



**Corey Barnes** is the garden director at Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden in Palo Alto. He has worked for both San Francisco Botanical Garden and Sonoma Botanical Garden (formerly Quarryhill Botanical Garden) in roles associated with education, curation, and propagation. He has served as the President of the Western Region of the International Plant Propagators' Society and has a Master of Science Degree in Horticulture and Agronomy from the University of California at Davis. Corey has traveled professionally to the UK, Chile, Mexico, and China, the latter on seed collecting expeditions to the Himalayas. Corey is at his best when making plant–people connections, whether in the field, the garden, greenhouse, or the classroom.



**Rhonda Bekkedahl** is the CEO of Channing House, a Life Plan Community in Palo Alto. A Life Plan Community provides continuous care to older adults, offering 3 levels of care: Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Skilled Nursing. The 250 residents at Channing House range in age from about 70 years old to 103 years old.

Rhonda has been at Channing House for approximately 10 years in various positions ultimately leading to her current role. Prior to her role at Channing House, Rhonda and her husband owned a company in Colorado that provided hydrogen fuel cell testing products and services to large companies, universities and research facilities throughout the world. Prior to her years as an entrepreneur, Rhonda worked in various healthcare facilities in Finance.

Rhonda holds a degree in Business Administration from Colorado State University. Her immediate family includes her husband of 35 years, her mom who shares a home with them, and their Standard Poodle. Her son, daughter, and son-in law also live nearby.



I am **Lauren Cortez**, a relationship manager specializing in Commercial Lending at Heritage Bank of Commerce. In banking and finance for the past 25+ years, I cover the greater Bay Area specializing in equipment financing, commercial banking, credit analysis, personal banking of high net worth individuals, and relationship management of business banking clients. At Heritage Bank of Commerce, we serve the greater bay area working with privately owned business, professionals, and non-profits. After hours, I enjoy playing tennis, glamping in our motorhome, and spending time with my husband and family.



Proudly exemplifying the spirit of entrepreneurship in the new normal, **Nada Djomehri** is building an inclusive future charged by a dynamic team of real estate and research leaders operating in California and Michigan since 2016, with an international bedrock in Australia. An Australian transplanted in Silicon Valley, Nada brings over twelve years of experience in real estate investing and sales which she channeled when launching her team in the U.S. She is a model entrepreneur in a tech-oriented and emerging virtual age. Passionate about people and nurturing the feeling of home wherever whenever Nada strives each day to cultivate community spirit while building her business. When Nada isn't on the clock, you can find her hiking, writing, watering plants, and with family.



**Alexis Crews-Holloway** was born and raised in Palo Alto and is a Palo Alto High School grad (Class of 2015!). She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology and Justice Studies from Humboldt State University in 2019. Growing up in Palo Alto, Alexis figure skated (and later worked) at Winter Lodge until graduating from high school. She also played the Cello in Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra (PACO) and took this skill with her as she continued to play throughout college in the Humboldt Symphony. Alexis is passionate about advocating for our vulnerable and at-risk community members, and she stepped into the role of Lead Case Manager for Downtown Streets Team in Palo Alto in August of 2019, shortly after graduating college. In addition to supporting her clients, networking and creating partnerships with community members and local agencies has been one of the things she has enjoyed most in her position with Downtown Streets Team. In addition to her Lead Case Manager role, she is also engaged in community volunteer work, as she is the Vice President of the Board for the local women's shelter Heart and Home Collaborative and the Co-Chair for Service Providers Network in Santa Clara County. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, camping, stand up paddle-boarding, and going to the beach with her dog.



**Dr. Lance Eliot** is globally known for his expertise in leadership and high-tech and serves as an invited Stanford Fellow at Stanford University. Formerly a professor at the University of Southern California (USC), he has been a top executive in a major Venture Capital firm and has been a corporate officer at several large firms as Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO) entailing worldwide operations encompassing over 30,000 associates. In addition, as a successful entrepreneur, he founded, led, and eventually sold several high-tech firms, and serves in an ongoing capacity as a mentor at startup incubators and as a frequent judge at startup-investor pitch competitions.

