

# #Women Who Wow



VM 2016  
MOST INFLUENTIAL  
WOMEN  
IN OPTICAL



NEW YORK—There’s nothing special about the number 43. It just happens to be the total number of honorees in this year’s group of Influential Women.

It’s the women themselves who are special.

You see, each of the 43 honorees who comprise The Class of 2016 has been selected based upon their accomplishments and their impact on colleagues, customers and, in some instances, the entire optical industry. They come from the worlds of vision care, retailing, manufacturing, distribution, dispensing and designing.

We’ve been impressed by their success stories, as we expect you will be, too. We hope some of them will even inspire you to put in that extra effort in your job—and outside the workplace, too—that it takes to move the needle from “good” to “outstanding.”

As in previous years, VM’s Influential Women were chosen from a large pool of nominees named by *VM* readers and in the following pages we profile their accomplishments in these roles:

- **Executive Suite:** Candidates are women who hold positions such as president, VP, CEO, CFO, CMO, CIO or COO that guide their companies forward, inspire leadership among their teams and peers and achieve high performance.
- **Rising Stars:** Candidates are women who are “up-and-comers” in their careers and within their companies or arenas within the industry; sharp talents who are on their way toward higher levels of responsibility and influence.
- **Mentors:** Candidates are women who are team builders, developers of talent, who via example or education and training successfully influence

others to learn and to grow in their business or professional acumen.

- **Innovators:** Candidates are women who have initiated new product developments or special programs in the arena of marketing, technology, retail or patient service/philanthropy, who have spearheaded innovative business enterprises.

The Class of 2016 joins a distinguished group of more than 500 Influential Women whom we’ve profiled since 2003.

Join the conversation about these Influential Women and other industry standouts you may know using the hashtag #WomenWhoWow. Please visit [www.VisionMonday.com](http://www.VisionMonday.com) to review an alphabetical listing of past years’ honorees and to read prior years’ Special Reports. ■

—The Editors

# #Women Who Wow

## Carmen Bauza

### SENIOR VP AND GENERAL MERCHANDISE MANAGER

Health and Wellness and Consumables  
Walmart U.S.  
Bentonville, Arkansas

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She has been a big innovator at Walmart Optical. She is also a rising star and leading mentor—especially to women at Walmart.”



Carmen Bauza has been with Walmart for nearly 10 years. Prior to her current role, for which she was tapped in 2013, she was the vice president and divisional merchandise manager of beauty and personal care merchandising at the company.

Today, she oversees the 2,900 Walmart Vision Centers and over 2,000 Vision Center associates. “When I was approached to take on health, wellness, pharmacy and optical, I knew it was a big opportunity and a huge challenge. So I did an assessment with all of our partners, associates and customers to learn how to add value to Walmart. It’s very important to have diversity of thought, to bring together people with a range of backgrounds and experiences.”

Bauza is upbeat about a new Walmart Vision Center concept which is just being rolled out, reflecting a redesigned environment and new technology. “Vision is a fascinating and dynamic industry where fashion, technology and patient care come together. What makes Walmart so special is our mission—to make high quality vision care services and products affordable and accessible to everyone.”

Bauza was a GMM at Bath & Body Works and spent over 10 years with the Walt Disney Company Theme Parks and Resorts division, including VP and GMM for all aspects of merchandising. She holds a B.S. degree in Fashion Merchandising and

Business Management from Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pa.

A native of Ponce, Puerto Rico, she has been active in various Hispanic support groups including executive sponsor of the Hispanic/Latino Resource Group at Walmart. She is on the board of Walmex, NACDS and the Network of Executive Women.

SHE SAYS... “A lesson I live by: leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making it last in your absence.”

## Susan Berryman

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING  
SEE Eyewear  
Southfield, Michigan

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “A branding visionary and marketing maven, Susan has built a brand personality that fits so seamlessly with the retail concept it has yielded a loyal consumer following that has grown exponentially year over year and made it possible for aggressive expansion into new markets. In short, Susan is the brand.”



Susan Berryman considers herself fortunate to have a network of talented and intelligent people who have supported and guided her throughout her 16-year career in optical, especially her longtime mentor Richard Golden, founder and CEO at SEE. In 2009, she was named one of Crain’s Detroit 40 under 40.

“A pioneer in the industry, Richard has not only been an invaluable resource for advice, he has been an inspiration for me.”

Berryman oversees all creative direction, branding and digital marketing for the SEE brand and became interested in optical after being intrigued by the opportunity to work with a company (D.O.C) that had “a rich history in both the industry and city.”

“We don’t work with huge budgets, so we have to be scrappy and nimble in an incredibly competitive industry. I am a hypercompetitive person by nature, which is why I love retail. Every day is a battle, and when you’re doing it without the luxury of high profile agencies and big budgets it is that much more satisfying when you celebrate wins.”

SHE SAYS... “I consider true customer service to be a lost art. You can have the best branding, the highest quality products, the most progressive designs and a great value proposition, but if you don’t exceed the expectations of your customers, you have nothing.”

## Crystal Brimer, OD, FAAO

OWNER  
Focus Eye Care  
Wilmington, North Carolina

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She leads the way in dry eye treatment and quality of care. She’s the most remarkable doctor with her patients.”



Just two years after graduating the Southern College of Optometry in 2000, Crystal Brimer, OD, opened her own private boutique practice, Focus Eye Care, in 2002. At Focus, Brimer has invested significant time, research and resources into dry eye treatment, developing a dry eye center devoted to advanced diagnosis and treatment of the condition using cutting edge technology and equipment.

Having grown up a high myope, Brimer said she became inspired to enter the optometric field when she recognized there had been a lack of expertise in her eyecare. “I didn’t realize until I was older how different that entire experience could have been,” said Brimer, who now designs personal treatment plans, to ensure she may positively impact each patient. “I decided that’s the

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difference I wanted to make.”

In addition to owning and managing Focus Eye Care, a Vision Source practice, Brimer has become a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, is extremely involved in other optometric activities such as clinical investigations, and currently authors columns in both *Optometry Times* and *Advanced Ocular Care*. She also travels extensively to lecture and consult, having returned recently from a 21-city tour on continuing education for dry eye.

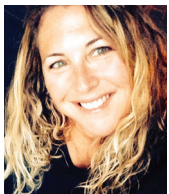
**SHE SAYS...** “Invest wholeheartedly into your patients, and take care of them the best you possibly can. The money will follow!”

## Jill Chernoff

### VP OF OPERATIONS

New Millennium Eyewear Group  
Freeport, New York

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She motivates the staff by being hands-on and demonstrating an incredible work ethic.”



After graduating from the University of Maryland with a degree in criminology and law, Jill Chernoff planned to go to law school. While taking a semester off, she accepted a customer service position at

Viva International Group, where her brother Ed worked, and has remained in the industry ever since.

During her eight years at Viva, Chernoff worked her way up to become director of marketing. In 1996, she and some family members started New Millennium Eyewear.

Like many women, who balance professional and family responsibilities. Chernoff is a champion multitasker, both by temperament and training. This skill serves her well as New Millennium’s vice president of operations, because she is involved in almost every aspect of the company’s business, including customer service, accounts receivable, warehouse and invento-

ry. She also coordinates and executes sales programs, promotions and contests for the sales team.

Despite the many changes that have reshaped the optical business over nearly three decades, Chernoff’s personal philosophy remains the same. “Treat your employees and your customers fairly, honestly and with respect. Hard work, dedication, loyalty and being proud of what you do every day truly is why I still love to go to work.

“The optical industry is exciting and always changing. Watching the trends and how shapes, materials and color have evolved over the last 28 years has been fascinating.”

