

# XXpert Influencers

COVER TOPIC



VM 2013  
**Most Influential  
WOMEN**  
in optical

NEW YORK—Women's influence in optical is undeniable. What's remarkable, though, is just how pervasive their influence has become.

Today, more women than ever before are playing vital roles at every level of our industry. In retailing, wholesaling, product design, manufacturing, distribution and vision care and managed care, talented women are shaping the direction of the companies and organizations they work for, and, in many cases, lead.

What is it about the optical industry that allows women to succeed in so many different roles? Several of this year's Most Influential Women offered responses to this question:

"Women have inherent qualities that make them successful in business, especially in a field like vision care. We are creative, collaborative and empathetic which are great qualities to have in an industry with a social focus," said Bidisha Rudra, director, business development, Essilor of America.

"Team Think is superior to Me Think," Kathy Wallace, national sourcing manager for Kaiser Permanente, pointed out. "Consensus-driven decisions based on data and team member participation gener-

ates not only excellent outcomes, but full implementation of new decisions, directions or policies."

Changing market conditions and changing attitudes are also affecting the outlook for women in optical. As Rebecca Chippior, OD, St. Lawrence Optometry, Kingston Ontario, Canada, noted, "Women were often seen as 'part-time ODs,' but optometry schools enroll almost twice as many women as men annually. I believe women will start buying into or starting their own offices to protect and guarantee their own destinies."

Lisa McCauley, information technology projects manager, Classic Optical Laboratories, put it simply: "Women have a can-do attitude, love a challenge and know there has to be a better way."

These observations speak to important characteristics shared by many of VM's Most Influential Women. In general, these women are energetic team players who are good communicators and problem solvers and who are motivated to do their best and help others do the same. This is just as true in 2013 as in the 11 years since we inaugurated this annual report.

In this context we view our Influential Women—who are chosen from a large pool of nominees named

by VM readers—and profile their accomplishments in the following roles:

- **Executive Suite:** Women who hold positions such as president, VP, CEO, CFO, CMO, CIO or COO and who guide their companies forward, inspire leadership among their teams and peers and achieve high performance.
- **Rising Stars:** 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:** 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:** Women who have initiated new product developments or special programs in the arena of marketing, technology or retail, who have spearheaded innovative business ideas or enterprises.

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. ■

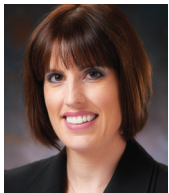
—The Editors

## Renee A. Brauns

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

American Optometric Association  
 St. Louis, Missouri

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She is influential not by her title, but by her dedication and honesty. She is respected by all. Ask any upper echelon of our industry and they will do nothing but speak highly of her accomplishments.”



While working in computer software training for a national organization called ExecuTrain, Renee Brauns was approached by a woman after class who inquired about her business and nonprofit experience. Not long after, that woman would become Brauns’ boss at the American Optometric Association who she has now been working with for 14 years.

“The St. Louis office had just gotten PCs and had sent staff for training. My [now] boss came up to me after the class to ask questions and mentioned AOA and asked if I would be interested. It appealed to me,” Brauns said.

Intrigued by the prospect of giving back and her affinity for working with people and providing customer service, Brauns said she stayed with AOA because of the passion its members, board, volunteers, staff and the optical industry at large show for their profession.

As COO since 2010, she oversees the seven groups that make up a majority of the office’s operations, including affiliate relations and membership, clinical resources, communications and marketing, and research and information.

**SHE SAYS...** “It is a rewarding and evolving industry for someone who enjoys working with passionate individuals and is willing to be active and get involved. It is that passion that drives me to want to succeed and give back even more to the profession.”

## Celina Burns

### PRESIDENT

Davis Vision  
 San Antonio, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “After amassing a unique breadth of health care and specialty vision benefits experience and being sought as keynote speaker on emerging health care trends including the importance of vision care as an essential benefit, she is now responsible for leading the overall development and implementation of Davis Vision’s strategic and operating plans.”



In health care for 25 years, much of it in leadership, management and marketing with Aetna and Humana, Celina Burns’ responsibilities have spanned start-up to turnaround to general management encompassing hospital contracting, medical cost management, business development, and client management across both medical and the full spectrum of specialty benefits.

She was led to vision not only through needing glasses a couple of years ago but also by her knowledge of emerging industry trends—voluntary health benefits like vision on the rise and the exponential increase in demand for vision benefits in the Baby Boomer and pediatric market segments.

“The optical field clearly is not in business-as-usual mode in an environment where there are numerous technology advancements, and an increasing segment of the population will be making optical services decisions via the web and/or private or public exchanges,” she said.

From her perspective, she sees an increasing role for women. “With the growing demographic women represent in optical as providers of care, as executives, in retail, women will be a dominant force within all optical industry sectors going forward,” she said.

**SHE SAYS...** “As one of the most precious human senses, vision and maintaining one’s eyesight is one of the most precious gifts we have. All children and adults should have access to comprehensive, affordable eyecare and eyewear services.”

## Linda Marie Chous, OD

### CHIEF EYE CARE OFFICER

UnitedHealthcare Specialty Benefits  
 Minneapolis, Minnesota

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “As Chief Eye Care Officer, Dr. Chous brings her provider perspective and clinical expertise to the development of new solutions and services for UnitedHealthcare.”



After working in a retail chain in California, Linda Chous, OD moved to Minnesota in 1989 and purchased her first practice in 1990. She opened a second practice, dedicated to pediatrics, in 1991 and in 1993 she closed the first practice to devote all of her efforts to the pediatric practice. As president of the Minnesota Optometric Association in 2009, she focused on helping doctors understand the ins and outs of health care reform and she began her position as Chief Eye Care Officer for UnitedHealthcare in 2009.

At UHC, she provides clinical input for the development of products and policy for vision care benefits, and contributes to marketing by writing communications, articles and whitepapers. Her most recent whitepaper addresses the ability of eyecare to integrate with medical care in the identification and monitoring of those patients with chronic disease. She believes “eyecare is often the initial touchpoint for involvement in a patient’s overall health and wellness. Optometrists have the capability to be the primary care providers and the first point of care.”

Today, she continues to maintain her private

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pediatric practice while working at UnitedHealthcare and serves on several committees for the American Optometric Association and National Association of Vision Care Plans.

**SHE SAYS...** "I have the unique opportunity to affect change by working within a system where I can advocate for both patients and providers of eyecare."

## Ann E. Englert

### OWNER AND MANAGING PRINCIPAL

Solutions  
 Naples, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Ann is president and sole proprietor of Solutions and has served as a director of the Optical Women's Association executive board for 10 years, with the last two years as president."



As owner and managing principal of Solutions, Ann Englert takes pride in positioning her company as a management resource for short term strategic sales and marketing for optical business. When working with clients, she insists on seeing projects through to ensure the best "solution" is found.

