

#WomenOfAchievement

SPONSORSHIP PACKET

17th Women of Achievement
Awards Luncheon

Creative Communication: Building Community through the Arts

Wednesday, May 21, 2025
11:30am - 1:30pm

Cabrillo Pavilion
1118 E. Cabrillo Blvd.
Santa Barbara



Association for Women
in Communications
Santa Barbara

Women of Achievement Past Recipients



2024 *“Lessons in Leadership: Connecting and Communicating as Education Evolves”*

Katya Armistead, UCSB Assistant Vice Chancellor and Dean of Student Life

Yolanda Medina Garcia, Retired 30-year Director, Starr King Parent-Child Workshop

Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

Wendy Sims Moten, Executive Director, First 5 Santa Barbara County, President, Santa Barbara Unified School District

2023 *“Climate Champions: Bold Communication for a Sustainable Future”*

Hillary Hauser, Executive director, Heal the Ocean and author

Dr. Leah Stokes, Associate professor of environmental politics, UCSB

2022 *“Navigating Uncharted Waters”*

Gina DePinto, Van Do-Reynoso, Suzanne Grimmesey, Mona Miyasato, Terri Nisich, Jackie Ruiz, Communication Professionals from the County of Santa Barbara

2020/21 *“Vision, Voice, and Advocacy for a New Generation”*

Barbara Ben-Horin, Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara

Luz Reyes-Martin, Santa Barbara City College/Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee

2019 *“Making a Difference with Stories that Matter”*

Beth Farnsworth, Journalist and Anchor at KEYT

Kymerlee Weil, Strategic Samurai

2018 *“Courageous Communicators”*

Hannah-Beth Jackson, California State Senator

Dr. Carrie Hutchinson, SBCC Professor & Social Justice Activist

2017 *“Inspirational Women Leaders: Communication, Empowerment, Outcomes”*

Helene Schneider, Former Mayor, Santa Barbara

Patty DeDominic, Founder, International Women’s Festival

2016 *“Women Stand Up, Speak Out”*

Lois Capps, Former Congresswoman

Dr. Lois Phillips, Communications Consultant and Founder AWC-SB

2015 *“Pioneers for Change: Communication, Community, Choice”*

Sigrid Wright, Director, Earth Day Festival

Marilyn Tam, Author, The Happiness Choice

2014 *“Giving Voice: Leadership, Education, Community”*

Nancy Leffert, President, Antioch University

Marianne Partridge, Editor-in-Chief, The Santa Barbara Independent

2013 *“Money Matters: Journalism, Justice, and Empowerment”*

Kathleen Sharp, Author, Blood Medicine

Marsha Bailey, Founder and CEO, Women’s Economic Ventures

2012 *“From Breaking News to Awakening the Muse”*

Perie Longo, Poet

Paula Lopez, Television Journalist

2011 *“From Ink to Internet: Honoring Visionaries in Communication”*

Lynda Weinman, Founder, Lynda.com

Starshine Roshell, Syndicated Columnist

2010 *“Writing Truth, Empowering Women”*

Sara Miller McCune, Publisher, Sage Publications

Marcia Meier, Author and Director, SB Writers Conference

2009 *“Championing Leaders, Building Relationships, Recognizing Excellence”*

Catherine Remak, Radio Host

Ann Louise Bardach, Journalist

2008 *First Women of Achievement Honorees*

Producer **Deborah Hutchinson** and reporters at the Santa Barbara News-Press including **Jane Hulse, Melinda Burns, Dawn Hobbs, Melissa Evans** and **Anna Davison**



The Women of Achievement Awards

This year AWC-SB honors five distinguished creatives building community through the arts including visual art, dance, choral music, traditional ringshout song and movement, and poetry.

Adriana Arriaga

Visual artist, entrepreneur, activist

Teresa Kuskey

Founder/Artistic Director,
La Boheme Dance

Frances Moore

Co-founder/Artistic Director, Santa
Barbara Ringshout Project

Melinda Palacio

Santa Barbara Poet Laureate

Joanne Wasserman

Artistic Director and Conductor,
Santa Barbara Choral Society

These women uniquely embody the 2025 Women of Achievement theme,

“Creative Communication: Building Community Through the Arts.”

