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WOMEN

2015
Making a Difference
Symposium & Awards

AWARD WINNERS



On Monday, May 4th the Los Angeles Business Journal hosted its annual Women Making a Difference Symposium & Awards. More than 1,000 business leaders attending the luncheon as we honored the region's most successful, most accomplished, and most inspirational women making a difference. In addition, more than 700 attendees joined our symposium where they were inspired by nine outstanding guest speakers. Read all about our winners (above), finalists, nominees and speakers starting on **PAGE 23**.

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

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THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS™

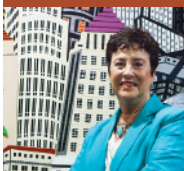
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Up Front



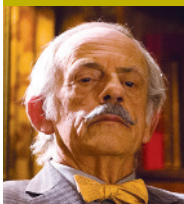
How one plumber is using the drought to make marketing splash. **PAGE 3**

News & Analysis



Carol Schatz on 25 years of making downtown more uptown. **PAGE 8**

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Why Christopher Lloyd won't be in stage version of 'Back to Future.' **PAGE 12**

Exec Office



A Les Paul guitar hits the right chord for recording studio's office. **PAGE 86**



Room Service: Sam Nazarian at SBE Entertainment Group's office on Miracle Mile.

Checking Back In

Hotelier Sam Nazarian loses partners in rough return

By CALE OTTENS Staff Reporter

HAVING recently returned to his corner office on L.A.'s Miracle Mile, a rejuvenated Sam Nazarian is settling back into his chief executive role at SBE Entertainment Group after a self-imposed hiatus that followed his confession to Nevada gaming regulators about his illegal drug use.

The return hasn't been easy. Nazarian was greeted with a revolt from a handful of partners. One group rescinded a \$500 million commitment to fund future projects; another removed SBE as its partner on a downtown L.A. development; a

third scrapped plans to let Nazarian run its gaming operations in Las Vegas.

Nevertheless, during an interview with the Business Journal last week, Nazarian was all smiles as he recounted SBE's accomplishments through the years. His demeanor showed more resemblance to his past reputation as a party boy nightclub owner than his contrite manner just a few months ago in his hearing before gaming regulators.

Nazarian returned in March after he voluntarily stepped down for about 10 weeks. Much of

Please see HOSPITALITY page 80

Acquisitions Forged Metals Business

MANUFACTURING: Departing CEO set Reliance's pickup pace.

By CAROL LAWRENCE Staff Reporter

Local manufacturers know metal processing companies Bralco Metals of La Mirada, United Alloys Aircraft Metals of Pico Rivera and Earle M. Jorgensen Co. of Lynwood – but they probably don't know those companies' owner. It's Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co., and that's just the way Reliance's leaders want it.

The downtown L.A. company's behind-the-

scenes ownership of 300 metal services centers, and the bevy of acquisitions it has made over the past few decades, have helped Reliance become the largest metals processor and distributor in the country.

That's the legacy of Chief Executive Dave Hannah, who will step down this month after 34 years with Reliance, a period during which the company's sales grew from \$180 million to \$10.5 billion.

Hannah, 63, was the author of the company's growth strategy and helped to buy dozens of companies since he joined Reliance as chief financial officer in 1981. He and his team's conservative

Please see MANUFACTURING page 79

Bank Will Give In Order to Get

LENDING: City National hopes concessions ease RBC merger.

By MATT PRESSBERG Staff Reporter

Pasadena's OneWest Bank gave most advocacy groups the stiff arm when they asked the bank to commit to more lending and other benefits in lower-income communities in exchange for giving their blessings to its proposed merger with CIT Group in Livingston, N.J.

But L.A.'s City National Bank, which announced its plans to be acquired by Toronto's Royal Bank of Canada on Jan. 22, decided to play ball.

City National worked with the California Reinvestment Coalition, a San Francisco organization of community groups, to hammer out an agreement to provide \$11 billion in small-business lending and other benefits over the next five

Please see LENDING page 78

Rocking Seats Look for Role

FILM: MediaMation sees most movement in overseas theaters.