**SHE SAYS...** “This is still very much a relationship-driven industry, especially with the ECPs, and I think the women who are successful really understand that.”

## Lauri Crawford

### SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING

Essilor of America  
Dallas, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She’s created and executed one of the largest consumer marketing campaigns in the industry, which has supported ECPs that dispense Essilor products and created greater visibility and interest in eyewear and eyecare.”



At Essilor, Lauri Crawford leads a team driving innovation and brand value. “Our focus is to be more customer centric, data-driven and results-oriented, to create demand and increase consumer engagement to drive growth for the independent ECP and the industry.

“One of the key areas of responsibility for delivering long-term value to Essilor is managing the marketing function from a people standpoint—insuring our organization is structured effectively, that our people are engaged and developing into strong marketing manag-

ers, business managers and future leaders.”

Crawford is also co-chair of Essilor’s IDEA Committee which leads inclusion and diversity efforts. Her career began in human resources, and that first role at Pepsico Foods was a foundation for understanding career development and “investing in the importance of people.”

She finished her MBA at Kellogg/Northwestern, went on to Proctor & Gamble and then to Nike (first managing a major region and then, a move to Nike HQ overseeing all retail marketing.) After six years at Nike, she chose to take a three-year career break to focus on family. “It was important to have that time and create balance away from demanding work.” She re-established her full-time career, in the software arena, before she was recruited to join Essilor in 2013.

**SHE SAYS...** “My goal is to inspire others to become who they are intended to be, to take risks and to deliver what is possible.”

## Luisa Delgado

### PRESIDENT AND CEO

Safilo Group  
Padova, Italy

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Luisa Delgado joined Italy-based Safilo Group, the industry’s second largest eyewear company, less than two and half years ago as its first female and first non-Italian CEO in the company’s 82-year corporate history.



Having spent time as a non-executive member of Safilo’s board, Luisa Delgado was fascinated by the company’s back story and its potential, when she agreed to the job of CEO. A 2020 strategic plan was developed with Safilo’s board and executive team to transform the Group.

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Today, the team is re-examining manufacturing and design, Safilo's brand portfolio, sales operations and systems "to become a partner of trust" of optical retailers and ECPs worldwide.

Also a non executive director at IKEA, Delgado brings strategic perspective to her current job. She served as board member and chief of HR for SAP AG, the global software giant, and prior to that she spent 21 years at Proctor & Gamble (P&G) where she worked in several local and international roles.

Born in Switzerland, Delgado graduated from the University de Genève and holds a LLM from King's College/University of London. She cites her upbringing in the Swiss mountains, speaking the country's "fourth" language of Romansh and came to learn this was a strength not a liability. "I remember gaining self-confidence when someone pointed out to me that 'different' was a 'plus,' and I've since tried to behave as a leader who is different and encourages different points of view."

**SHE SAYS...** "A leader's role is to build possibilities and opportunities, to empower and not constrain. Be yourself – with skill." She adds, "In our industry, women have a unique place. We see so many more women among the 3 Os. There's an emotional intelligence, intuition, the extra edge women can bring to match the right and left side of the brain together. Safilo used to be an almost all-male Italian group and now among our top 125 leaders, 30 percent are women."

## Rebecca Giefer

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Modo  
New York, New York

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "She has contributed by surrounding herself with talented young managers, by mentoring them to continuously grow and increasing the revenues of Modo."



Upon her graduation from New York University in 2004, Rebecca Giefer joined the Modo family. Moving up through the customer service, sales and operations channels, Giefer

held several positions with the company before being promoted first to vice president of operations then to chief operating officer in early 2014.

Giefer, who played a crucial role in implementing various web and digital technologies into Modo's operations, has improved the efficiency of the business as well as created a smooth customer experience.

She takes her inspiration from various places, and always considers it a reminder that "the concept of 'self-made' is truly a myth." Along with her family and friends who are "incredible, genuine people" she is inspired by "Modo's entrepreneurial-minded CEO Alessandro Lanaro who sets an unequivocal pace in innovation that I want to meet in Modo's U.S. sales and operations."

In her personal life, Giefer is an avid runner who has run across the Sahara desert twice as a part of the Marathon Des Sables. She is also a soccer enthusiast and has attended two World Cups.

Her strong sense of teamwork has spread not only through Modo's New York offices, but within the global operations of the company, and has seen the company through double-digit sales growth in each of the last two years.

**SHE SAYS...** "I'm inspired by the Modo team because they are committed to our goals but have great personal stories as well. They are artists, athletes and family-focused people."

## Anne-Marie Lahr, OD

### DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Hoya Vision Care  
Lewisville, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "In addition to speaking with and training thousands of people, Dr. Lahr launched Empower U, Hoya's comprehensive and free online education tool for independent eyecare practices."



Soon after graduating from the Ohio State University College of Optometry in 1991, Anne-Marie Lahr, OD, completed a primary care residency at the Eye Institute at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in Philadelphia, followed by an international teaching fellowship at the Hogeschool Utrecht in the Netherlands. Since then, she has embraced several roles in the optometry field, working in a retail chain, an optometric practice, a medical practice and in academia.

Lahr has always been drawn to teaching, and it shows: she has twice earned the Clinical Science Teacher of the Year Award; recently earned the Educator of the Year Award for Excellence in Teaching at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University; and she has served as a clinical specialist for iScience Interventional, a company which develops microcatheter and imaging technologies enabling site-specific ocular therapies.

At Hoya, Lahr is responsible for all internal and external optical and product education.

"If I can get [doctors and opticians] to understand the benefits [of ophthalmic lens products], then they can get patients to understand. Education will close the purchase gap and help independent practices overcome commoditization," she said.

**SHE SAYS...** "I would not be in my current role if it weren't for Barney Dougher, president and CEO of Hoya Vision Care, NA. He had the vision to pluck me from the world of academia and the faith that my expertise would change the way optical education is implemented."

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## Donna J. Mikulecky

### VP, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Vision Source  
Kingwood, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Donna is in charge of the 170 Vision Source Administrators. These optometrists are all leaders in their field. She helps shape how the administrator team mentors local optometrists and helps them get the tools they need to be successful and have maximum impact.”



Donna Mikulecky’s career started in public accounting, where she focused primarily on health care clients. Before joining Vision Source in August of 2014, she spent a year and a half in health care consulting and for 14 years prior to that, worked for a large integrated health care system, where she was president of the employed physician group.

“As vice president of Professional Development, I am responsible for working with our 170 administrators, who are our optometrist leaders, as well as our 110 Vision Source Representative Facilitators (VSRFs), who are our staff leaders. In this role, I provide our administrators and our VSRFs with tools and resources to effectively do their jobs and to ensure they continue to deliver value to our members.

“When the opportunity to work with Vision Source was presented to me and after I understood the mission, I was immediately impressed and wanted to use my business skills to help. Optometry can play an important role in population health management and its role in our overall health care system is not widely recognized. In working with Vision Source, our administrators and VSRFs, I hope to change this.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Be your best. Whatever you do—

give it your all and be the best you can be.”

## Kate Renwick-Espinosa

### PRESIDENT

VSP Vision Care  
Rancho Cordova, California

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Trendsetter, motivator, innovator, mentor, leader are all words that apply to Kate. She demonstrates a commitment to an environment of trust, respect and individuality.”



Kate Renwick-Espinosa has spent 24 years in marketing and communications at VSP, becoming marketing VP for Vision Care (when she was previously recognized among VM’s MIW in 2005), then being named VSP Global’s first chief marketing officer. A new organization structure took shape last October under the leadership of now-CEO Jim McGrann and she was promoted to president of VSP Vision Care.