As individuals and collectively, these five powerful women embody the potency and transcendence of the arts as a form of communication and a way to bring people together to build community.

The annual Women of Achievement Awards are one way AWC-SB strives to empower women.

By acknowledging exemplary women leaders in communications, AWC-SB provides inspiring role models for women within or pursuing careers in journalism, public speaking, writing, public relations, filmmaking, photography, and related disciplines. Every contribution to this event helps AWC-SB sustain and provide meaningful professional development opportunities throughout the year.

AWC-SB's monthly meetings help women stay current with developments in the technology, practice, and ethics of contemporary communications. In addition, AWC-SB offers an annual networking event, a holiday party, Founder's awards, and more. AWC-SB's offerings are designed to encourage cross-sector connections.



2024 WOA Honorees, Katya Armistread, Yolanda Medina Garcia, Susan Salcido and Wendy Sims Moten. Photo: Veronica Slavin.



2025 Honoree

Adriana Arriaga

Adriana Arriaga, known artistically as *adriana la artista*, is a passionate local artist rooted in the 805. At 16 years old, she discovered her interest in graphic design and recognized the ethical responsibility in her work. She earned a BA in Art/ Design Studies from San Jose State University with a minor in Chicano Studies, and later completed her MFA in Design from the University of California, Davis, where she explored contemporary Chicana poster designs — a pivotal experience that gave rise to “*adriana la artista*.”

Inspired by the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and blending those ideals with present-day themes, Adriana creates bold, thought-provoking illustrations that celebrate her culture, community, and life experiences. While she is widely recognized for her powerful self-portraits, she is also known for her protest posters, which address pressing social and political issues. Though her work is widely accessible online, Adriana has also been showcased in several exhibitions and actively engages with her community by distributing posters at protests, leading design workshops, and sharing her art freely at local pop-up events. She has also been featured in print and online publications and participated in many artist talks centered around her creative journey.

Today, Adriana continues to shape her community through her creative contributions by serving on the Board of Trustees for the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara and using her design expertise to amplify important causes and tell meaningful stories.



Thank you to AWC-SB for this honor. I'm grateful to be recognized and hope to inspire future artistic leaders dedicated to uplifting our community.



2025 Honoree

Teresa Kuskey

A fifth generation Santa Barbara native, Teresa Kuskey grew up dancing, starring in innumerable ballet productions on local stages. She performed nationally with San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet before raising her six children. She is the mother of a special needs adult, which has inspired her commitment to inclusion, as a dance teacher in schools and for La Boheme.

Kuskey started La Boheme Dance in 2014 with the goal to uplift our community and spread joy by offering community members of all ages and abilities the opportunity to express themselves through dance. That first year, 30 dancers shared Teresa's ground-breaking cabaret/jazz fusion choreography at the 40th annual Santa Barbara Summer Solstice parade and festival. Ten years later, La Boheme led the 50th Solstice Festival parade with over 150 dancers, performers, and volunteers.

Teresa earned a Santa Barbara Local Hero honor from The Santa Barbara Independent (2017) for her early commitment to dance excellence and for offering authentic dance and performance opportunities for the community regardless of age, experience, ability to pay, or any other barrier to participate. She was named Saint Barbara for Old Spanish Days Fiesta in 2020 for her work with veterans as a member of Native Daughters of the Golden West's Reina del Mar Parlor No. 126. She continued the rich tradition of Fiesta through the COVID-19 pandemic, producing a video-version of a traditional Fiesta Festival at a historic Santa Barbara County ranch. She also kept the Solstice tradition alive through the pandemic by producing a Marie Antoinette-themed film version of a parade and festival at a beautiful Montecito estate with 80 dancers, which screened at the Arlington Theater for a community reeling from lockdowns, loss and isolation.

