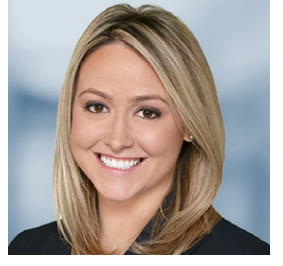




40 UNDER FORTY

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**Congratulations to Hartford Business Journal's
40 Under 40 Class of 2024**

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Spotlighting top young professionals

There continues to be a talent war in Connecticut as employers compete for top performers amid a tight labor market.

Up-and-coming young professionals remain a key recruitment focus for companies. While Connecticut struggles at times to retain newly-minted college graduates, the state still has a strong cohort of young professionals making a difference at their respective organizations and within the broader community. It's important to put a spotlight on them to show others that starting a business or launching and making a career here can pay dividends, both professionally and personally.

That's the purpose of 40 Under Forty. Every year for the last 28 years, Hartford Business Journal, with the help of our independent judges, has selected 40 of the top young professionals who are leading their organizations.

This year we received about 175 nominations. Narrowing down the list to 40 deserving honorees was a difficult task. More importantly, our winners provide evidence that our state has a vast young talent pool.

Our 2024 honorees hail from the private, public and nonprofit sectors, and from organizations both small and large.

We'd like to thank this year's judges for helping choose our honorees. They include:

- **Paddi LeShane**, CEO & Co-Founder, Sullivan & LeShane Inc.
- **Andi Campbell**, President, WellSpark Health
- **Bruce Adams**, President & CEO, Credit Union League of Connecticut.

We will be celebrating our annual 40 Under Forty event on Sept. 19, at the Aqua Turf Club in the Plantsville section of Southington.

If you think you have what it takes to be part of a future 40 Under Forty class, we ask that you submit a nomination next year. This award is only as strong as the class of individuals who are nominated for it.

And many nominees represent the state's promising future.



Greg Bordonaro
Editor

FEATURED PHOTOS BY:
BRIAN AMBROSE PHOTOGRAPHY



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Anthony Anthony

AGE: 38
COMPANY: State of Connecticut
TITLE: Chief Marketing Officer
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 3+
WHERE I LIVE: Avon
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: George Mason University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Government and International Politics

Anthony Anthony is the chief marketing officer for Connecticut, spearheading the charge to revitalize the state's brand and reputation as a world-class place to live, work and play.

Since being appointed in March 2023, he has rebranded the state and driven high-water marks for positive public relations mentions of CT (4.1 billion), hits to CT Visit (9.4 million, making it a top 10 state tourism website), and visitors to the state (67.9 million) in 2023.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Rebranding the state of Connecticut and creating a meaningful campaign around it to put the state on the map again. This required strategic insights, creativity, collaboration with numerous partners, and a great deal of buy-in from internal and external stakeholders to maximize impact both in-state and out-of-state.

How are you involved in the community?

As a state official, I have the pleasure of working closely with our municipalities, residents, nonprofits and many businesses every day. While I'm not originally from Connecticut, I've fallen in love with it because of the people. There's an immense sense of community here, with dedication to common objectives wherever you go.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Oversees marketing for the state of Connecticut, a \$26 billion-plus entity with over 30,000 employees and 27 agencies/offices.
- Doubled the team size of two state offices, integrating tourism and economic development marketing to create the Office of Statewide Marketing & Tourism.
- Served as a strategic advisor to Fortune 500 CEOs, nonprofit executives and the governor of Connecticut.



Heather Atkins

AGE: 30
COMPANY: Johnson Brunetti
TITLE: Financial Advisor
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 5
WHERE I LIVE: Wethersfield
WHERE I WORK: Wethersfield
COLLEGE: The Ohio State University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Business Administration with a specialization in investments

Heather Atkins is a certified financial planner (CFP) at Johnson Brunetti and has onboarded 330 families, bringing in approximately \$150 million in investments.

She is currently servicing over 400 families in all areas of financial planning. Atkins made it her mission to empower women to find financial freedom and success. She wants to get more money in the hands of women, and she has positioned herself as a mentor for other women and men to do the same.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I spent years preparing and studying to obtain my CFP certification. I have been able to change the lives of my clients because of this certification, and that is something I will always be proud of.

How are you involved in the community?

I have been an active member, fundraiser and participant in the Junior League of Hartford for four years. I served as the community service co-chair and assisted the board as treasurer. I am also an active volunteer for Dress for Success, Junior Achievement, and the Boys and Girls Club.

What do you like to do outside of work?

My fiancé and I like to visit the state parks and take our dog Taz for hikes. I also love trying new restaurants in the area.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Top fundraiser for the Junior League of Hartford two years in a row.
- Leading women's initiative at Johnson Brunetti with women-centric educational events and podcast episodes.
- First female CFP hired at Johnson Brunetti.

Fun Fact

I went free-fall skydiving as part of a class for college credit.



Juliana Carrillo MacTaggart

AGE: 39
COMPANY: Charles Schwab
TITLE: Director, Consultant Relations at Schwab Retirement Plan Services
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 2
WHERE I LIVE: Southington
WHERE I WORK: Southington
COLLEGE: University of Hartford
HIGHEST DEGREE: MBA, UConn

Juliana Carrillo MacTaggart is a director of consultant relations for Charles Schwab Retirement Plan Services.

She is responsible for several premier consultant firms across the U.S., and is instrumental in growing Schwab's multibillion-dollar retirement book. Prior to joining Schwab, she spent almost 14 years at Prudential Retirement in various roles, including her most recent one as assistant director, where her team was accountable for over \$80 billion in client-retention assets.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My dedication to my business partners and customers built a strong relationship that led to a breakthrough team win in 2023. This resulted in the firm's first win in nearly a decade from a highly valued, multi-billion-dollar retirement advisor, better positioning my firm and opening the door to future opportunities.

How are you involved in the community?

I spent the last 14 years in leadership roles for community-focused organizations, leading essential efforts to help the Hartford community, contributing over 15,000 sandwiches, 5,000 gifts at holiday toy drives, career-readiness and professional development and raising over \$76,000 in 2022 to help research for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Held leadership roles for the last 15 years across multiple community groups and nonprofit organizations.
- First-ever Hispanic woman from Prudential to be selected to the coveted Young Hispanic Corporate Achiever Award by the Hispanic Association of Corporate Responsibility.
- Led a team that raised \$76,000 and was named CT's first Woman of the Year in 2022 by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Congratulations Tucker!

Bradley, Foster & Sargent is proud to congratulate Tucker Childs and all Hartford Business Journal 40 Under 40 Class of 2024 honorees!

Tucker's commitment to his clients, colleagues, and community embodies the core values and traditions that BFS upholds.

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Tucker Childs

AGE: 37
COMPANY: Bradley, Foster & Sargent
TITLE: Director of Wealth Planning & Portfolio Manager
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 11
TOWN WHERE I LIVE: West Hartford
TOWN WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: Georgia State University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's degree in Finance, Georgia State University

Tucker Childs is the director of wealth planning and a portfolio manager at Bradley, Foster and Sargent. In his role as director, Childs guides his firm's philosophy on wealth planning and identifies the planning issues most relevant to clients.

As a portfolio manager, he works with clients to incorporate an understanding of their needs with investment portfolios tailored to meet those needs. He is a chartered financial analyst and a certified financial planner.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I led the creation of my firm's wealth planning program from the ground up. Over the last six years, I have been tasked with building consensus among our portfolio managers to develop a wealth planning offering that complements our approach to investment management and provides additional value to our clients.

How are you involved in the community?

I am a member of the board of trustees at Wheeler Health, where I serve on the finance and retirement committees. I am on the program committee for The Estate and Business Planning Council of Hartford. I have served as a volunteer, teaching financial literacy to elementary school students in Hartford.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I successfully led the creation of a wealth planning department at Bradley, Foster & Sargent.
- I leverage my professional strengths to support organizations that are doing good things in the community.
- I am dedicated to the promotion of integrity in the investment industry, placing clients ahead of profits.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy exploring the world with my wife and two children. I like to stay active playing soccer, golf, biking and hiking.