VSP Vision Care serves 80 million members and some 56,000 clients. Renwick-Espinosa said, “I’m responsible for growing our VSP membership and creating patient opportunities with professional optometry. Today, VSP members want to be treated as individuals. This requires a deeper understanding of the member, being more ‘human-centric,’ and discovering what will make each individual a member for life.”

Citing the multidimensional nature of careers in vision, incorporating health care, fashion, manufacturing, technology and more, Renwick-Espinosa recommends the Optical Women’s Association (OWA) as a way to connect. “I’ve seen more women in leadership roles. For example, my executive team today is half women. Some of this has been due to new opportunities and more women being willing to take risks and be uncomfortable. Women can feel they need to be completely pre-

pared for new assignments or new roles in the workplace, but that isn’t practical or realistic. If you’re not uncomfortable, you’re not learning.”

**SHE SAYS...** “There are plenty of well-known women I admire, including Sheryl Sandberg and her messages in “Lean In.” But the women leaders who inspire me the most are the ones I work with every day at VSP.”

## Kim Schuy

### PRESIDENT

Essilor Vision Foundation - Americas  
Dallas, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Kim’s passion, knowledge and keen intellect has made her an asset to Essilor for a number of years in many parts of the company. Her contributions to the sun business have been global and Kim has now brought that passion to the foundation where she has already made a difference by inspiring others to believe in the cause through donations of time and dollars.”



Kim Schuy was drawn to the optical field because of the parallels she saw in the world of dermatology, where she started her marketing career at Procter & Gamble. Schuy worked on the Olay skin care account managing marketing efforts for both consumers and doctors. She joined Essilor in 2005 as brand manager for Varilux, and spent the last three years as global VP of marketing for sunwear. Schuy was drawn to Essilor because “the company is always changing—their goal is to continually evolve and innovate.”

She was named president of Essilor Vision Foundation (EVF) in January. “I help our team provide underprivileged children the opportuni-

# Executive Suite

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ty to live a better life through better sight. In the coming year, EVF will double our reach to provide services to nearly 200,000 children in the U.S. this year.”

Schuy has created growth by engaging partners to maximize existing non-profits who share in the mission to conduct eye exams and provide no-cost eyewear to children in need. “We aim to reach over one million children by the year 2020.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Change is inevitable and also valuable. We must embrace it and stay current. Today, medicine is evolving across specialties—we must expect and want the same for optical.”

## Michelle Skinner

### SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF OMNI CHANNEL DEVELOPMENT

VSP Global

Rancho Cordova, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She coordinates sales strategies, programs, and processes while facilitating partnerships across VSP Global’s companies to deliver a unified global experience to customers.”



Michelle Skinner began her career 22 years ago at VSP Global, where she helped create the company’s Altair eyewear brand. She left to take a sales management position at Marchon, remaining with the company after it was acquired by VSP in 2008. After rejoining VSP two years ago, she led the Altair business and helped develop Premier, a commercial program that connects the Marchon and Altair eyewear brands right to VSP members and then directs them to Premier locations.

In 2016, Skinner moved to the newly created position of senior VP Omni Channel Business Development. She is now responsible for the Pre-

mier program, Retail and Franchise relations, leading a team of 19 employees.

Skinner believes that to be a successful manager one must not only think strategically, but also be able to listen to others and trust your gut instincts. She encourages team members to develop both their EQ (emotional intelligence) and IQ, a combination she believes is particularly powerful.

Skinner offers this advice, gleaned from an early mentor: “Don’t be intimidated by what you don’t know. Be curious. That can be your greatest strength. It ensures that you do things differently than everyone else.” She added, “Be authentic, be you, not who you think others want you to be.”

**SHE SAYS...** “The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

## Yvette Waddell, MBA

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Brien Holden Vision Institute  
Sydney, Australia

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Yvette’s caring, passion, dedication and commitment to the Brien Holden Vision Institute are unmatched.”



As chief operating officer of the Brien Holden Vision Institute in Sydney, Australia, Yvette Waddell is responsible for managing its overall operations and business development initiatives including the licensing of new technologies developed at the research facility. Named after founder and esteemed leader, the late Professor Brien Holden, the Institute is affiliated with the University of New South Wales’ School of Optometry.

The core mission of the Brien Holden Vision

Institute is to eliminate vision impairments by promoting leading edge research and technologies in vision correction. The Institute fosters global collaboration among eyecare professionals in the fields of optical education, research, public health and business development. As COO, Waddell’s focus is to continue the legacy of Professor Holden, and to promote within Brien Holden a “healthy, vibrant work environment where people grow and learn, new ideas flourish and scientific breakthroughs happen.”

Waddell, who joined the Institute 23 years ago in the finance area, attributes her career success to being able to work with outstanding leaders in the industry like Professor Holden, who she said, “inspired and guided me for my entire career.” With so many different avenues of opportunity for women to assume leadership roles, Waddell expects the influence of women to continue to increase throughout the optical industry.

**SHE SAYS...** “It’s never ‘I did this or that.’ It is always WE. WE can do so much more together than as individuals.”

## Mary Walker, COE

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COO

Vision Associates  
Warren, New Jersey

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Over her five-year tenure, she has been instrumental in reorganizing Vision Associates and doubling sales.”



In 1989, Mary Walker, an ABO optician, joined the ophthalmology practice of Dr. Alan Hefner who ran an optical dispensary as a convenience for patients and hoped, at best, not to lose money operating it. Over the course of 19 years, Walker turned that single location dispensary, which was barely breaking even, into a high-

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ly profitable, multi-location optical profit center. In 2011, she earned her Certified Ophthalmic Executive (COE) designation and with Dr. Hefner's blessing, moved on to bigger challenges.

Today, Walker is executive director of Vision Associates, a firm that provides a complete comprehensive management program and consulting services for over 100 ophthalmologist owned dispensaries nationwide. Although ophthalmology dispensing was once viewed as a small player in the optical market, noted Walker, today some of the most successful dispensaries reside in ophthalmology offices. "I strive to drive ophthalmology dispensing to the levels I know can be achieved," said Walker, whose business successes reflect that goal.

Walker believes that careers in optical "offer an amazing blend of medical and hands-on technical work, and the ability to have an incredible daily impact on people's lives." The key to success, is to "stay current, keep your optical foundation solid, continue to learn and most importantly, align yourself with people who share your core values."

**SHE SAYS...** "Never lose sight of why we all do what we do, to provide the best possible eye-care and visual solutions to every person."

## Ellen L. Weiss, OD, FVI

### PRESIDENT

VOSH International  
Omaha, Nebraska

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Dr. Weiss leads by example in community service, holding leadership roles in many professional and community service organizations. She involves and educates optometric

students, and inspires them to become more involved in their profession and communities."



When assuming the presidency [at VOSH International], I set a goal to increase our contact with students," said Ellen Weiss, OD, who has led the charge in advising more than 75 state, regional, school and international chapters. "With our emphasis on sustainable eye clinics, expansion of our VOSH Corps program to place U.S.-trained optometrists in optometry schools to teach in Nicaragua, Uganda and Malawi, and our Technology Transfer Program to take donated equipment and place it in schools and clinics in developing countries, [VOSH] is making an international difference. I'm proud to be a part of this effort," she said.

Weiss has volunteered her services in several countries throughout Latin America, but her inspiration to become an optometrist came from home. "I have a visually impaired younger sister, and an older brother that had strabismus surgery twice. It seemed like my family was always at the eye doctor's office," Weiss said.