La Boheme dancers have been seen at 10 Solstice parades, 10 years of Fiesta events, public performances by rock legends Chubby Checker and Skip Martin—lead singer for Kool and the Gang and the Grammy-winning Dazz Band – countless nonprofit fundraisers and galas, holiday parades, and private events. La Boheme has been honored with numerous "Best of Santa Barbara" awards.



Building community and empowering women are two of the main drivers behind my creative vision for La Boheme. My goal has been to offer dancers of all abilities the chance to communicate joy through dance wherever we go. I'm honored to be recognized as a Woman of Achievement for this work!



2025 Honoree

Frances Moore

Frances Moore, a long-time resident of Santa Barbara, was born and raised to a family of sharecroppers in Pine Flat, Alabama. At the age of 12, Frances moved to Montgomery, Alabama in the 1950s, where Dr. King began the Civil Rights movement. After graduating high school, Frances moved to Columbus, Ohio, attended business school, and secured a job for the state of Ohio. In 1960, she relocated and worked for the City of Los Angeles as a data entry operator.

In the early 1980s, Frances accepted a challenging position working with the Shuttle Test Group at Vandenberg Air Force Base, preparing to launch the space vehicle the Challenger. She then went on to obtain a data entry position with the County of Ventura's Child Protective Services where the social workers saw her potential and passion and encouraged her to do social service work with vulnerable people within the community. She began working with at-risk youth, mentoring them, and helping them see their full potential and value. She went on to obtain a BA in psychology from Antioch University Santa Barbara, and further expanded her impact in her community by studying non-violent communication and obtaining certification in alcohol and drug counseling.

She is the co-founder, with Mark Ravitz, of the Santa Barbara Ring Shout project. Ring shout is a tradition of the African enslaved people's style of worship known as "call and response." Since its inception 17 years ago, The Ring Shout Project has performed at many events including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Juneteenth celebrations and programs throughout California. Its greatest achievement was to be invited to Washington DC by the Gullah/Geechee group to perform the largest Ring Shout ceremony for the Lorenzo Dow Turner's exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution.

Frances is currently retired and attending SBCC's Adult Extension Program for creative writing. She is still active with the Ring Shout Project. She has two adult children and six grandchildren.



When I learned that I have been chosen to be one of AWC's Women of Achievement award recipients, I felt appreciated, and respected. This will encourage me to keep pressing on.



2025 Honoree

Melinda Palacio

Melinda Palacio is the City of Santa Barbara's 10th Poet Laureate (2023-2025). She holds two degrees in Comparative Literature, a BA from UC Berkeley and an MA from UC Santa Cruz. Palacio is a 2007 PEN Center USA Emerging Voices Fellow and a 2009 poetry alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. Her poetry chapbook, *Folsom Lockdown*, won Kulupi Press' Sense of Place 2009 award. She is the author of the novel, *Ocotillo Dreams* (Bilingual Press 2011), for which she was awarded the Mariposa Award at the 2012 International Latino Book Awards and a 2012 PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles Award for Excellence in Literature.

Her first full-length poetry collection, *How Fire Is a Story, Waiting*, (Tia Chucha Press 2012) was a finalist for the Milt Kessler Award, the Paterson Prize, and received First Prize in Poetry at the 2013 International Latino Book Awards. In 2015, her work was featured on the Academy of American Poets, Poem-a-Day Program. Her latest poetry collection is *Bird Forgiveness*, published by 3:A Taos Press. In addition to her literary work, Melinda has had a long career in journalism as a freelance writer for the *East Valley* and *Scottsdale Tribune* and a staff reporter for the *Goleta Valley Voice*. She was an editor and publisher of *Inkbyte Magazine* and has been a regular contributor to *La Bloga* for over a decade. She also writes a poetry connection column for *The Santa Barbara Independent*.