Allison P. Dearington

Age: 36
Company: Jackson Lewis P.C.
Title: Principal and Office Litigation Manager
No. of years with current company: 8
Where I live: West Hartford
Where I work: Hartford
College: Fordham University
Highest degree: Juris Doctor, University of Connecticut

Allison P. Dearington is a principal and office litigation manager in the Hartford office of Jackson Lewis P.C. Her practice is focused on employment litigation, including class and collective action defense.

She is also a trusted advisor to several national clients on workplace law matters. In her manager role, Dearington systematically oversees all office litigation matters and ensures continuous practice skill learning and litigation training in the Hartford office.

What's been your biggest professional

accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment was the opportunity to learn from some of the most experienced and best employment litigators in Connecticut, and subsequently being promoted to principal and office litigation manager at Jackson Lewis.

How are you involved in the community?

I chaired the Junior League's Career Connections for Young Women program and recently presented on a "How to Get Hired" panel. I have also served as a mentor for Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity and Jackson Lewis' Rise Mentoring Program. I've also participated in panel discussions for 1L students at UConn Law, co-chaired my office's practicing and parenting resource group, and presented to the bar on employment law-related topics.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Elevated to principal at age 33 and office litigation manager at age 35.
- Experienced trial attorney with some precedent-setting rulings.
- Helped develop Junior Achievement's Career Connections for Young Women program through my involvement with the Junior League of Hartford.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I'm usually chasing my 6-year-old and 2-year-old around, but apart from that, Peloton rides and spending time on the shoreline.

Congratulations to all of the Hartford Business Journal's 40 Under Forty Award Winners!



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Jessica Fenner

AGE: 38
COMPANY: Yale University
TITLE: Associate Director, Engagement & Campaign Initiatives
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 10
WHERE I LIVE: Branford
WHERE I WORK: New Haven
COLLEGE: University of Connecticut
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's Degree in Social Work, University of Connecticut

Jessica Fenner is a proud Husky. She holds a master's degree in social work and bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut.

Recently, she obtained a certificate of nonprofit leadership from the Harvard Kennedy School. Fenner began her fundraising career working for U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT). Currently, she is the associate director of engagement and campaign initiatives at Yale University. Her work directly supports the "for Humanity" campaign, Yale's most

ambitious fundraising effort.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My work directly supports the "for Humanity" campaign, a campaign designed to equip Yale's faculty and students with the resources they need to tackle the most critical needs of our time. I am honored to work on behalf of this incredible philanthropic venture.

How are you involved in the community?

Community service is an important part of my life. I am a member of the CT Arts Foundation board of directors and was appointed to this role by Gov. Ned Lamont. I recently joined the Girls on the Run Greater Connecticut board of directors and am a proud Fellow at Yale University.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I am committed to elevating the field of philanthropy and highlighting the incredible work underway in the non-profit sector.
- I am a proud volunteer and passionate about giving back to communities across the state.
- I will be recognized as a 2024 Connecticut's Finest Honoree by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Connecticut Chapter. I was selected for this honor based on my professional successes and philanthropic spirit to join the fight to cure cystic fibrosis.



Genny Rodriguez Fonseca

AGE: 37
COMPANY: Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board
TITLE: Chief Operating Officer
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 14
WHERE I LIVE: Prospect
WHERE I WORK: Waterbury
COLLEGE: University of Connecticut
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's degree in English, UConn

Genny Rodriguez Fonseca serves as chief operating officer of the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. The agency is dedicated to connecting jobseekers with employers and enhancing the workforce development system to sustain a robust economy and foster business growth.

It offers comprehensive training across all industry sectors, with an emphasis on high-demand industries. Fonseca joined the organization in 2010 as an administrative assistant, progressing

through roles such as case manager, program coordinator and director of strategic planning and development.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I wouldn't quantify this as the biggest, more-so most rewarding, which was being a case manager for our healthcare job-training program. It allowed me to personally connect with the individuals who walk through our doors. This part of my career serves as my daily reminder of our mission to serve our community and remain grounded.

How are you involved in the community?

I formerly served on the City of Waterbury's Diversity Council; nowadays, I am committed to supporting my daughter's extracurricular activities and education to help her develop a strong and positive sense of self. I also support local small businesses.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- As someone who is able to put their personal problems aside and remain focused, I would describe myself as selfless, dedicated and compassionate.
- I belong to a niche group of women who deserve representation in the C-Suite world as a young, minority, single mother who started at the entry level of the organization.
- I am passionate about taking part in initiatives that empower individuals to thrive.



Congratulations!

GENNY RODRIGUEZ FONSECA

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL'S
TOP FORTY UNDER 40 HONOREE

We are thrilled for Genny, Chief Operating Officer of the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, for being named one of Hartford Business Journal's Top Forty Under 40! This prestigious recognition is a testament to Genny's exceptional leadership and dedication to workforce development in Connecticut. Her innovative strategies and unwavering commitment have significantly advanced the board's mission, making a lasting impact on our community.



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This announcement is funded by a grant awarded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act from the U.S. Department of Labor. The total cost of the announcement is \$2455, of which 100% is funded by federal dollars.



Matthew S. Gelles

AGE: 36
COMPANY: NEFCO
TITLE: President & CEO
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 14
WHERE I WORK: East Hartford
COLLEGE: Syracuse University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's of Industrial Distribution, Texas A&M

Matthew Gelles serves as president and CEO of NEFCO, a 1,000-plus employee construction supply distributor throughout the United States. As president and CEO, Gelles provides leadership for the entire company, with an emphasis on long-term value creation, growth, profitability and return on invested capital.

He is responsible for NEFCO's strategic, financial and operational execution with oversight over all of NEFCO's departments. Since Gelles joined NEFCO in 2010, revenues have grown by 18x and profitability has grown by 28x.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment has been leading the execution of the comprehensive strategic plan I drafted in 2012, to take our family's regional construction distribution business from 70 employees and four locations in 2012, and grow it to become a nationwide distributor, which today spans over 40 locations and over 1,000 employees.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Took over leadership of NEFCO as president and CEO in 2022 at age 34 and have doubled both revenues and profitability in the last two years.
- Lead strategic planning and execution, which has led to tremendous growth and transformation of our family business, from 70 employees to over 1,000 in 14 years.
- Lead strategic planning and execution, which has resulted in revenues increasing by 18x in those 14 years, making NEFCO one of the largest independent distributors across the U.S.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my family, my wife Tracy, and sons Gabe and Jack and my extended family and friends. I am an avid sports fan and in my spare time, I enjoy playing golf, basketball, tennis, padel and basically any other sport available to me.



Jonathan E. Harding

AGE: 39
COMPANY: City of Hartford
TITLE: Corporation Counsel
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: Less than 1 year
WHERE I LIVE: Hartford
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: Boston College
HIGHEST DEGREE: Juris Doctor, UConn Law

Jonathan Harding is the corporation counsel for the City of Hartford. He leads the legal department of the city and provides legal counsel to all of the city's elected officials, departments, boards and commissions.

Before joining the city, Harding served as associate general counsel to Gov. Ned Lamont. He started his legal career as an assistant attorney general for the state of Connecticut, and served in that capacity for 10 years.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Serving as corporation counsel for the City of Hartford is one of the great honors of my life. In that capacity, I lead an entire legal department of incredible public servants and make critical decisions daily that have a direct effect on the citizens and the business community of the city.

How are you involved in the community?

I serve on the boards of the West End Civic Association and the iQuilt Partnership. I previously served as a commissioner on the Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission, the Hartford Democratic Town Committee, Noah Webster Microsociety Magnet School Governance Council, and mentored at CREC Impact Academy.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I have been a tireless public servant that has dedicated my entire legal career to work that benefits the public at large.
- I thrive in high-pressure, dynamic work environments. I welcome professional challenges and always seek to produce the highest-quality work product.
- I always treat my colleagues and the public at large with respect, dignity and compassion.