"What I love about my company is that I'm very diversified," Englert said. "I get in and do what needs to be done. I help people find what they're looking for, when sometimes, they don't know what they're looking for."

An expert at finding and developing talent, Englert believes her affinity for efficiency and positive outcomes stems from a long line of supportive mentors. "I'm very grateful for the stream of mentors throughout my life. They saw my potential, believed in me and encouraged me to hone the skills to enhance my potential."

Englert is also president of the OWA, where she exercises her natural passion to encourage the lead-

ership of women. She believes that leading women "will do the work to understand the changing needs of the marketplace," as well as collaborate and navigate their companies to better serve the industry on both the individual and corporate levels.

**SHE SAYS...** "I firmly believe that as long as we believe we can, we can accomplish great things, big and small."

## Anna Fuentes

### PRESIDENT AND OPTICIAN

Art and Science of Eyewear  
 Lafayette, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Anna is a leader for her staff, a perfectionist in her job and an innovator in the industry. She seeks products that are unique to her clientele and the boutiques of California."



After graduating from San Francisco State, Anna Fuentes went back to school to earn her Masters in Language Studies thinking she would one day become a teacher. "While in graduate school at night, I took a day job as a receptionist with C. Stephen Johnson, an OD in Oakland, Calif.," she explained. "I soon became the office manager, substituting as the optician as needed and then finally, the optician. At 29, I decided to make this my profession."

Fuentes opened Art and Science of Eyewear in 1996. "Art and Science of Eyewear is a business motivated by serving others. I wanted to create a practice where heart is a method of operation and the discovery of the possible is motivating and prized. Now 17 years later, I have a loyal client base and a 5-star rating on Yelp," she said.

Fuentes credits several people with contributions to her success but it was her mother, Eudelia Fuentes, who was her greatest supporter until her

death in 2012. "She taught me where inside myself to go for that reserve [of strength] when I need it," said Fuentes.

**SHE SAYS...** "Be known for your own brand. Think and act like a business owner and manage your reputation, then you'll become a walking advertisement of your value to your boss, co-workers and industry associates."

## Annette Hanian, OD

### OWNER

Northsight Vision Care Center  
 Scottsdale, Arizona

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "For the past decade, Dr. Hanian has been a beacon of great leadership for optometry in Arizona, rallying optometrists throughout the state to help protect our patients."



After graduating from the University of Calgary in 1991, Annette Hanian, OD got her degree from the Southern California College of Optometry in 1995. Almost immediately thereafter, she opened Complete Vision Care Center in Scottsdale and today is a sole practitioner in private practice.

As legislative committee chairperson for the Arizona Optometric Association since 2007, Hanian makes it her business to ensure doctors of optometry are allowed to practice up to the full extent of their license, providing education to the Arizona Legislators, other health professions and the public about the importance of good eyecare and the significant role doctors of optometry play in securing the best vision and eye health possible.

Today, she splits her time between her practice and duties at the legislature where she has been instrumental in getting several bills passed which expand the scope of practice for optometrists in

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Arizona. “The legislators in Arizona have a better understanding of what optometry is and what we do as a profession,” she said. Hanian urges other women in the profession to “join your state and national associations, even if you are part-time in your profession, and participate to the level that you feel comfortable.”

**SHE SAYS...** When asked what inspires her she replied “The sign on my office wall says ‘Put on your big girl panties & deal with it.’”

## Sherianne James

### DIRECTOR, NORTH AMERICA MARKETING

Transitions Optical  
 Pinellas Park, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She successfully guides the brand positioning and marketing of one of the best-known optical lens brands.”



Sherianne James leads her team in developing and executing trade and retail marketing programs, as well as maintaining and developing relationships with Transitions Optical’s business and research partners. She oversees the development and implementation of organizational marketing strategy in the U.S. and Canada. These plans include driving Transitions Optical and partner business growth by promoting brand equity, increasing consumer demand for the family of Transitions lenses and helping ECPs reach new levels of patient satisfaction. She has been active in integrating insights into the development of Transitions Optical’s brand strategy and campaign, and has also led efforts that have enhanced consumer and eyecare professional segment insights.

Like any good marketer, James knows that the underlying appeal of a brand is based as much on emotion as on reason. “I’m inspired to connect people to the world on a deeper level, to be a facil-

itator of magical moments,” she said. “You can’t develop technology for technology’s sake. I look at that sweet spot between a product’s technical strength and what consumers need and like.”

Prior to joining Transitions, James served as senior marketing director for Russell Hobbs, a marketer and distributor of popular small household appliance brands.

**SHE SAYS...** “In our field, where there is a gatekeeper between the patient and product, we need to balance the position of the doctor or eye health expert with a healthy dose of patient empathy. Using consumer insights, we can understand what patients want and delight them.”

## Sherry Lay

### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/ CHIEF MERCHANDISING OFFICER

Visionworks  
 San Antonio, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Within senior management, she is a strategic leader responsible for merchandising, brand management, marketing, business development and inventory planning to tactically drive the company forward to be a leader in the industry.”



Sherry Lay’s current responsibilities include product development, merchandising, inventory planning and marketing for 600 Visionworks stores as well as strategic partnerships with Davis Vision and Viva International Group. She has held senior level merchandising and marketing roles with multi-channel retail companies including VP, merchandising and marketing at Pearle Vision and GMM/VP, merchandising at Sunglass Hut, as well as similar roles at Ann Taylor and The Body Shop.

She sees current challenges resulting from the changing landscape of health care/optical benefits

and their effect on serving the eyewear customer within their wallet size. From her perspective, she’s seen women’s roles expand: “Over the past decade, more women have joined the ranks of optical retail leadership. Women understand the balance between the business side and the nurturing side of optical,” she said. “This industry assists customers to have a better life, optical correction needs are growing, customers want the best value and at the same time feel they can trust optical experts to recommend what is best for their sight.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Just like the fashion world, one size does not fit all in the optical business. You must understand every different customer and customize for every individual’s eyewear needs.”

## Aimée LaFont Leifer

### HEAD OF MEDICAL DIVISION

Demandforce, an Intuit Company  
 San Francisco, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She is instrumental in assisting the industry in improving patient connectedness. Her effort to understand the business of optometry allows Demandforce to make inroads.”



Aimée LaFont Leifer’s name says it all—she was destined for eyecare. “I do come from an eyecare family,” said Leifer, whose father is a practicing optometrist, as was his father. Proving to be a true “lifer”—though the “LaFont” is just coincidence, she said—Leifer worked at an ophthalmology practice in high school, at her father’s practice in college and then went on to study business at the University of Chicago. It was back in San Francisco that she saw a job listing for Demandforce, which bundles the marketing and communications tools that small local businesses need to succeed with customers today.

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“They were looking for someone with an MBA from a top business school with marketing and financing experience and an interest in startup technology. It seemed to exactly describe my background,” Leifer said. “The bottom line said ‘optical industry knowledge a plus.’ It seemed too serendipitous not to take the interview.”

