but because **power thrives on goodwill**. When people ate because of him, they stayed loyal to him. Kindness became armor. It built silence. It bought protection in neighborhoods where police couldn't.

But that kindness had limits. Betrayal wasn't forgiven, it was answered. That's where the quote aligns perfectly with mob philosophy:

Mercy exists only until it's exploited.

“Take Care of Those Who Take Care of You”

This wasn't sentiment; it was survival law.

If someone:

- Showed up when it mattered
- Protected your name when you weren't in the room
- Stayed solid under pressure

They were family. And family was untouchable.

But if someone flipped? Talked? Took without giving back?

They weren't just disloyal, they were **dangerous**.

Mob bosses understood something timeless:

You train people how to treat you by what you tolerate.

The Deeper Meaning

This quote, paired with that old-world gangster ethos, is really about **boundaries backed by consequence**.

It says:

- I can be generous.
- I can be patient.
- I can be forgiving.

But none of that means I'm powerless.

Kindness is the invitation.

Respect is the requirement.

And strength is what's remembered when the dust settles.

In the end, whether in the streets, business, or life, the most dangerous people are rarely the loudest. They're the ones who gave you every chance to do right...

and never had to explain themselves when you didn't. Candice says, "I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason, confidence is silent, and insecurities are loud."

Having endured and survived immense betrayal, deception, manipulation, severe abuse, and having escaped narcissism and toxicity packaged up as love and care by some of the people she trusted and loved closest to her, rest assured that her book will contain some of the lowest and most painful moments that helped shape her into the woman she is today. "And although a lot of that was extremely painful and brutal," she adds, "I truly can't imagine my life being any different, or I wouldn't have the mental clarity and dexterity, and/or possess the sheer power and grace that I'm immensely proud of, and wear as a badge of honor today. I want to share a message of hope in a dark world and some very trying times in our society."

An Open Call to Las Vegas: Your Story Matters Here

This is where **YOU** come in.

Real Vegas Magazine is formally inviting locals—born and raised, newly arrived, quietly struggling, wildly dreaming—to step forward.

To drop in.

To go twelve inches deeper.

To tell the story only you can tell.

Not because it's pretty.

But because it's real.

Your story might be about:

- Growing up here
- Losing your way here
- Finding your way back
- Loving this city
- Surviving it
- Being shaped by it

There is no hierarchy of pain.

There is no competition for worthiness.

There is only truth.

And truth, shared bravely, has a way of healing more than just the teller.



Stay Tuned: This Is Only the Beginning

Candice Wiener's memoir: decades in the making; will be officially announced and released in the seasons ahead. Alongside it will come **ongoing "Tell Us Your Real Story" segments**, community features, and deeply human narratives that reflect the soul of Las Vegas beyond the Strip.

This city is not just neon and noise.

It is family.

It is history.

It is resilience.

It is heart.

Las Vegas is the best city in the world; not because it's flawless, but because it's real.

And now, more than ever, it's time we tell those stories... Together.

"From the bottom of my heart- thank you for sharing in my personal journey and subsequently some of the best years of my entire life thus far! I'm inspired most by my beautiful daughters, sisters, Granddaughter, Eden Elise, and soon to arrive, the newest addition, my Grandson, Ash Adam. I'm especially humbled and thankful for all my large and extended family, friends who have become family and partners in life, our supporters and local readers, advertisers, audience, and contributors."

~Candice Wiener

Inside Candice Wiener's upcoming memoir:

- Five generations of Las Vegas history—through one family's eyes
- Growing up behind casino walls, with no clocks and no windows
- Love, loss, widowhood, and rebuilding life as a single mother
- The moon, the sun, and the quiet power of spiritual renewal
- Betrayal, resilience, and the strength that comes from restraint
- Turning pain into purpose—and survival into legacy

📖 **Book announcement and title reveal coming soon**

✉ **Reader story submissions now open:**

info@realvegasmagazine.com

★ **Quarterly reader spotlights begin in 2026**

Submit your 'Real Story' or just simply share some basics with us via email:

info@realvegasmagazine.com



We will review and select one reader to spotlight and profile each quarter in subsequent issues to follow in 2026, and we truly hope these stories of passion, love, strength, hardships, and so much more empower others in our community, and help other locals connect with you on a much deeper and more real level.



CABINETS NOW



Cabinets Now is a Las Vegas kitchen cabinet company, specializing in cabinetry, prefabricated granite countertops and laminate flooring. Our experienced kitchen cabinet employees can help you with all your cabinetry needs in your Las Vegas Home.

We understand and appreciate the needs of our customers and will communicate openly with them to ensure their kitchen cabinet needs are met. At Cabinets Now, we offer a wide variety of hardware for your new Las Vegas kitchen, bath cabinets with such name brands as Top Knob, Jeffrey Alexander and MSI Surface.

Our team of professionals is knowledgeable in prefabricated granite counter tops. Our affordable kitchen cabinets are designed to bring elegance to your home without the hefty price tag. Take advantage of our sales in the Las Vegas area on laminate flooring as well!

All the jobs we do are important to us and our kitchen cabinet and prefab granite countertop for customers in Las Vegas, North Las Vegas and Henderson. Cabinets Now is much more than a Las Vegas kitchen cabinet company. We do laminate flooring, waterproof vinyl flooring, prefabricated granite countertops, sinks, faucets,



door casings, baseboards, crown molding and so much more. We offer an in-home estimate and measuring available for your Las Vegas kitchen remodeling needs. We have always adhered to the requirements of low price and high quality.

We are also a Better Business Bureau company, and have always been the best choice for Customers who want professional quality and service. We have a nice showroom and big warehouse where customers can buy right now and pick up immediately, allowing customers to easily finish the job.

Visit us online, or better yet, come into our fantastic showroom and have a look around!



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Alexandria Sidoris
Alexis Kouser
Alexis McArthur
Alicia Nelson
Alice Young
Alisha Kerlin
Alison Wainwright
Amanda Klein
Amanda Kouretas
Amanda Laub
Amanda Ralph
Amy Rosetti
Analyn Braza
Andeen Rose
Andrea Dupper
Angela Gettrost
Angela Stabile
Angela Tina
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Angelica Clemmer
Angelica McDonnell
Angelina Scarcelli
Anita Saldana
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April Drummond
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Berenice Orozco
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Chera Leigh
Cheryl Whittingham-Irwin
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Christina Vela-Vreeland
Courtney Orrock
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Yvette Auger
Yvette Zolina
Zoi Brees

2026 WOMEN WHO
wow
REAL WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

LOCAL WOMEN WHO TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS

We all know these women in our local community.

The ones who do the most in all the right ways.

Moms, Wives, Sisters, Business Owners and Leaders, Aunts, Grandmas, Nieces, Granddaughters,
Daughters, Nurturers, Providers. All around
real incredible women!

They're real intelligent, real creative, real strong and real amazing women.

YES, THESE WOMEN!



Photo Credit: Jose Burrola.

CHECK MATE

How Tiffanie Craddock Quietly Built the Power Engine Brands Never Saw Coming

Las Vegas is a city enamored with spectacle. But spectacle alone is fleeting. What endures—what compounds—is the structure beneath it. The invisible architecture that determines whether a moment fades... or becomes momentum.

Tiffanie Craddock understood this long before the industry learned her name.

Before she was the owner of a nationally respected agency or the founder of a full-service marketing enterprise, Craddock began where few decision-makers ever do inside the system itself. As a model, she experienced the industry's contradictions firsthand—the beauty and the imbalance, the opportunity, and the inefficiency. She saw how talent was often treated as interchangeable, how communication fractured under pressure, and how success was frequently dictated by chaos rather than clarity.

Most people tried to survive that system.

Craddock studied it.

She identified where power stalled, where money leaked, and where expectations collapsed. Those fractures became her advantage.

The first move was TLC Models.

Rather than launching another agency chasing hype, Craddock built one engineered for correction. TLC Models was designed with discipline, structure, and professional rigor—an agency that respected both talent and client with equal seriousness. No guesswork. No disorder. Just execution.

That precision transformed TLC Models into a nationally respected agency representing more than 3,500 professional models across the United States. Known for flawless delivery in high-pressure environments—where reputations are formed live, and mistakes are unforgiving—TLC Models became synonymous with reliability. In 2026, that leadership was formally recognized when the company was named Talent Management Agency of the Year, an honor earned through consistency, not noise.