Matthew Gravel

AGE: 37
COMPANY: General Dynamics Electric Boat
TITLE: Director of Program Finance
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 15
WHERE I LIVE: Colchester
WHERE I WORK: Groton
COLLEGE: Bachelor of Business Administration (Finance), UConn
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's of Business Administration, University of New Haven

Matthew Gravel is the director of program finance at Electric Boat. He leads a team of 80 people responsible for cost management and financial performance across all business lines, including the Columbia-class submarine program, the nation's No. 1 defense priority.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Having the honor of being chosen as the senior management representative on board the USS Vermont's post-delivery sea trials. I was able to

experience five days at sea and was in awe of the sailors who operate and the men and women who design, build and test these machines.

How are you involved in the community?

I am involved with my children's sports teams and support the United Way. I also mentor professionals at EB, from improving their business acumen to providing situational help. I have been fortunate in my career to have had mentors supporting me, so I feel it is important to pay it forward.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Outside of work, I spend most of my time with my wife, Elizabeth, and our children, Logan and Victoria (ages 6 and 5). In the summer, we spend our week-ends at the beach, but come winter, our attention turns to UConn basketball.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- The teams I have led have developed and implemented multiple process improvements to streamline interactive management metrics and dashboards.
- I am the financial management representative on EB's shipyard director team, which is leading a once-in-a-generation growth period.
- In my 15 years at EB, I have developed significant leadership influence and am a key member of the senior leadership team.



Jennie Hirsch

AGE: 32
COMPANY: Connecticut Foodshare
TITLE: Chief of Staff
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 6
WHERE I LIVE: Hartford
WHERE I WORK: Wallingford
COLLEGE: SUNY New Paltz
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's degree in Art History, SUNY New Paltz

Jennie Hirsch is the chief of staff at Connecticut Foodshare, the food bank serving the entire state of Connecticut. She joined the organization over six years ago and, in that time, has worked to develop the organization's leading, trusted voice in policy and government relations.

Hirsch was instrumental in executing the historic merger of Foodshare and Connecticut Food Bank in 2021, and developing the new Connecticut Foodshare organization. Originally from New York, she now lives in Hartford with

her partner Ryan and their dog Bialy.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My involvement in the food bank merger is the biggest accomplishment of my career thus far. Working together, we achieved something that will have a massive, lasting impact on our neighbors in Connecticut. I am proud to have contributed my strengths to that journey.

How are you involved in the community?

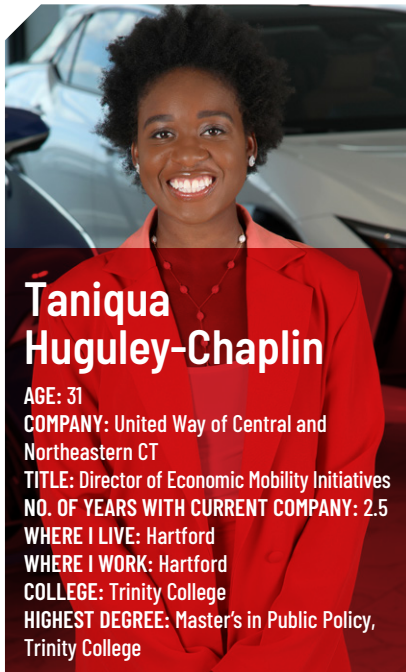
I stand on the shoulders of so many incredible individuals who have worked toward more inclusive, equitable communities. I'm committed to ensuring that I use my privilege to create more opportunities and support for others, and am lucky to work for an organization that helps the community every day.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Chief of staff at a major nonprofit by 30.
- Secured federal funding for and supported the development of the "Grocery on Broad" with Forge City Works, a nonprofit grocery store in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford.
- Graduate of Leadership Greater Hartford's Quest Program (Class of 2022).

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to read, ride my bike with my partner and play board games with friends. I love to cook and host game night!



Taniqua Huguley-Chaplin

AGE: 31
 COMPANY: United Way of Central and Northeastern CT
 TITLE: Director of Economic Mobility Initiatives
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 2.5
 WHERE I LIVE: Hartford
 WHERE I WORK: Hartford
 COLLEGE: Trinity College
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Public Policy, Trinity College

Taniqua Huguley-Chaplin is the director of economic mobility at United Way of Central and Northeastern CT. In her role, she works to create programs and resources that help individuals and families in the community to become economically secure.

She also leads the Hartford Working Cities initiative. This program's vision is for Hartford to be a place where young adults have the skills and talents needed by local and regional businesses.

She also leads the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) coalition. Working in

collaboration with community partners, her coalition served more than 13,000 families in the region this season, securing nearly \$28 million back to the community in tax credits and refunds. Huguley-Chaplin is also the founder and CEO of Black Girls Achieve, an enrichment program that provides Black girls with the skills and tools needed to navigate Black girlhood.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I have made positively impactful contributions in the Hartford community related to economic mobility, housing and youth and young adult development.
- I create opportunities for youth and young adults to become successful leaders and change agents.
- I work to create cross-sector collaboration between community organizations and residents.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

During my short time with United Way, I have established two cohorts of the Young Legends Leadership Academy, and more than 40 young adults have successfully completed the program.

I also helped reestablish the Career Navigation Community of Practice, providing over 50 career navigators with professional development opportunities. I also worked to launch the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline and North Hartford Navigation Hub, connecting families in North Hartford to resources and services.



Drew Iacovazzi

AGE: 35
 COMPANY: Bank of America Private Bank
 TITLE: Senior Vice President, Private Client Advisor
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 8
 WHERE I LIVE: West Hartford
 WHERE I WORK: West Hartford
 COLLEGE: Champlain College
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Business

Drew Iacovazzi is a private client advisor at Bank of America Private Bank. He leads a team of specialists who leverage the global resources of the bank.

Iacovazzi is responsible for providing strategic guidance to clients with respect to investment management, wealth structuring services, customized lending, trust and estate planning services, business succession and philanthropic objectives.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I have enjoyed advising clients during my

time at the Private Bank. The ultimate accomplishment is earning my clients' trust.

One particular aspect that I find truly fulfilling is advising clients on the exit of their business and helping them settle into the next chapter of their lives.

How are you involved in the community?

I am a trustee of Catholic Charities of Hartford, where I serve on the strategic planning committee. I also serve on the boards of the Estate and Business Planning Council of Hartford, Connecticut Insurance and Financial Services cluster, and the board of ambassadors at The Bushnell.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my family, playing golf and tennis, and serving my community.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Named senior vice president within three years of starting with Bank of America Private Bank.
- I have grown my practice by an average of 30% year over year for the last seven years.
- I have designed and run a training program for new private client advisors in the Hartford market.

Fun Fact

I spent a month mountaineering in Wyoming and climbed its highest peak, 13,810 feet.



Congratulations TANIKA HUGULEY-CHAPLIN

Director of Economic Mobility Initiatives

United Way is proud to congratulate Taniqua Huguley-Chaplin and the entire 2024 class of Hartford Business Journal's 40 under Forty!

As we celebrate our centennial year, United Way is especially excited to recognize emerging leaders who inspire others and serve as role models across our community.



Jessica Idleman

AGE: 38
 COMPANY: Fortunato Construction Group Inc.
 TITLE: Chief Financial Officer
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 12
 WHERE I LIVE: Berlin
 WHERE I WORK: Berlin
 COLLEGE: UConn
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's degree in Accounting, UConn

Jessica Idleman is the chief financial officer of Fortunato Construction Group, a Connecticut-based commercial construction firm.

She has been with Fortunato for 12 years starting as assistant controller, making her way to chief financial officer. She leads the firm's accounting department and plays a key role in the organization's leadership team.