Palacio is also a musician who taught herself to play ukulele online during the COVID-19 lockdown. She has participated in the "100 Days of Ukulele" project for the past four years and the "ukesnotnukes" flashmob for peace. Three years ago, she joined Santa Barbara's Ladies Social Strumming Club and performs in the group, playing guitar and ukulele. Palacio started singing and writing songs in her late forties and began incorporating her original songs and music into her poetry presentations.



This honor touches my core, lifts the space cultivated by generations of creative and resourceful female ancestors. I know my mother and grandmother are beaming.



2025 Honoree

Joanne Wasserman

JoAnne Wasserman has held the baton as Music Director and Conductor of The Santa Barbara Choral Society since 1993. As conductor she is the catalyst that brings the music to life, unifying over 100 musicians on stage to create a moving experience for the audience. Joanne's journey into conducting began during her teenage years in Los Angeles, and she went on to earn a master's degree in Choral Conducting from California State University at Northridge, with doctoral work at USC. Her mastery developed further under the guidance of renowned conductors John Alexander and Rodney Eichenberger, Paul Salamunovich, Robert Shaw, and Roger Wagner, at a time when few women held roles as conductors.

Over 32 seasons with The Choral Society, Joanne has conducted numerous major choral works, including Verdi's *Requiem* and Bach's *Mass in B-minor*, and introduced fresh programming. Notably, she collaborated with Sir George Martin at the Granada and brought the *a cappella* group Voctave to local audiences. For decades, Joanne has prepared choruses for Santa Barbara Symphony. Her teaching includes faculty positions at CSU Northridge, Moorpark College, and Westmont College, as well as serving as chorus master for Opera Santa Barbara. In 2008, she collaborated with State Street Ballet to premiere William Soleau's original ballet for Orff's *Carmina Burana* at the Granada Theatre.

Thanks to her professional connections, Santa Barbara hosted the West Coast premiere of *The Rain Sequence* by renowned African-American composer Dr. Rollo Dilworth, and The Choral Society's first Community Choral Workshop at the Music Academy of the West, conducted by acclaimed maestro Dr. Eugene Rogers.

Joanne has led The Choral Society on four international performance tours. Through her vision and dedication to the choral arts, she has become a local legend, continuing to inspire The Choral Society as it enters its 77th season.



This dream job provides me the opportunity to explore and tap into the power of music and the human voice to connect, comfort and inspire listeners.

About AWC-SB



The Association for Women in Communications – Santa Barbara (AWC-SB) empowers women to develop and deepen the communication skills they need to succeed in a variety of fields. Members enjoy educational and networking opportunities to elevate their careers, enhance personal growth, and become agents of change. Now an independent organization, AWC-SB served for many years as the award-winning local chapter of the national Association for Women in Communications.

AWC-SB members include journalists and broadcasters, entrepreneurs, designers and marketers, authors, corporate communicators, photographers, coaches, and public relations experts. AWC-SB offers opportunities to network with colleagues, hosts monthly meetings (free for members) featuring experts on current topics, and presents the annual Women of Achievement Awards event. Visit awcsb.org to learn more about the organization, its all-volunteer board, and upcoming events.

AWC-SB was founded in 2006 by communications consultant Lois Phillips, publisher Mindy Bingham, and producer Deborah Hutchison. They saw the need for a dynamic, local organization that cut across sectors to bring together professional communicators, solopreneurs, scholars, and corporate communicators as well as communications majors at local colleges and universities.

Professional Development: Our membership includes women at different stages of their careers and with different backgrounds and skill sets. Regular networking meetings allow women to deepen their professional friendships, often leading to collaborative opportunities. Monthly meetings feature speakers and panel discussions designed to help communicators stay at the top of their game. The association also offers casual opportunities for members to meet in person, in smaller groups.

