



Les Dames d'Escoffier[®]
INTERNATIONAL
Sacramento Chapter

Celebrating
**10 YEARS OF
IMPACT**

Celebrating Ten Years of Impact



Les Dames d'Escoffier International
Sacramento Chapter, 2015-2025

Les Dames d'Escoffier International Vision

To be the preeminent global professional association for women leaders in the food, beverage, and hospitality industries.

Sacramento Chapter Vision

To focus on excellence in leadership and philanthropy to advance the lives and professional careers of women in agriculture, food, beverage, hospitality, and related fields across the communities represented by our membership.

Sacramento Chapter Mission

We give our time, money, professional expertise, and other resources to inspire, support, and advance our members as well as women in our communities working in agriculture, food, beverage, hospitality, and related fields.

10th Anniversary Annual Report Credits

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Celebrating Ten Years of Impact

By Dame Amy Myrdal Miller



What an honor it is to be serving as president of the Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI) Sacramento Chapter during our tenth year! I was a founding member, and I have watched with awe and amazement as our chapter has grown in membership, recognition, respect, and impact through our programming and philanthropy.

LDEI was founded in New York City in 1976.

Dame Sue Huffman Robison shares insights in the inspiration for founding this organization in her article on page 17.

The Sacramento Chapter was founded in 2015 with the following 22 members, including five members who were originally inducted into LDEI in other chapters. Many of our founding members are still active members today, contributing to our rich history as well as our current initiatives. **Dame Elaine Corn** shares on page 18 the story about The Valley Lights that prompted her to form our chapter.

LDEI Sacramento Founding Members

Debbie Arrington	Andrea Lepore
Suzanne Ashworth	Dani Luzzatti
Elise Bauer	Patricia Murakami
Elaine Corn	Amy Myrdal Miller
Shankari Easwaran	Roxanne O'Brien
Ann M. Evans	Kathi Riley Smith
Lina Fat	Brenda Ruiz
Lane Giguere	Shannin Stein
Amina Harris	Amber Stott
Carolyn Kumpe	Joni Stuart
Sue Huffman Robison	Teresa Urkofsky

Today, our chapter has nearly 100 members led by a 14-member board of directors as well as five committees that contribute to our impact through public outreach, educational programming, and philanthropy.

- The **Board of Directors** includes the four executive officers, comprised of the president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary, as well as the immediate past president, a member support liaison, committee chairs, and four directors at large.
- The **Nominating Committee**, chaired by the immediate past president, identifies members to serve on the board.
- The **Program Committee** plans, markets, and hosts events for members and the public.
- The **Membership Committee** identifies and recruits potential new members and collaborates with the Program Committee on programming to engage with and retain current members.
- The **Scholarship & Philanthropy Committee** identifies scholarship opportunities and philanthropic gifts, works with community partners to develop funding for named scholarships, and finds appropriate and meaningful ways to recognize and thank donors and partners.
- The **Communications Committee** leads all public relations, marketing, advertising, and member communication efforts.

Leadership from our board and committees has allowed us to expand our community impact. Here are just a few of our major success stories.

Past president **Dame Ann Evans** recommended we partner with the Davis Farm to School Program to co-host The Village Feast, which has been our most significant source of



fundraising for our philanthropy efforts. All proceeds from this event are divided equally between the Davis Farm to School Program and LDEI Sacramento. You can read more about the history and impact of The Village Feast on pages 19.

Over the course of ten years, our philanthropic giving surpassed \$125,000, including a \$25,000 grant given over five years to support the Saint John's Program for Real Change. The impact of this gift is featured in an article along with a QR code to view a video on page 23.

Our programming for members has been diverse and delightful, including members-only hands-on educational activities held in members' homes focused on pairing honey and cheese, making Chinese dumplings, cooking Mexican food, making French pastries, and making fresh cheeses. We have also hosted many Dames Night Out events, designed to facilitate networking and noshing at women-owned bars, tasting rooms, and restaurants across the Sacramento region.

Our public programming, which is a required part of our non-profit status, ramped up in 2023 with the launch of our LDEI Sacramento Speakers Series. This wonderful idea, like so many others, was brought forth by past president **Dame Amina Harris**, who said, "We really need to do more to showcase the expertise of our members!" Read more about the Dames and other women who have been featured in the five events we've hosted on page 14.

None of our accomplishments would have been possible without an energetic and engaged board of directors and enthusiastic members who serve on committees, open their homes and businesses for our events, and share their time, expertise, talents, and financial donations.

I am incredibly grateful to the 2024-2025 board members and committee co-chairs listed below who have attended monthly board meetings, thoughtfully discussed issues and initiatives, led committees, carefully managed our financial resources, encouraged other women leaders to join our chapters, and strived to make our chapter stronger, more resilient, and more impactful. I have appreciated the support and enjoyed the laughter the past year, and I look forward to seeing the future impact of our small but mighty chapter under the leadership of **Dame Shelly Kessen**.