Soon, it was her own optometrist who encouraged Weiss to consider optometry school, and she later graduated from the University of Missouri St. Louis in 1992. Since then, she has held dozens of affiliations and roles in and outside the optometric field. In addition to her work with VOSH, she also practices at Millard Family Eyecare in Omaha, a Vision Source member.

**SHE SAYS...** "I love what I do and am so glad I became an optometrist."

## Cynthia Williams

### GENERAL COUNSEL

1-800 Contacts  
Draper, Utah

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Cindy Williams leads discussions and recommends solutions on high-impact government and legal issues for contact lens wearers, 1-800 Contacts and contact lens retailers. She spearheaded the Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice, establishing relationships with Costco Wholesale, Lens.com and consumer interest groups."



Cynthia Williams has been the General Counsel of 1-800 Contacts for the last year. She started her career as a trial lawyer and later practiced as an in-house lawyer. Her experience includes launching a government affairs department and PAC at a fortune 1000 publicly traded company.

Currently, she manages the legal and legislative affairs team for 1-800 Contacts, which includes legislative work at the state and federal levels as well as legal and regulatory work. She said, "A major accomplishment for me included working to highlight to legislators and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) the often forgotten requirement in the Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act of 2003 (FCLCA) for eyecare professionals to automatically release prescriptions.

"I became interested in the optical field because it presented an opportunity to advocate for Americans across the country, which has been a lifelong passion of mine that started with providing pro bono legal services and later fighting for the rights of the residents in my community."

**SHE SAYS...** "I have been inspired most of all by my immigrant father, who had an unparalleled work ethic. He instilled that work ethic in me and told me that I could achieve seemingly impossible goals with hard work and determination."

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## Stacey Abler

### VICE PRESIDENT OF DIGITAL MARKETING & MEDIA

National Vision  
Duluth, Georgia

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Over the last five years, she has risen to the level of VP of marketing because of the results she has been able to deliver leading our digital efforts.”



Stacey Abler credits the love and support from her husband and parents for inspiring her to focus on becoming a better version of herself every day.

In 2010, she accepted the challenge to move the retail brands of National Vision into the world of digital marketing. Today, she is responsible for overseeing all aspects of digital marketing for America's Best Contacts & Eyeglasses and Eyeglass World.

Before working with National Vision, Abler founded and operated a group of websites for Army spouses and families. “It started as a personal blog and soon turned into much more, allowing me to communicate with and support Army families across the country and around the world.”

She considers one of her greatest strengths to be her ability to get things done.

“If I put my mind to a project, I will accomplish it or die trying. One of my favorite quotes is ‘People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it’” by George Bernard Shaw.

To women who are just breaking into the optical industry, Abler's best advice for them is to find a trusted mentor because “as a woman, being strong and vocal in the corporate world isn't always well-received. A mentor can provide objectivity and advice that has been validated through their own experiences.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Many people like to say, ‘think outside the box.’ I prefer to think there is no box...”

Fear of failure can stop innovation, learning and growth, which is a disservice to yourself and the business you work for.”

## Jennifer Brown

### DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, NORTH AMERICA

Luxottica  
Port Washington, New York

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Over her 10-year career with Luxottica, Jennifer has focused exclusively on independent optometry. She has developed a keen understanding of the needs of this group and is very passionate about her work on their behalf.”



Fashion led Jennifer Brown to her passion in optical. “I have always seen eyewear as a fashion accessory, which is what inevitably led me to Luxottica.”

Brown has been in optical for 15 years, starting out as a sales consultant servicing the independent channel. While her current responsibilities include all commercial programs and incentives for Luxottica Wholesale North America's independent optical channel, her goals are to provide tools and resources for independents to thrive in the changing market.

Her quick thinking and competitive nature, as well as her belief in collaboration, have allowed Brown to excel in her leadership role, but through it all she tries to make an impact every day and challenge others to push their limits. In 2015, she was awarded the Above and Beyond award from Luxottica for her contributions.

She believes that it's an exciting time in optical for everyone and her advice for women just starting out, “Would be to aim high. The optical industry is healthier than ever and women are uniquely suited to lead here.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I believe that every day can be a game changer. I try to be open to ideas, even when they make me uncomfortable.”

## Siobhán Burns

### LICENSED OPTICIAN AND OWNER

The Eyeglass Lass  
New London, Connecticut

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Siobhán has used her many talents to rapidly become one of the most recognized and unique optical boutiques in Connecticut. Her inventory of vintage eyewear and current frame styles offers an opportunity for her customers to make a unique statement.”



For Siobhán Burns, what started out as “just as job” became her life, and 13 years later she has gone from needing a job in college to becoming The Eyeglass Lass.

After working at the same location for 10-and-half years, testing out two other locations and working at an independent location for a few months, what Burns wanted was to move back home and open her own location. She made the jump in March 2014 and opened her own location three months later.

“Talk about a whirlwind! I sit back once in a while and can't believe I pulled that off. I went from having my lucky PD ruler and an idea for a shop name to owning my own independent optical boutique overnight. And I wouldn't change a thing.”

While only being open for less than a year, the local newspaper, *the day*, awarded her store second place in the region for Best Optical Shop and this year, The Eyeglass Lass went home with the first place honor.

Burns makes a difference by genuinely listening to her customers and ultimately helping them become more confident by the time they pick up their new eyewear.

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As for advice she'd give to women entering optical, "Take chances! There is so much happening in our industry that we need to stay on top of. It isn't just one thing that is important; it all matters."

**SHE SAYS...** "I feel like everyone I encounter in my life inspires me in one way or another."

## Veneeta Eason

### SENIOR DIRECTOR, DEMAND GENERATION AND BRAND MARKETING

Zeiss

San Diego, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Since coming on board, Veneeta has created an atmosphere of innovation and technology leadership that the entire company has followed. She has brought many new ideas to a company that needed to take a new approach in communicating to customers and consumers."



Veneeta Eason is a global marketing expert who has been connecting people and products through technology for more than a decade. Working across B2B and B2C channels, she has built a reputation for developing and implementing innovative marketing and business strategies that generated double-digit growth for companies like Hewlett Packard and Eastman Kodak. In 2012, she joined Zeiss to lead the company's demand generation, brand and communications programs.

Armed with a bachelor's degree in engineering and an MBA from the University of Michigan, Eason always dreamed of working for a high tech company. "When I discovered that Zeiss, the leading company in precision optics, was right in my backyard, I saw an opportunity to devote my marketing passion and skills to empower ECPs to deliver comprehensive vision innovation for the best patient care possible."

Today, Eason oversees planning and marketing for

the company, including branding and new product launches, public relations and trade shows. "I've led the go-to-market of numerous new product lines, including our breakthrough Zeiss DriveSafe, Zeiss Blue Protect AR coating and our Zeiss Precision line of progressives that help address digital eye strain," she said.

**SHE SAYS...** "When you put the customer front and center, you will deliver on your brand promise. That is how I define winning—it starts with a great team and a strong strategy, and ends with a satisfied customer and patient."

## Sandra Fortenberry, OD, FAAO

### ASSISTANT DEAN FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Rosenberg School of Optometry  
University of the Incarnate Word  
San Antonio, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Dr. Fortenberry is assistant dean at RSO where she was heavily involved in getting the school's accreditation. She is on the Executive Committee of the Texas Optometric Association (TOA), she serves on the Continuing Education Committee for AOA and she is CE chair for TOA. She has shown great potential as one of our future leaders that will be great for our profession."



Sandra Fortenberry, OD, has been influenced by women her whole life. Her mother pushed her to get an education and be independent, while her childhood optometrist was the one who inspired her to go into the optometry field.