Leifer believes her biggest accomplishment at Demandforce has been introducing the company to the medical space, particularly the optometric market. The product, which focuses on increasing local business, has been adopted by over 15 percent of ODs in the U.S. in just two years, the fastest percent growth in one market, Leifer said.

**SHE SAYS...** “If you don’t love your job, keep looking. When you find something that challenges you in the right ways, it will make you happier, your fellow colleagues happier and your employees happier.”

## Erica Perreira

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

American Optical Services  
Las Vegas, Nevada

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Erica’s shown great expertise in the operational consolidation of optometry/ophthalmology practices and has helped create a unique business model in the industry. Three words to describe her are excellence, spirit and drive.”



Erica Perreira began her 20-year career at Essilor with the Logo Paris distribution, then headed to L.E.A.D./Cartier Eyewear where she oversaw the company’s operations and distribution network in North, Central and South America. After Cartier, she became the director of operations for Richemont in New York responsible for the Lancel retail network. In 2006, she helped form

Luxury Optical Holdings, where as senior vice president she oversaw all the operations and sales for the company. Then in 2009, she joined Pierre Keyser when he formed American Optical Services. Today, she oversees all of the company’s practice locations, revenue, acquisition integrations, EMR implementation and back office operations.

“Our company is creating and pursuing opportunities to evolve the optical industry through quality of patient care and quick responses to the changes in health care,” she explained. “We have integrated amazing talent that together overcomes obstacles, creates wins and results in success.”

And though her biggest mentors have been men, her biggest inspiration shares her XX chromosomes. “My mentor throughout my career and who has been a great support in my development is Pierre Keyser, CEO of AOS, but my inspiration is my daughter. She gives me the strength and determination to be the best I can be.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Embrace change. Without it, we cannot grow.”

## Shirleen Prescott

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

HMI Buying Group/Red Tray Network  
Vicksburg, Mississippi

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She brings a fresh perspective and her ‘A’ game to her job every day as she continually challenges those around her.”



After a prior career in accounting, Shirleen Prescott began working for Hayes Marketing Inc. (HMI Buying Group) created by Dr. Jerry Hayes, OD, as an accounts payable clerk. Some 28 years later, Prescott is now serving as COO of HMI Buying Group and Red Tray Network, an alliance of independent ECPs, where she oversees operations for

more than 100,000 supplier invoices and 5,000 member statements each month. She attributes her success to hard work and a great staff.

“I worked my way up, and I was very fortunate,” said Prescott. “I have staff that’s been here longer than me, so there was a great infrastructure coming in. What makes a company successful is the employees. I’ve definitely grown with the company. We’ve had great success.”

Part of this success can be attributed to Prescott’s talent for encouraging staff to identify and implement ways to improve billing systems and customer service. Additionally, her extensive knowledge of the industry allows her to serve as an advisor for partner vendors, offering knowledge on a range of topics from software systems to member programs.

**SHE SAYS...** “What inspires me every day is the challenge of the job. We feel so good about where we’re going, where the business is going, where the industry is going. It’s a great profession.”

## Bidisha Rudra

### DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Essilor of America  
Dallas, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “As a researcher and strategist, Rudra has a direct influence on the global executive committee at Essilor with her knowledge and skill in providing key insights, competitive intelligence and strategic recommendations.”



Bidisha Rudra, who holds a PhD in applied economics, started her career in the banking sector, working for Citigroup and American Express. She entered the optical industry seven years ago when she joined Essilor. Most recently, Rudra managed the decision science area within the company’s marketing department, providing recommendations

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to senior management in achieving long term strategic investment goals by quantitative as well as qualitative analyses on competitive strategies, channel optimization, ROI on campaign executions, demographic trends and macroeconomic outlooks.

“This year, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to take up an international assignment within Essilor to work out of our Asia Pacific headquarter in Singapore to develop strategies and implement best practices from the U.S. for new business growth and development in our emerging markets in Asia,” she said. “I fit in with the culture here, and I have a skill set developed in the U.S. market which many people here are eager to learn from,” noted Rudra, who was born in India and educated in America.

**SHE SAYS...** “Women have inherent qualities that make them successful in business, especially in a field like vision care. We are creative, collaborative and empathetic which are great qualities to have in an industry with a social focus.”

## Daniela Zanzuri

### CHIEF OPTICAL ILLUSIONIST

Edward Beiner Group  
 Miami, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Daniela built a team necessary to execute our advertising and marketing plan. Under her guidance and direction, the company started a process of re-evaluating and understanding our customer base in 10 different Florida markets.”



As the upholder of Edward Beiner’s corporate and public image, Daniela Zanzuri’s goal is to ensure each and every store fits the scene of its location.

When asked about her success in doing just that, she attributes certain qualities to her prior experience in the film industry.

“Advertising and public relations can sometimes be a big illusion,” she said. “How do we give it substance? How do we give a certain reality to the illusion we’re trying to create? That’s what I’m good at—breaking the big picture into details.”

Zanzuri’s greatest challenge at Edward Beiner has been catering each location to a different clientele “while at the same time being true to our own DNA and our own image of what we think optical should be,” she said.

She is able to face those challenges with the support of friends, family and the determination to never stop learning—a philosophy derived from her mentors, one of whom was one of the first women in the Directors Guild Association of Florida, and another being her mother who still takes university and Pilates classes at age 93.

**SHE SAYS...** “Have a smile and conquer people by being kind rather than by losing it.”

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## Rebecca Chippior, OD

### OWNER

St. Lawrence Optometry  
 Kingston, Ontario, Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE... "She is taking the practice from the past and into a new millennium of eyecare."



Rebecca Chippior, OD, has only been an OD for 10 years, and took the step four years ago to buy a busy group practice. While in optometry school, she started out as an optometric assistant. She also worked in optical retail. "I have seen the business from many different angles," she said. "I have a great perspective unlike other optometrists... I have been in a staff member's shoes."

Chippior believes that "if you give patients the best advice for their needs, they will be your patient for life." She also noted, "I excel at what I do because I am so passionate about eye health and eyecare that it shows. I treat patients as if they were my own family members." She also said that optical is a great industry where there is constant change, and "you have to evolve with it." Her biggest challenge has been learning to run a business without having any previous experience or education in that area.

Chippior is a member of the Ontario Association of Optometrists. She was her class valedictorian at the University of Waterloo, and upon graduating she received the Canadian Association of Optometrists Award of Merit.

**SHE SAYS...** "Women were often seen as 'part-time ODs' but optometry schools enroll almost twice as many women as men annually. I believe women will start buying into or starting their own offices to protect and guarantee their own destinies."

## Hillary Cribben

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Zeal Optics  
 Boulder, Colorado

CHOSEN BECAUSE... "She is a young talent, who is applying her incredible skill to the optical space. Confident, creative and thoughtful. The optical industry needs more of these types of people."