Dame Amy Myrdal Miller
2024-2025 President

LDEI Sacramento

2024-2025 Board of Directors

Executive Officers

President: Amy Myrdal Miller

Vice President: Shelly Kessen

Treasurer: Carrie Boyle

Secretary: Debbie Arrington

Board Members

Past President & Nominating Committee Chair: Rachael Levine

Program Committee Chair: Amanda Frew

Membership Committee Chair: Jennifer Kaye

Member Support Liaison: Kate Washington

Scholarship & Philanthropy Committee Chair: Ashley Rosales

Communications Committee Chair: Heather Fortes

Director-At-Large: Randii MacNear

Director-At-Large: Corinne Martinez

Director-At-Large: Bobbin Mulvaney

Director-At-Large: Marcella White

Committee Co-Chairs

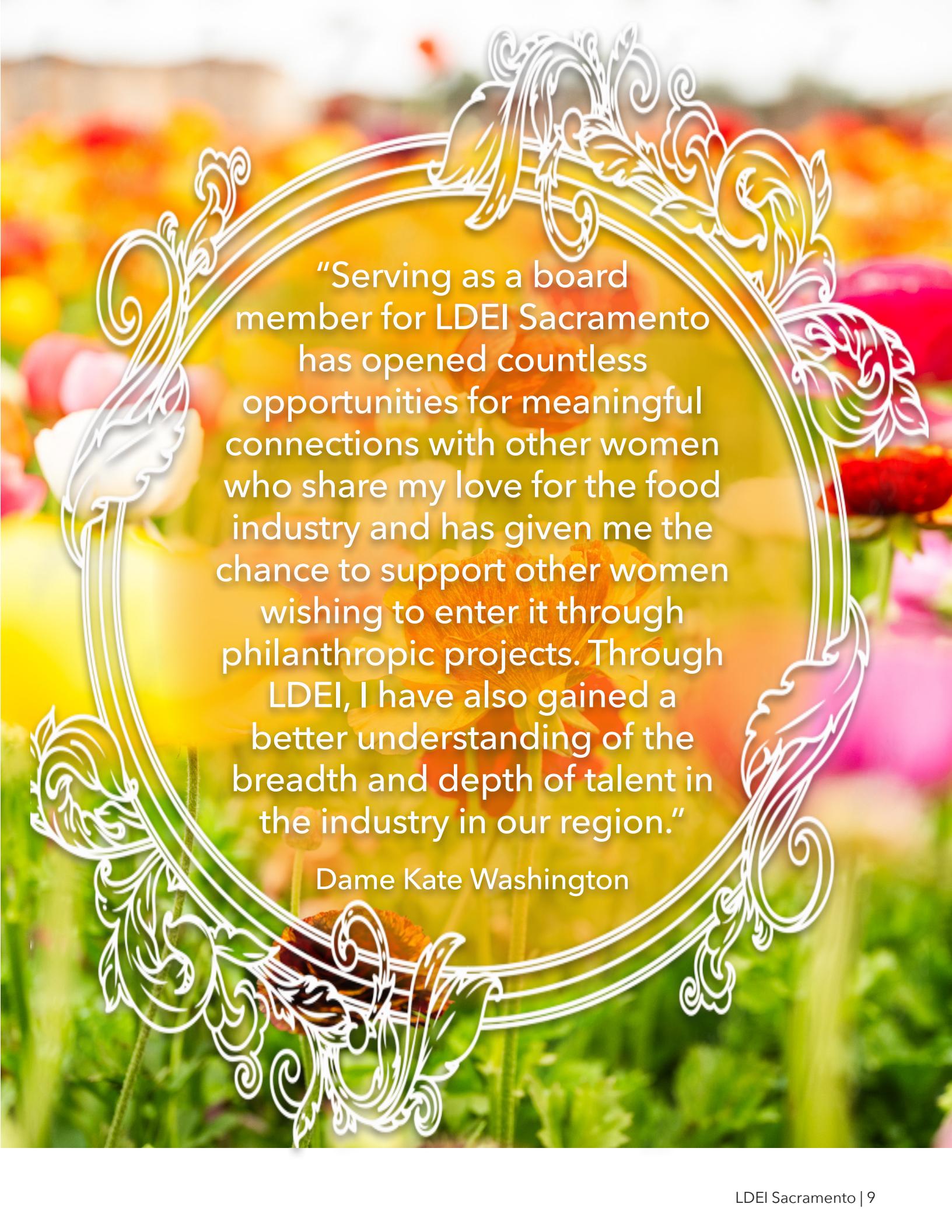
Program Committee Co-Chair: Liz Mishler

Membership Committee Co-Chair: Ann M. Rolke

Scholarship & Philanthropy Committee Co-Chair: Beth W. Byers

Communications Committee Co-Chair/Social Media: Cinthia Martinez

Communications Committee Co-Chair/Newsletter, Email & PR: Maya Wilson



“Serving as a board member for LDEI Sacramento has opened countless opportunities for meaningful connections with other women who share my love for the food industry and has given me the chance to support other women wishing to enter it through philanthropic projects. Through LDEI, I have also gained a better understanding of the breadth and depth of talent in the industry in our region.”

Dame Kate Washington

10th Anniversary Celebration, Annual Meeting & New Member Induction

Sunday, August 24, 2025 | 11:00AM to 3:30PM

Milagro Event Center by Bella Bru | 6241 Fair Oaks Blvd, Carmichael, CA 95608

11:00AM	Registration & Networking
11:25AM	Members & Inductees Take Seats for Annual Meeting
11:30AM	CALL THE ANNUAL MEETING TO ORDER Chapter President Amy Myrdal Miller
11:31AM	Determination of the Presence of a Quorum Chapter Secretary Debbie Arrington
11:32AM	SECRETARY'S REPORT: Review & Voting Member Approval of 2024 Meeting Minutes Chapter Secretary Debbie Arrington
11:35AM	PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Presenting LDEI Sacramento's 10th Anniversary Report Chapter President Amy Myrdal Miller
11:45AM	TREASURER'S REPORT Chapter Treasurer Carrie Boyle
12:00PM	Family Style Lunch Service Begins
	COMMITTEE REPORTS
	Program Committee Chair Amanda Frew
	Communications Committee Chair Heather Fortes
12:45PM	Scholarship & Philanthropy Committee Chair Ashley Rosales
	Membership Committee Chair Jennifer Kaye



1:15PM	10th Anniversary Champagne Toast Dessert Service Begins
1:20PM	BOARD NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT: Review & Voting Member Approval of 2025-2026 Board Officers and Board Members Board Nominating Committee Chair Rachael Levine
1:30PM	Recognition of Outgoing Board Officers and Board Members Chapter President Amy Myrdal Miller and Incoming President Shelly Kessen
1:40PM	TRANSFER OF THE PRESIDENT'S GAVEL Adjourn the Annual Meeting Chapter President Shelly Kessen
1:45PM	New Member Induction Membership Committee Chair Jennifer Kaye
2:50PM	Closing Remarks from the 2025-2026 Executive Board Chapter President Shelly Kessen Chapter Vice President/Co-Vice Presidents Chapter Secretary Debbie Arrington Chapter Treasurer Carrie Boyle
3:00PM	Group Photos
3:10PM	Gather Your Anniversary Gift at the Flower Bar
3:30PM	Event Ends



LDEI Sacramento Financial Update

2025 Budget

INCOME	AMOUNT	NOTES
EVENT INCOME		
Members-Only Events	\$3,000.00	
Public Events	\$7,500.00	Speakers Series
The Village Feast	\$20,000.00	
Kitchen Swap Shop Fundraiser	\$2,500.00	
TOTAL EVENT INCOME	\$33,000.00	
PRIVATE DONATIONS		
Board Members	\$2,000.00	
Members	\$500.00	
Non-Members	\$500.00	
TOTAL DONATION INCOME	\$3,000.00	
INTEREST INCOME		
Interest Income	\$2.00	
TOTAL INTEREST INCOME	\$2.00	
MEMBERSHIP DUES		
Primary Members	\$18,200.00	
Secondary Members	\$400.00	<i>These are members who pay national dues through another chapter.</i>
TOTAL DUES INCOME	\$18,600.00	
TOTAL INCOME	\$54,602.00	
EXPENSES	AMOUNT	NOTES
EVENT EXPENSES		
The Village Feast	\$6,000.00	
Annual Meeting & New Member Induction	\$4,000.00	
Holiday Party	\$2,500.00	
Members-Only Events	\$1,200.00	
Public Events	\$0.00	<i>This is unusual; a board member agreed to cover charges for all public events in 2025.</i>
Board Retreats	\$500.00	