Her guidance has helped the family-owned company transition to a new second generation of leadership.

Idleman collaborates with colleagues, clients and partners to facilitate strong, lasting relationships that are the backbone of the company's success.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment has been gaining the trust and respect of my coworkers. I started at Fortunato at age 26 as the assistant controller and a female in the male-dominated construction industry with very little knowledge of construction. I quickly gained the knowledge and skills to be a valued and trusted asset and advisor in many facets of the organization.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with family and friends, including my husband, Rob, and my kids, Parker (9) and Maxx (7). I also love spending time with my dogs, enjoying the outdoors and staying active.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Provide leadership to all levels of the organization to empower individuals to make the best decisions possible for both the company and themselves.
- Actively involved in the construction industry and implementing forward-thinking technology and systems to efficiently operate a construction company.
- Balance my passion for my work with enjoying all the little moments life has to offer.



Kevin Jodice is the vice president and partner at PDS Engineering & Construction, a commercial general contractor that completes projects throughout Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York. He focuses on business development and customer relations.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My team and I have restructured the company's organization and fostered a trusting, results-driven team culture.

My team is focused on enhancing marketing effectiveness, which has led to achieving 40% volume growth. PDS' strategic leadership and industry expertise drive continuous innovation and success.

How are you involved in the community?

I volunteer my time at a local Montessori school, helping with the grounds crew/clean up. I have also created coat drives for the students on PDS' school projects, and turkey drives for Foodshare at Thanksgiving.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my wife, five-year-old son, and four- and two-year-old daughters. Their activities and interests keep me busy outside of work. I also spend time outdoors, watching sports and playing golf.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Third-generation family business owner.
- Streamlined our management staff, improved our culture and standardized processes within the company to provide a more effective project delivery and continued success.
- My dedication to empowering employees reflects my personal values and broader vision for a more equitable industry.

Fun Fact

I grew up playing hockey.

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FAMILY OF INDUSTRY LEADERS





Kevin F. Kenny

AGE: 36
COMPANY: NAI Lexington Commercial, Lexington Partners, Innoconn Construction Management
TITLE: Founder and President, NAI Lexington Commercial, (Vice President Lexington Partners, Innoconn)
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 5
WHERE I LIVE: Rocky Hill
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: Johnson and Wales University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Marketing/Advertising, Johnson and Wales University

Kevin F. Kenny is a leader in the commercial real estate industry, serving as the founder and president of NAI Lexington Commercial LLC, a brokerage that has generated \$3 million in revenue within a year and a half of its launch.

Additionally, he holds the role of vice president at Lexington Partners LLC, focusing on real estate development, and serves as vice president of business development at Innoconn Construction Management.

With a wealth of 15 years in real estate development, brokerage and construction management, Kenny specializes in new business development, acquisitions, investor relations, government relations and owners project management, contributing to north of \$100 million in construction management services sold in the past few years.

What do you like to do outside of work?

The most significant aspect of my life is spending quality time with my wife of 10 years, Kristen, and our two children, Billy (6) and Izzy (3). Family activities hold immense importance to me. I have a great passion for dining experiences, golfing and supporting my favorite baseball team, the New York Mets. These moments with my family and indulging in my hobbies bring me immense joy and fulfillment.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I believe I deserve this award due to my achievements in the commercial real estate sector and my commitment to Hartford's future and economic prosperity.
- My revitalization endeavors in downtown Hartford, exemplified by establishments such as Huskies Tavern and The Drake, have significantly benefited the community.
- By emphasizing historic preservation and sustainable development, I aim to create a lasting impact. My roles at Lexington Partners and NAI Lexington Commercial also showcase my business development and client relations expertise.



Lesley Kuffour

AGE: 30
COMPANIES & TITLES: Director of IT Infrastructure, YearUp; Owner, Home Instead Northeastern; Owner, Total Health Club; Owner, Hillstone Holdings
WHERE I LIVE: Ellington
WHERE I WORK: Tolland
COLLEGE: Fairmont State University, West Virginia
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's, Management Information Systems; Bachelor's, Business Marketing

Starting his engineering career at Wayfair in 2016, Lesley Kuffour has advanced to director of IT Infrastructure at YearUp, a nonprofit job training program. Concurrently, he built a real estate business, renovating over 50 units and owning a seven-figure rental portfolio.

Additionally, he has invested in and acquired two local businesses in the fitness and homecare industries, generating millions of dollars annually

and serving nearly 2,000 residents in Hartford, Tolland and Windham counties.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment is starting Hillstone Recovery, a nonprofit providing recovery housing for adult men in Vernon. Additionally, I scaled YearUp's IT infrastructure to serve more underserved young adults nationwide and provided affordable housing to dozens of families as a grateful immigrant.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I started Hillstone Recovery, providing recovery housing for adult men battling substance abuse, showcasing my commitment to community support and well-being.
- I've acquired and renovated several dozen affordable housing units and own fitness and homecare businesses, serving nearly 2,000 residents in Hartford, Tolland and Windham counties.
- As an immigrant in America for 12 years, coming here without any economic resources, my success through sheer hard work and perseverance should inspire others to achieve their dreams if they do not quit.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with family and staying active by working out every day of the week.

Lexington Partners is proud to honor Kevin Kenny

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 "40 UNDER 40"



Kevin Kenny, President of NAI Lexington Commercial

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HAI Group extends
our sincere
congratulations to
Chief Operating
Officer **Troy LePage**,
CPA, on being named
an HBJ



40 Under
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Troy LePage

AGE: 38
 COMPANY: HAI Group
 TITLE: Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President
 No. of years with current company: 7
 WHERE I LIVE: Cheshire
 WHERE I WORK: Cheshire
 COLLEGE: University of Connecticut
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Accounting, UConn

Troy LePage is the chief operating officer and executive vice president of HAI Group, a family of companies that provides insurance and related services to the affordable housing industry nationwide.

Since joining the company in 2017, LePage has held positions of increasing responsibility, including chief compliance officer and chief financial officer. Under his leadership, the company has seen consistent profitability since 2018, and has grown revenue from \$150 million to over \$250 million.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Besides being an HBJ 40 Under Forty honoree, which I am humbled my colleagues nominated me for, watching the continued success of my mentees has been incredibly rewarding. I owe part of my success to my mentors, and always strive to pay that generosity forward.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- As the COO, I play a critical leadership role in managing a business with more than \$250 million in revenues whose mission is to protect the sustainability of affordable housing, which is vitally important.
- Because I've garnered deep expertise in areas that affect our customers nationwide, such as cybersecurity, I am regularly asked to present at industry conferences around the country. Regardless of our customers' challenges, I'm ready to get involved.
- I've played a significant role in growing our organization from 150 employees to 175 and implementing transformational technological improvements to support our future.

How are you involved in the community?

As a mission-driven organization, HAI Group is always looking for ways to give back to our community. In the past year alone, I've personally participated in food and school supply drives and Habitat for Humanity, among other things.



Chris Marziale

AGE: 33
 COMPANY: CohnReznick LLP
 TITLE: Senior Manager
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 11
 WHERE I LIVE: Glastonbury
 WHERE I WORK: Hartford
 COLLEGE: Central Connecticut State University
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Accounting, CCSU

Chris Marziale, CPA, serves as an audit senior manager at CohnReznick, with over a decade of experience serving clients across manufacturing and distribution, consumer products and hospitality industries.

Marziale leverages his extensive technical expertise to offer valuable insights and guidance beyond the scope of core audit services, helping clients overcome business challenges and achieve growth and success. Marziale is also deeply committed to the accounting profession,

devoting considerable time to training and mentoring the next generation of leaders.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

In January 2024, I achieved a significant milestone in my career by receiving my office's prestigious "Breakthrough Award." This accolade recognizes individuals who exemplify the firm's core values by fostering opportunities for our colleagues, positively impacting our clients, and contributing to the betterment of our communities.