But execution was never the endgame.



Working directly with brands, Craddock identified a deeper systemic failure. Companies were spending aggressively across events, digital campaigns, and social platforms—yet struggling to understand what actually worked. Impressions were easy to buy. Performance was not.

Marketing lacked cohesion.
Data lived in silos.
Accountability dissolved between vendors.

Rather than stacking more solutions onto a broken model, Craddock did what she had done before.

She built the infrastructure herself.

TLC Media Haus emerged as the natural evolution of everything she had learned—from the talent floor to the boardroom. It unified live execution, content creation, strategic marketing, media buying, and analytics under one roof.

No silos.
No redundancy.
No wasted spend.

Powered by TLC's national talent network, Media Haus campaigns are grounded in real human behavior—real engagement, real response, real conversion. Visibility becomes measurable. Performance becomes accountable. Marketing becomes intelligent.

This was the shift.

“
I spent years seeing the cracks in the industry from the inside. I didn't just want to fix the talent side or the brand side—I wanted to build the infrastructure where they finally work in perfect synergy”

TLC was no longer an agency.
It became an ecosystem.

To the untrained eye, Craddock's ascent may seem unexpected. In truth, it was inevitable. While the industry categorized her as “the model,” she was quietly learning how the entire machine operated—and where it failed.

She wasn't trying to be seen.
She was building the infrastructure that would decide who was.

That philosophy was recently highlighted on Legacy Makers, a platform dedicated to founders building enterprises designed to last. The feature captured not only what Craddock has built, but how—through alignment, discipline, and an uncompromising respect for systems.

Today, with TLC Models setting the national standard for elite talent execution and TLC Media Haus delivering end-to-end marketing strategy, Tiffanie Craddock has built something rare: a power engine that elevates talent, unlocks clarity for brands, and transforms moments into scalable enterprise growth.

This isn't a pivot.
It's an announcement.

The enterprise is built.
The system is live.
The board is set.

Craddock doesn't chase attention. She designs the infrastructure that directs it.



Publisher's Note:

Tiffanie Craddock is as striking in intellect and integrity as she is in presence. Her beauty extends far beyond what the eye can see; it lives in her discipline, her generosity, and her unwavering commitment to doing things the right way. She leads with grace, builds with intention, and uplifts everyone in her orbit. Watching her transform lived experience into lasting legacy is not only impressive—it is inspiring.

—Candice Wiener
Publisher & CEO, Real Vegas Magazine

Homelessness Isn't a Failure It's a Circumstance — and It Changed My Life



It taught me early that homelessness is rarely about character and often about circumstances, loss, rising costs, broken systems and life happening faster than resources can catch up. It gave me a lifelong commitment to restoring hope and access to people living through what others judge from a distance.

Care Wasn't New to Me — It Was Personal

Care Complex became home to my purpose long before I became CEO. I began volunteering with the organization in 2016. In 2020, I joined the board, drawn to the mission and the people it served. I watched Care stand up for individuals and families who didn't need pity, but a path forward. When the founder asked me to step into the CEO role, it was for two reasons that fit naturally together.

First, my background, which is rooted in business development and consulting, building organizations, strengthening systems and scaling impact from the ground up. Second, I could relate to the clients we serve not from theory, but from lived experience.

Homelessness Has More Faces Than People Realize

One of the biggest misconceptions about homelessness is that it only looks a certain way, but at Care, we serve a population many people don't recognize: the working homeless. These are individuals clocking in every day, doing everything they can, yet still unable to afford stable housing.

One moment can shift everything. In Las Vegas, the gap between wages and housing costs has grown so wide that hard work alone doesn't always create a way back in. That is why stigma matters.

Homelessness is rarely about a lack of effort or pure laziness. While that story may be true for some, it is often a temporary circumstance tied to access. Veterans navigating gaps in earned benefits, aged out foster kids or homeless youth, single parents or employees working full time but priced out by rising costs. Individuals recovering from medical emergencies, or people displaced after job loss. When we acknowledge that homelessness has many paths and many solutions, we respond with systems that actually work rather than assumptions that stall progress.

Before I ever led Care Complex, homelessness was already part of my story.

I come from very humble beginnings. I was raised by a single mother who loved us deeply, but life required her to carry more than most people ever should. My father died when I was 2 years old, and my mother, suddenly responsible for five children, had to navigate grief, instability and survival without a safety net.

She was never on drugs. She never struggled with any type of addiction. She was simply a mother who was dealt a difficult hand and did everything she could to keep her family together. There were seasons when "home" was not guaranteed for us and that experience shaped me.



Compassion Needs Structure to Last

My focus as CEO has been strengthening Care's ability to do what it was always designed to do. We built the foundation that makes this possible by creating the systems, policies, and procedures needed to operate with clarity, accountability, and consistency. We established donor and funding infrastructure, developed sustainable income streams, upgraded and reconfigured the facility to support programs and operations, all while implementing the technology required to sustain growth.

We reorganized pathways like our Homeless to Home program, to ensure clear expectations, structure, and assistance. We transformed our board of directors to align our leadership with Care's evolving needs and plans for expansion. More than anything, we are reinforcing Care as a bridge to fill the gap. Not just a place to survive a hard season, but a place to rebuild momentum.



When We Change the Stigma, We Change the Outcome.

The story of Care is carried by people fighting for their future. I have watched clients arrive worn down by uncertainty and constant survival decisions, to then shift their perspective when they realize they are not being judged here.

When support is consistent and a plan is visible, something changes. Hope becomes practical. Progress becomes possible.

A central part of my leadership is shifting how homelessness is understood and perceived. If we treat people as broken or hopeless, we build systems that keep them there. If we treat people as worthy and capable, we create solutions that help them rise. Care Complex is proof of what happens when compassion meets structure. We do not label people by what they have lost. We meet them where they are and assist with what they are working to regain.



This Is Only the Beginning

Care is growing in both reach and clarity. Our partnerships are expanding. Our systems are strengthening. Our vision is becoming scalable. My goal is to position Care Complex as a standard model where working individuals and families do not remain trapped in homelessness but move through it. Where the path to housing is clear, the resources are reliable, and the support is life changing.

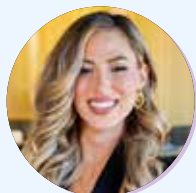
Homelessness is not who someone is. It is where someone is and Care Complex exists to help people end their experience not just temporarily but permanently.



2026 WOMEN WHO
wow
 REAL WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE



Abie Mae Durst



Alexis Kouser



Alexis McArthur



Andrea Dupper



Angela Stabile



Amanda Laub



Ayesha Mehdi



Berenice Orozco



Bobbi Vargas

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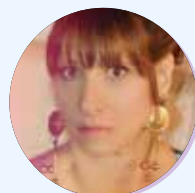
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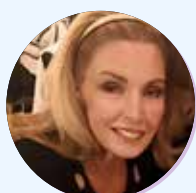
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Leah Monroe



Lindsay Feldman



Lisa Imbesi



Lissette Waugh



Maho Sugai



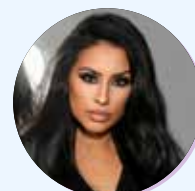
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Marissa Castillo



Premier SHOWGIRLS

THE ULTIMATE LAS VEGAS ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE

Step into the spotlight with Premier Showgirls, Las Vegas' premier luxury performance troupe—where classic showgirl elegance meets modern, show-stopping spectacle. From iconic feathered headdresses to jaw-dropping choreography, Premier Showgirls bring undeniable glamour, energy, and sophistication to every stage, event, and celebration.

Perfect for:

- Corporate events & brand activations
- Grand openings & VIP receptions
- Sporting events & red-carpet affairs
- Concerts, festivals & private luxury parties

When the moment demands **impact, beauty, and unforgettable Vegas flair**, Premier Showgirls deliver every time.



CONGRATULATIONS TO

Cari Byers

FOR BEING NAMED A
2026 WOMEN WHO WOW
OF LAS VEGAS

A true embodiment of grace, leadership, and creative excellence, Cari Byers continues to elevate the Las Vegas entertainment scene through vision, dedication, and undeniable star power. This well-deserved recognition celebrates her influence, artistry, and lasting impact on the community and the world of live entertainment.