EXPENSES	AMOUNT	NOTES
Mentor Program	\$200.00	
TOTAL EVENT EXPENSES	\$14,400.00	
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES		
Mailing, Shipping, and P.O. Box	\$400.00	
Printing & Copying	\$500.00	
General Supplies	\$100.00	
Member Support Program	\$1,200.00	
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$2,200.00	
OTHER EXPENSES		
Public Event Advertising & Marketing	\$500.00	
Chapter Insurance	\$1,000.00	<i>Insurance is paid to the national organization, which holds the policy for all chapters</i>
Software Licenses	\$1,000.00	
Charitable Trust Registry	\$25.00	
National Membership Dues	\$9,100.00	
Other Expenses	\$300.00	
Website & Membership Works	\$600.00	
Domain Name Registration	\$10.00	
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	\$12,535.00	
PROFESSIONAL FEES		
Bookkeeper	\$1,200.00	
CPA	\$1,200.00	
Website Administrator	\$2,520.00	
Website Redesign	\$3,400.00	
Graphic Designer	\$350.00	
TOTAL PROFESSIONAL FEES	\$8,670.00	
GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS	\$25,000.00	
TRAVEL & MEETINGS		
LDEI National Conference: Chapter President	\$0.00	
LDEI National Conference: Chapter Delegates	\$0.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$63,460.00	
NET ORDINARY INCOME	-\$8,858.00	<i>Carryover income from 2024 offsets this negative balance.</i>

Toast to *Ten Years of Sisterhood & Service*

Dame Shannin Stein



*2015-2016 President
LDEI Sacramento
Director of Development
Alchemist CDC*

When I was asked to serve as the founding president of LDEI Sacramento in 2015, I embarked on a journey I could never have imagined—alongside a group of remarkable and inspirational women. After 20 years in the restaurant trenches with little female guidance or professional direction, I found mentors and friends whose generosity and strength elevated me and helped reshape my path. Together, we envisioned a chapter that would embrace and encourage young women in restaurant and culinary arts, provide scholarships and education, and include active celebration of Sacramento's culinary diversity.

My heart swells when I witness how our chapter has grown and flourished over the past ten years, and I'm filled with optimism for LDEI Sacramento's continued evolution. From mentorship programs that launch bold new ventures to collaborations that amplify new voices, we've built a membership and championed a culinary community united in advancing equity and opportunity through food, a community that extends far beyond Sacramento's borders. To the founding sisters and every member who embraces this vision: may our shared legacy continue to blossom in the decade ahead!

Dame Ann M. Evans



*2016-2018 President
LDEI Sacramento
Author*

Is LDEI just a social organization of women in food, as important as that is? No, it's so much more. I love the philanthropy that keeps the organization caring about women in our region who need a hand, who need our kindness: Like pajamas in the winter. Like scholarships for aspiring farmers, chefs, and food entrepreneurs.

There is magic in the power of relationships, in networks, and that's what LDEI builds. Women who join meet a universe of other women in the region who share a vision to build a food system with values that sustain the earth and society—like farm to school programs. The network keeps food where it should be—at the center of our world. We resurrect old ways and create new ways to do that.

By recentering food, agriculture, and eating, we come together around what is most important for our health and happiness—sustaining and building community. LDEI gives members the chance to do that on a national and international level as well.

Dame Amina Harris



2018-2020 President
LDEI Sacramento
Queen Bee
Z Specialty Food, LLC

I think back to when I was first asked by **Dame Elaine Corn** if I was interested in becoming a member of the San Francisco Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International. My reaction was, "Me? Why me?" I thought Les Dames was for authors, famous chefs, television personalities, the well-known and accomplished women. Not me.

I owned a honey company.

It's true that my business was one of the first that promoted varietal honey. It's true that we won awards. And it's true that I was the founding director of the University of California Honey and Pollination Center.

But I still didn't think I was outstanding enough to be accepted into this group of elite women. Now I know LDEI is made up of friends who support and grow together, who want to make

a difference in their selected field, and in making that difference, influence and help other women to grow into their greatness.

Dame Joni Stuart



2020-2022 President
LDEI Sacramento
Sommelier & Wine
Educator
Regal Wine Company

What an honor it is to share my story alongside four other extraordinary chapter leaders and to reflect on the remarkable journey of our Sacramento chapter over the past decade.

As a founding member, my journey began on the inaugural board as the secretary. I was nominated by **Dame Elaine Corn**, whose vision and determination sparked the very idea of bringing Les Dames d'Escoffier to Sacramento. I'll never forget drafting our first bylaws in Lena Fat's living room and toasting the founding of our chapter at her table. Lena—and all the women in that room—believed

in the promise of this new circle of women leaders. She would be so proud to see how far we've come.

Before my term as president, I had the privilege of serving and learning from three past and two future presidents, each remarkable in her own way. I stepped into the role of president in 2020, a year in which our industry and our nation faced unimaginable challenges. During my term, we navigated the shutdown of our hospitality community amid the COVID-19 pandemic and stood together during the national reckoning following the murder of George Floyd. In those uncertain and often painful moments, our chapter showed incredible resilience, compassion, and clarity of purpose. We adapted, pivoted, supported one another through business closures and change, and created space for meaningful conversations around equity, inclusion, and justice. It wasn't easy—but it was powerful. And it reminded us why organizations like ours matter.

Now, as we celebrate 10 years of sisterhood, service, and impact, I'm proud of the legacy we have built—and I am filled with hope for our future. To every Dame who has led, contributed, mentored, and shown up, I want to say THANK YOU! Our legacy is strong, and our future is even stronger, because of you.



It's been an amazing and fulfilling collection of years watching our chapter grow. I was recruited into the chapter by **Dame Lane Giguiere**, who hosted the induction ceremony that year in her home. We were a small chapter then and events like induction were hosted by members. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves in a round robin manner and I remember being absolutely awestruck by the caliber and individual success of the women in the room. Secretly I wondered if I belonged among so many accomplished women.