How are you involved in the community?

I actively participate in the firm's Community Impact initiatives, which involve various volunteering and fund-raising events throughout the year. Additionally, I participate in our firm's Week of Caring, which is a week dedicated to giving back to nonprofit organizations in the greater Hartford area.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Commitment to world-class client service by listening and being responsive to the needs of my clients, and supporting them through all stages of their business.
- Dedication to attracting and developing the next generation of leaders in the accounting profession through recruiting, training and on-the-job mentoring.

Celebrating those at the forefront

In recognition of his outstanding leadership, we congratulate **Chris Marziale**, along with the other 40 Under 40 honorees! We are proud to support these young professionals and the Hartford Business Journal's commitment to growing business and strengthening communities.

Melissa Ferrucci, CPA, Partner
 and the Partners of CohnReznick



Member of Nexia





Mike McGuire

AGE: 37
COMPANY: KeyBank
TITLE: Senior Vice President, Senior Middle Market Relationship Manager
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 4
WHERE I LIVE: Southington
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: St. Peter's University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, St. Peter's University

Mike McGuire is a senior middle market relationship manager, senior vice president with KeyBank. He is responsible for prospecting new commercial banking clients and developing strong relationships with his existing portfolio.

McGuire manages a portfolio of public and private companies with revenues from \$25 million to \$3 billion, in addition to covering a select group of private equity firms. His portfolio consists of complex capital structures including debt and equity capital markets, syndications and M&A.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I achieved Signature Circle in both 2021 and 2022, Key's prestigious awards program that recognizes the top 1% of individual producers across the bank. In 2022, my strong performance significantly contributed to Connecticut's ranking as Key's No. 1 performing market amongst the bank's 26 markets nationwide.

How are you involved in the community?

I serve on the board of directors for the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks, and am a consistent volunteer at KeyBank's Neighbors Make the Difference Day. I have also volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and Domus in Stamford, which serves troubled youth ages 12 to 26.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Successfully manage a team of partners to deliver full-service banking capabilities, including treasury and credit solutions, real estate, equipment financing, fx, swaps and automation.
- Mentor junior associates at the bank to help them develop professionally and be positive contributors to the overall team.
- Consistent volunteer in the community, serving on a board and volunteering for several nonprofits.



Christopher Mele

AGE: 38
COMPANY: Cigna Healthcare
TITLE: Director, Medicare Growth - Tristate Region
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 3
WHERE I LIVE: Southington
WHERE I WORK: Bloomfield
COLLEGE: Univ. of New Haven; Central Conn State Univ.
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's degree in Labor Relations, Univ. of New Haven

Christopher Mele leads all market expansion and growth efforts for the Medicare Advantage division across Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. He and his team develop multi-year growth initiatives with the independent brokers and agencies that represent Cigna in the markets.

Mele is a two-time Gold Circle Award Winner, achieved his annual goal for three years consecutively, with 153% to goal for 2024. He was awarded a sales leadership segment award for excellence in leadership and collaboration

within his organization.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I successfully launched the Connecticut, northern New Jersey and New York Medicare Advantage markets in 2021. Over three years, I onboarded over 2,000 independent brokers and successfully brought in over 30,000 new Medicare Advantage clients, exceeding all forecasted market expansion expectations. I credit my success to the hard work and dedication of my amazing team, maintaining focus and resilience, and the support of my colleagues at Cigna.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I maintain a strong focus on both performance and team development in my leadership role at Cigna, building new verticals for my staff to grow as professionals.
- I achieved my market-level goals from 2021-2023, exceeding all forecasted membership projections by over 100%.
- I planned, developed and executed a multi-year market expansion strategy in the Northeast, a 28-county expansion with over 30,000 new clients.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I reside in Southington with my wife, Lindsey, and two kids, Christopher and Evelyn. I enjoy hiking, fishing, golf, cycling and family vacations to Maine.

Congratulations 2024 HBJ 40 UNDER FORTY HONOREES

Cheers to our own School of Business faculty and alumni honored this year:

Jonathan A. Moore '07

Executive Director, UConn Digital Frontiers Initiative
 Instructor in Residence, UConn OPIM Department

Heather Atkins '02

CFP®, CRPC®, Financial Advisor, Johnson Brunetti

Troy LePage '07, '08 MS

Executive VP & Chief Operating Officer, HAI Group

Matthew Gravell '09

Director of Program Finance, General Dynamics Electric Boat

Robert Wooley '13, '18 Grad Certificate

COO, Co-Founder, Apple Rehab, Nurses at Home

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Jonathan Moore

AGE: 39
 COMPANY: University of Connecticut
 TITLE: Executive Director of CT Information Technology Institute
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 16
 WHERE I LIVE: Tolland
 COLLEGE: Nichols College
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Business Administration, Nichols College

Jonathan Moore is an award-winning professor of information management at the UConn School of Business, the executive director of the Connecticut Information Technology Institute (CITI), and the CEO and co-founder of Appoint LLC.

He founded the OPIM Innovate Lab, pioneering experiential learning in emerging technology. Appoint LLC specializes in streamlining appointment scheduling through advanced software solutions, enhancing efficiency for businesses. His

leadership bridges academia and industry, driving significant impact in both fields.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My most outstanding professional accomplishment is founding and developing the OPIM Innovate Lab, which enhances experiential learning in emerging technology through innovative programs, field trips, industry talks and securing new revenue sources, significantly impacting the academic and professional development of students at UConn.

How are you involved in the community?

I actively engage in the community by volunteering with the UConn Child Development Lab, serving as cubmaster for Cub Scouts Pack 15, coaching Tolland Youth Football, flag football and lacrosse and coordinating community STEM programs for local schools and programs.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Founded the first educational research lab in emerging technology at UConn.
- Redesigned the curriculum and entire major of management information systems to bring it up to industry and peer standards.
- Co-founded an innovative company at the age of 35 while working full-time and becoming a father to four children.



Adrienne Nelson

AGE: 38
 COMPANY: Pickard Chilton
 TITLE: Principal
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 10
 WHERE I LIVE: Hamden
 WHERE I WORK: New Haven
 COLLEGE: Iowa State University
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Master of Architecture, Iowa State University

Principal Adrienne Nelson works closely with architects and designers at Pickard Chilton to oversee the production and growth of the studio's design portfolio, including office, life science, mass timber and interior architecture.

She has collaborated in the design of award-winning buildings nationally and internationally such as 2+U in Seattle, Washington, 1144 in Denver, Colorado, and the ATCO Commercial Centre in Calgary, Canada.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Completing 2+U, a 38-story tower in Seattle, Washington. Through a collaboration with the design team and the contractor, we achieved an incredible feat of engineering to lift the building 85 feet above the street to create publicly accessible open space for the community.

How are you involved in the community?

I have served as a mentor and team leader with ACE (a national mentorship organization for high school students interested in architecture, construction and engineering) for many years, and as an advocate for women in architecture through my role as a co-chair on the American Institute of Architects (AIA) CT Women in Architecture Committee.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I love to cook. I'm a big foodie and enjoy experimenting by adding new flavors to my repertoire. I also love to draw.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Named the youngest and first female principal within the studio.
- Collaborated on the design of large-scale, award-winning projects nationally and internationally.
- I have served on the AIA Women in Architecture committee as a volunteer and co-chair to advocate for and recognize female architects in Connecticut.

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Pickard Chilton is a global architecture studio that designs innovative buildings and transformative environments that deliver value and inspire community.

Pickard Chilton is proud to recognize all **40 UNDER FORTY** recipients, including our own, **ADRIENNE NELSON AIA, IIDA**, Principal at Pickard Chilton Architects.

www.pickardchilton.com



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Brianne Nichols

Director of Retail/Specialty/Ambulatory
Pharmacy at Hartford HealthCare

Dedicated to quality and equity for all

Hartford HealthCare congratulates our own Brianne Nichols named as a recipient of the Hartford Business Journal's 40 Under Forty awards.