BOOK THE BEST. BE UNFORGETTABLE.

Phone: 702.524.4190
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Email: cari@premiershowgirls.com
Instagram: @PremierShowgirls
Facebook: Premier Showgirls

FROM ZERO TO \$100 Million in 2½ Years

How one woman founder engineered
a category shift in artificial turf.



THE FOUNDER AS BUILDER

Founded by entrepreneur Carla Arzubiaga, Big Bully Turf is a woman-founded company built on the belief that aesthetics matter just as much as performance — because your yard should look as good as it functions. Before launching the brand, Carla spent over 20 years in technology and product development designing products people genuinely loved to use. That background shaped Big Bully Turf from day one: building systems, not just surfaces, and applying product discipline to a traditionally conservative home improvement category.

ENGINEERED, NOT REBRANDED

Big Bully Turf doesn't source off-the-shelf products. Designed using Carla's proprietary Effortless Flow™ technology, the turf system is engineered in-house to deliver superior drainage, odor control, and bacteria resistance — without sacrificing beauty. The turf is intentionally designed to be fuller, lusher, and more natural-looking, redefining what artificial turf should feel like underfoot.



SCALE AS STRATEGY

From zero to \$100 million in just two and a half years, Big Bully Turf is proof that doing things differently really works. Ordering millions of square feet of turf wasn't a marketing flex — it was a strategic move that allows the brand to pass savings directly to customers while maintaining a premium product. Scale is built into the business model, enabling Big Bully Turf to grow fast without compromising quality or design.

WHERE PERFORMANCE MEETS DESIGN

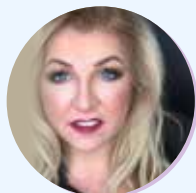
Big Bully Turf proves business can be bold, beautiful, and a little bit pink. The turf features a signature cool pink backing that helps keep surfaces cooler in extreme climates like Las Vegas — because heat resistance can still be stylish. Inspired by Waffles the English Bulldog, the brand's standard is simple: if it's not chic, comfy, and fabulous, it's not Waffles Approved.



CLOSING STATEMENT

Big, bold, beautiful — and proudly pink — Big Bully Turf is changing landscapes one fabulous yard at a time. From proprietary technology to scale-driven strategy, the brand shows how technical rigor and bold design can coexist — and why doing things differently is exactly what drives real growth.

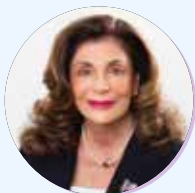
2026 WOMEN WHO
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Maria Miuccio



Mistie Knight



Mayor Shelley Berkeley

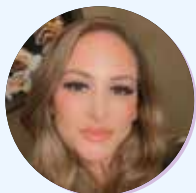


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Mayra Estrella



Melanie Speed



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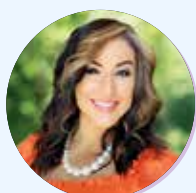
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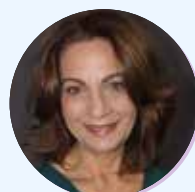
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**Susie Weiner
 Magit**



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In a city filled with accomplished professionals, Mandy **McKellar of McKellar Law** stands apart as a force of compassion, courage, and unwavering advocacy. A fierce champion for children and families, Mandy has built her legal career around protecting those who need a voice the most—often stepping into the hardest cases with both grit and grace. Her work in the children's justice arena is not performative or symbolic; it is hands-on, deeply rooted, and life-changing.

What makes Mandy a true **Woman Who Wows of Las Vegas** is not only her legal acumen, but her heart. She shows up—consistently, selflessly, and with integrity—for children navigating systems that can feel overwhelming and unforgiving. Beyond the courtroom, her commitment to our community is evident in the countless ways she supports, uplifts, and advocates for meaningful reform and protection for vulnerable youth.

Mandy's impact reaches far beyond her profession. She inspires confidence, leads with empathy, and reminds us that justice, when done right, is an act of love.

Publisher's Note:

By Candice Wiener, Publisher & CEO, Real Vegas

Mandy McKellar is not just a friend of Real Vegas Magazine; she is family. And that distinction matters, because family shows up, does the work, and stands firm when it truly counts. Mandy does all of that and more.

I am profoundly grateful for her real, lasting contributions to children's justice in Las Vegas, but even more so, I am personally honored to call her a friend. Mandy is the definition of a Woman Who Wows, not because of titles or headlines, but because of her unwavering commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us. She is a tireless champion for children who need advocates the most, and she does the hard work quietly, consistently, and with heart.

Our community needs more leaders like Mandy; people who don't just speak passionately at events or use big words, but who put in the actual time, energy, and compassion to fight for real justice. Mandy shows up every single day, and for that, she has my deepest respect and admiration.





Mayra Estrella

Grace Under Pressure: The Woman Who Stands Between Crisis and Clarity

Where medicine, law, and heart converge—Mayra Estrella becomes the advocate families didn't know they needed, but can't afford to face life's hardest moments without.

In the quiet moments when lives are upended—after an accident, during a medical crisis, or amid the disorienting aftermath of injury—clarity is rarely immediate. It is precisely in these moments that Mayra Estrella steps forward, not merely as a consultant, but as a steady, informed advocate who understands both the human cost and the institutional complexities families face.

As Founder and Owner of Estrella Consulting, LLC, Mayra Estrella has built a career at the intersection of medicine and law—two worlds that often operate in parallel, yet speak different languages. A Medical-Legal Liaison by profession and by temperament, Estrella brings deep, practical knowledge from her background in the medical field and her leadership experience as a Personal Injury Director of Business Development and Case Manager. This rare combination equips her to guide families and victims through some of the most challenging journeys of their lives, ensuring they are informed, supported, and never navigating alone.

What distinguishes Estrella is not simply her command of the personal injury landscape, but her ethical rigor. She understands the regulatory frameworks and marketing guidelines that govern



the personal injury network and operates with precision and integrity. For law firms and healthcare organizations, Estrella Consulting specializes in healthcare and legal marketing services related to personal injury—strategically increasing visibility, revenue, and long-term growth while adhering to strict ethical standards.

Her firm works closely with attorneys and medical professionals to design and execute thoughtful marketing strategies that connect those in need with trusted legal representation and medical care. From data analytics and lead-generation campaigns to building high-quality, niche digital platforms aligned with Google's best practices, Estrella Consulting delivers measurable results. Mayra also facilitates introductions across the medical and legal communities, nurtures referral relationships, and coordinates community outreach events and sponsorships that elevate awareness and service access. Yet Mayra's impact extends beyond boardrooms and case files.

“Her work lives at the intersection of medicine and law, but her purpose lives in protecting families when they are most vulnerable.”

In a deeply personal expression of her values, she also creates exquisite life castings—timeless sculptural works that preserve the imprints of hands, moments, and milestones in stone. These pieces are more than art; they are acts of remembrance and love, capturing the tenderness of family bonds and the fleeting beauty of now. The intention is unmistakable: to honor life, connection, and legacy.

A wife, mother, friend, and business owner, Mayra Estrella embodies the balance of strength and compassion.

She leads with both strategy and heart—advocating fiercely while never losing sight of the people behind the paperwork. It is this rare blend of professional excellence, ethical leadership, and genuine care that makes her profoundly deserving of recognition as a 2026 Women Who Wow.



For those seeking guidance through medical-legal challenges—or organizations looking to grow responsibly within the personal injury space—Mayra Estrella is a trusted call.

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Las Vegas, NV 89117
(725) 208-9406
mayra@mayraestrellaconsulting.com**

► *Women Who Wow 2026*

SHERYL BEST

The Heart Behind the Steakhouse | Echo & Rig

*Where legacy, leadership, and
generosity meet—Sheryl Best is pure Las Vegas soul.*



Las Vegas is a city built on legends, but it is sustained by the women who quietly shape its culture, elevate its standards, and carry its stories forward. Few embody that truth more gracefully than Sheryl Best—hospitality leader, arts advocate, entrepreneur, mother, and one of the most genuinely generous women in the Las Vegas community.