Weekly columns by Dr. Eliot appear in Forbes, AI Trends, and other publications such as the San Francisco Daily Journal. His articles and posted pieces have amassed over 4+ million views online, his popular podcasts have over 200,000 downloads, and several of his books are rated in the Top 10 in their specialties. He serves on committees for the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the United Nations (UN) and has been an advisor to the Vice-Chair of the U.S. Congressional Science & Technology Committee. On a community service basis, he had been active on the board of a nonprofit that extensively promoted STEM and annually serves as a Grand Sweepstakes Judge at the California Science & Engineering Fair (CSEF) and the International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF). He holds a Ph.D. in Business and Computer Science, MBA, and a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering.



**Jan Gabus** was born in 1940, grew up in rural Nebraska, graduated high school in 1959, college in 1963, and University of Nebraska School of Dentistry in 1967. For the next five years he was a dental officer in the U.S. Navy providing dental care for navy personnel in 18 exotic locations. He met and married his one and only wife on Okinawa (At that time a U.S. territory). When it was time to leave the Navy, the big question was, where to settle down. He assumed they would live in small town Nebraska. His wife, who grew up in New York City, had other ideas. They moved to the Bay Area in 1972 and have lived here ever since. They have two children in their late 40's, both single, and two adorable granddaughters. If you want to see photos just ask.



**Margot Gardias** – I moved to Palo Alto, Community Center area 11 years ago for great schools and excellent style of life. My two children enjoyed friendly neighborhoods and excellent schools.

Professionally, I am a founder of Modernizt Design Studio. I hold a Masters of Architecture and my work is on display throughout the Bay Area, California, New York, Fiji, and Europe.

My credo is that our city should foremost be functional and innovative while respecting context. New changes, decisions should be relevant for generations. We should focus on more connected neighborhoods, support urban diversity, foster more human-oriented city planning, and advocate for a stronger art presence in Palo Alto and the Peninsula. I wish that our generation can leave solutions, not problems, for our children, grandchildren.



**Lisa Hom** grew up in the Greenmeadow neighborhood of Palo Alto where she currently lives with her husband and daughter. She received a B.S. in Nutritional Sciences from Boston University. After school she taught English in Antofagasta, Chile for a year before going to work for Santa Clara County Public Health's Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Programs. She's worked as a Nutrition Educator for School Health Clinics of Santa Clara County, Health Educator and Program Manager for PAMF's 5-2-1-0 Program, and is currently a Community Health Manager for Sutter Health/Palo Alto Medical Foundation. She enjoys exploring the outdoors for exercise and pleasure, loves to travel, and spending time with her family.



**Dan Lee** has had three different careers: as a software developer and engineer of financial banking systems on Wall Street, as a product management professional for technology startups in silicon valley, and as a seasoned volleyball coach at the club, high school, and DI college level in CA. Dan has 25+ years of product management, UI design, and operational experience. As a product leader, he has led multiple efforts to gather primary user research to help identify and solve business problems using various types of technology. He has held product leadership positions at startups and small companies, including BinWise, OpenTable, Medallia, and General Magic. His product focus has run the gamut from developing desktop software solutions to web-based services and mobile apps.

As CEO, board member, and Senior Vice President of Product Management of BinWise for 2.5 years, Dan led efforts to raise funding, streamline the company's business processes, and create innovative products to help restaurants manage their wine and spirits assets. Restaurants like Michael Mina, the French Laundry, Le Bernadin, and Union Square Café were all important customers that helped shape the BinWise product offering. One of the most fun products Dan created was an iOS-based scanning app that allowed users to quickly scan bar codes on wine and spirits to help reduce the monthly inventory process time by 80%.

Dan spent seven years at OpenTable as Director and Senior Director of Product Management, the online restaurant reservation company for fine dining and casual restaurants. If you've ever checked in at a restaurant host stand and they are tapping away on a computer system, chances are good that Dan worked on that system. Dan helped grow OpenTable's restaurant network from 1,000 to 10,000 restaurants during his tenure and led the research and expansion effort into the Japan market. The explosive growth of the business and the expansion into global markets culminated in the company's successful IPO in 2009.