"My eyes are my livelihood, so I've always had an interest in optics and been aware of the concerns surrounding eye health," said Hillary Cribben. That's certainly a compelling reason to develop an interest in the optical industry when perhaps "sexier" industries are available to a young and talented designer.

"I don't have a background in optical, so it's been really exciting to learn a plethora of new information. But it's up to me to translate and communicate that into digestible material," she added. "There have definitely been some bumps along the way, but they make the successes way more gratifying."

She is currently responsible for the design of all of Zeal's printed material, from accounts' custom window displays to an event flyer to their catalogs. She is also heavily involved in the art direction of the company's campaigns and the creative direction for its photo shoots.

Additionally, she helps the product team trend forecast and conceptualize Zeal's goggles on a cosmetic level. "My hand touches it all," she confirmed. "In a nutshell, I like to think I curate the cool. And I tell the best jokes."

"Zeal is in over 26 countries but everything is done in house and my opinions matter. I create something new and wonderful every day and I have a pretty good time while doing it."

**SHE SAYS...** "Be smart and ask questions. Know

your market and then challenge yourself to expand it. The industry could use a few more risk takers and rule breakers."

## Christine A. Fraser

### DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Adlens Ltd.  
 Oxford, United Kingdom

CHOSEN BECAUSE... "She has the passion and drive to push Adlens and its people forward, and is able to convey information in a way that is interesting and relevant."



Christine Fraser brings a unique mix of right brain and left brain thinking to her job as director of customer success for Adlens, the U.K.-based company that develops and markets variable focus eyewear.

"I attended both the University of Glasgow to study for a mechanical engineering degree, and Glasgow School of Art to study product design," explained Fraser, who also holds an MBA. "This gave me a fantastic foundation into how to develop new products. Although products need to operate technically, true greatness will only be achieved if they are designed and marketed with an understanding of the customer."

Fraser's passion for great design and great products allows her to focus on both the right strategy as well as the out-of-the-box experience. "Due to my mix of technical, design and business backgrounds I can talk the language of different functions and bring a fresh perspective to key decisions," she said.

At Adlens, Fraser oversees the product management, marketing and customer services departments. She is also responsible for managing the relationships with key distributors and the company's Boston office. Since joining Adlens in 2012, she has helped the company secure its first license brand and launch its John Lennon collection, define and bring to market its next generation

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Alvarez product while increasing awareness of Adlens as a global player.

**SHE SAYS...** "I believe we should empower those around us and encourage them to excel. Only by trusting those around us will we truly reach our potential."

## Lisa McCauley

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS MANAGER

Classic Optical Laboratories  
Youngstown, Ohio

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "She has a unique understanding of the interplay among lab operations, lens manufacturing and the design of software systems that handle third-party eligibility and billing."



An integral member of Classic Optical Laboratories' Information Technology team, McCauley serves as the point of contact for all IT-related projects. Whether it's building an interface to a piece of machinery, managing the lens manufacturing software system (LMS) and database or developing a new system to interface and manage the benefits of a managed care or state health plan, McCauley is the lab's go-to person. Yet McCauley is not just sought out by her colleagues at Classic Optical. When Essilor set out to redesign its LMS, the company called for her to join its team as an advisor.

McCauley developed her extensive knowledge of lab operations while working at Classic Optical for the past 27 years. "They hired me right out of high school," she recalled. "I started in the stock room, pulling lenses."

McCauley has served in many different positions in the lab, including customer service, accounting and most recently, information technology. She noted that the increase in technology in the optical

industry over the last 10 years has enabled her and other women in IT to play a more prominent role in the optical industry.

McCauley credits Classic Optical's chief operating officer, Dawn Friedkin, for creating a corporate culture that has allowed her and other female employees to thrive. "She opens the door for us and gives us the opportunity to make suggestions," said McCauley.

**SHE SAYS...** "Women have a can-do attitude, love a challenge and know there has to be a better way!"

## Jill Novelo

### CORPORATE PUBLIC RELATIONS SUPERVISOR VSP Global

Rancho Cordova, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Jill has a significant role in the direction and implementation of VSP Global's charity strategy and mission. She is also involved in getting current topics in eyecare to media channels for national and international release."



Familiar with the medical and charitable sides of optical through an uncle who is an ophthalmologist and a grandfather who funded a mobile eye clinic in Thailand, Jill Novelo had her professional introduction to the field when she joined VSP five years ago.

Most recently promoted to supervisor of the VSP Global corporate public relations team, she's involved in developing and executing national/international public and community relations strategies that support brand awareness, sales growth and retention, as well as providing support for VSP Global companies' programs and initiatives. She has a role in leading and developing VSP Global's charity platform, Eyes of Hope, which formally launched earlier this year and

included reorganizing and adding to existing charity programs.

She views her role at VSP as continuing a tradition of women at the company. "Working at VSP, the role women have played within the company has always been an area of pride," she said. "VSP is truly a progressive company in the fact that our female executive leaders have played a vital role in making VSP an industry leader of today. VSP is devoted to providing leadership, guidance and education to our employees, which results in many opportunities for women to achieve their career goals."

**SHE SAYS...** "From a philanthropic standpoint, I'm extremely proud of being able to have a voice and the opportunity to increase access to care to those in need around the world."

## Janelle Routhier, OD, FAAO, FBCLA

### MANAGER, GLOBAL STRATEGIC MEDICAL AFFAIRS

Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc.  
Jacksonville, Florida

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Dr. Routhier is a true innovator. She is among the first to become a Diplomate in the American Board of Optometry."



You could say vision care is in Janelle Routhier's blood. "My grandfather and his two sons (my uncles) were optometrists so I grew up knowing about the profession." Her background in contact lenses has been key to her journey which landed her a major role at J&J, first as a cornea and contact lens resident at the Michigan College of Optometry in 2008 and then as a member of the college's CL clinical faculty in 2009.

In her current role at J&J, Routhier is responsible for elevating the Acuvue brand with scien-

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tific information. “In a nutshell, I work as the bridge between marketing and research & development, helping to translate the science R&D produces into something marketing can use in their messaging.”

She considers it a major accomplishment that she left private practice and academia to make the jump into the corporate world. “Since starting at Johnson & Johnson Vision Care 2.5 years ago, I have obtained my Florida Optometry License, American Board of Optometry Diplomate status, Fellowship in the British Contact Lens Association and have presented scientific information at four global conferences.”

**SHE SAYS...** “People who are blessed with the gift of sight deserve to have the best vision possible, and that’s why it’s so important for companies to continue to research, innovate and develop new products to continue to make vision better, healthier and affordable for everyone.”

## Alyssa Voorheis

**DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS**  
MyEyeDr  
Vienna, Virginia

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Alyssa and her team rolled out the Acuity POS, the backbone of our operations, which was a huge undertaking. She and her team are the glue that keeps the business running.”