Sheryl's imprint on this city began at a pivotal moment in its history. As a key member of the opening team at The Mirage—Las Vegas' very first mega-resort—she helped usher in a new era on the Strip. The Mirage didn't simply open its doors; it redefined what Las Vegas could be. To be part of that foundational moment speaks to Sheryl's instinct for excellence, innovation, and world-class guest experience—qualities that have followed her throughout her career.

Her story is also deeply rooted in Las Vegas legacy. Sheryl's father served as the accountant to Frank Sinatra, a connection that recently revealed a rare and touching coincidence. While sharing stories, Sheryl discovered that the writer and publisher of this magazine's grandfather was Sinatra's attorney—a shared thread in a city where true multi-generational connections are increasingly rare. The two women bonded over memories, laughter, and reverence for an era that shaped Las Vegas' golden identity.

Beyond hospitality, Sheryl's heart for creativity and community shines through her contributions to the arts. Through her involvement with Delgado Dance Studios and as the creator of the Ballroom for Schools after-school program, she has introduced countless young students to dance as a vehicle for confidence, discipline, and self-expression. These efforts reflect who Sheryl is at her core—someone who believes in giving back, lifting others up, and creating access to beauty and opportunity.

For more than 14 years, Sheryl has also been an integral force behind the success of Echo & Rig, working alongside her brother to build and sustain one of the most respected steakhouse brands in the region. Known for its in-house butchery, elevated yet approachable dining experience, and unwavering commitment to quality, Echo & Rig has become a staple for both locals and visitors alike. Sheryl's leadership style—thoughtful, collaborative, and deeply human—has helped shape the brand's enduring reputation.

Never content to stand still, Sheryl has expanded into digital entrepreneurship as the founder of Vegas Gals on Whatnot, a livestream platform where she connects with audiences nationwide, offering curated finds and authentic, engaging experiences that feel as personal as they are entertaining.





“

Sheryl Best doesn't just build brands— she builds community, culture, and lasting legacy ”

At the center of everything she does is family. Sheryl is the proud mother of two accomplished daughters, women who reflect her strength, warmth, and work ethic. As a friend, she is humble, supportive, and unfailingly generous; qualities that make her impact felt far beyond business success.

It is with deep gratitude and admiration that we feature Sheryl Best once again in our Women Who Wow of Las Vegas special issue. She is not only a steward of legacy, but a builder of community; and Las Vegas is better off because of her.

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2026 WOMEN WHO
wow
REAL WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE



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Tashi Campbell



Tiffanie L. Craddock

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Tiffany Stabile



Tyra Bell



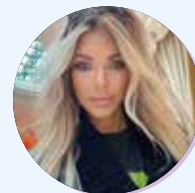
Tiffany Q



Tamra Trainer



Trish Williams



Vivienne Sievers



Tammy Eden



Tsikki Thau



Vandana Bhalla



**Yaquelin 'Jackie'
Lizaola**

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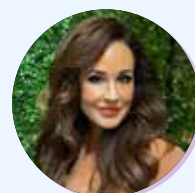
Yolla Alsabagh-Arnold



Yolanda Draï



Yvette Zolina



Zoi Brees

Congratulations to all

2026 WOMEN WHO
wow

Congratulations

BRANDI THOMPSON

*A true force of heart, hospitality,
and leadership; on being named a
2026 Women Who Wow!*

Brandi Thompson is the kind of woman who leaves an imprint everywhere she goes. In the kitchen, in the dining room, and throughout the Las Vegas philanthropic community, she leads with passion, grace, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

As Co-Owner, Director of Operations, Catering Sales Manager, and Assistant Chef at D'Agostino's Trattoria, Brandi wears just about every hat imaginable and wears them beautifully. Alongside her husband, the immensely talented Chef Dan Thompson, she plays a vital role in shaping the vision, leadership, and day-to-day operations of the beloved neighborhood trattoria.

From strategic decision-making and operational efficiency to hands-on customer service and staff development, Brandi is the heartbeat of D'Agostino's.

Her gift for hospitality ensures that every guest feels welcomed, valued, and eager to return. She listens, she leads, and she elevates, turning feedback into opportunity and dining experiences into lasting memories.

Beyond the restaurant walls, Brandi's generosity and philanthropic spirit continue to uplift the Las Vegas community, making her impact felt far beyond the table.

Stop by D'Agostino's Trattoria and say hello to Brandi to experience her warm smile, genuine hospitality, and the authentic Italian flavors that keep locals coming back again and again.



*Las Vegas is
lucky to have
women like
Brandi Thompson,
leaders who serve
with heart in
everything
they do*



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Quiet Luxury, Loud Impact

How Randi Garrett Cultivates Style, Soul,
and Community in Real Vegas

By Real Vegas Magazine

Cork and Thorn

WG
WINE GARDEN

Goldie
INSPIRED MIXOLOGY



In a city often defined by spectacle, it's the quietly intentional visionaries who leave the deepest imprint. Randi Garrett is one of those rare locals whose work doesn't shout for attention—it earns it. Through florals, wine, nightlife, and design-driven hospitality, Garrett has built spaces that feel personal, immersive, and unmistakably Real Vegas.

For those of us who live here, creators like Garrett are the heartbeat of the community. They don't just open businesses—they cultivate experiences, support local culture, and give the city its soul. That's why spending quality time with Randi recently—sitting down, catching up, and hearing her story in her own words—felt less like an interview and more like a homecoming.

Designing With Intention

"My work is rooted in creating environments that feel intentional, immersive, and undeniably stylish," Garrett says. "Each of my businesses is an extension of the same philosophy."

It's a mindset that rejects excess in favor of meaning. Garrett's version of luxury isn't about flash—it's about feeling. It's the subtle confidence of a space that knows exactly what it is.

Naakiti Floral: Where Florals Become Art

As founder of Naakiti Floral, Garrett approaches floral design as a living art form. Known for its refined, organic aesthetic, the studio blends sculptural movement with natural elegance. Each arrangement is thoughtfully composed to enhance a space rather than overwhelm it, favoring seasonality, texture, and mood over convention.

The result is florals that feel elevated yet alive—designed not just to be seen, but felt.

Naakiti Floral has become a go-to for those who understand that beauty is most powerful when it feels effortless.

Website: naakitifloral.com

Book a custom floral experience or inquire about events and installations.

Cork and Thorn: Presence Over Pretense

That same sense of atmosphere carries seamlessly into Cork and Thorn, a sophisticated lounge and nightlife destination where locals and visitors come together for hookah, live music, and conversation.

Moody lighting, intentional sound, and a stylish yet unpretentious crowd define the space. Cork and Thorn isn't about being seen—it's about being present.

"It's a place where people dress up, settle in, and let the night unfold," Garrett says.

In a city that moves fast, Cork and Thorn invites guests to slow down and savor the moment.

Website: corkandthorn.com

Phone: 702-823-2678

Visit for live music, hookah, and a nightlife experience designed for connection.

The Wine Garden: Sip, Stay, and Discover

The Wine Garden offers a different kind of escape—an indoor garden setting designed for lingering. Guests are invited to explore wines from around the world, available by the glass or bottle, in a space where atmosphere is just as important as what's poured.

Offerings include wine pairings, blind tastings, playful high tea experiences, charcuterie boards, and floral design classes—each curated to feel social, stylish, and just a little unexpected.

Join a tasting, book a class, or gather friends for an elevated wine experience.

Goldie: A Golden-Hour Future

The next evolution of Garrett's vision is Goldie, an upcoming mobile mixology concept housed in a vintage Airstream and set to open inside the Art District Food Park.

Playful yet polished, Goldie is designed for golden-hour moments—expertly crafted cocktails served in an intimate, design-forward setting. With a nod to nostalgia and a midcentury-modern edge, the concept blends hospitality, style, and spontaneity.

Goldie is proof that great design doesn't need four walls—it just needs intention.

Follow Goldie's journey and catch it when it parks.

Why Randi Garrett Matters to Real Vegas

Randi Garrett represents the best of Real Vegas: creative, community-rooted, and quietly influential. Her venues aren't just places to go—they're places to belong.

We're honored to finally have had the time to sit with her, hear her story, and celebrate the impact she continues to make. In a city built on reinvention, Garrett reminds us that authenticity never goes out of style.

Publisher's Note

At Real Vegas, we believe the true luxury of this city lives in its people—the creatives, builders, and culture-shapers who elevate our community with intention and heart. Randi Garrett is one of those rare individuals.