Today, she pays it forward as the assistant dean for Professional Advancement at Rosenberg School of Optometry where she hopes to make a differ-

ence in her student's lives by showing that they can have fulfilling careers while still keeping family and values a priority.

Dr. Fortenberry has also been a practicing OD for almost a decade. She is a partner at Texas State Optical, and was named the Young Optometrist of the Year by the AOA and the TOA in 2013.

**SHE SAYS...** "I excel at my job because I explain things well to my patients. In my role at the school, I use the same techniques: treat others with respect and be forthcoming in my thoughts. I am typically known as the one who will say what everyone else is thinking."

## Kerry Giedd, OD, MS, FAAO

### FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

Eola Eyes

Orlando, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "In addition to caring for Eola Eyes patients, Dr. Giedd enjoys consulting as a clinical investigator for contact lens industry research."



Whether it's managing a multimillion dollar practice, consulting or caring for her patients, Kerry Giedd, OD, is all about balance—or at least, tries to be. "Although I try to manage my time wisely, like many people, I often feel there aren't enough hours in the day," said Giedd. "By designing a business model from the start that fosters work-life balance, I've been able to maintain my passion for patient care and business management."

Giedd graduated from the Ohio State University College of Optometry in 2000. Three years later, she founded Eola Eyes, a private practice where she and two partners put the focus on contact lenses. She and the practice have earned various recognitions, including CooperVision Best Practices for 2015 and the Vision Monday Design and Retail Excellence

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(D.A.R.E.) Award for eco-achievement in 2011. Independently, Giedd was named the SBA Women in Business Champion of the Year for the District and State of Florida in 2012.

Along with operating a thriving contact lens practice, Giedd is actively involved in the AAO and AOA, serves on the editorial board of *Primary Care Optometry News*, has served as a principal investigator for various clinical research trials, and frequently serves as a consultant, speaker and author within the contact lens realm.

**SHE SAYS...** “Find your niche in the industry and commit yourself to serving that niche better than anyone else.”

## Lisa Hanson

### QUALITY MANAGER

Vision Ease  
Ramsey, Minnesota

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Her strong customer focus, drive for continuous improvement and commitment to learning make her extremely effective with Vision Ease customers.”



As the quality manager for Vision Ease, Lisa Hanson is responsible for both the quality assurance and quality control programs, most notably the Six Sigma program. As the company's Six Sigma specialist, she works with manufacturing, engineering and R&D to improve and maintain the quality and performance of Vision Ease products for customer standards. Her team is also responsible for developing the quality of Vision Ease suppliers and qualifying new raw material and equipment partners.

Hanson leads the team that qualifies new project launches and serves as the company's quality expert and industry liaison. “We execute various tests and conduct several audits on the products every day, strategically designed to protect our customer and ensure that they are receiving the best product possi-

ble,” she said.

“With my Six Sigma background, I am able to help people make data driven decisions through proper analysis and interpretation techniques. I am also able to see when processes are broken and can initiate changes to improve those processes.”

Hanson is fascinated by the number of women who have become involved in the lens manufacturing process, adding, “There are still lots of opportunities for women to take on higher level leadership roles in manufacturing.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Sometimes the road to the future is not always clear. But being able to influence and drive the team in that forward path on a continual basis is critical to keeping pace with the company's needs.”

## Jayne Hyman

### MARKETING MANAGER

Visual Eyes Eyewear  
Longwood, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Jayme Hyman goes above and beyond for all customers, big or small. She has put together huge marketing programs with the Stand Up 2 Cancer marketing team as well. It is great to work with a young woman like Jayme and see the positive impact she has on our optical community.”



Jayne Hyman's background in public relations gave her a strong foundation for her marketing manager position at Visual Eyes Eyewear Inc., where her primary focus is on consumers and how to reach them directly. In the marketing department at Visual Eyes, she had to learn how to reach the customer through a distribution channel, a process she found challenging.

Despite the difference in approach, Hyman educated herself about the optical industry and went on to lead the team to launch the company's first web-

site. Six years later, Hyman has connections to industry veterans—including colleagues, frame buyers at retail chains and lab owners. Though she is self-driven and detail oriented, she realizes the importance of teamwork, not only for her colleagues, but for customers and sales representatives.

With the role of women changing in the workplace, Hyman is hopeful that there are opportunities for women to rise to the leadership ranks.

**SHE SAYS...** “I think it is important not to feel intimidated by gender and statistics. Prove to your successors that women can thrive in the optical industry. We can thrive, we can empower and we can conquer.”

## Jaimee Palkovicz

### MARKETING COORDINATOR

i-see Optical Lab  
Blackwood, New Jersey

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Jaimee is a graduate of Rider University, and has been with i-see Optical for three years, but she grew up in the industry. At an early age, Jaimee loved glasses, and fashion, and brings that passion to the 40-year-old independent eyeglass lab. Jaimee leads the way in bringing a new energy, and direction to i-see Optical.”



Though Jaimee Palkovicz was around opticians her whole life, she tried her hand at corporate administration before she decided to work as a marketing coordinator for her family's business. With the awareness that the fashion and retail aspects of the optical industry evolve with technology and Millennial trends, she decided to use her strengths as a social media buff to create an online presence for i-see Optical Lab Inc. Today, she coordinates all aspects of marketing, including the company's social media platforms, meetings and customer outreach.

Since she started working in her family's lab,

*More* →

Palkovicz has been featured in numerous industry magazines. She was also instrumental in the opening and launch of i-see Optical's mirror coating center and AR coating center.

**SHE SAYS...** "My greatest challenge is the things I don't know. There are people in this industry who have more experience than I do. All I can do is continue to educate myself, use the resources I have and continue to learn. I am not in this business to watch. I am in this business to lead the next generation."

## Heather Revens

**ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT**  
CareCredit  
Costa Mesa, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Heather has been

instrumental in building the CareCredit brand in the optical industry by developing marketing and educational programs and events. She has also expanded CareCredit's reach by creating marketing partnerships with associations and other companies in the industry."



As the assistant vice president of optical marketing to providers that offer CareCredit, Heather Revens' responsibilities include developing strategic marketing plans to support the company's network of optical providers. CareCredit allows patients and customers the ability to purchase health care products and services using a credit card that features deferred interest on purchases.

Revens has been in marketing for some 20 years, 10 of them specializing in health care marketing.

During the past five years with CareCredit, Revens helped develop ad campaigns for providers, organizes Lunch N' Learn seminars at trade shows like Vision Expo and is currently working on a new ad campaign for CareCredit.

Revens said, "I have a passion for creative problem solving that provides benefits to the company, provider and patients alike. This passion motivates me to develop new, out of the box solutions."

Revens has always been interested in the unique combination the optical industry has with health and beauty. "Just like people don't have one pair of shoes for all occasions, people shouldn't have only one pair of glasses for all occasions."

**SHE SAYS...** "I am inspired by Sheryl Sandberg's philosophy which says, 'Don't wait for the perfect moment, take the moment and make it perfect. Speak up. Believe in yourself. Take risks.'"

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## Naheed Ahmad, OD

### DIRECTOR

Dr. N. Ahmad & Associates  
Rosewell, Georgia

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Naheed is an incredible leader and innovator—not only is she practicing full scope optometry, she is also a leader, and speaks about diversity and our patients.”



Naheed Ahmad, OD, is adamant about putting her patients first. Her personal philosophy, “Always do what’s right for the patient,” comes with the understanding that,

“you can do as much marketing as you want, but unless you treat your patients well and with respect, they will not continue to come back.” Dr. Ahmad prioritizes communication, and believes that patients should be in the know about every step of the treatment process—from procedures, to diagnoses, and treatment options.