Brianne is currently the Director of Retail/Specialty/Ambulatory Pharmacy for Hartford HealthCare, where she helps to ensure affordable and accessible medications and life-saving therapies for all of our patients in a hospital setting and in all of the communities we serve.

Congratulations, Brianne!





Brianne Nichols

AGE: 37
COMPANY: Hartford HealthCare
TITLE: Director of Retail/Specialty/
 Ambulatory Pharmacy
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 10
WHERE I LIVE: Andover
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: Massachusetts College of
 Pharmacy and Health Sciences
HIGHEST DEGREE: Pharmacy Doctorate, MCPHS

Brianne Nichols started as a retail and hospital pharmacist who went into leadership and now oversees three pharmacy divisions. She has used her strong leadership skills to start and grow several key pharmacy programs.

The specialty pharmacy started with five employees (including herself) and now employs over 30. She has helped change Connecticut pharmacy law to expand pharmacy practice, using pharmacists to counsel patients and monitor their medications. She has also extended organizational

community benefit programs.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to spend time with family, friends and my lovable pit bull, Roxy. I enjoy being outside, especially in the warm weather. My activities include exercising, running, biking and kayaking. I also play pool competitively and recently began boating in the south.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Passionate and determined leader focused on staff communication and inclusion with decisions. Consistently deliver employee workgroup engagement scores in the top 5% to 10% across HHC.
- Increasing the HHC Specialty program revenue between 2017 through 2023 by 1,100% and growing.
- Instrumental in legislative changes allowing pharmacists to practice at the top of their license and growing the ambulatory pharmacy program. This change gives patients more access to a dedicated pharmacist for additional support.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Starting and rapidly developing the Hartford HealthCare Specialty pharmacy program is my most significant achievement. We use liaisons to help patients navigate insurance and financial assistance, and give direct access to a pharmacist for medication education and monitoring.



Michelle Nicholson

AGE: 39
COMPANY: The Flour Girl Bakery
TITLE: Founder/Owner
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 5
WHERE I LIVE: Hebron
WHERE I WORK: Hebron
COLLEGE: Salve Regina University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Business Administration, Salve Regina University

Michelle Nicholson founded The Flour Girl Bakery, located in Hebron. In 2019, after teaching herself to make sour-dough bread, Nicholson began a cottage food bakery in January 2020.

Her business exploded during the pandemic, and it is now a three-building campus on Main Street in Hebron with almost 50 employees. Her fourth building is set to open before the end of the year.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Watching my business grow is amazing,

but experiencing my staff's unwavering loyalty and dedication to my business and my dream is by far my biggest accomplishment. I can't think of anything to be more proud of than the team I have around me.

How are you involved in the community?

At The Flour Girl we pride ourselves on our community giveback, almost 100% of our marketing budget is spent on community partnerships. We do everything from sponsor T-ball teams to hosting events to donating thousands in raffle prizes. We believe if we support our community, they will support us back.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I have a husband and three kids that occupy my time outside of work. We enjoy rock climbing together, and on my own time, I love to paddle board with my dog.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Have grown my company from a front porch hobby to a successful business.
- Have had a hand in changing the landscape of our historic downtown in Hebron.
- Have been given the opportunity to serve on several boards, allowing me to impact change and community efforts in a variety of causes.

Fun Fact

My business started with a bag of flour, wild grapes from my backyard and a Facebook group.

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Romika Odedra-Roma

AGE: 38
COMPANY: PeoplesBank
TITLE: Vice President, Regional Manager
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 3
WHERE I LIVE: Westbrook
WHERE I WORK: CT Market
COLLEGE: Central Connecticut State University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Criminal Justice and two years completion of Connecticut School Finance & Management

In her role as a VP regional manager for PeoplesBank, Romika Odedra-Roma leads the Connecticut branch network and is responsible for sales and operations. She has grown the team from four to 26 associates.

Odedra-Roma is passionate about small businesses and community involvement. She leads her team to focus on developing and contributing to the community.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Over the last three years, I have led the expansion of the Connecticut market to six banking centers, which has resulted in record-breaking sales and deposit growth.

How are you involved in the community?

I am a board member of the West Hartford Chamber and committee co-chair for the business resource committee. I am a board member of the Betty Knox Foundation. I also serve as a treasurer for the Salvation Army Hartford.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy traveling and spending time with my lovely family. My daughter and I enjoy our shopping time.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- My involvement and dedication in the community I work and serve in. I am on three different nonprofit boards and two committees. I serve to help small businesses grow in the community.
- Over the last three years, I have led PeoplesBank's CT market expansion to six banking centers.
- I have also helped lead record-breaking sales and deposit growth in the CT market.

Fun Fact

I speak five different languages.



Jennifer A. Pedevillano

AGE: 38
COMPANY: Halloran Sage
TITLE: Partner
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 13
WHERE I LIVE: Guilford
WHERE I WORK: New Haven
COLLEGE: DeSales University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Juris Doctor, Quinnipiac University School of Law

Jen Pedevillano is an experienced litigator concentrating on complex commercial and corporate litigation matters and labor and employment disputes.

She has successfully litigated a number of cases, both in arbitration and court. Pedevillano regularly presents at local, regional and international seminars. One of the youngest partners at Halloran Sage, she serves as the chair of the associates committee, co-chair of the Women's Legal Network, and was elected to the firm's management committee.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I advocated for flexible policies and led others by example, demonstrating that it is more than possible to be a successful attorney, firm leader and parent. When COVID changed the practice of law, I shared with others how to use technology to advocate efficiently and effectively on behalf of clients.

How are you involved in the community?

I mentor both associates and summer associates. I also mentored a high school student through the Marian Work Study Program at Kolbe Cathedral High School during the 2023-2024 academic year, and am doing so again this year. I also coach my son's basketball team and chaperone school field trips.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Coordinated the firm's first diversity survey, mentor associates, co-chair the Women's Legal Network and advocate for work-life balance to better the mental health of attorneys.
- Was named a partner at Halloran Sage at the age of 33, and was named chair of the associates committee and elected to the Management Committee.
- I am the program chair of ALFA International's Business Litigation Practice Group.



Martha Prou

AGE: 38
COMPANY: Phoenix Manufacturing Inc.
TITLE: Vice President, Administration & Compliance
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 14
WHERE I LIVE: Bloomfield
WHERE I WORK: Enfield
COLLEGE: Johns Hopkins University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

Martha Prou serves as vice president at Phoenix Manufacturing Inc., a privately held, woman-owned aerospace component manufacturer in Enfield. Prou originally intended a career in Washington, D. C., but the unexpected passing of her father and Phoenix Manufacturing's founder, Lech Paluch, in 2009, accelerated her return to the family business.

Since her return in 2010, she has worked in various roles to learn the ins and outs of the business. Looking forward, Prou and her brother, Peter Paluch, will serve as second-generation ownership with a strategic

vision for the future.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Spending the last 14 years at Phoenix Manufacturing Inc., I have grown under the wing of my mother and mentor, Krystyna Paluch (CEO), turning the business into a formidable force recognized by the industry.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Outside of work, I am family-oriented and enjoy spending time with my husband and daughters (ages 8 and 10). As a family, we enjoy traveling and skiing. I also enjoy running outside, Peloton workouts, and am learning to play golf.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Honor of nomination: Appreciation for the recognition of a colleague who sought acknowledgment of my commitment to bettering our company, community and industry.
- Commitment to business in Connecticut: Dedicated to running, sustaining and growing the family business in Connecticut's Aerospace Alley.
- Workforce development: Phoenix Manufacturing frequently participates in industry initiatives to support workforce development such as hosting student tours of its facility and partnering with local secondary and post-secondary schools to hire students for internships.