It is with deep respect that we celebrate her journey, her vision, and the environments she has so thoughtfully brought to life. We wish Randi continued blessings, inspired growth, and lasting success as she continues to shape the soul of Real Vegas.

—The Publisher, Real Vegas Magazine

Fast Five with Randi Garrett

1. What inspires your design philosophy?

Atmosphere. I'm inspired by how a space makes people feel the moment they walk in.

2. Your definition of luxury?

Luxury is intention. When everything feels curated, effortless, and authentic.

3. Favorite part of being a Las Vegas local?

The creative community. There's so much talent here, and we really support one another.

4. A perfect night at one of your venues looks like...

Great music, good conversation, and people lingering longer than they planned.

5. What's next for you?

Continuing to create experiences that feel personal, immersive, and memorable—starting with Goldie.

Designing Elevated Outdoor Living for Las Vegas

Multi-Year Gold Award Winner

In a city defined by bold vision and refined living, outdoor space is an extension of the home. Proficient Patios is one of Las Vegas' most trusted names in luxury outdoor design, transforming backyards into thoughtfully curated outdoor environments built for beauty, comfort, and longevity. From custom patio covers and pergolas to fully realized outdoor living spaces, each project is expertly designed and precisely built to suit the client's lifestyle.

Designed for Las Vegas Living

With deep local roots and a strong understanding of desert conditions, Proficient Patios designs and builds luxury outdoor living spaces that elevate both lifestyle and property value. In addition to design-build services, the company also offers hot tubs, patio furniture, and outdoor kitchens to complete the outdoor experience. Clients are invited to call to schedule a personalized design consultation for their home.

Award-Winning Craftsmanship

Proficient Patios has earned Gold and Silver awards across multiple years, including a Gold win in 2025, in several Best of Las Vegas categories. Known for clean lines, durability, and timeless design, the company delivers consistent excellence through a client-first approach.

As Proficient Patios celebrates its 20-year anniversary in February 2026, the company is preparing to expand its proven model through franchising across the United States, marking an exciting new chapter of growth.

A Woman Who Wows Las Vegas

Proficient Patios is led by co-founder and visionary Jessica Lane, a 2026 Women Who Wows of Las Vegas honoree. Born in Colombia, South America, and raised in Las Vegas from the age of four, Lane is a UNLV graduate who later attended the Boyd School of Law. She grew Proficient Patios from a home-based operation into a thriving company with a 25,000-square-foot showroom and design center. Today, the company employs 80 in-house professionals, holds six contractor licenses, and performs all work internally — never subcontracted — ensuring superior quality control and long-term warranty support.



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2019	2020-21-22	2023	2024	2025
#154	COVID	#272	#318	#275

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Outdoor Kitchen	Silver	Silver	Silver				
Hot tubs	Gold	Gold	Gold	Gold		Silver	Silver
Remodeler/Contractor		Gold	Gold	Gold	Gold	Gold	Gold
Masonry		Bronze	Bronze	Bronze		Bronze	Silver

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The Power of the Collective



Yaquelin Lizaola Is Building the Future of Marketing—One Strategic Collaboration at a Time

Las Vegas has never been short on ambition, but true visionaries—those who build with intention, precision, and purpose—are rare. Yaquelin Lizaola is one of them. As the founder of Content Collaborative and Pulse Media Studios, she is redefining how brands grow, how stories are told, and how collaboration fuels long-term success.

Content Collaborative is a Las Vegas-based, full-service marketing agency created to meet businesses where they are—and take them where they're meant to go. Designed as a contracted marketing partner, the agency supports both emerging brands and established organizations with strategic, results-driven solutions. Its offerings span brand strategy and positioning, social media and platform management, content creation, influencer and community partnerships, paid and organic digital advertising, event marketing, experiential activations, and detailed performance reporting.

What sets Content Collaborative apart is its flexibility. Through fractional CMO leadership and concierge-style marketing support, clients gain senior-level strategy without the overhead of an in-house team, allowing them to scale with clarity, efficiency, and confidence.

With more than a decade of experience across digital marketing, creative production, event strategy, and business development, Lizaola brings both creative instinct and operational discipline to every engagement. Her portfolio spans hospitality, restaurants, real estate development, nonprofits, medical and service-based businesses, and national franchises—giving her a uniquely adaptable, results-oriented approach.

“Luxury marketing isn't about being loud—it's about being intentional, aligned and unforgettable.”

Extending her vision beyond strategy, Lizaola founded Pulse Media Studios, a sister company designed to support high-quality content production and creative experiences. Serving as a hub for podcasting, photography, videography, branded content and creative rentals, the studio bridges the gap between big-picture strategy and hands-on execution. Together, Content Collaborative and Pulse Media Studios form a seamless ecosystem—where ideas are not only imagined, but expertly brought to life.

As founder and owner, Lizaola frequently operates as an extension of her clients' leadership teams. Her collaborative leadership style, paired with a community-first mindset, has positioned her as a trusted strategist and connector in the Las Vegas business landscape.

Founder-led. Strategy-driven. Community-powered. At its core, Content Collaborative is rooted in clarity, collaboration, and impact—helping brands build visibility, trust, and long-term value in markets that demand authenticity and excellence.



Publisher's Note

**By Candice Wiener,
Publisher & CEO, Real Vegas**

There are women you admire from afar—and then there are women you build with. Jackie is the latter.

She is a familiar force in the Las Vegas media space: bold, strategic, and unapologetically driven. Watching her continue to make power moves while staying grounded in integrity and vision is something I deeply respect. When Jackie and I came together, it wasn't just collaboration; it was alignment.

At Real Vegas, we believe collaborations are currency. When two women-led media powerhouses unite, the impact multiplies. Women supporting women isn't a trend... it is a cohesive strategy. It's how we elevate our community, expand our reach, and create lasting influence.

Jackie embodies everything Women Who Wow stands for: leadership, resilience, innovation, and heart. I am honored to collaborate with her, grow alongside her, and showcase women like Yaquelin Lizaola—founders who are not only building brands, but shaping the future of our city.

Together, we're proving that when women lead together, there is no ceiling—only expansion.

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Denise became interested in hair restoration because of her own hair loss at the age of 16.

She suffers from traction Alopecia and it took years of paying professionals who couldn't help her before she decided to educate herself about hair loss. The truth about hair loss is that there are many different factors that cause it and the truth about hair restoration is that there are many different treatments to restore it. Denise's goal is to give you a personalized treatment plan to activate your damaged hair follicles and restore your hair to its natural healthy state.

Before

After



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The Emerald Dream:

Renae Lunco's Legacy of Love and Elegance



I've known Renae Lunco for years as a friend but sitting down to interview her for this feature felt different. When I confessed my nervousness, she didn't hesitate; she pulled me into a warm hug and said, "We are family." That is Renae. A woman who builds empires while nurturing souls in equal measure.

Her journey began in 1986 as a wedding photographer, naming her company Seatyn Ashley Gallery after her daughter. For decades, she documented love stories, developing an instinctive eye for detail and emotion; skills that would later shape something far greater: a place where families begin their next chapter.

Renae and her late husband, Leon, whom I was fortunate to know... lived by a simple yet powerful motto: "yours, mine and ours." Together, they blended families from previous marriages and welcomed their son, Shane, creating a home rooted in love that multiplied rather than divided. When Leon passed, Renae grieved deeply. Still, she remained focused on the venue they built together, leaning on family and friends while recommitting to her health and well-being. She knew honoring his memory meant continuing to live with love, light and a laugh that touches your soul.

"We are family"

Today, that legacy thrives at Emerald at Queensridge. Shane serves as general manager, daughter-in-law Joey leads marketing, and son Daniel Kimble oversees the purification and physical care of the property. At 65, Renae is what I call an untouched beauty—proof that peace, holistic health, mindful eating, and a beautiful soul create ageless radiance. A devoted grandmother and lifelong Disney enthusiast, she escapes to the parks with her grandchildren whenever she can.

Emerald at Queensridge is her masterpiece. Nestled within the prestigious Queensridge community at 891 S. Rampart Blvd., the venue reflects Renae's decades of experience in celebration. From the moment you enter, you're surrounded by roses, bamboo hedges, blossoming trees, and cascading water features, all framed by Red Rock Canyon.