My time in leadership began when I was invited to become a member of the board and chair of the Green Tables initiative. That year, under the vision of **Dame Ann Evans**, we partnered with Davis Farm to School to co-host The Village Feast. In my previous life, I had been an original member of The Village Feast Planning Committee, so it was a natural and joyous fit for me. The Village Feast has grown each year and remains our

chapter's primary mechanism for fundraising. With many pathways available to serve in the chapter, I found myself in the role of treasurer for a few years, which ultimately led to becoming chapter president. My two-year term ended in August 2024 and **Dame Amy Myrdal Miller** now holds the gavel. She's doing wonderful work leading the chapter forward.

My time spent among this ever-growing collection of marvelous Dames has been inspiring. I haven't secretly wondered if I belonged since that first twinge and I think that is due to my own self-awareness and the support I have had from so many in the chapter. We work hard, we network, we build, we inspire, we laugh together, we raise a glass together, we break bread together, we celebrate together, we mourn together, and we learn together. I am grateful for the community that we've built over the last ten years and cannot wait to see what the next ten years will bring.

Dame Rachael Levine



*2022-2024 President
LDEI Sacramento
Co-Owner and Manager
Naranja Hospitality LLC
Hotel & Restaurant*

The Visionary Women of NYC

By Dame Sue Hoffman Robison



Tn 1936, a group of former pupils of Auguste Escoffier gathered at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City to form an all-male organization of gastronomes called Les Amis d'Escoffier. In 1976, 40 years later, 50 visionary women in New

York City announced it was their turn. Thus, Les Dames d'Escoffier was born, dedicated to advancing women in food, wine, and hospitality.

Carol Brock, then the Sunday food editor of the New York Daily News, led the charge. This group of trailblazers established the first chapter of Les Dames, determined to break barriers in industries still largely dominated by men. Now this glass ceiling-breaking group is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

As it turned out, I moved to Manhattan just as the organization was being formed.

I had no intention of living in the Big Apple. Ladies' Home Journal was seeking a new food editor and I, a St. Louis newspaper food

editor, knew my chances were slight. Most of the Seven Sisters' (women's magazines of the 70s and 80s) food editors were home economists.

I was a journalist, not to mention a single mom of two kids aged six and eight, who had been to New York City only twice in my life. I did get the Ladies Home Journal job but as a newbie, I was not on the Dames founders' list. However, a year or two later, the chapter took on a few new members. It was sort of like a college sorority rush week, and I made the cut.

In my more than 30 years in the chapter, I formed solid friendships and became an avid supporter of the group's generous and ever-increasing scholarships. So much so that when I moved west, I supported strong scholarship programs for the

San Francisco Chapter and later our Sacramento Chapter, founded in 2015. We joined the 39 other LDEI chapters in the US, Canada, Mexico, the UK, and Italy in continuing to support women in food, wine (and other beverages), and hospitality. And in Sacramento we are proud to include agriculture in our expertise, outreach, and impact!



The Valley Lights

By Dame Elaine Corn



TIt was 2015. I was driving back to Sacramento after eating and drinking a bit too much wine with the San Francisco Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI). As a member since 2000 and eventually its president, I was a long-distance yet active member.

Over time, a small group of San Francisco members who lived in Sacramento and Yolo counties would carpool to the Bay Area for events. This time I was alone. I navigated the curves through the darkness of the American Canyon and began the descent into Fairfield.

Before me lay the Valley lights.

Then, a revelation.

Why am driving back and forth from Sacramento to San Francisco? We had plenty of women of culinary achievement in the Sacramento area for an LDEI chapter of our own. Sacramento's women chefs, restaurateurs, caterers, nutrition advocates, writers, authors, teachers, wine professionals, beekeepers, and food bloggers had been an unrecognized part of Sacramento's culinary momentum. Their talent and power as professionals could be denied no longer.

It was our time.

The next morning, I called Greg Jewell at the LDEI headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, where I once was food editor at the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. I'd known LDEI's executive director Greg Jewell for nearly 30 years. "Would it be possible for Sacramento, just 100 miles from San Francisco, to build its own chapter?"

I asked. In an instant he connected me with an LDEI board member in Chicago whose job it was to assist efforts for new chapters. Soon after I received application forms and a pile of paperwork thick as a bank loan.

With a handful of names rolling around in my head, I hosted a meeting at my house of possible founding members. In attendance were Roxanne O'Brien, Amina Harris, Carolyn Kumpe, Patricia Murakami, Kathi Riley Smith, Shannin Stein, Joni Stuart, Elise Bauer, Ann Evans, and Sue Robison.

Ann Evans, a former mayor of Davis and no stranger to laws, and Shannin Stein, with her non-profit management experience, met again in my dining room to go over bylaws and Articles of Incorporation.

I may have had the idea, but it was important to me to let our new chapter fly and to find its own leaders. Shannin Stein became president; Kathy Riley Smith 1st vice president; Elise Bauer 2nd vice president; Debbie Arrington secretary; and Joni Stuart treasurer.

We conducted our own induction ceremony over a delicious dinner at Frank Fat's, hosted by the restaurant's owner and founding member Lina Fat. At a later working dinner at Lina's home, we accepted the bylaws.

A number of LDEI chapters have taken up to two years to become whole. We created our chapter—including fulfilling all membership requirements, and completing, signing, and submitting every significant piece of documentation—in just three weeks!

The Valley Lights brought inspiration, but strong-willed, smart, professional women made our chapter a reality.

The Village Feast

Building Community Through Food

By Dame Debbie Arrington

Celebrating its 22nd anniversary this year, the Village Feast started simply: Feed a crowd (outdoors) with locally sourced food so local children can learn about farming through a farm to school program. In the years since, LDEI's Sacramento Chapter has expanded the Feast's reach and made it a way to nurture future farmers, food professionals, and entrepreneurs.

See for yourself: The 2025 Village Feast will be held Sunday, October 12, at Davis Central Park, which is also the site of the Davis Farmers Market.

In the farm-to-fork area of the Sacramento Valley, the Village Feast makes an ideal bridge, connecting not only farmers and diners but the Sacramento region's agrarian past with its future. It also fulfills LDEI's Green Table initiative in a fun and delicious way: breaking bread, sustainably, while helping others.

Dame Ann Evans, past president of LDEI's Sacramento Chapter, founded the Village Feast in 2003 with **Dame Georgeanne Brennan** to support Davis Farm to School, which provides garden grants, farm field trips, and support for farm-fresh food in Davis schools. The Sacramento Dames and Davis Farm to School now co-produce the event, held each fall.