Alyssa Voorheis started off in the industry answering phones at an optical shop near her hometown in Michigan. Eight years later, she is thriving in the Washington, D.C. area as one of the leading implementers of Acuity, a point of sale system central to MyEyeDr’s brand.

“My proudest accomplishment is the implementa-

tion of our software system. Two years ago, we were barely on paper,” said Voorheis, referring to Acuity Logic, now used at 50 optometric locations. Her leadership at MyEyeDr also includes overseeing the managed care and operations support teams, as well as the company’s distribution and inventory.

Voorheis believes being patient focused is the best route to success in the optical business, no matter what area of the industry one serves.

“If we focus on the patient when we make a decision as a business, and make the decision as an individual person working in that practice, we will be successful,” Voorheis said. “All of it ties together. It’s been great to be so involved and to learn about every part of the business.”

**SHE SAYS...** “My biggest challenge has been overcoming peoples’ perceptions of what they expect me to be. You’re in control of your life. Take that opportunity, take that chance. Raise your hand. Don’t be afraid of failing.”

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## Jillia Edris Bird, OD

### PRIVATE PRACTITIONER

St. John's, Antigua

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Dr. Bird's commitment and passion for blindness prevention have resulted in increased awareness and action on glaucoma among countries in the Caribbean Region."



As the optometrist to the Data Collection Centre of the 1990s Barbados Eye Study—the largest population study on glaucoma and related eye disorders in black people's eyes—Jillia Edris Bird, OD had first hand experience with the irreversible blindness associated with Open Angle Glaucoma. "My mother, Dr. Edris Bird, was visually impaired from late-diagnosed glaucoma, but at age 84 heads the Antigua/Barbuda Glaucoma Support Group. She is my main inspiration. I fueled my passion about her glaucoma into a better place," Bird said.

Bird founded the support group in 2007 which successfully lobbied the Government of Antigua to recognize glaucoma as the public health problem predominant in the Caribbean population. In addition to her duties as president of the World Glaucoma Patient Association, she serves on the Medical Advisory Board of the New York-based Glaucoma Foundation. In April of 2013, she was honored with the International Optometrist Award presented by the World Council of Optometry.

A graduate of State University of New York's College of Optometry, Bird has run a successful private practice on the island of Antigua for the past 23 years and this Fall she will come full circle when the College honors her with the Alumnus of the Year Award.

**SHE SAYS...** "Each of us holds the potential to singlehandedly raise the world's awareness

of avoidable blindness and reduce the unacceptable statistics. We then need to redouble our efforts to weave an impenetrable web of glaucoma awareness."

## Sandra Blanchette

### CONTACT LENS LICENSED OPTICIAN

Village Family Eye Care  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Sandra continues to learn and share and has been a great mentor. She gives to her profession and continues to give in every way."



Sandra Blanchette has been in the optical industry for 25 years, and spent six of them honing her store management skills, during which she worked on meeting customers' needs while supervising and mentoring staff. Recently, she's been pursuing her passion for contact-lens fitting work.

"For the past four years, I have gone to the Global Specialty Lens conference in Las Vegas. I have been working with keratoconus fittings, and fittings for dry-eye and eye disease fittings. I have also been working with patients with corneal transplants and corneal grafts," she said. She has also had students shadowing her contact lens fitting work. "I have also been doing a lot with cosmetic contact lens work."

In addition to teaching CL fittings for many years, she is currently vice president of the Manitoba Chapter of the Opticians Association of Canada, a group with which she has worked for many years. She is also on the board of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. During her optical career, she has worked with the Ophthalmic Dispensers of Manitoba as a board member, as well as serving as an exam moderator for the National Accreditation Committee of Opticians.

**SHE SAYS...** "I absolutely love what I do and

when I am with students, or I am mentoring someone, or they shadow me at work, I hope my positive attitude about the profession shows."

## Sandra S. Block, OD, M Ed, FAAO, FCOVD

### MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL-BASED VISION CLINICS

Illinois College of Optometry  
 Chicago, Illinois

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Dr. Block is a champion in promoting access to eyecare for persons who are vulnerable due to poverty, disability, gender or age. She has a strong social commitment to the role of optometrists and to promoting access to health care."



Sandy Block, OD has served ICO since she graduated in the class of '81. Since then, her role and prominence in the optometric profession has continually increased, and so too, has her passion. "My personal philosophy is improving access to vulnerable populations. Being an optometrist gives you an opportunity to help people. It's a great profession," she said.

Block is an active member of the World Council of Optometry public health committee and a global clinical advisor for the Special Olympics-Lions Club International Opening Eyes program. She is also a member of the National Center of Children's Vision, an institution headquartered at Prevent Blindness America serving preschool aged children who have limited access to vision care.

Block serves in pediatrics at ICO's Illinois Eye Institute (IEI), a clinic which, in addition to its comprehensive eyecare and research developments, offers charitable services to people in need throughout the Chicago area and beyond. She is chiefly involved in IEI's Chicago Public Schools program, which offers free eyecare to children.

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Her primary goal throughout, she said, is to address vision as a core health issue for young people and to eliminate preventable blindness.

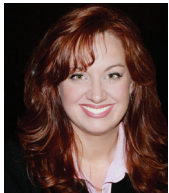
**SHE SAYS...** “If I can convince somebody that something is important and they grow in their own right, to me that is a success.”

## Dorothy L. Hitchmoth, OD

### CHIEF OF OPTOMETRY

Department of Veterans Affairs  
 White River Junction, Vermont

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Dr. Hitchmoth is involved in every aspect of the profession and is a leader and mentor to students, residents, colleagues and others.”



Eye disease among her family members gave Dorothy Hitchmoth, OD, early motivation to work in optical. In the industry for 20 years, she specializes in geriatric and pediatric eyecare, and is a self-professed “retina chick.” She also runs Hitchmoth Eye Care Associates in Hanover, N.H., and is “involved in everything,” she said. Her work with the AOA has led to changes in public policy and in educational and residency programs at state and national levels.

Hitchmoth is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and the Optometric Retina Society, and is a past president of the New Hampshire Optometric Association. She is also on the faculty of four optometry colleges.

Treating patients with compassion and respect without being rushed is a cornerstone of her practice, and she believes in providing the latest treatment medical and therapeutic options available.

“Some of the challenges for all of us in health care apply to optometry too—managing resources in a resource-constrained system like the VA, in my private practice, in an environment of reduced

reimbursement,” she said. “I have learned to become more efficient at problem solving and improving processes at the VA.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I don’t think it matters if it is men or women, but we need good people to come into the profession. It’s very important to work together on public policy and research that affects patients.”

## Laura Dorris

### MANAGER OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Vision West  
 San Diego, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Laura is always coaching and counseling employees. She is an example of a positive, super productive citizen of the Vision West culture.”