Weddings remain Emerald's specialty, but the venue is a true full-scale event center. The Grand Ballroom features soaring vaulted ceilings, a custom granite bar, a dedicated dance floor and state-of-the-art audiovisual capabilities. The bridal suite offers six vanity stations, while the patio showcases flowing water and lush landscaping. An exquisite on-site kitchen, led by Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef Chanh Bouphe,

serves fresh cuisine. With accommodations for 50 to 400 guests, Emerald adapts seamlessly to any celebration.

*"A venue built with heart
legacy and intention"*

Renae's greatest strength is her heart. She uplifts entrepreneurs, supports others personally and professionally, and treats everyone like family. Charities close to her heart include Pawtastic Friends and Pours for Paws.

While remaining a premier wedding destination, Emerald is expanding its focus to more community-centered events—from corporate gatherings and seminars to birthdays, quinceañeras, bar and bat mitzvahs, baby showers and bridal showers. The venue also hosts community events, galas, and a weekly farmers market. Some places must be experienced to be fully understood—and Emerald is one of them.

With a heart as vast as the stars that sparkle in her eyes, I thank Renae for the honor of photographing her for this cover feature, and Candice Wiener, owner, and publisher of Real Vegas Magazine, for the opportunity to tell her story.



By Charlie Polston

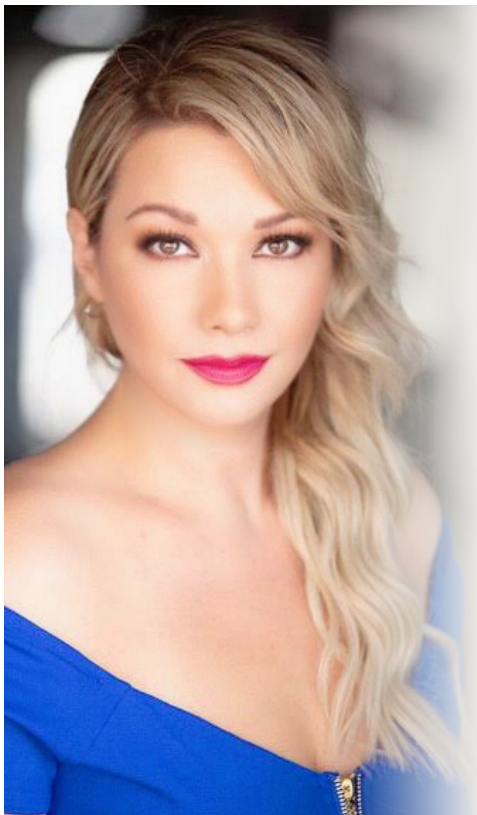
Publisher's Note:

Renae Lunco is always a strong candidate for our Women Who Wow issue—because Renae is as real as they come.

She tells you exactly how it is, leads with truth, and represents the kind of strength our community needs more of. Renae operates maternally, with love, light, and grace while building something lasting and meaningful. That balance is rare, and it's powerful.

At Real Vegas, we don't just feature Renae, we consider her family. She embodies what it means to uplift others while standing firmly in her own purpose. Women like Renae don't just create beautiful spaces; they create safe ones, inspiring ones, and legacy-driven ones.

It is an honor to celebrate her in Women Who Wow ~ today and always.
~ Candice Wiener



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FROM FAMILY FRACTURE TO SHARED FUTURE

How grief, grace and great hair turned an unlikely partnership into a Las Vegas beauty success

The curling iron hums softly as sunlight pours through the windows of Suite One, a bright, stylish salon tucked into a quiet Las Vegas neighborhood. On any given day, the client in the chair might be a Golden Knights player, a news anchor prepping for the 5 o'clock segment, or a reality-show regular slipping in for a low-key blowout—like myself.

No matter who it is, they're treated to the same warmth and attention. That's the magic Alexis McArthur built by turning life's hardest chapters into a haven of beauty and resilience.

"I never imagined I'd be back here," Alexis says, sweeping hair from her station with ease. "But sometimes life nudges you toward what's right, even if it's not in the plan." She means that literally.

Years ago, Alexis walked away from this very salon—Suite One—after her marriage ended. At the time, she needed space. A new chapter. Years later, she co-owns it again ... with her ex-husband's life partner. Yes, you read that right.

The Salon Chair That Sparked a Legacy

Alexis' story begins where many Vegas stories do not: not under neon lights, but in the grind behind them.

She's lived in the city since she was a toddler, raised in a family whose roots stretch back to Las Vegas' earliest days. One of her ancestors even helped settle the city.

"I've always loved Vegas," she says. "There's something about this place—the energy, the people. It's part of who I am."

After graduating high school, Alexis packed up for Provo to study cosmetology at Paul Mitchell. By 2000, she was back in Las Vegas, scissors in hand, ready to build a career. She landed a position at Suite One, then owned by someone else, and over five years built a loyal clientele. Eventually, she purchased the salon alongside her then-husband, Tommy. But business and marriage didn't mix.

"We gave it a shot, but working together wasn't a healthy environment for us," she says candidly. The two divorced. Alexis left Suite One. Tommy continued running the business. She moved on—until life circled back in the most unexpected way.



A New Chapter, Shared Roots

In October 2016, Tommy passed away suddenly, leaving behind four children—two with Alexis and two with Ashlee Whiting, his partner after the divorce.

At the time, Ashlee was working at Suite One. Alexis was focused on raising her children.

It was Tommy's parents who suggested something bold: Why not run the salon together?

"She had been a mother figure to my children," Alexis says. "And they loved her. So, when the opportunity came to team up, I said yes without hesitation."

The partnership could have been awkward—even explosive. Instead, it became a model of maturity, mutual respect, and shared vision.

"We got really close after Tommy's passing," Alexis reflects. "And we've always had a great relationship and partnership."

Pandemic Pressure and the Power of Reinvention

For years, Suite One thrived as a beloved local staple. Then COVID-19 hit.

"Money was tight. Stylists started leaving for private rooms because they didn't want exposure to too many people," Alexis recalls. "It was tough."

Health regulations required dividers between stations—necessary, but far from chic. Business slowed. The energy dimmed.

So they rebuilt.

New mirrors. A custom front desk. Updated shampoo bowls, bathrooms—everything. The transformation wasn't just cosmetic. It revived the spirit of the salon and drew new talent and clients back through the doors.

Serving Stars Without the Spotlight

While Suite One hasn't been splashed across TMZ, it has quietly become a hub for local notables.

"We've had reality stars, local news anchors, even people tied to the Golden Knights," Alexis says. "But honestly, everyone who walks in here gets VIP treatment." That's intentional.

**"HOMELIFE CHANGED.
BUSINESS CHANGED.
BUT THE COMMITMENT
TO SHOW UP NEVER DID."**

Front desk staff greet every client like an old friend. Whether you're a stay-at-home mom, a schoolteacher or a SportsCenter regular, the vibe is the same—warm, familiar, and unpretentious.

"We couldn't do this without our clients," Alexis says. "They're what keep us going."

Suite One offers everything from wedding styling and extensions to nails, waxing and facials. But it's not the service list that sets it apart—it's the people behind it.

"I want every stylist here to build a full book of clients," Alexis explains. "I lead by example. If you love what you do, work hard, and stay grateful, success follows."

The Boss Era: Calm, Confident, Focused

Alexis now works behind the chair just three days a week, a rhythm that allows her to prioritize motherhood without sacrificing business goals.

"I'm kind of a homebody when I'm not working," she admits. "My kids are everything. They're the reason I push through hard days."

And the hard days come. But Alexis doesn't dwell there. Instead, she focuses on staying current, mentoring young stylists, and preserving a culture that is both laid-back and top tier.

"There's no big plan to franchise or blow it up," she says. "We just want Suite One to stay fresh, to keep evolving and to always feel like home."

When asked what she hopes her children learn from her example, Alexis doesn't hesitate.

"That hard work matters. That you don't quit when it's tough. And that if you treat people well and do what you love, good things happen."

She hopes they remember the love and energy poured into Suite One over the past two decades—and understand that success isn't flashy.

It's steady. Intentional. Deeply personal.