"The Village Feast was inspired many years ago by the traditional southern French Grande Aioli lunches held at the end of summer in villages throughout Provence," Evans recalled in an interview marking the Feast's 20th anniversary. "The meal was served at one long table, down the main street, and people reconnected after the long summer. The menu is set and seasonal

and adheres to all the Green Table principles out of tradition and necessity."

Having attended many such lunches in France, Dames Evans and Brennan "felt we could introduce the idea to a small California town, Davis, using its Central Park," Evans said. "The climate and geography were similar enough to the Mediterranean such that the Grande Aioli menu made sense from a farm-to-table perspective."

Served family style, the menu mirrors that French-California connection: grilled local lamb and vegetables served with California wines, cheese, olives, nuts, baguettes, and an abundance of garlicky aioli.

"The Village Feast was the (Sacramento area's) first large dining event to be held in a public, outdoor space and the community took to it immediately," Evans added. "The tradition of guests bringing their own table settings was carried on, and from the beginning (again as in France), the event was zero waste, used communal serving dishes (with guests serving themselves) ... and included placing a baguette on the table to be broken and shared. Local wines flowed with the conversation and good will."

After the event went on hiatus, the Sacramento Chapter revived the local tradition in 2018 as an LDEI Green Tables event with 350 guests at Davis Central Park. With the hashtag #WhatPlate, a social media campaign reminded patrons to bring their own place settings.

During COVID, the Village Feast went virtual with successful online auctions and communal

dining via Zoom. In 2022, the event returned in person but with another twist: simultaneous Feasts (one indoor, one outdoor) at two locations, joined digitally. In 2023, the Feast returned to its roots in Davis Central Park.

Besides enjoying food and camaraderie, patrons also have the chance to bid on unique auction items and experiences provided by local restaurants, farmers, and food professionals.

With common goals, the Sacramento Dames and Davis Farm to School work together to support education programs around food and agriculture. All proceeds from The Village Feast go toward these missions.

Since 2018 when the Sacramento Dames revived the event, the Village Feast has raised more than \$200,000 for these efforts, according to past Village Feast co-chair **Dame Rachael Levine**. Only a few dollars from each ticket sold go towards that fund-raising effort, she noted. Instead, Feast fundraising relies on sponsorships, auction proceeds, and Friends

of the Feast, a new direct-donation program introduced in 2024.

With their share, the Dames provided funds to the Saint John's Program for Real Change (a residential shelter for women with a culinary training program), as well as scholarships to women in food, wine, agriculture, and hospitality. Also among the benefactors of the Village Feast are future farmers trained by the Center for Land-Based Learning and food entrepreneurs in Sacramento's underserved communities via the non-profit Alchemist Community Development Corporation. For example, Alchemist grants bought a fusion-style hot dog cart for an artisan pickle maker, a new oven for a Southern-inspired cottage bakery, and two Arab-style griddles for a new farmers' market enterprise.

"The Village Feast isn't just a fundraiser; it's a relationship builder," said Evans. "The hands-on partnership creates more than funds for each organization; it creates new friendships and understanding about the mission of each partner organization."

To learn more about the Village Feast, please visit
<https://www.davisfarmtoschool.org/village-feast>



Creating Impact Through Philanthropy

Scholarships: LDEI Sacramento provides scholarships for female students within the local community who are pursuing careers in agriculture, food, beverage, hospitality, and related fields. These scholarships support women with limited resources in achieving their professional goals. Over the past ten years, recipients of these scholarships have been enrolled in the following programs:

- American River College's Hospitality Management program
- UC Davis's Department of Viticulture and Enology
- Center for Land-Based Learning's Farm Academy

Philanthropy: Through philanthropic giving programs, we support the future generation of diverse women leaders in agriculture, food, beverage, hospitality, and related fields while strengthening our local communities. Over the past ten years organizations that have received LDEI Sacramento grants include the following:

- Saint John's Program for Real Change: We provided \$25,000 over five years to sponsor a tiny house at Saint John's Square, supporting women and children transitioning to self-sufficiency. This continues our chapter's longstanding support for the region's largest residential program for formerly homeless women and children.
- Center for Land-Based Learning: We provided support for women enrolled in the Farm Academy, an intensive, seven-month-long training program for aspiring farmers. We are proud of our long-running support for California's future farmers.

- Alchemist Community Development Corporation (CDC): Our funding provides matching grants to women participating in Alchemist CDC's mentoring program, supporting local food entrepreneurs with limited resources in purchasing essential equipment for their culinary businesses. Additionally, we have provided a one-time community grant for their "Roots Down, Rise-Up" fundraising event.



2024-2025 Scholarship & Philanthropy Committee

Leadership

- Ashley Rosales, Chair
- Beth Byers, Co-Chair

Committee Members

• Katrina Balagian	• Rachael Levine
• Rachelle Doyle	• Elizabeth Rose
• Lisa Falcone	Mandalou
• Linda Harris	• Corinne Martinez
• Carissa Jones	• Karen Ross
• Mary Kimball	• Karen Stone

Major Milestones & Accomplishments

- A strategic decision was made to focus philanthropy on two distinct areas moving forward: grants for organizations and scholarships for individuals, each with its own application process, timelines, and scoring rubric.

- An online grant application was developed to broaden the reach and impact of our giving program. Up to \$5,000 per organization per calendar year will be awarded to organizations based on merit, financial need, program goals, and community impact, as well as alignment with the LDEI Sacramento Chapter vision and mission.
- Timelines for LDEI Sacramento's philanthropic grants and scholarship applications have been developed and will be announced in late summer 2025.
- The final installment of the \$25,000 grant was given to Saint John's Program for Real Change in the amount of \$5,000. Read more about the impact of this grant on the next page, page 23.
- A grant of \$1,000 was provided to the Alchemist Community Development Corporation "Roots Down, Rise Up" fundraising community event.

For more information about LDEI Sacramento grants and scholarships, please visit

<https://ldeisacramento.org/philanthropy/>



Creating Lasting Impact with Transformational Gifts

By Dame Ashley Rosales

LDEI Sacramento has made a lasting impact not only on Saint John's community but on the lives of the many families who are now on a path of transformation and ending the generational cycle of trauma and homelessness.

In 2020, under the leadership of then-chair **Dame Sue Huffman Robison**, we committed to supporting Saint John's Program for Real Change by providing a \$25,000 grant to be given over five years to sponsor a tiny house at Saint John's Square, supporting women and children transitioning to self-sufficiency. Our final gift installment paid in 2024 fulfills our five-year commitment and continues our chapter's longstanding support for the region's largest residential program for formerly homeless women and children.