Aside from running her two practices in Georgia, Dr. Ahmad is a member of the AOA, Georgia Optometric Association, a part of a leadership team for the Walmart ODs in Atlanta. She also serves as secretary on the executive board of Energyeyes Association, the first national optometric association created to foster, support and demystify corporate-affiliated practices of all types. Through her ties at Energyeyes, Ahmad mentors young ODs in corporate-affiliated practices by answering questions from them.

**SHE SAYS...** “My advice is to do your best, work hard and don’t let anyone tell you, you can’t do something. Optometry offers so many ways to practice and allows you to tailor your career the way you want or need it to be.”

## Sue Creek

### VP SALES & TRAINING

Adlens  
Boston, Massachusetts

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Sue is one of the most motivating, hard working and mentoring people—she makes people feel good about themselves.”



The optical industry has been Sue Creek’s ticket to traveling the world. She spent 15 years opening retail optical stores globally for Vision Express and lived in Australia, Argentina and Russia, enjoying “lots of adventures” along the way. Throughout her globetrotting career, Creek has worked in every optical environment including private practice, lab, retail sales and big box retail, enjoying them all.

Creek is currently VP of sales and training for Adlens, a manufacturer of adjustable focus prescription eyeglasses that represent a new approach to vision correction. One of the industry’s greatest challenges, said Creek, is getting doctors and opticians to embrace new technology. She believes, “If we embrace new technology versus hiding from it, we will move our industry forward quicker.”

Training and empowering people are the strengths that have propelled Creek forward in her career. She has trained over 2,000 people in optical retail sales around the world, motivating and inspiring them to develop and love their jobs and the industry. “I encourage people to try new things. People learn more from mistakes than wins, so I give them the freedom to make mistakes and come up with better solutions.”

Her advice to women entering the industry is simple: say “yes” often. “There are so many different avenues and opportunities in our industry, if you are open to them you will never get bored. “

**SHE SAYS...** “Life’s about relationships, the rest is just details.”

## Cindi Davis, ABOC, CPOT

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING MANAGER

Carl Zeiss Vision  
San Diego, California

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Cindi develops training modules for the entire sales organization and is the ‘mom’ who is very successful in on-boarding new hires.”



A part-time job in a progressive vision care practice evolved into a rewarding optical career for Cindi Davis. Working with the late Dr. Joe Clay and his son, Dr. Greg Clay, for over 16 years

provided Davis with the learning opportunities that encouraged her to improve her optical knowledge and skills. “I am forever indebted to the Clays for providing me with a strong foundation and love for patient care,” said Davis.

Building on that foundation, Davis held positions of increasing responsibility in retail optical, and in 2008, she joined Carl Zeiss as regional sales manager. In 2011, she was promoted to her current job as professional development and training manager. Davis creates and delivers training programs for new hires and for the company’s sales professionals nationwide, and works with client ECP staff to develop their optical knowledge and dispensing skills.

Davis believes that the best advice for anyone, not just women, to succeed in the industry is to constantly hone your skills. “The optical landscape is changing at such a rapid pace, we need to take it upon ourselves to learn all we can through publications such as *Vision Monday*, online CE courses, webinars and seminars.

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**SHE SAYS...** “If we always remember that everyone deserves the very best vision possible and we strive to deliver the necessary services and products to provide that vision, we have done our professional duty.”

## Molly Drenen

### PROGRAM MANAGER OF OPTICAL TECHNOLOGY AND OPHTHALMIC MEDICAL ASSISTING

Cuyahoga Community College  
Cleveland, Ohio

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She inspires all prospective students as well as students in the program to excel and be the best that they can be in the field of optics.”



As the program manager at Cuyahoga Community College, Molly Drenen helps students to develop into opticians. Her strength is in the passion she has for educating, and she realizes the importance of encouraging her alumni because they tend to more patients than she does and are able to make a wider impact. Drenen always instills in her students that, “Opticianry is about designing eyewear that will best meet the visual needs of the patient.”

Though she serves as a mentor now, Drenen is also grateful to her own mentors who not only gave her advice, but taught her about ophthalmic dispensing, influenced how she educates her opticianry students and reminded her that the profession of opticianry is a constant source of inspiration.

Drenen is also optimistic about the changing role of women in the field. Over the past decade, she believes women have worked their way into leadership roles and have pioneered the way for others.

**SHE SAYS...** “Opticianry is a mixture of math, fashion

design and medicine. I encourage women who are interested and are trying to have a career in the optical industry to develop their skills by continuing to educate themselves. There is always more to learn, which is what makes opticianry so exciting.”

## Tracey Glendenning, OD, FCOVD

### DIRECTOR OF RECRUITING

MyEyeDr.

### CLINICAL FIELD DIRECTOR

SE North Carolina

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “In a state where the board exam pass rate is lower than 40 percent, she is a source of positivity and encouragement. ‘If you dream it, you can become it’ is her motto, and she lives it every day.”



Inspired by the stories of individuals who have overcome adversity, Tracey Glendenning, OD, has always made a point to pay it forward. “I truly believe it is my goal to help everyone around me become the best they can be and never stop learning,” Glendenning said.

At MyEyeDr., she successfully balances many roles, one of which is preceptor for optometry student externships. During these, she acquaints students to a large private practice setting with an emphasis on contact lenses and ocular disease, and goes the extra mile by helping with test prep and administering mock board exams. She is also responsible for hiring optometrists at all of MyEyeDr.’s 250 locations, for which she actively visits schools and conferences.

Among many organizations and affiliations, Glendenning is an active member of the AOA, NCSOS, COVD and SE District Optometric Society.

Glendenning said her most rewarding work is providing vision therapy for her traumatic brain

injury patients, whom she treats as part of her management role at MyEyeDr.’s Center for Visual Learning and Rehabilitative Therapy.

**SHE SAYS...** “This is the best industry for women. There are so many opportunities to grow and make a lifetime career in it—and it can start small with no experience. The key is to just start!”

## Lynette K. Johns, OD, FAAO, FSLs, FBCLA

### CLINICAL & EDUCATION CONSULTANT

Bausch + Lomb Specialty Vision Products  
**ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**  
New England College of Optometry  
Boston, Massachusetts

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Dr. Johns is regarded internationally as one of the foremost scleral lens fitters and educators.”



When Lynette Johns, OD, joined the Boston Foundation for Sight in 2005 as a senior optometrist, she saw patients fly in from around the world for scleral lens care because so few practitioners

were fitting these specialty contact lenses. Today that is changing, with most optometry schools now teaching scleral lenses, enabling patients to be fitted by their local optometrists, Johns said.

Her work as a clinical and education consultant with Bausch+Lomb allows Johns to introduce scleral lenses to optometrists, ophthalmologists and fitters across the globe while providing hands on education in fitting. Fitting scleral lenses properly is critical, she noted, for both effective outcomes and practitioner confidence.

“I have two passions: scleral lenses and education,” Johns said. She combines both by teaching at New England College of Optometry, consulting with Bausch+Lomb and working as an attending clinician at New England Eye Commonwealth.

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In her practice, Johns treats patients with severe visual impairments or devastating eye pain and light sensitivity. Scleral lenses can visually rehabilitate these people to functional levels, she says, allowing them to return to work after years of disability. “It is a gift to witness a patient transform within a minute of simply applying a scleral lens on his or her eye.”

**SHE SAYS...** “In my opinion, this is a very exciting time to be involved in specialty contact lenses with the increased awareness and acceptance of scleral lenses.”

## Brandie Shaw

**NATIONAL SALES MANAGER**  
Coburn Technologies  
South Windsor, Connecticut

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “In an industry sector dominated by men, she has shattered the glass ceiling for women in capital equipment.”