"This isn't a fairytale comeback," she says. "It's better." It's a story about choosing collaboration over ego, gratitude over grief, and showing up—day after day—to build something real.

"I never set out to wow anyone," Alexis adds. "But when you keep going, even through the hard stuff, that's what really makes people take notice."

In a city built on flash, that kind of quiet confidence may be the rarest glow of all.

For more on **Alexis McArthur**, **Ashlee Whiting** and **Suite One** services, follow them on Instagram **@suiteonelv**.

About the Author: Roy "Big Country" Nelson is a Las Vegas native and is a former 4x MMA Champion, UFC TUF Champion, Renzo Gracie Blackbelt, who now is partnered with Choice Life Care and their ambassador program.

For more information, please visit and follow: **roynelson.com**

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Regenerate Like a Pro Athlete, Now in Las Vegas

Where Science-Backed Recovery Meets Everyday Wellness



Las Vegas thrives on nonstop energy, high stakes and a rhythm that doesn't stop. But that relentless pace comes at a cost: Nevada now ranks as the second most stressed state in the nation, with residents reporting burnout linked to work, finances and health, according to WalletHub's 2025 report.

Pause Studio Las Vegas, a wellness destination rooted in science-backed recovery and regeneration, has opened to help locals fight back. Known for bringing elite-level recovery to the everyday person, Pause Studio's doors are officially open at 1043 S. Rampart Blvd. in Rampart Commons.

Recover Like the Pros

What makes Pause different is its approach. Rather than following the spa model of relaxation through luxury alone, Pause blends cutting-edge recovery technology with restorative therapies that help the body repair, restore and rebalance the same way professional athletes do, all under one roof. The studio's newest offering, Aescape, introduces AI-powered, hands-free massage technology designed to deliver precise, customizable muscle relief without oils or manual guesswork.

Cryotherapy chambers. Infrared saunas. Floatation therapy tanks. LED light therapy. IV nutrient drips. Guided breathwork and contrast therapy. Aescape, an AI-powered robotic massage experience. Each service at Pause is designed to trigger the body's natural healing processes, reducing inflammation, improving circulation, optimizing sleep and supporting mental clarity.

The same modalities trusted by world-class athletes and performance experts are now accessible to anyone looking to feel, move and live better. Whether you're recovering from an intense workout, a long flight or a demanding workweek, Pause gives every guest the tools to recharge with purpose.



The Science of Slowing Down

While once confined to professional locker rooms and elite training centers, these modalities are now part of a growing movement toward preventative wellness, a shift from treating symptoms to maintaining optimal health.

Cryotherapy, for instance, uses subzero temperatures to boost blood flow and reduce inflammation, leading to faster muscle recovery and improved mood. Infrared saunas aid detoxification and circulation, while floatation therapy, which suspends the body in a buoyant, zero-gravity solution, helps reset the nervous system and promote deep relaxation, a meditative antidote to modern stress.

A New Wellness Standard for Las Vegas

Stepping inside Pause Studio feels like an exhale. The modern space is intentionally designed to create a sense of calm, with minimalist interiors and a quiet energy that invites guests to disconnect from their phones and focus inward.

Beyond its services, the studio represents a larger shift in the wellness industry. Pause prioritizes proactive self-care, accessible technology and education about long-term health. In a city built around stimulation, Pause stands as an invitation to balance.

As part of a growing national brand redefining modern recovery, Pause now counts 25 locations across 11 states, with more on the way. Each studio offers a curated range of experiential therapies, from otherworldly float sessions and detoxifying infrared saunas to replenishing, vitamin-packed IV drips. The concept is driven by a simple mission: to give people everything they need so they can be everything they're meant to be.

Locals were introduced to the concept during the grand opening on Saturday, October 18, featuring guided tours, raffles and exclusive discovery packages. Guests explored the same recovery modalities trusted by professional athletes, now available to the public for the first time in one elevated destination.

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As part of a growing national brand redefining modern recovery, Pause now counts 25 locations across 11 states, with more on the way. The Las Vegas studio is now open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Packages and memberships are available at pausestudio.com/lasvegas.

So whether you're a weekend warrior, a casino executive, or simply a local looking to feel better in your own skin, consider this your invitation to recover like a pro. Because in a city that never stops moving, the ultimate power move might just be learning to Pause.



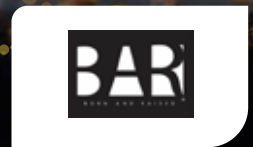
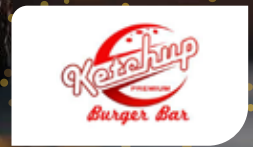
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HOW SOCIAL DARTS IS AUTOMATING CONNECTION IN A POST-ZOOM LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas welcomes more than 6.3 million convention attendees each year, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. However, in 2026, many of these corporate teams will arrive with a new challenge. After years of remote and hybrid work, coworkers are meeting in person for the first time with almost no connection. Traditional group dinners filled with forced small talk and awkward ice-breakers are just not cutting it anymore.

As convention season ramps up, with annual convention spending topping \$10 billion, companies are under serious pressure to justify travel and off-site budgets with experiences that actually build connections.

That shift is fueling an uptick at venues built for interaction, not observation. One of the clearest examples is Social Darts®, exclusive to Flight Club, located in the Grand Canal Shoppes at the Venetian Resort on the Las Vegas Strip. Instead of relying on conversation alone, the experience automates connection through competitive play.

Social Darts® is powered by technology that handles scoring, pacing and gameplay. Everyone participates, games move quickly and the excitement of competitive leisure removes the awkwardness of introductions. Groups jump straight into action and the competition naturally creates energy, conversation and connection. Within minutes, coworkers stop feeling like strangers and start functioning like a team.

For convention groups, that is what truly matters. With real dollars being spent on flights, hotels and meeting space, organizers want outings that deliver actual value. Interactive play provides a shared goal, which research shows is more effective for building trust and collaboration than passive social settings. The game does the heavy lifting, making connection feel organic instead of forced.

Flight Club pairs that experience with globally inspired, shareable dishes and a rotating menu of seasonal handcrafted cocktails and mocktails. Groups can snack, sip and socialize without interrupting gameplay, keeping the focus on interaction rather than table service or seating charts.

Locals are already in on this concept. Flight Club has become a go-to for coworkers meeting after work, residents hosting visiting friends and family and friend groups looking for a night out that feels social without being uncomfortable. The appeal is simple... People can compete, laugh and connect without trying too hard.

The timing aligns with broader workforce trends. Gallup reports that roughly one-third of U.S. workers now operate in hybrid or fully remote roles. As fewer people share daily office space, shared experiences have become more valuable and more intentional.

In a city built on bringing people together, competitive leisure is emerging as more than a trend. For convention teams and locals alike, Flight Club shows how technology can move people off their screens and automate real connection.



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Sean Su, MD, is a graduate of University of California – Irvine, and earned his medical degree from Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

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Vegan in Vegas

Las Vegas No. 1 for Vegan Donuts



Before we dive headfirst into the decadent custard inside a local vegan donut, let's start the year with a monumental vegan fail — and how it could have been avoided. Unfortunately, it's one many vegans are now experiencing.

Twin Creeks at Silverton is, as the name suggests, a steakhouse.

Vegan-friendly is not what immediately comes to mind. Yet for years, it was. I even highlighted its options in this column and on veganinvegas.com. Those days, however, are gone.

I recently attended a Christmas gathering there for a local company and was made to feel like the greatest imposition imaginable. When I asked if the chef could simply roast the artichokes — which everyone else was getting — in olive oil instead of butter, I had told her “Heads would explode if I asked.” Twin Creeks once offered a lovely vegan sorbet for dessert; that, too, has disappeared. Throughout dinner, I was assured they would “try to find something” for me. When dessert



arrived, my place setting was left empty. When I asked why, I was told, “Oh no, we couldn't find anything for you.”

I was left with a house salad and a hastily assembled pasta with vegetables and olive oil, while everyone else received thoughtful, gourmet service. And all they had to do was keep what already worked — a watermelon salad, roasted vegetables prepared with olive oil, or existing pasta dishes. Instead, when the menu was redesigned in October, vegan options were eliminated entirely.

When I asked why, I was told veganism had been viewed as “woke.”

I couldn't believe my ears. Suddenly, my diet was political.