Dan took a break from the startup world to take advantage of an opportunity to coach women's indoor and beach volleyball at the DI college level at Santa Clara University for two seasons. He has leveraged his prior playing experience and combined it with the teaching / presentation skills that he developed in the corporate world to help young players grow as athletes and young adults. He has coached volleyball for 10+ years at the club, high school, and college level, leading multiple club teams to junior nationals and many high school teams to deep playoff runs in NorCal HS playoff tournaments.

**Education:**

The University of Chicago - MBA (Strategy and Marketing)

The University of Pennsylvania - BSE in System Science and Engineering (Business Systems)



**Lesley Milton** - Over 16 years experience in city government, Lesley was recently appointed as the City Clerk for the City of Palo Alto, California and she is excited to be part of the peninsula Team. The Council believes her strong track record of innovation, collaboration, transparency and community engagement will be a great asset for the City and the community.

Prior to arriving in Palo Alto, Lesley served as the City of Seaside's City Clerk and Public Affairs Officer for seven years then promoted to Assistant City Manager. During her tenure in Seaside, she led many innovative processes that increased the City's transparency and citizen engagement. She also managed many departmental programs and policy implementation such as Army land use mitigation, Short Term Rental regulations, cannabis permitting, and youth violence prevention programming. Prior work included recycling and sustainability with the City of Monterey including co-authoring one of California's first plastic bag bans.

As City Clerk, Lesley will serve as a liaison between the public and the City Council, providing information about the operations and legislative history of the City. She will also serve as the City's Elections Official, assisting with potential candidates and ballot measures.

Lesley has a Bachelor's Degree from Washington State University, a Master's Degree in Public Administration from California State University Dominguez Hills, has completed several post graduate-programs including completion of the Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard's Kennedy School and is a graduate of the 2019 Women's Leadership Program at Yale University. She is currently pursuing her Public Leadership Credential at Harvard University. Outside of public service, Lesley's favorite things are delicious food, Spartan races & half marathons (to accommodate for the delicious food) and outdoor activities. Newest hobby: kayaking and paddle boarding.



**Karin North** works for the City of Palo Alto as the Assistant Director of Public Works for the Environmental Services Division (Acting); which oversees the Sustainability Program, Regional Water Quality Control Plant, Watershed Protection, environmental regulatory programs that impact the City as well as Zero Waste programs. Mrs. North has worked for the City for more than 20 years and is a leader in her field specifically emerging contaminants in the San Francisco Bay. Mrs. North has a master's degree in Environmental Science Management and Bachelor of Science Degrees in Hydrological Science and Environmental Science from University of California Santa Barbara. On the weekends you can find her on the pool deck or basketball court supporting her two sons who both play water polo and basketball.



My name is **Vincent Ngwono Ontita**, I am an environmentalist, conscious conservationist & social activist, wildlife and nature ambassador, certified interpretive guide, lead organizer for Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, and currently, a Special Projects Coordinator with Environmental Volunteers. Inspired by the beauty of my homeland, Africa, and the challenges that face wild landscapes in the world, I believe that addressing complex global issues that affect communities and governments such as conservation is vital to ensure a healthy and peaceful coexistence. This philosophy guides my work. Over the years, I have led a movement of young people in conservation as part of a citizen science approach to experiential learning through a program called – Wildlife Warriors. The program seeks to enhance its capacity in international environmental issues, conservation, and policymaking.

I believe together as a people we are best placed to inspire the next generation of leaders to equip and nurture us with the required skills to transform our world towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Well, skilled leaders will provide not only the needed science-policy interface, which involves the exchange of information but also knowledge leading to learning and ultimately enhance changes to decision-making and behavior. I am eager to learn new things and be part of this global movement who are at the forefront of transforming their communities and nations. I look forward to connecting as many people as I can to wildlife and nature and inspire them to value through discovery and learning. I would like to be the bridge between policymakers and scientists to communities and young people who are at the heart of conservation.