Brandie Shaw knows what it’s like to be a woman in a mostly man’s world. She was named national sales manager this year for Coburn Technologies, a manufacturer and distributor of surfacing, finishing and diagnostic equipment. While women have made significant career inroads throughout the optical industry, the equipment side of the business has been, until recently, primarily a male domain. But that’s changing too.

“Early on, I faced subtle prejudices because I am a woman in a highly technical part of the business,” said Shaw. But she is quick to note that

some of her most valued mentors have been the visionary men who supported her career and gave her permission to step into roles that were outside her past experience. “These gender-blind mentors helped provide me with opportunities to learn and grow professionally,” she said.

Experience, hard work and “spending time to really learn the business” are qualities that have enabled Shaw to succeed throughout her 35-year career in different optical settings. “I hope I can set a positive example for anyone entering the industry, knowing that hard work can pay off with a truly rewarding lifelong career.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I like Woody Allen’s quote: ‘Eighty percent of success is showing up.’ It reminds me that I need to just jump in and give it a try even when I feel uncertain about my ability to do something. It’s the work ethic I hold myself to.”

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## Abby Ayoub

### CEO, FOUNDER

Optical Academy  
Clifton, New Jersey

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Abby is doing it alone and we are amazed at how far she’s gone because of her passion to serve. She mentors us daily, has created a profit share program and many incentives for us to grow individually within the company. She cares about every aspect and turns no one away if they cannot afford our services.”



Abby Ayoub fell in love with the optical industry at a young age and has never left. She crossed paths with a 15-year-old girl named Kelly who had a tumor that blasted her retina, went into her brain and pushed her eye all the way left. Kelly annually failed her school’s vision test and wasn’t able to see an optometrist. That’s when Ayoub founded Optical Academy—which provides onsite exams and eyewear at school sites, work sites, and other communities.

When she served on the Council for VCA, 18 years ago, data showed that, “over 70 percent of children who fail a vision screening never get seen.” Because that remains unchanged today, Ayoub works to address the problem with the way eyecare is delivered, especially to underserved children.

**SHE SAYS...** “I have a mission and purpose that is stronger than the bottom line. I am an entrepreneur and not afraid of failure. I love to create, do things differently and have a passion for people. I excel by fueling that nut daily and hope I can be the largest player in the optical industry too.”

## Debby Feinberg, OD

### FOUNDER

NeuroVisual Medicine

### OWNER

Vision Specialists  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Through her cutting edge research and patient care over the last 20 years, Dr. Debby Feinberg has developed the new optometric field of NeuroVisual Medicine.”



Debby Feinberg, OD, has devoted a majority of her career to neurovisual optometry, a type of practice geared toward diagnosis and treatment of neurological conditions through eyecare. As such, her biggest inspiration has been her patients. “My patients who suffer the invisible symptoms of dizziness, anxiety, nausea, headache, neck pain, light sensitivity and imbalance with walking inspire me to never give up on the mission of moving this work forward,” she said.

As a neurovisual specialist, Feinberg said she has treated more than 8,000 patients, resulting in an 80 percent reduction in symptoms by prescribing microprism lenses. She has gained notoriety in media including publication in *Brain Injury*, a peer-reviewed, monthly medical journal (February 2016), as well as in a TEDx talk she delivered in Detroit in 2015.

Seeing herself and her colleagues as a “team of healers,” Feinberg believes optometrists are in a unique position to change the way people think about the eyeglass industry, and the scope and reach of optometry.

**SHE SAYS...** “As with any profession, men and women may have different perspectives, but as the role of women in optometry becomes more prominent, I believe that they will have a bigger ‘voice at the table’

and ascertain that the needs of our patients, as viewed from the female perspective, will be met.”

## Kelly Freitas

### SENIOR DIRECTOR, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

VSP Global  
Rancho Cordova, California

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Kelly has created systems and processes required to unify and run marketing automation and customer relationship management systems. She’s implemented and socialized testing methodologies on all elements of the digital marketing mix to improve conversion rates and optimize campaign results.”



A 15-year veteran at VSP, Kelly Freitas is the catalyst that has propelled VSP Global’s transformation in marketing, technology and automation. Three years ago, she spearheaded the company’s Customer Experience Management Center of Excellence, which delivers welcome messages to members, educates them on their benefits and helps them understand the importance of having regular eye exams.

She supervises approximately 30 people divided into two teams. One is a digital engagement team that focuses on the digital marketing customer experience for VSP members, including websites and email campaigns; systems and processes required to run an effective and efficient marketing organization, including marketing automation and customer relationship management systems. The other is a customer insights team that provides research, analysis and recommendations for product and marketing opportunities for VSP Global companies.

“The number of women in leadership roles has definitely grown since I entered the optical industry.”

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try 15 years ago, observed Freitas, who got her start in marketing while working at the *Sacramento Bee*. “I’m inspired by the business savvy, creativity and innovation I see at VSP Global and in the industry overall.”

**SHE SAYS...** “From enhancing the eyecare experience for consumers to delivering innovations to how eyecare and eyewear are delivered, women will continue to influence change in the industry.”

## Linda Hardy, LDO-GA, NCLC, ABOC, CPOT, COA

### OFFICE MANAGER

Eyexam of Peachtree City  
Peachtree City, Georgia

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Linda helps train all optometric techs. She pushes them to become educated in the tasks they perform. She loves all parts of this field.”



Over the past two decades, Linda Hardy has never stopped learning. Since getting her start as an ophthalmic technician at a private practice in 1996, she began a career at Newnan Family Eye Care, where, in addition to her role as clinical coordinator, she pursued many certifications, earning her ABO, NCLE, Licensed Dispensing Optician in the state of Georgia, ParaOptometric Technician and Certified Ophthalmic Assistant. Currently, she is studying for her Advanced ABO, and hopes to become a master optician, she said.

After 16 years at Newnan, Hardy has recently accepted a new position as office manager of Eyexam of Peachtree City, in May 2016. In her new role, she is adjusting to being less “hands-on” and allowing her staff to take the reins.

“I am the first to jump in and try to help a patient, run a test, or do repairs—but I know I

should allow others with less experience to do more. I want to not only train new employees, but train them effectively,” Hardy said.

Outside the office, Hardy is a contributing editor for the *Optician’s Handbook* and *Review of Optometric Business*. She also enjoys teaching continuing education, and recently accepted the SECO ParaOptometric of the Year for 2016.

**SHE SAYS...** “Start taking certification and licensing tests early. There are so many women in this field that have worked for several years but have never taken the steps to become certified. It is worth investing in your education and career.”

## Iris Johnson

### ART DIRECTOR

20/20 Magazine, Jobson Optical Group  
New York City

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Iris is the premier art director of the #1 publication in optical. As art director, she sets the tone, the look, the feel and the future of what it takes to be eyewear as the ultimate accessory.”



Iris Johnson’s entry into optical was purely by chance, although with the name Iris, she likes to think it was fate. “When I began working at 20/20, I was surprised to learn that there was a monthly magazine devoted to eyewear. Now I’m constantly looking at what people on the street are wearing and what the latest trends are.”

Johnson’s first publishing job was as art assistant with Nickelodeon Magazine. She has been at Jobson Publishing since 2000, first as a designer for *U.S. Pharmacist*, and then in 2003, as a designer for *20/20 Magazine*. In 2006, she became art director of *20/20 Magazine* and today she is responsible for the design and look of *20/20* and its supplements, including KidzBiz and SunVision, which she has

been art directing for the past 10 years now.