Laura Dorris gained exposure to the medical field early on when her brother suffered a traumatic brain injury. “I wanted to help care for people and make a difference,” she said. After college she worked for an MD/OD practice and enjoyed caring for patients. “Adding the retail/fashion/image side was a real plus.”

Dorris left the optical industry for about six years, and worked for a large telecommunications company. She missed the optical industry, and brought back with her experience in business and event management. At Vision West, she oversees peer-to-peer events, corporate events, and programs and education resources for its members, working closely with vendor partners to help independent ECPs succeed.

“Success is about building relationships. Work with compassion and integrity and treat people the way you would like to be treated. The eyecare industry is changing and the solutions and support

our members need are changing. It will take extra work to remain competitive and be responsive to the needs of ECPs and their staff,” she said.

Dorris recently joined the Optical Women’s Association and is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management.

**SHE SAYS...** “Networking is essential. Women are challenged to have a great career and balance family needs. We have a great opportunity to mentor each other. Women can help each other and learn from those that model this well.”

## Teri Fittz

### DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Hoya Vision Care  
 Lewisville, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She ensures that everyone she works with, from Hoya’s field sales force to guest educators and the team at Cleinman Performance Partners, maximizes the business opportunity for as many independent ECPs as possible.”



Teri Fittz is responsible for seeking new business opportunities for Hoya Vision Care as well as nurturing incremental growth from established relationships. She brings together independent practice owners with financial, equipment and practice development resources to ensure all find common ground and grow their respective brands. Working with Cleinman Performance Partners, for example, she helps deliver high energy, high quality practice development education and inspiration to practices across the country. To date, the program has visited 40 cities and over 6,000 eyecare practitioners and staff have participated.

Before joining Hoya three years ago, Fittz developed her business building expertise as a sales and marketing executive of a licensed con-

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sumer products company, working inside strategic alliances with Disney, Marvel, Crayola and others to expand the brand and build new sales.

“All this experience combined maintains a common thread...it’s all about what the consumer wants and needs,” she said. “Once you focus on the consumer, you will then know the key to success in business. So, for our industry, it’s all about the patient and the patient experience that can only be provided in independent practices.”

**SHE SAYS...** “To quote Stephen Covey [author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*] ‘Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It’s the foundational principle that holds all relationships.’”

## Linda Fitzgerald

**NATIONAL OPTOMETRIC AMBASSADOR**  
 Classic Optical Laboratories  
 Youngstown, Ohio

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Linda sets a successful example of great leadership and helps to develop and support newly licensed Ohio opticians in the profession.”



Linda Fitzgerald started wearing glasses in the second grade, and when she was 14, Shirley Hoover, an optician, sold her two pairs of eyeglasses and contacts at a time when glasses were deemed more a necessity than a fashion statement. “She ignited a passion in me for this industry and 30 years later, I couldn’t be happier with my decision.”

Later, she was mentored by Dawn Friedkin, Classic Optical’s COO, who took her in as an optician and “transitioned me into a business woman. She helped me grow to not only meet, but exceed any expectation I ever had.”

After being a regional territory manager for Classic Optical, she is now a national optometric ambassador,

serving large-volume contracts within Ohio, and working as a liaison to newly awarded state contracts. She is also a dual licensed optician (ABO and NCLE), an Honored Fellow of the OAA, and she serves on the Board as a Trustee at Large for the Opticians Association of Ohio. She is also a member of the Optical Women’s Association, the National Association of Professional Women, and an Ambassador for the Youngstown Regional Chamber.

**SHE SAYS...** “Women are at the forefront of the marketplace and continue to show our dedication for success. We can see a future for ourselves that our mothers couldn’t. My advice for success is simple...and complicated. Educate yourself! And do it early.”

## Tracy Gantner

**NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER**  
 Vision-Ease Lens  
 Lombard, Illinois

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She is committed to helping in any way she can to improve accessibility to improved vision.”



Tracy Gantner started out as a lens tinter, but almost immediately, couldn’t stand the fumes. Her boss at Twin City Optical said, “Wait a little bit, we might have something else for you.” A week later she was in frame sales, and was soon covering a five-state territory. That was 25 years ago. She has spent 15 years at Vision-Ease, and previously worked for Carl Zeiss Optical/SOLA.

Gantner enjoys the people and the relationships she’s made in optical. Also, “I am selling lenses, which is more technical and requires education—something beyond size and color. It is ever changing, and you have to keep up with those changes, which entices me,” she said.

Gantner foresees more clients needing eye

health as managed vision care and new health care policies come in 2014. “I look forward to getting more vision care to kids and to less-fortunate individuals. I want to give my best and give back,” she said. To that end, Gantner has also worked with VOSH on a mission to Sri Lanka, and has worked here with the Salvation Army, and hopes to work more with Prevent Blindness America.

**SHE SAYS...** “While lens manufacturing and design is dominated by men, more women are coming into the industry as CMOs and CEOs. Demonstrating a high level of integrity and meeting the ever changing needs of the market is good advice for anyone coming into the industry.”

## Kathy Hoover

**DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES**  
 QSpex Technologies  
 Alpharetta, Georgia

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She keeps the morale high for all 130-plus employees of the company through consistent communication, employee events and meetings, and personal guidance when required.”



Hoover grew up in an optical family and has been in the optical industry on and off her entire life. Her father, Kai Su, PhD, is the inventor of over 100 vision care patents such as the QSpex Premium Lens System, Softcolors contact lenses, and Opti-Clean lens cleaner. Apart from a couple of non-optically related positions, Hoover has worked as a lab technician for Ciba Vision and as head of finance and personnel for Technology Resource International.

In her present role as HR director for QSpex Technologies, which markets an in-office system that allows eyecare professionals to produce ophthalmic lenses in about 35 minutes, Hoover handles all aspects of employee relations and human resources.

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“My role is to make sure the employees are happy and informed, which in turn hopefully equates to more effective productivity for the company,” she said. “I see myself as the liaison between upper management and the rest of the workforce which don’t always seem to have the same ideas and/or goals.”

Hoover said that getting people to think creatively and trust their instincts is her greatest challenge. “Too many people these days aren’t willing to think of new ways to do things and when or if they finally do, they end up second guessing themselves.”

Hoover believes that women have the unique ability to combine a practical approach to fashion with business and will continue to invent new ways of using this skill to affect change in the optical industry in the coming years. She offers this advice for women who are pursuing an optical career: “Always trust your instincts and don’t be afraid to voice your opinion. You can do anything you put your mind to.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Always trust your instincts and don’t be afraid to voice your opinion. You can do anything you put your mind to.”

## Jennifer Jackson

### REGIONAL SALES MANAGER, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA/PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Viva International Group  
 Somerville, New Jersey

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She’s an amazing team leader who has earned the respect of her co-workers, clients and direct sales team.”