By SANDRO MONETTI Staff Reporter

Theaters in Japan, Mexico, Columbia and now China have all installed seats, made by Torrance's MediaMation Inc., that move and shake along with the action in blockbuster films.

But while the company is doing good business in foreign markets, back home in the movie mecca of Southern California – indeed, in all of the United States – its seats can be found in just one theater, and that's in the Ventura County city of Oxnard.

Please see FILM page 78

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Number of movie screens opening daily in China.



Exiting: Reliance Chief Exec Dave Hannah.

The only source of knowledge is experience.

— Albert Einstein

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RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ

Page 6: Willie Zuniga at Grifols Biologicals' campus in East Los Angeles.

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Green Space Taken To New Height

Downtown building grows profile with 80-foot 'living wall.'

If you find yourself walking down Olive Street in downtown Los Angeles, take a look to the west – and up – when you pass by the PacMutual Campus.

Climbing up the side of the building between Fifth and Sixth streets, just across from Pershing Square, is an 80-foot tall “living wall” – a massive vertical plant display.

Downtown real estate firm **Rising Realty Partners**, which owns the building, unveiled the wall this month, saying it's the largest living wall in the city.

Chris Rising, president of Rising Realty, said the side of the building where the living wall is located used to be a fire exit, which was added in the 1980s. It was odd looking, and clearly not original to the building, and he wanted to cover it up with something.

“Our team wanted to have some kind of art on the wall,” Rising said. “And what better way to bring life to Olive Street than with a giant living wall.”

He said the inspiration for the planter came from French botanist **Patrick Blanc**, who calls himself the inventor of the vertical garden and has installed living walls around the world.

Rising Realty chose a living wall system designed by **LiveWall**, a vertical garden designer in Spring Lake, Mich. The wall features drought-tolerant plants and a low-water irrigation system.



Looking Up: PacMutual Campus' 80-foot plant wall. RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ

It's fitting that Rising traces the wall's inspiration to Blanc, as the wall is just next door to PacMutual's newest tenant, **Pitchoun**. The café and bakery was co-founded by French expats **Fabienne** and **Frederic Soulies**, who have made a point to make their

restaurant authentically Gallic, with chairs and wine barrels imported from France.

While the wall was completed last year, it wasn't unveiled until Pitchoun, which means “kiddo,” opened this month.

— *Subrina Hudson*

Retail Website All Broken Up Over Content

Never Liked It Anyway lets exes sell items left over from relationship.

Match.com, **Tinder** and **eHarmony** all help hopeful singles find romance. But what about a company that helps pick up the pieces of all those fizzled flings?

Enter **Never Liked It Anyway**, an e-commerce site for offloading the detritus from failed love affairs. Imagine a place to sell that clutch your beloved gave you, before you realized he had a girl on the side.

“It's like **eBay** for breakups,” said **Annabel Acton**, chief executive of the Venice company.

She founded the retail site in 2012 after splitting with



Splitting Take: Annabel Acton.

her ex just before Christmas and being stuck with an airplane ticket to see his family in London. A native Australian, she wanted to fly home instead and wished there was a way to ditch her costly flight.

On the site, customers upload photos of the items they'd like to sell and list the price, the reason it's for sale and a “breakup plan” – or

what the seller plans to do with the sale proceeds.

Never Liked It Anyway takes a 6 percent cut of proceeds. It also recently started selling \$30 “Bounce Back Boxes” – care packages filled with candles, mascara and a one-month membership to Match.com.

Acton has funded the firm thus far

with earnings from a career in marketing and said the company only brings in revenue of about \$40,000 a year. But the site draws about 2,000 unique visitors a day, and Acton said she thinks it would be a natural acquisition target for a bigger outfit.

“When you think about breakups, everyone has them,” Acton said.

— *Marni Usheroff*

Plumber Aims To Seal Deals With Valves

Cesar Balbin plugs toilet flappers as way to cut water usage.

Local plumber **Cesar Balbin** has a plan to use an oft-forgotten piece of equipment to save millions of gallons of water – and hopefully make his business flush with new clients.