"Thank you to Les Dames for the support that you've given to us over the past few years. Your investment in our transitional housing has been transformational for many families, women, and children who are setting a new path and course for their life, and I know you know how important that work is for St John's and for our Sacramento community."

We thank you for the partnership and your belief in the work that we do and most importantly for your belief in the women and children of Saint John's. So, from all of us at Saint John's to all of you at Les Dames, thank you so much and we look forward to a partnership with you in the future."

Scott B. Richards, Ed.D. | Chief Executive Officer

Scan this QR codes or go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgSrB_nZ3x0 to view the thank you video message from Saint John's CEO Scott Richards.



2024-2025 Program Committee

Leadership

- Amanda Frew, Chair
- Liz Mishler, Co-Chair

Members

• Elise Bauer	• Jocelyn Maddux
• Suzanne Cook	• Patty Mastracco
• Elaine Corn	• Amy Myrdal Miller
• Rachelle Doyle	• Sue Robison
• Anastasia Murphy	• Joni Stuart
• Bobbin Mulvaney	• Marcella White
• Gayla Mace	

Major Milestones & Accomplishments

- Established an event calendar so that members can save the date and look forward to events like Dames Night Out (DNO) and Speakers Series events. The consistency in scheduling the events (for example, DNO events are held every other month on the second Tuesday from 5:30 to 7:30 PM) has resulted in higher attendance and the ability for us to advertise events much further in advance than in prior years.

- Formed designated sub-committees and roles within the Program Committee, enabling members to clearly understand their assignments and to be proactive and independent with moving things forward on the committee.
- Invited Communication Committee representatives to attend Program Committee meetings to foster greater collaboration among the two committees.
- Created a strategic events strategy for the year, including categories for events that will better cover the needs and wants of the chapter based on member survey data. Categories include family-friendly events, members-only educational events, fundraising events, and public education events like the Speakers Series and The Village Feast.
- Planned and hosted three LDEI Sacramento Speakers Series events that contributed more than \$6,000 to the Scholarship & Philanthropy Fund. Read more information about the LDEI Sacramento Speakers Series on next page.

For more information about LDEI Sacramento events, please visit
<https://ldeisacramento.org/events-public/>

"**Women in Business: Masters of Marketing & Brand Building**" was held on November 20, 2024, hosted by **Dame Bobbin Mulvaney** of Mulvaney's B&L, and featured **Dame Elise Bauer** of SimplyRecipes.com, **Dame Liz Mishler** of Bella Bru Café, and **Dame Janet Zeller** of Soil Born Farm. Some of the most memorable quotes from the evening include:

Dame Elise Bauer on economic success:
"To be successful you have to scale."

Shining a Spotlight on Dames

In the spring of 2023, **Dame Amina Harris** spoke up at a Program Committee meeting, insisting that we need to offer more programs that help fulfill our non-profit requirement of offering education and outreach to the public. She also insisted we needed to do more to feature our members in our programming. Her comments led to the creation of the LDEI Sacramento Speakers Series where we could showcase the expertise of our members while also engaging the public in our fundraising efforts.

The Speakers Series events are designed with three goals in mind:

1. Raise awareness among the public of the philanthropic work our chapter does in the Sacramento Region.
2. Raise funds for our Scholarship & Philanthropy Fund through ticket sales.
3. Shine a spotlight on the unique talents and expertise of our members.

We launched the LDEI Sacramento Speakers Series on November 15, 2023, featuring **Dame Sue Huffman Robison** and **Dame Laura McIntosh** and hosted by **Dame Amy Myrdal Miller** for a robust discussion titled, "Women in

Television: Behind the Scenes Secrets & Stories from the Pros." Sue was a founder of the Food Network and Laura is the host and producer of "Bringing It Home" on PBS.

Our next event, held on February 21, 2024, and hosted by **Dame Amy Myrdal Miller**, focused on "Women in Agriculture: Celebrating Sustainable Production." **Dame Lane Giguere**, **Dame Mary Kimball**, and **Dame Karen Stone** shared stories about how they are shaping the future of food production in California through strategic initiatives that provide benefits to soil health, inspire future farmers, preserve and protect rangeland, reduce urban sprawl that affects farmland, and mitigate climate change.

On May 15, 2024, we hosted "Women in Wine: Growing the Grapes, Building a Brand" featuring **Dame Jody Bogle** of Bogle Family Wine Collection, **Dame Mackenzie Cecchi** (formerly with Casino Mine Ranch Winery), and **Dame Loraine Scott** of Acheson Wine Company. **Dame Amy Myrdal Miller** led the panel discussion and audience Q&A while guests enjoyed wine from the speakers' wineries.

Dame Janet Zeller on preserving mental health:

"No is a complete answer." and "It's okay to ask for help."

Dame Liz Mishler on customer service and customer loyalty:

"I train servers to treat customers like they are their friends."

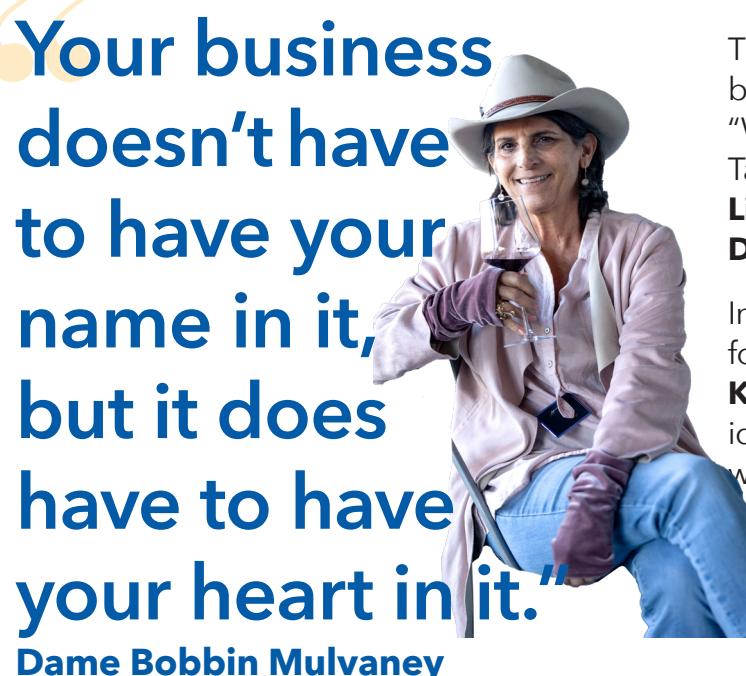
As we moved into the new year, three events were planned, starting with "Women in Journalism: Crafting & Selling Compelling Food Stories" on February 26, 2025, featuring **Dame Elaine Corn**, award-winning food editor, culinary journalist, and cookbook author; **Dame Debbie Arrington**, co-creator of Sacramento Digs Gardening and veteran journalist; and **Dame Anastasia Murphy**, publisher and editor-in-chief of Edible Sacramento. The panelists shared their experiences navigating the evolving landscape of journalism, offering insight into storytelling in food media, and the impact of journalism on the culinary world.