Special Events: The annual Women of Achievement luncheon honors inspirational local communicators who make a difference in the Santa Barbara community. AWC-SB hosts an annual holiday party where we recognize a Member of the Year and support a Volunteer Organization of the Year. A few of the local nonprofits that have benefited from our generosity include Girls Inc., Friendship Center, Storyteller Children's Center, Domestic Violence Solutions, and Santa Barbara Women's Fund. The organization also celebrates local communicators with the Founder's Award. Recent recipients include Dr. Ann Lippincott (leader of Mental Health Matters Volunteer Team), Dr. Katrina Mitchell (breast surgeon and advocate for women's health), Kristine Schwarz (executive director of New Beginnings), Teri Jory (community activist), Jen Baron (founder of Girls Rock Santa Barbara), Guille Gil-Reynoso (co-founder of the Santa Barbara Latina Leaders Network), Anna Laura Jansma, (communications liaison at UCSB), Kate Carter (founder of Life Chronicles), and Rebecca Claassen (spokesperson for Citizens' Climate Lobby).

Leadership: AWC-SB is governed by an all-volunteer board. The 2024-25 Board of Directors includes Ana Papakhian, Lisa Osborn, Claudia Dunn, Beverly Herrera, Brooke Holland, Jamie Knee, Jennifer LeMay, Leanna Orsua, Tamesha Schumacher, and Judith Smith-Meyer.

Thank you for your consideration. AWC is a 501 (c) (6) nonprofit organization.



Creative Communication: Building Community Through the Arts

Sponsorship Levels

Masterpiece - \$5,000

Exclusive recognition (“The 2025 Women of Achievement Luncheon Presented by___”)

Premier seating for eight at the luncheon

Premier featured sponsor in media advertisements

Logo on invitations, event slide show, and event materials

Recognition in AWC-SB event social media posts and news media publicity

Full-page color ad and premier logo placement in the event program

Acknowledgment at the luncheon from podium
Option for a **promotional giveaway** for honorees and guests at luncheon (approximately 165)

Logo on the AWC-SB website, awcsb.org, and AWC-SB’s member newsletter throughout the year

Eight complimentary registrations for AWC-SB monthly meetings

Choreographer - \$1,500

Seating for four at the luncheon

Logo on invitations, event slide show, and event materials

Recognition in AWC-SB event social media posts and news media publicity

Half-page color ad and featured logo placement in the event program

Logo on the AWC-SB website, awcsb.org, and AWC-SB’s member newsletter throughout the year

Four complimentary registrations for AWC-SB monthly meetings

Conductor - \$2,500

Premier seating for six at the luncheon

Listed as a sponsor in media advertisements

Logo on invitations, event slide show, and event materials

Recognition in AWC-SB event social media posts and news media publicity

Full-page color ad and featured logo placement in the event program

Acknowledgment at the luncheon from podium

Logo on the AWC-SB website, awcsb.org, and AWC-SB’s member newsletter throughout the year

Six complimentary registrations for AWC-SB monthly meetings

Designer - \$500

Seating for two at the luncheon

Logo on invitations, event slide show, and event materials

Recognition in AWC-SB event social media posts and news media publicity

Quarter-page color ad and featured logo placement in the event program

Logo on the AWC-SB website, awcsb.org, and AWC-SB’s member newsletter throughout the year

Four complimentary registrations for AWC-SB monthly meetings

Additional Sponsorship Opportunities

\$350 - Quarter-page color program ad

In-Kind - by donating items to the luncheon, you support honoring exceptional women communicators in Santa Barbara. In-Kind sponsors receive a **quarter-page color ad** in event program and **special recognition** from the podium on the day of the event.



AWC is an organization that brings smart, amazing women together to share and connect their businesses. You put four or five women in any room and watch them work and bring any project or mission to life. Women need the support of other women. This organization does just that. The rule of the day is 'be a mentor and get a mentor.' That's how it works. We learn, we grow, we share, and we succeed. That's what AWC does for its members and much, much more.

Dr. Nancy D. O'Reilly, PsyD
Founder of Women Connect4Good



In 2025, five women, each a beacon of creativity and strength, use their art to weave threads of connection that unite us all. Through the power of creative communication, they build communities that celebrate diversity, inspire collaboration and transform the world around them.

Brooke Holland
AWC-SB Board Member and Women of Achievement Co-chair



Get Connected with AWC-SB

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