**Beatriz Pastor** is a passionate Educator, Community Outreach and Resident Services Coordinator, and Project Manager with 20 years of experience engaging and inspiring organizations and community participation. A bilingual advocate and leader who supports non-profit agencies through communications, marketing, event coordination, facilitation of trainings and workshops, volunteerism, and building partnerships. Successfully serving in the roles of investigator, educator, community builder, liaison, advocate, and service facilitator. Experience with both in-person and virtual platforms. Beatriz is originally from Madrid, Spain, and holds a Marketing Certificate Program from Berkeley University and a Master Degree in Human Development with focus in Leadership in Education and Human Services from Pacific Oaks College. She worked at Palo Alto Community Child Care for almost 15 years and since last February 2021 Beatriz is working at Alta Housing as the Service Coordinator at Webster Wood and Mariposa Club (in Mt View) as well as Resident Services Manager. Beatriz brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience, with a background in early childhood education and translation/interpretation Spanish/English.



**Christine Prior** was born and raised in Palo Alto and currently lives in Mountain View. She received a BA in Political Science with a minor in Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley. She has worked as a policy aide/executive assistant in Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian's office since 2016. Christine works on parks/open space, federal affairs, and manages the office's intern program.



**Randy Shuayto** is currently the Director of Property Management with Premier Properties. In this role, he directs the management of 75 commercial office and retail buildings in the Palo Alto and Redwood City markets. Working with a team of 5 professional property managers, He oversees all aspects of property management, including quarterly financial and operations reporting, audit compliance, project and building maintenance, supervision of management and engineering personnel, and execution of tenant improvement projects.

Randy received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Missouri Valley College. He was a former BOMA TOBY Committee Chair and Judge in 2016 and BOMA Silicon Valley Board Member from 2016 – 2017. He currently serves as the Sustainability Committee Chair for the BOMA Silicon Valley Board. Randy is a licensed California Real Estate Salesperson and a BOMA RPA Designation Candidate.



**Elke Teichmann** is Castilleja School's Assistant Director of Communications and Community Relations. She grew up in Palo Alto and Menlo Park, except for living in The Netherlands for three years. Elke received her B.A. in Diplomacy and World Affairs from Occidental College and her MSc. in Digital Media Production from Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, photographing, coaching volleyball, and exploring California's beaches and restaurants with her golden retriever.



**Caroline Willis** is a registered Architect in California who migrated to Palo Alto after growing up on the east coast. Her interests include gardening, plein air painting and historic preservation.

She was for many years involved in Palo Alto Stanford Heritage and the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation. Serving as a PAST docent she has conducted tours of downtown, Professorville and Homer Avenue. As an advocate for community wide fundraising for our schools, she served on the board of the All Schools Fund, a predecessor to Palo Alto Partners in Education. After many years, she has been recently reappointed to the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board where she hopes to generate a renewed interest in historic preservation throughout our community.



**Christina Hood** is a knowledgeable and results-driven residential real estate broker with over a decade of experience being a marketing maven and skillful negotiator. As a Broker Associate with Keller Williams in Palo Alto, she is dedicated and committed to getting her clients the best possible price when buying or selling, and building community one home at a time.

A graduate from the University of Southern California with a degree in International Relations with a concentration in Strategic Warfare, Christina is a lifelong learner. She is currently finishing her Certificate of Business Excellence from UC Berkeley's Executive Education Haas School.

Her community involvement includes being a Board Member of the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce and serves as the Board Liaison for Leadership Palo Alto; which she became a Fellow in 2018. Christina is also a member of the Palo Alto Woman's Club and Past President of the Junior League of Palo Alto•Mid Peninsula. She spends her free time enjoying the company of her gal pals, friends, her Contractor husband and two dogs; Dante & Quattro.

Christina Hood joined the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in June 2021. Christina is the Board liaison to Leadership Palo Alto 2021-2022. Please feel free to contact Christina with any questions or thoughts you may have.