“I produce a monthly fashion photoshoot for the magazine, assign all the still life shooting, design the layouts, and handle the less glamorous, more bureaucratic responsibilities of running an art department.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I am lucky that my editor-in-chief James Spina, who has championed me from the time I arrived at *20/20 Magazine*, understands the importance that design and photography have on a magazine’s visual impact. Working with him and the editorial staff is truly a collaborative effort.”

## Amanda K. Lee, OD

### VICE PRESIDENT AND COO

Vision Source At Seaside Eye Associates  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She is a Vision Source administrator and leader in her region. A consultant and speaker, people are influenced by her opinions.”



Amanda Lee, OD, has always been interested in pursuing a career that allowed her to explore her love for science and medicine. During a junior high school career day she chose to listen to a nurse, mortician and an optometrist. “When the time came, I applied to both optometry school and medical school but ultimately chose optometry because of my interest in the eye and the visual system.”

Since then, her philosophy about the optical business is that it’s constantly evolving and “there are many moving parts, some of which may come together or come apart at any given moment. This creates an excitement in me since it is always different.”

Along with this excitement, Lee is an ardent supporter of the charity, Optometry Giving Sight

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## #Women Who Wow

WOMEN WHO HAVE INITIATED NEW PRODUCTS, PROGRAMS OR IDEAS MARKING SUCCESS

# Innovators

and has been since she first learned about them.

With her many memberships and involvement, Lee considers being honored as one of VM's Most Influential Women in Optical a great accomplishment. "To be referred by one of my colleagues in our industry is an honor that I do not take lightly."

**SHE SAYS...** "Keep your mind open to new people and possibilities in our industry. Look at every person who walks into your office as someone who has the potential to share knowledge with you."

## Jana Noble

### MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR/GEOSPATIAL ANALYST

Vision Source Member Support Center  
Kingwood, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "She is a key member

of the team helping ODs determine the best spot to open a new location. She also works with over 40 health care systems building tools to help their patients connect with their nearest Vision Source member optometrist."



Jana Noble came to Vision Source in 2014 to work with the geospatial analytics program and support the organization's members and network development team. A veteran of the banking industry who specialized in lending and commercial real estate, Noble also worked at an ad agency where she gained a deeper understanding of consumer behavior.

At Vision Source, she designs geospatial and consumer insight analysis reports using data provided by makers of GPS systems. The reports are used by Vision Source members who want to learn

how to market effectively to the people who drive by their practice every day. She also conducts one-on-one consultations to assist members in finding the perfect place to open a new location or move their current location.

The program has significantly shortened turn-around time on geospatial requests from Vision Source members. "Technology has changed the way we shop and the optical industry is no different," Noble observed. "We need to stay ahead of the game. Spatial analytics help identify and anticipate changes in the market so we can adapt accordingly."

**SHE SAYS...** "Women tend to be the decision makers when it comes to health related purchases. Concentrating our efforts to learn about their spending habits will make it easier to provide them with the products and services they want."

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## Karin Sears

### VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT

Nouveau Eyewear, a Division of Walman Carrollton, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She is brilliant in her thinking and clearly knows how to demonstrate influence through others by her persuasive way of presenting clear ideas. She knows how to mold herself to all situations in order to come up with the best solutions.”



Karin Sears has been in the optical industry for 28 years after entering the field by chance and is a member of the Optical Women’s Association (OWA). Over the course of this

time, she has held several unique positions that she credits with opening the door to new relationships and opportunities.

Sears considers the founders of Nouveau, Pat and Evan Aptaker with being excellent mentors who have “led by example and introduced me to the optical industry, which drew me into a true passion for eyewear.”

In her current role, Sears works directly with brand licensors, product manufacturers, optical buyers and account management teams. “This has helped me stay connected and have a broader perspective of our industry.” Along with this, she is responsible for overseeing all product design, development and quality control for all 12 licensed brands and more than 10 private labels.

“Nouveau has a team of brand managers and QC experts that are at the core of our company and culture. They align themselves with our

sales and marketing teams to bring the best products and innovation to our customers. I am privileged to lead this talented team.”

SHE SAYS... “I am inspired every day to live in the present, keep a positive attitude, approach every interaction with kindness and integrity and to look for opportunities every day to learn and grow.”

## Katheryn Stafford-Hudson

### PROJECT MANAGER

Office of Student Health and Wellness  
Chicago Public Schools  
Princeton Vision Clinic  
Chicago, Illinois

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CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She has been instrumental in conceiving an in-school and mobile vision-based program that provides comprehensive vision exams and eyeglasses to over 46,000 Chicago public school students each year.”



Katheryn Stafford-Hudson’s background in community organizing helped her appreciate the needs of the Chicago community, particularly the lack of vision care for many children. While working in the non-profit sector, Stafford-Hudson established partnerships with optical industry organizations such as OneSight and Essilor Vision Foundation.

In 2010, she began working with the Chicago Public Schools, the third largest school district in the U.S. with over 600 schools and approximately 400,000 students, approximately 86 percent of

whom live at or below the poverty threshold. At the time, bureaucratic and supply chain issues prevented children from receiving vision care quickly and easily. Students were waiting two to three months for a pair of glasses.

With the help of wholesale lab Classic Optical, which switched reimbursements from Medicaid to managed care, worked with vendors to simplify product selection and created an open bidding process, Stafford-Hudson was able to shorten turnaround time to a few weeks. Since then, the vision program has seen unprecedented growth.

**SHE SAYS...** “I believe children should have access to quality eye exams and eyeglasses. It is a right not a privilege. Since vision problems in children lead to poor academic performance, self-confidence and quality of life, it is my purpose to remove barriers and provide access to vision services for all Chicago children.”

## Vicky Tyburski

### MANAGER, SHIPPING DEPARTMENT

Classic Optical Laboratories  
Youngstown, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She led a major project to re-engineer Classic Optical’s shipping operations. She listened to her team and engaged them in the process, incorporating their feedback along the way.”



Vicky Tyburski entered the optical field by chance. She was in need of a job and a friend referred her to Classic Optical. Thirty-one years later, she has worked in customer service, as an expeditor, then as frame department manager, and now she is the manager of the shipping department, her first lab team management position.

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Earlier this year, Tyburski led a manufacturing project to re-engineer Classic Optical's shipping operations. Under her guidance, the shipping department continued to operate and moved in excess of 20,000 pairs of eyeglasses a week at the same time it implemented the project.

"I am living proof that you can join a team at an entry level and with hard work, determination and professional guidance, you can work your way up to a management position, if that is your goal," she said.

As a leader, Tyburski acknowledges the importance of understanding the skill levels of her team. Striving for too much success, she realizes, causes others to fail. Instead, "it is better to work together, to set goals that are attainable—with a few stretches for good measure."

SHE SAYS... "I encourage women to set goals and work smart; there is no substitute. Don't be afraid to change your path. Look for something you like to do and go for it." ■

## Methodology for Most Influential Women in Optical

This year's request for nominations was structured like the 2015 Report in that we continued to expand the scope of women recognized in the report, who make leadership contributions throughout the ECP, retail, supplier, lab, managed care and association landscapes.

Readers were asked to make up to three nominations per the following categories: **Executive Suite, Rising Stars, Mentors** and **Innovators**.

The "Influential Women" process is not designed to be a vote or a ranking. Nominations were reviewed and categorized by *Vision Monday's* editors. The "Chosen Because..." selections are drawn from the nominations submitted for each candidate. Honorees are organized alphabetically by category.

To view past year's Special Reports about Influential Women in Optical, go to [VisionMonday.com](http://VisionMonday.com) and click on VM Reports.