For Jennifer Jackson, having great mentors helped her become a great mentor. “I have had numerous mentors in my career,” she said. “In my current role, director Kelly O’Grady and our VP of sales Jan Cory have been fantastic mentors. Celina Huizar-Fouts of Viva, Margie Gagliardi of Luxottica Retail, and Sherry Migley at VSP/Altair Eyewear have all

been strong women role models in my optical career.”

Jackson has been in her optical career for about 10 years. “I started with Cole, shortly before the Luxottica merger, and stayed until 2007. Then I joined the Altair Division of VSP as an inside sales regional manager. I’ve had the opportunity to work in several different areas of the industry and I think that helps me see the business from a 360 point of view.”

But her true passion was field management and in late 2010 she joined Viva as the regional sales manager for Northern California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. She recently expanded her territory to include Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana and now oversees a team of 16 sales reps.

“It’s important to be able to model the behaviors I am looking for from our sales leaders to help them achieve their goals, because when they win, I win. I want my team to look forward to me coming to their market and knowing I am there to help them in any way they need me.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I am a firm believer in helping team members improve their performance and showing them the path they can take to get there.”

## Martha Mijares

### OPTICAL DIRECTOR, EYECARE CENTER

Marshall B. Ketchum University  
 (formerly SCCO)  
 Fullerton, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Martha has trained hundreds of students in the retail aspect of optical services, including service, styles and background knowledge of vendors and business ownership.”



Originally, Martha Mijares planned on being a fashion merchandiser, and was hired by an optical office. “When I saw the opportunity and the need, I felt motivated to grow the fashion

aspect and integrated it completely into the medical aspect,” she said. Before joining Marshall B. Ketchum University seven years ago, she has spent more than 25 years in the industry, holding administrative and managerial positions at Kaiser Permanente, LensCrafters, Pearle Express and Cole Vision. Currently, she is involved with Transitions’ Pro-Forum Group, the Paraoptometric Association and the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry.

She is also responsible for educating more than 200 students annually in ophthalmic optics, running the operations of the EyeCare Center and supervising and training six opticians. She also organizes promotions, marketing, trunk shows and health fairs.

One of the biggest challenges Mijares faces is promoting changes in the eyewear and lens technology to a large student body and faculty. “We make recommendations and educate patients on premium products. When the school year ends, we start the process all over again.”

**SHE SAYS...** “I have a vision first, then I work with my team to form a plan to reach our goal. Teamwork is one of my strengths. I educate, motivate and reward the team, consistently. This helps us get the best results in all our endeavors.”

## Susan Moniello

### VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Marchon Eyewear  
 Melville, New York

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She leads by example and utilizes encouraging and positive managing methods.”



Susan Moniello had a strong female mentor early on in her career which has helped shape the way she views success and mentorship. “In my early career, one of my first mentors was a vice presi-

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dent of brand and marketing who taught me to be confident and push myself to be the best that I could be," she said. "This was a time when there weren't many women in senior management and she was instrumental in proving that success is genderless."

"I jumped into the optical field by chance," Monicello continued. "I was fortunate to meet my boss, Mark Ginsberg, who was new to Marchon as well and looking to fill a new position. Coming from a soft goods accessory background, I wasn't sure that this would be the right fit. But I was so impressed by Mark that I knew I wanted to work for him. After one month, I knew I'd found my niche and I've never looked back."

She's now been in the optical industry for more than 10 years and is responsible for all development from inception to finished product for Marchon. "I am fortunate to work for an amazing company and with a fabulous group of people. Claudio Gottardi is a great leader and visionary. Mark Ginsberg is always supportive and challenges me in new ways that keep

every day interesting and I have a core group of colleagues who inspire me and are collaborative partners that make coming to work a pleasure."

**SHE SAYS...** "Strive to be a good partner and to be attentive and listen to what is happening in the market."

## Yvonne H. Pelkey

### OPTICIANRY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
 Richmond, Virginia

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "She sets a high standard for quality and constantly looks for opportunities to bring the latest in learning experiences to the program."

Yvonne Pelkey believes that every patient should get the best possible care, regardless of where they



are treated, and would like to see more talent sharing among the different types of ECPs. "If we truly want to bring awareness of the value we provide, we need to put our differences aside and become unified," she noted.

Pelkey feels her contribution to the industry is "a desire to take something good and help make it great. I see so much opportunity in our education programs, giving back and in building relationships and contributing wherever I can."

Pelkey has been in opticianry since 1986, and worked for several optical stores and ECPs before joining J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College in 2006. She has been program director since 2011. She has helped students get involved in humanitarian missions with I Care International, and has partnered with a local OD to help low-income and uninsured patients.

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Pelkey has also worked with the National Federation of Opticianry Schools, the Optician Association of Virginia and the Opticians Association of America. She is also the Commissioner of the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation for the next three years.

**SHE SAYS...** “Don’t be afraid to speak your mind...you’re not the minority. I have spent many of my years in this profession in somewhat of a ‘bubble’ and I’ve learned to come out.”

## Karen Storey

**OPTICAL MANAGER**  
 DeKalb Optometric  
 DeKalb, Illinois

*Karen Storey passed away on June 8, 2013 following a brief illness.*

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “She always had a ‘can do’ attitude, and was a talented teacher who was loving, caring and very intelligent.”



A Cleveland, Ohio native, Storey entered the optical field 25 years ago when she took a job at local wholesale lab Rooney Optical. She then moved to Essilor of America, where she worked as a senior sales consultant and sales trainer. Storey was promoted to manager of strategic accounts and earned the Presidents Club award in 1999.

Recruited by Hoya Vision Care, she served as a lens product specialist and then as a territory sales manager. Colleagues at both Essilor and Hoya recall her as being kind and supportive, and someone who freely shared her extensive optical knowledge with those she mentored.

A certified optician, Storey was a Fellow of the National Academy of Opticianry. Most recently, she

worked as an optician, office manager and staff trainer at DeKalb Optometric, a DeKalb, Ill. practice owned by her husband, Stephen Storey, OD.

Storey was a volunteer for I Care International and was active on the organization’s board. She participated in missions to Mexico and other foreign countries, often working around the clock for days at a time. She would do pre-testing, optical fitting and dispensing, and Dr. Storey would perform eye exams. As part of her volunteer efforts, she taught honor students at DeKalb area high schools how to clean, neutralize and package glasses for upcoming missions. “It takes about 8,000 pairs of glasses to go on one of these missions,” said Dr. Storey. “Karen spent many hours sorting through glasses and categorizing them.”

Before embarking on an optical career, Karen Storey received a BA at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. She earned an MBA at Thunderbird School of International Business in Glendale, Ariz.

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## Maria Dellapina

### FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

Specs4us  
Burton, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Despite all odds, Maria would not give up helping her daughter and others like her.”



For Maria Dellapina, necessity was literally the mother of invention. Though she counts Giselle Lander, OD, and Renee Martino, OD, as mentors and inspirations, it was her children, especially Erin who has Down syndrome, who she credits for her success.