On June 25, 2025, we hosted our sixth Speakers Series event titled, "Women in Digital Media", which was planned and hosted by **Dame Elise Bauer** and featured Lisa Lin of HealthyNibblesandBits.com, Amy Flanigan of BellyFull.net, **Dame Kara Chin** of KaraBlakeChin.com, and Erin Anderson of NaturallyElla.com. The panelists discussed their experiences as bloggers, vloggers, authors, and photographers and how AI is changing digital media.

To date, the LDEI Speakers Series has raised more than \$12,000 to support our philanthropic efforts and helped recruit new members, which are powerful outcomes for a small chapter like ours.

The next LDEI Speakers Series event will be held November 12, 2025, and focus on "Women in Science: The Secrets of a Splendid Table" and feature **Dame Vicky Flraig**, **Dame Linda Harris**, **Dame Ashley Rosales**, and **Dame Lisa Falcone**.

In addition to recognizing **Dame Amina Harris** for the inspiration, we owe thanks to **Dame Kara Chin**, who created the logo and brand identity for this initiative, and **Dame Liz Mishler**, who has donated the event space and AV equipment at the Milagro Event Center by Bella Lu and provided the catering for all events.



Les Dames d'Escoffier®
INTERNATIONAL

 Sacramento
Speakers Series

2024-2025 Membership Committee

Leadership

- Jennifer Kaye, Chair
- Ann Martin Rolke, Co-Chair

Members

• Darra Adler	• Kara Chin
• Jennifer Basye Sander	• Lisa Frank
• Elise Bauer	• Rachael Levine
• Marybeth Bizjak	• Kelsey Maher
• Donnell Brown, our Fairy P.O.D. Mother	• Jennifer Millsap
	• Risa Weaver-Enion

- Continued to develop the P.O.D.S. (Popup Opportunities for Dames to Socialize) program and encouraged Dames to participate. This is an “off the radar” personalized program meant to bring Dames together around shared interests like hiking, golf, craft beer, and other hobbies. Member interests are noted during the annual member survey, and our Fairy P.O.D. Mother, Dame Donnell Brown, helps facilitate the casual planning of fun, small group activities.

Significant Accomplishments

- Established four subcommittees (i.e., New Member Applications, Member Recruitment, Member Retention, Member Wayfinding) to better tackle specific committee goals.
- Updated the membership application process, which allows applicants to complete and submit all required elements online, thereby eliminating cluttered inboxes.
- Conducted personalized outreach to potential new members, resulting in great turnout at multiple chapter events, including our own Potential Member Open House.
- Established the Sister Support Fund to cover 50% of first-year dues for new members who need and privately request financial assistance during their first membership year.
- Presented a slate of 13 fabulous new members to the board. New members are listed on pages 28-31.
- Hosted a New Member Brunch to warmly welcome all new members, providing a smaller, more intimate networking and relationship-building opportunity for new members.



Welcome New Members!

Introducing Our 2025 Class of Inductees



Ame Harrington-Pickens

Nominated by
Dame Kathi Riley-Smith

Ame is a Sacramento native, only leaving for 5 years to go to college in Humboldt. Instead of studying, Ame always found herself in the cookbook section of her school library pursuing recipes and chef biographies. That is when she realized she should pursue a career in food! After graduating, she quickly immersed herself in learning all that she could about cooking by working at a fish restaurant, alongside a lot of men, breaking down and prepping case after case of vegetables and loving it! Ame has held numerous kitchen jobs throughout Sacramento before starting her own catering company, Ame's Mean Eats, in 2011. Ame is a wife and mother to three kids who loves to be outside gardening, walking the dog, or sipping wine with her friends!



Camille McArdle Hankin

Nominated by
Dame Jennifer Basye Sander

Camille is the founder of Food Simply, a top-rated catering company in Sacramento. After leaving the restaurant world feeling unfulfilled, she became a private chef while working full-time in property management. Eventually, she took the leap and started Food Simply, self-funded and solo. Giving back has always been part of her mission, partnering with numerous local non-profit organizations to provide exceptional food at discounted prices for their fundraising events.



Gerine Williams

Nominated by
Dame Bobbin Mulvaney

Gerine is a firm believer in bridging the intersection of food education, equity, and culture. In her work as Community Engagement Manager at the Food Literacy Center, she has taken the lead at the Oak Park Farmer's Market and has championed initiatives that connect children and underserved communities to healthy food. She firmly believes in building a food system that is equitable, joyful, and accessible to all.





Jami Correia-Babcock

Nominated by
Dame Kathi Riley-Smith

A gypsy at heart, Jami is always seeking adventure! She moved to Spain at 17, traveled all over Europe, and settled in Italy, where she taught English and soaked up the Mediterranean lifestyle. A decade later, she was ready to return home to Sacramento and put her roots down. She went to work at Enotria Wine Bar and became smitten learning everything she could about wine—the different appellations, Old World versus New World wine styles, flavor profiles, and how to pair wine with food. That passion became her mission and career in the following two and half decades.



Janet McDonald

Nominated by
Dame Janet Zeller

With a background in interior design, Janet co-owned a successful restaurant design firm for many years. After years in that field, she wanted to try something new ... initially canning garden produce for friends and family. She began to develop her own recipes, and experimented with various preservation techniques, and was eventually urged to start a business! In 2012, The Good Stuff was established, specializing in the creation of jams and marmalades using locally sourced organic fruit in small batches. As an advocate for local, seasonal cuisine, Janet firmly believes in the importance of preserving food that is not from far away or excessively processed.



Julie Liebenbaum

Self-Nomination

Julie is a project coordinator for Alchemist Kitchen, a branch of Alchemist Community Development Corporation, where she works one-on-one with local entrepreneurs who come from low-income backgrounds and underserved communities in navigating the complex world of food business. She brings more than 30 years of professional food industry experience to this project, having worked in almost every kind of commercial kitchen, from production bakery to high-end fine dining, including almost two decades running her own farm-to-fork restaurant, The Boonville General Store. Julie is always looking for opportunities to engage in the Farm-To-Fork Capital's exciting food world.