As Robert F. Kennedy Jr. promotes increased saturated fat consumption and former President Donald Trump publicly encourages eating more meat, dairy and eggs, it appears the culture wars have come for vegans — the very people eating in alignment with science, the World Health Organization and climate researchers who say this is how we must eat to protect both our planet and ourselves.

Restaurants across the valley that once offered thoughtful vegan options are cutting them. Several vegan-focused businesses, including NoButcher, have closed. Las Vegas, once a growing and vibrant vegan community, is now seeing those offerings shrink — and politics appears to be one of the reasons. It's a shame.





Offering choice and accommodating all diets — whether vegan, allergy-related, dairy-free or gluten-free — only strengthens a restaurant's bottom line. At a time when many establishments are struggling, it's baffling to watch potential revenue streams disappear rather than expand.

Now, let's be clear: being vegan doesn't mean eating health food all day. Oreos are vegan. And thanks to Ronald's Donuts, so are some of the most indulgent treats in Las Vegas.

Located at 4600 Spring Mountain Road in Chinatown, Ronald's Donuts was recently named the top vegan donut shop in the United States by VegNews. My weekly visits never disappoint. Old-fashioned, custard-filled donuts, fritters — even vegan bagels with faux ham and cheese — are available daily. While Pinkbox offers two vegan options among more than 30 donuts, Ronald's takes the opposite approach: the top two shelves of the case are entirely vegan.



And I dare anyone to taste the difference.

Sweet, decadent and unapologetically indulgent, these donuts are for everyone — vegan or not.

Vegan pastry options in Las Vegas are limited. Bronze Café offers an impressive selection of vegan cookies and scones, and Manan Bakery will make a vegan birthday cake with two days' notice. But at Ronald's, every day feels like Christmas for vegans, with endless treasures lining the case.

Next up, we'll dive into Strip buffets to see which ones come out on top for vegan diners. I already know the answer. Here's a hint: it rhymes with bin.



To read more about these and other restaurants go to veganinvegas.com and listen for reviews on The **Karel Cast** wherever you get your podcasts. Reviews are often featured at youtube.com/reallykarel so subscribe as well as realvegasmagazine.com Send comments to comments@veganinvegas.com and follow the adventures of a vegan entertainer and his little dog Ember around town and beyond.



Leading with Heart:

Maho Sugai and the Legacy of Ichiza Restaurant

By: *Patranya Bhoolsuwan*



When diners walk into Ichiza Restaurant, many describe the same feeling: it feels like Japan. That sense of authenticity doesn't happen by accident. It's carefully nurtured by Maho Sugai, the general manager of Ichiza and one of Las Vegas' quietly powerful local businesswomen.

Sugai's journey to leadership began thousands of miles away. She came to the United States from Japan as a student, eventually landing in Las Vegas to study hospitality management at UNLV. At the time, she knew little about the city beyond its reputation as a global hospitality hub, but she quickly discovered something special. "Las Vegas has so many opportunities," she says. "You can experience so many different people and cultures in one city."

After working in Japanese restaurants, hotels, and Asian dining concepts, Sugai was introduced to the owners of Ichiza through professional connections. When the restaurant's previous owner prepared to retire, the opportunity arose, and she was asked to step into a leadership role she never imagined for herself.

"I never thought I would be running a restaurant," she admits. "I always thought I would support someone else's business." Nearly four years later, Sugai oversees both Ichiza locations, balancing operations, staff, and customer experience with grace earned through experience.

Running a restaurant, she learned quickly, demands respect, for people, for process, and for teamwork. "Without employees, we can't run the business. Without customers, we can't keep going," she says. "Everyone matters. The server, the cook, the dishwasher. It all works together."

That philosophy is deeply influenced by Japanese culture, where hospitality exists even without a tipping system. "In Japan, people show respect no matter the job," Sugai explains. "That respect is part of the culture." At Ichiza, she works intentionally to bring that mindset into an American restaurant setting, fostering respect among team members and extending it to every guest.

Authenticity is at the heart of Ichiza's success. From the way food is prepared and presented to the atmosphere of the dining room, Sugai aims to make guests feel transported. "Japanese customers tell me they feel like they're back home," she says. "People who've traveled to Japan say the same thing."



That authenticity has built remarkable loyalty. Some customers have been dining at Ichiza for more than 20 years. "People come back not just for the food," Sugai says. "They come back for the relationships."

Ichiza operates two distinct dining experiences. The original location offers lively, open dining where conversations spark easily. The second, known as Hanare, meaning "separate building", features private rooms designed for intimate gatherings, family celebrations, and special occasions. The menu remains the same, but the ambiance shifts to meet different moments in diners' lives.

One of Ichiza's most unique offerings is its Japanese breakfast menu, introduced nearly three years ago, an uncommon experience in Las Vegas. Inspired by traditional breakfasts served at Japanese inns, it reflects Sugai's commitment to sharing cultural experiences beyond dinner service.

As Ichiza approaches its 25th anniversary, Sugai sees the milestone as a celebration of shared history. "Customers tell me they came here 10, 15, even 20 years ago," she says. "They watched their kids grow up here. That's our story together."

Looking ahead, she hopes the next chapter is just beginning. "We've made it to 25 years," she says. "Now I hope we continue for 50 years or more."

Under Maho Sugai's leadership, Ichiza isn't just a restaurant. It's a living legacy, rooted in authenticity, respect, and the quiet power of community.





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PET HOSPICE CARE

IT'S NOT ABOUT GIVING UP.

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Dr. Johnathan Sneed

TWO BY TWO PET SUPPORT

Hospice Care is about loving your pet deeply enough to choose comfort, dignity, and presence when the future feels uncertain. Hospice is about honoring the life that is still here—while offering thoughtful guidance through one of the most tender chapters of loving an animal.

At *Two by Two Pet Support*, we believe hospice decisions should never be rushed or reduced to medical facts alone. True hospice care looks at the whole picture—your pet, your family, and the life you share together.

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There is no single "right" way to walk this path. Every family carries their own beliefs, emotions, and fears when facing serious illness.



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Hospice is about **being present**, paying attention, and caring with intention. It allows families to notice changes, understand what they are seeing, and move forward with clarity rather than fear.

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REAL VEGAS®

Vegas Fallout 2026 Ignites the SPIRIT OF THE OLD WEST

The dust kicked up and the competition heated up as **Vegas Fallout 2026** took over the desert, bringing together an unforgettable showcase of grit, talent, and community. From the rugged charm of the frontier to the high-stakes energy of the competition, every detail of this year's event embodied the adventurous spirit of Las Vegas.

A major highlight of the festivities was the legendary **Culinary Gauntlet**, where flavors clashed in a true test of skill. Our **Real Vegas** team had a spectacular time witnessing the action, with **Old Man Liver** serving as one of our three distinguished celebrity judges, alongside the renowned **Chef Vic Vegas** and our very own magazine representation.

A special thank you to the iconic **Pioneer Saloon** and the beautiful **Sandy Valley Ranch** for hosting this incredible gathering and providing the perfect backdrop for such a unique experience. Their exceptional hospitality and western heritage elevated the entire pictorial.

The day's vibrant energy and stunning visuals were perfectly captured by **Michael Rogers of Michael W. Rogers Photography**, whose lens reflected the excitement, character, and community that define the Vegas Fallout event.

Where history meets the heat of competition — only in Real Vegas.

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RED MEAT LOVERS CLUB

Ignites Las Vegas with *Culinary Philanthropy*

The grills were hot and the atmosphere was electric as the **Red Meat Lovers** Club brought together an extraordinary showcase of flavor, passion, and community for its latest “meating.” From the finest cuts to the shared joy of a world-class dining experience, every detail of this gathering embodied the bold and sophisticated spirit of Las Vegas.

Guests enjoyed a true celebration of culinary craftsmanship, savoring perfectly prepared dishes while networking for a cause. A special thank you to the “Secretary of Steak” and the local partners whose exceptional hospitality and commitment to excellence elevated the entire experience for our **Real Vegas** team.

The event’s rich textures and unforgettable moments were perfectly captured by **Stephon Vierra**, whose lens reflected the warmth, excitement, and prestige that define the **Red Meat Lovers** community.

Where passion for flavor meets the art of the grill — only in Real Vegas.

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