Dellapina has been in the optical business for 35 years, was licensed in Ohio in 1980 and has done everything from retail to lens surfacing, but in 2004 she designed and patented the Erin’s World Frame line for children with Down syndrome and others requiring a lower bridge placement and shorter temples.

“Originally, anyone I spoke to thought there was no need for my design,” said Dellapina. “I knew a lot about optical and lenses but not how to get a frame made. I kept sending off my drawings and they would get returned re-designed like a standard frame. It took me four years to find a manufacturer to listen and the first four models arrived in 2008 on my daughter’s birthday.

“We now have 14 models and refit many older individuals with Down syndrome whose parents gave up trying to get them to wear glasses years ago. I ship all over the world, donate to the Special Olympics and present at Down syndrome conferences.”

In fact, in 2010, Dellapina was awarded the President Award by the National Down Syndrome Congress and this year will receive the Exceptional Meritorious Service Award.

“My biggest challenge now is just getting the word out,” she concluded.

**SHE SAYS...** “Never give up.”

## Elizabeth Faraut

### MANAGING PARTNER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR

La Loop  
Santa Monica, California

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “She invented a whole new fashion accessory and product category—a line of jewelry that includes a loop with a patented hinge designed to keep glasses in place around your neck.”



So how did a former fashion editor, advertising and PR exec invent a new type of optical accessory and then get people to buy it? “I was introduced to the optical industry 14 years ago

when I launched La Loop in 1999 out of my partner’s NYC apartment,” said Faraut. “We created La Loop because we were tired of what was on the market and saw an opportunity to create a product that kept track of glasses that we’d actually want to wear, not have to wear.”

Early inclusion of the optical market was a natural for Faraut. “When you walked into an optical retailer all you saw was frames,” she described. “You have the customers’ attention; why not bring in products besides eyewear? I immediately understood the importance of the add-on sale.”

So did one of her early supporters, Robert Marc. “Robert was one of the first believers in La Loop. He was our first customer and really got the power of the incremental sale. Robert introduced us to the industry and to customers he believed would benefit and get it.”

Today, she designs and manufactures up to 50 new designs a year, as well as marketing and selling La Loop to over 600 stores around the world, including Sunglass Hut, Bergdorf Goodman, the Museum of Modern Art, Robert Marc, Optical Shop of Aspen, Ilori and Morgenthal Fredericks, as well as Harrods and Selfridges in the U.K.,

Marc Le Bihan in France, Isetan and Hankyu in Japan and Puyi in Hong Kong.

**SHE SAYS...** “Be daring and authentic. Speak up. Share your ideas and your passion—they are worth a lot.”

## Karen Perry, OD, FAO

### DIRECTOR, PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS AND TRAINING

Compulink Business Systems  
Westlake Village, California

CHOSEN BECAUSE... “Dr. Perry has been honored by both the community and her colleagues with numerous professional, academic and civic awards, recognizing her outstanding leadership, achievement and academic merit.”



In 2008, while delivering a presentation about Electronic Health Records (EHR) to the Florida Optometric Association, Karen Perry, OD had no idea that the COO of Compulink Business

Systems was in the audience. He liked her views and passion when it came to saving patient data and delivering better health care using the tools and efficiencies EHRs provided. She was subsequently hired by Compulink and today she manages and develops team strategies for the delivery of client educational programs for the company. In addition, she oversees client training initiatives, and develops learning pathways and programs for forecasting success with the implementation of EHRs.

Perry has been a partner in a private practice with her husband, Dr. Mark Perry, located in Orlando, Fla. for over 24 years, where she is also Vision Source co-administrator. Although her Compulink duties take up her weekdays, she still finds time to practice optometry on the weekends.

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Perry believes, “Opportunities for the optical profession are boundless. With the dynamics occurring in health care, the aging population, exponential chronic disease and new technological advances, the optical business is in its infancy.”

**SHE SAYS...** “As a very first job, I worked at Walt Disney World and was ingrained with the principles and philosophies of ‘creating the magic.’ I was inspired by Walt Disney who said, ‘All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.’”

## Chelsy Pham, MBA, ABOC

### PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT

VSP Optics Group  
 Rancho Cordova, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Chelsy developed VSP Global’s otto (one touch to optical) iPad app.”



In optical for 18 years, Chelsy Pham started at VSP as a customer service rep, went on to be an analyst in the contract lab department, then furthered her career overseeing pre-production at VSPOne Optical Laboratory in Sacramento. After going back to the corporate side as a supply chain analyst working on international and ophthalmic supply chain projects, she now focuses on bringing the latest technology to optometric practices in her current position.

In addition, she has three optometrists in her family, with whom she works in the family practice as optician, business administrator and event coordinator. This, combined with her work at VSP, has helped her see the big picture. “To some, it’s just a pair of glasses. What I see is a combination of science and art, creating a customized medical device in a mass production environment that

helps you see and is fashionable at the same time,” she said. “Optometry is a humble practice, while taking care of a patient’s eye health, checking for illness such as diabetes, hypertension and even tumors, they help people clearly see the world around them.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Seeing all facets of optometry and seeing the profession advance with new technology, it is an industry where once you’re in, it’s hard to step away. VSP was a job for me as a young woman starting a family. With my experience at VSPOne my interest in optics grew, and I wanted to learn more.”

## Kathy Wallace

### NATIONAL SOURCING MANAGER

Kaiser Permanente  
 Richmond, California

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “For more than 20 years, Kathy has been a tough woman negotiator in a world usually filled with men. She is in charge of all bids, RFIs, and RFPs for lenses, frames, contacts and accessories.”



With a post graduate degree in Purchasing Management from UC Berkeley, Kathy Wallace began her career in procurement in the wholesale jewelry business which, she noted, “has a remarkably similar culture to optical.” It was there that she honed her negotiation skills and for the last 22 years she has been an optical products sourcing manager. At Kaiser Permanente, she facilitates three national sourcing teams for frames, ophthalmic lenses and contact lenses.

“We develop formularies for lenses and CLs, do product evaluations, choose vendors and products in support of our 150+ stores and five laboratories where we manufacture approximately 1 million

pair of glasses per year.” She negotiates and writes all contracts for these commodities for Kaiser nationwide and manages 47 contracted vendors in all areas of the optical industry, including OTC, lens treatments and digital software.

“I never forget that there is an invisible thread between me and every patient we have. They don’t know me but they depend on me for high quality, good value products, fast deliveries and good service born of solid supplier relationships and excellent contract terms.”

She said her long tenure at Kaiser is due to a “wonderful corporate culture. Being a member of the Kaiser Permanente team is an honor and a responsibility I take seriously.”

**SHE SAYS...** “Team Think is superior to Me Think. Consensus driven decisions based on data and team member participation generates not only excellent outcomes, but full implementation of new decisions, directions or policies.” ■

## METHODOLOGY

This year’s request for nominations was structured like the 2012 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.