Kristen Madigan

Nominated by
Dame Donnell Brown

Kristen is the manager at Touchstone Brewing Company in Sacramento. She enjoys doing things outdoors, like camping, climbing, kayaking, and hiking! Touchstone Brewing is owned and operated by rock climbers, so it is a perfect fit for her. When she is not at work, she enjoys petting her cat, Rudy, or working on house projects with her partner. If the sun is out, you'll often find her on a patio drinking a nice cold beer.



Maria-Elena (Nena) Rasul

Nominated by
Dame Bobbin Mulvaney

Nena's restaurant experience includes working as head baker and pastry chef at Bacon & Butter, and as head pastry chef at Mulvaney's B&L. She currently, serves as a culinary arts instructor at both American Legion High School and American River College. In addition to her formal teaching roles, she has led culinary skills classes at local nonprofits such as St. John's Program for Real Change and the Roberts Family Development Center. Advocacy remains at the heart of her work. She co-founded Women in Food and Agriculture, with the goal of promoting equity and representation for women in the culinary and agricultural sectors in our region.



Nicholle Cox

Nominated by
Dame Jennifer Millsap

Nicholle has been an integral staff member at Saint John's Program for Real Change since 2017. What began as her own success story, having graduated from the Saint John's Program herself, developed into her earning a professional role as catering assistant. Over the last eight years, Nicholle has advanced through multiple roles and now serves as Assistant Director of Social Enterprises—a testament to her commitment not only to her craft but to the women and children whose lives she helps transform every day. She is a mother and grandmother, a nurturer by nature, and an outspoken feminist. She suffered through trauma and came out the other side stronger than she knew possible. Her greatest reward in life is having a positive impact on others.



Shoshana Zeldner

Nominated by
Dame Nicole Salengo-Lee

Shoshana has fond childhood memories of helping her dad with his beehives, nestled among eucalyptus groves in California's coastal foothills. Today, 30 plus years later, she is honored to contribute to the varietal honey company that her parents started nearly 50 years ago. As a member of her family business, she works to increase their presence as a top purveyor of varietal honeys and a leader in education around varietal honey, mead, beekeeping, and pollination throughout California and the specialty food industry. Before joining Z Specialty Food (The HIVE) full-time, she worked for 15 years in the arts and culture sector at nonprofits, universities, and state agencies.



Tayler Pecha

Nominated by
Dame Carrie Boyle

Tayler is a lifelong educator turned hospitality expert who brings a unique blend of teaching, leadership, and deep beverage knowledge to Omakase Por Favor. With over a decade of experience in both education and hospitality, Tayler's journey began in the classroom, where she specialized in teaching middle school intervention. But even while shaping young minds, she harbored a passion for the art of bartending, balancing both careers before fully immersing herself in the world of fine dining, craft cocktails, and sake. She is a certified sake sommelier, an avid wine enthusiast, and a firm believer in the magic of thoughtful pairings.



Vicky Flaig

Nominated by
Dame Amy Myrdal Miller

Vicky Flaig is a nonprofit executive, registered dietitian, and inclusive camp leader with over 25 years of experience in food service operations and hospitality. She currently serves as Director of Operations for Ronald McDonald House Charities Northern California, overseeing both the Ronald McDonald House in Sacramento and Camp Ronald McDonald at Eagle Lake. Vicky is also an adjunct professor, teaching graduate-level food service and healthcare systems courses. She is passionate about inclusive programming, mentorship, and building sustainable systems that serve families and communities.



Zion Taddese

Nominated by Dame Elaine Corn

Zion is a seasoned restaurateur, food advocate, and community-focused farmer based in Sacramento. As the owner of Queen Sheba Restaurant and founder of Sheba Farms Foundation, she has over a decade of experience in the culinary and agricultural sectors. Zion is deeply committed to preserving and promoting Ethiopian food traditions while advancing sustainable farming practices that assist under-served communities. Her work bridges the gap between heritage cuisine, food justice, and economic empowerment through education, cultural events, and farm-to-table initiatives.

Looking Forward

A group of people are gathered around a long table for an outdoor meal. They are all holding wine glasses and appear to be toasting. In the foreground, a woman with dark hair and a bright smile is looking directly at the camera. Behind her, a man with a beard and glasses is also smiling. The table is set with white plates, silverware, and glasses. There are several bottles of wine on the table. The setting is a sunny day with trees and a fence in the background.

Building on a Decade of Impact

By Dame Shelly Kessen

This moment—marking our 10th anniversary as a chapter—is a testament to the dedication, vision, hard work, and perseverance of many. Our founding members, our board, and every **Dame who has** contributed her time, talent, and spirit have woven a rich tapestry of generosity, leadership, and community that sets our chapter apart.

First and foremost, thank you. Thank you to each **Dame who has** poured her heart and soul into building this organization—from the first spark of an idea to the flourishing chapter we celebrate today. Your commitment to excellence and service has laid the foundation for everything we do. It is your passion that has inspired new members to join our ranks, your wisdom that has guided our decisions, and your energy that has propelled us forward. We are grateful to those who believed at the start—as they do today—in the power of women supporting women in food, beverage, agriculture, and hospitality.

Our mission remains clear: to give back, to lift up, and to open doors for those following in our footsteps. The impact of our philanthropic work, including more than \$125,000 given in grants and scholarships, and countless hours spent working alongside one another, ripples far beyond our chapter. Whether supporting students, advancing the careers of women in our industries, or partnering with community organizations, we are united by a shared belief in the power of women to create positive change. Every scholarship awarded, every event hosted, and every partnership forged is a testament to our commitment to empowering women.

As we honor our first decade, we must also look ahead to the future. The momentum we have built is more than a legacy. It is a promise. A promise to continue growing, learning, and evolving. Our world is ever changing, and our chapter must be agile, innovative, and inclusive as we step into the next decade. It is our responsibility to nurture the next generation of leaders, to seek out new voices and perspectives, and to ensure that every **Dame feels valued** and supported—in Sacramento and beyond.

Together, we will build on the strong foundation laid by those before us. We will dream bigger, reach further, and ensure that our chapter remains a beacon for women in our industries: today, tomorrow, and for many years to come. I look forward to all we will accomplish together.

With gratitude
and excitement
for the future,

Dame Shelly Kessen
2025-2026 President



Notes

Notes





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1809 S St. Ste 101 #287
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<https://ldeisacramento.org>

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