Michelle Rakebrand

AGE: 35
COMPANY: ConnectiCare
TITLE: Assistant Vice President, Government Affairs
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 4
WHERE I LIVE: Farmington
WHERE I WORK: Farmington
COLLEGE: Fairfield University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Juris Doctor, Pace University School of Law

Michelle Rakebrand is currently the assistant vice president of government affairs at ConnectiCare, and for the EmblemHealth Family of Companies. After graduating from law school and briefly practicing law, she decided to pursue a career in government affairs.

Rakebrand worked in the public sector as an attorney for the U.S. House of Representatives and the Legislative Commissioners' Office in Hartford. She also worked at the state's largest

business association before taking the position at ConnectiCare.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I did not set out to work in government affairs. After only a few years of practicing family law, I decided to try something new. Breaking into a different industry that was public-facing and required subject-matter expertise was challenging, but it was also one of my biggest accomplishments.

How are you involved in the community?

ConnectiCare takes great pride in being the only local health insurance carrier in the state. I often engage in community service projects with my colleagues at ConnectiCare, including Habitat for Humanity, Foodshare and Yoga in our City.

What do you do outside of work?

When I am not at the Capitol building, I can be found in the backyard with my husband attempting to make pizzas (and often impromptu calzones) with our commercial-grade pizza oven.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Represents one of the largest not-for-profit health plans in the country.
- Leads external coalition-building efforts for the company.
- Mentors students interested in law school who want to pursue an alternative legal career.

Congratulations!

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Elizabeth P. Retersdorf

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Elizabeth Retersdorf

AGE: 39
 COMPANY: Day Pitney LLP
 TITLE: Partner
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 11
 Where I live: Avon
 WHERE I WORK: Hartford
 COLLEGE: Rice University
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Juris Doctor, Yale Law School

Elizabeth Retersdorf is a partner at Day Pitney LLP. She is a strong litigator, representing her clients in insurance coverage disputes and reinsurance disputes both in court and arbitration.

However, she does not stop there — she has a practice representing and advising clients on insurance-related regulatory matters, including domestic acquisitions and compliance issues. Retersdorf has established herself as the go-to counsel for assisting clients with “Form A” applications to acquire insurance companies in Connecticut.

What’s been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment is making partner at Day Pitney while being an active mother and wife with two small children. I dedicate myself fully to every task and challenge in front of me, and I am very proud to have accomplished a balanced life with professional success.

How are you involved in the community?

I am involved in the community through my children. I love being a “soccer mom” and getting to meet and interact with other parents who balance professional and home lives.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Was named partner at Day Pitney LLP as a mother of two young children.
- Run a unique type of legal practice in both insurance litigation and regulatory work.
- Established myself as the go-to regulatory counsel for holding company system filings, pioneering a procedural mechanism for addressing competitively sensitive information with the Connecticut Insurance Department.

What do you like to do outside of work?

My family and I go on hikes, specifically, ones with rock scrambles for my kids (and really, me) to climb over. I love a good puzzle or book, but I have to be careful because I will not go to sleep until it is done. My husband and I always enjoy a good laugh at the UK show “Taskmasters.”



Erick Russell

AGE: 35
 COMPANY: Office of the Treasurer
 TITLE: Connecticut State Treasurer
 NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 2
 WHERE I LIVE: New Haven
 WHERE I WORK: Hartford
 COLLEGE: University of New Haven
 HIGHEST DEGREE: Juris Doctor, UConn Law

Erick Russell is in his first term as Connecticut’s state treasurer. A graduate of the University of New Haven and UConn Law, as treasurer, Russell has committed to sound and ethical pension fund management, prioritizing financial literacy and making long-term investments to promote economic strength and opportunity.

He resides in New Haven with his husband, Christopher Lyddy. Russell is the first Black out LGBTQ+ person to win an election for statewide office in

American history.

What’s been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

The Treasurer’s Office is playing an important role in Connecticut’s economic resurgence, building a stronger and more inclusive future for the state. In 2023, we launched the first-of-its-kind CT Baby Bonds initiative that will invest directly in the future of tens of thousands of Connecticut children.

How are you involved in the community?

As treasurer, I’m fortunate to spend a lot of my time in communities across the state explaining how our work impacts people’s everyday lives, including lowering long-term costs and helping families save for college. It’s my mission to get people excited to participate in shaping our collective future.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Launched CT Baby Bonds, a first-in-the-nation program to combat systemic poverty and create economic opportunities for a generation of Connecticut children.
- Initiated reforms to the state’s pension fund management to recruit and retain talent and maximize investment returns.
- Involved and active mentor for young people, particularly Black and LGBTQ+ kids.

Robinson+Cole



Taylor A. Shea

Taylor’s dedication to serving her clients, her colleagues and her community exemplify the highest values and traditions of the legal profession. We are proud of her accomplishments and congratulate all of the 2024 40 Under Forty honorees.

Contact: Keisha S. Palmer | kpalmer@rc.com | 860.275.8392

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Taylor Shea is a partner at Robinson+Cole. She represents clients in a wide range of finance transactions, as well as general corporate and commercial matters.

Her clients include borrowers, banks, funds, SBICs and other lenders. She also has a special niche in the precious metal industry, where she represents lenders and commercial users in precious metal and base metal consignments.

In addition to her robust finance practice, Shea regularly represents clients on general

corporate and commercial matters, focusing on corporate counseling and commercial contracting in the manufacturing industry.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I made partner at an AmLaw 200 law firm in nine years, and rose to co-chair of the firm's finance practice group three years later. I've been fortunate to spend my entire legal career at Robinson+Cole and have benefitted immensely from the collaborative and supportive culture of the firm.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Co-chair of the finance practice group of an AmLaw 200 law firm.
- Dedicated to serving my community, with a particular focus on ending homelessness and empowering women.
- Selected as a Rising Star in the Connecticut Super Lawyers list from 2018 to 2023, recognized as a New Leader in the Law by the Connecticut Law Tribune in 2020, and was awarded the "Americas Rising Dealmaker Award" by M&A Atlas in 2024.

How are you involved in the community?

I joined the board of My Sister's Place Inc. (MSP) in 2014, and was vice chair when MSP merged with Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp. I was instrumental in joining these two incredibly important organizations.



Natalia Sieira Millán serves as partner at Shipman & Goodwin LLP in its school law practice group.

She represents local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers and charter schools in all areas of school law, including freedom of information hearings, policy development, student disciplinary matters, personnel issues including employee disciplinary matters, investigations, collective bargaining with certified and non-certified bargaining units and all other legal proceedings involving educational entities.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment has been finding a practice that I love. Before joining Shipman & Goodwin in 2018, I always knew I loved the law but had not found my home. Being a school lawyer has become the most enriching experience of my professional life.

How are you involved in the community?

I have volunteered with the Family & Children's Agency (FCA) for several years and served on its Junior Board of Advisors for 11 years. In my free time, I also regularly volunteer at local organizations and shelters in Connecticut.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- My commitment to my clients and to providing practical and timely advice is of utmost importance to me.
- I am passionate about my community and care deeply about improving people's lives.
- My love and respect for the law is ever-present in my life.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I love spending time with my family and friends. In the warmer months, we spend most of our time outdoors, hiking, on the boat or at the beach. In the winter months, we spend most of our time cooking and finding excuses to get together and laugh.

Deloitte.



Leadership that inspires

Deloitte celebrates those in our community who think boldly and dream bigger.

We are proud to congratulate the winners of Hartford Business Journal's 40 Under Forty Awards, including our own, **Christina Siena**, Partner, Deloitte & Touche LLP.

www.deloitte.com

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Christina Siena is an audit and assurance partner at Deloitte & Touche LLP with 16 years of experience serving public and private clients within Deloitte's financial services practice.

She specializes in providing the insurance industry technical accounting, regulatory reporting and advisory services. Siena is also a leader in Deloitte's sustainability efforts with clients and employees.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

Becoming an audit partner at Deloitte was the most significant milestone in my career so far. I was also in the 2020 class of Deloitte's elite fellowship program consisting of 24 high-performing managers across the U.S. developing recommendations for sustainability initiatives, which were presented to the Deloitte U.S. executive committee.