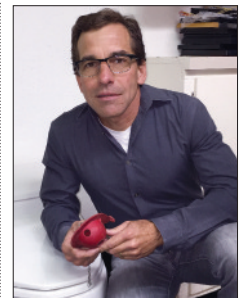
His Mid-City firm, **Reliance Home Services**, is offering free toilet flapper valves to the first 1,000 customers who ask for one. Toilet flapper valves are those rubber pieces that form a seal at the bottom of a toilet tank. When they crack or begin to disintegrate, water can leak into the bowl, wasting as much as 200 gallons

of water a day, according to Balbin.

Balbin, Reliance's co-owner, came up with the giveaway last month, figuring that if homeowners just could get leaky flappers replaced, they could individually save hundreds of dollars on their water bills and the region could save millions of gallons of water. Reliance is giving away not just the valves, which cost about \$10, but also the installation, which can cost \$160 or so.

“It's a really easy and effective way for people to join the campaign to save water,” Balbin said.

Though the program is off to a slow start – about 30 customers have taken advantage of the giveaway so far – Balbin hopes the free flappers will help Reliance to pick up customers or get additional work from existing ones.



Giveaway: Cesar Balbin.

Once one of Reliance's 300 plumbers arrives at a home to replace a flapper valve, the homeowner often asks to have other plumbing fixtures checked for leaks.

“We can use this as an opportunity to get in the home and check all the fixtures and plumbing for maximum water savings,” Balbin said.

— *Howard Fine*

Educator Gets His Message Out

Words come easily to **Jim Tetreau**, who is something of a writer. But they didn't come to him much at all one evening early this month when he greeted about 140 supporters and well-wishers at

Strive in Watts, a private after-school program for inner-city youths.

Tetreau started to say how grateful he was to those in attendance, then got choked up as he looked over the crowd, who were seated and awaiting the evening's entertainment, a solo piano concert

by **George Winston**.

“I hope you read the program,” Tetreau managed to say, “because it's all in there.”

Indeed, in the program, Tetreau, 50, had written a heartfelt thanks to Strive's sup-

porters and also explained that whenever he tries to express his gratitude on stage, “emotion wins the moment.”

Strive is an unusual school in that it accepts no government money, teaches kids to have proper behavior and works to inspire students to achieve. (One prominent sign

PAGE 3

CHARLES CRUMPLEY

for the kids reads: “Healthy behavior. Willing attitude. Then academics.”) Because of its limited funding sources, Strive has relied on business people for much of its support since its co-founding 25 years ago by Tetreau and **Don Anderson**.

But Tetreau's word shortage may have paid off.

At intermission, a woman came up to him and said, “Any man who gets choked up like that over kids wins me over.”

She said that she would figure out a way to double her

company's financial support for the campus.

Running Risks on Road

Randall Leff got his first true taste of adventure in 1972 when he was a college student backpacking by himself across Europe.

It was almost time for him to head back to the United States when he ran out of money. The logical solution, he thought, was to hitchhike.

“This was before cellphones, so you're kind of on your own,” said Leff, 62. “I needed to get to London to get home. . . . And to get there, we cut through the

corner of Yugoslavia.”

But Leff and the couple who picked him up on the side of the road were stopped by police, who were on high alert at the time because a terrorist attack had just occurred the previous day.

“They took us outside and lined us up against a wall and were basically about to execute us,” he said. “I was just thinking, nobody in the world knew where I was.”

Fortunately for Leff, the police let him go after checking his passport and he made it to London in time for his flight. Since then, Leff, a partner



Leff

at Beverly Hills law firm **Ervin Cohen & Jessup**, has gone on several more adventures – everything from running with bulls in Spain to completing the Escape From Alcatraz triathlon in San Francisco.

In fact, Leff just signed up to compete in the triathlon again in September.

Despite everything, there are still some things he deems too risky to try.

“It's funny, I think skydiving is too dangerous,” he said. “I won't do that.”

Staff reporter **Cale Ottens** contributed to this column. Page 3 is compiled by Editor **Charles Crumpley**. He can be reached at ccrumpley@labusinessjournal.com.