How are you involved in the community?

I have been involved with Junior Achievement for over 15 years, overseeing over 30 Deloitte volunteers per year to lead programs building financial literacy in students. I also participated on the young professional advisory board for the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford, offering feedback on strategies, goals and programs.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- My demonstrated leadership in delivering exceptional client service through high-quality audits and industry knowledge and insights.
- My commitment to supporting childhood development programs to build a brighter future for all children.
- Strong role model for working parents in the public accounting industry on balancing family and career goals.



Shruti Singh

AGE: 37
COMPANY: Webster Bank
TITLE: Managing Director, Service Delivery
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 6.5
WHERE I LIVE: Simsbury
WHERE I WORK: Southington
COLLEGE: Chhattisgarh Swami Vivekanand Technical University, India
Highest degree: Bachelor's of Engineering

Shruti Singh is the managing director of service delivery at Webster Bank, a commercial bank that delivers financial solutions to businesses, individuals, families and partners.

Singh oversees the development and execution of IT strategies so that banking operations remain functional at over 190 banking centers, the modernization of the bank's technology stack for 4,000 colleagues, and ensures the integrity and security of Webster technology.

How are you involved in the community?

I am very active in the community, especially as it relates to bridging cultural divides and generating interest in STEM. Currently, I am a volunteer with HindiUSA where I provide Hindi language lessons to children under the age of 10 so they can begin to communicate with their family members in India, particularly grandparents, who are not fluent in English. I also provide science and math workshops at my local community center to encourage the next generation of the workforce to take an interest in a STEM career.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my family, exploring local parks and cooking traditional Indian dishes. I also engage in community events, volunteer at cultural organizations and stay connected with friends and family through video calls. It's a balance of relaxation and cultural connection.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Restructured and modernized the Webster IT team, allowing it to successfully scale as the bank grew.
- A strong advocate for diversity in STEM, my team is over half women!
- I'm a culture champion, constantly celebrating different cultures and opening the minds of those around me.

Fun Fact

I'm an Indian immigrant IT leader who blends Chai breaks with cutting-edge tech innovation.



Alexander Sulpasso

AGE: 37
COMPANY: GSB
TITLE: Executive Vice President, Client Experience Officer
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 8
WHERE I LIVE: Guilford
WHERE I WORK: Guilford
COLLEGE: Southern Connecticut State University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Political Science, SCSU

As the Executive Vice President, Client Experience Officer, Alex Sulpasso has the privilege of reshaping and re-imagining the retail banking, business banking, call center/engagement center and digital banking divisions to deliver industry-leading solutions that exceed client expectations.

With a strong focus on digital transformation, Sulpasso aims to implement cutting-edge technologies that streamline processes and improve overall client satisfaction. To achieve this, he will explore opportunities to leverage emerging

technologies to create seamless and personalized experiences for our clients.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment so far is leading the digital transformation efforts at GSB. Over the last several years, we have updated systems, deployed technology and improved our client delivery. This has led to the continued growth of our bank, improved employee engagement and meaningful connections with our clients.

As a result of these efforts, I was invited to present our journey at a national banking conference.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- My commitment to my family, personal growth and professional development has allowed me to make a positive impact on the organization where I work.
- I am dedicated to the communities where I live and work throughout Connecticut. This includes volunteering for my kids' after-school activities, affordable housing organizations, small business groups and more.
- I am involved in philanthropy and help lead organizational efforts that direct grant funds to support a wide variety of community service organizations.

Fun Fact

I have really improved my golf game over the last few years ... I just let others win.



Congratulations Shruti Singh

A Hartford Business Journal
40 Under Forty honoree

We applaud your leadership and commitment to better serve our clients every day.

Congratulations to all this year's outstanding honorees.



Shruti Singh
Managing Director, Service Delivery

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GSB Congratulates Alex Sulpasso on his 40 Under 40 Award!



Alex embodies our bank's commitment to serving each other, lifting our community and innovating and enhancing our client experience.



Congratulations to all the nominees.

2024 | 40 UNDER FORTY



Nicole Warren

AGE: 38
COMPANY: WTNH News 8
TITLE: Assistant News Director
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 7
WHERE I LIVE: Glastonbury
WHERE I WORK: Hartford/New Haven
COLLEGE: Providence College
HIGHEST DEGREE: MBA, Isenberg School of Management UMASS Amherst

Nicole Warren is the assistant news director at WTNH/News 8. Her passion and drive equip her to execute a united content strategy for a team of 70-plus journalists daily.

Warren's editorial leadership helped propel broadcast ratings to historic heights in 2024. She utilizes research and industry trends to enhance engagement and viewer retention across multiple platforms, resulting in nearly 70 million page and video views on WTNH.com in 2023.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

WTNH News was honored with nine Emmy nominations by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Additionally, WTNH news at 6 p.m. cemented its first-place lead while becoming the most-watched newscast in Connecticut.

How are you involved in the community?

My broadcast vision and expertise help raise thousands of dollars each year at local telethons and blood drives for organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army. I have also spearheaded coverage of dozens of political debates and town halls highlighting key issues, including education and health.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I am a mom to my 4- and 6-year-old kiddos and am engaged in their school and sports programs. I also like early morning workouts with friends, and family beach days with my husband and kids.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Consistent strong leadership aimed at creating a positive, nurturing work environment and mentorship.
- Superior organization skills and the ability to multitask in a fast-paced environment.
- Ratings growth at both News 8 and Fox 61 under my direct leadership.



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Whittlesey congratulates our own
Tom Wood
and all the Hartford Business Journal
40 Under Forty Class of 2024 recipients.

Tom's commitment to our clients has helped them successfully navigate compliance, economic, and technological changes to see a better future.

280 Trumbull St, 24th Floor, Hartford, CT 06103
860.522.3111 | www.WAdvising.com



Thomas Wood

AGE: 39
COMPANY: Whittlesey PC
TITLE: Assurance Manager
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 20
WHERE I LIVE: Avon
WHERE I WORK: Hartford
COLLEGE: Bentley University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Master's in Accounting, Bentley University

Tom Wood, CPA, is an assurance manager at Whittlesey, overseeing audit and advisory engagements for nonprofits and foundations. He started his career at Whittlesey as an intern and joined full-time after completing his master's degree.

Wood is a key player in the firm's nonprofit business development and thought leadership initiatives. He helps clients identify funding sources, navigate regulations, improve operations and plan leadership transitions. He is a

valuable contributor to staff development and training, a formal and informal coach to dozens of individuals, and is a member of the interview committee and the firm's leadership program.

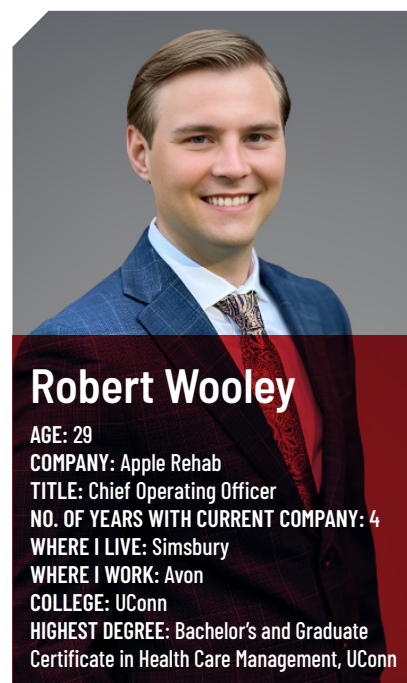
What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

I took over scheduling early in my career, initially managing it through a manual Excel workbook. As the firm grew, I helped to transition to a more powerful scheduling software, recognizing the need for a more robust solution.

This software automated many manual tasks, reduced scheduling conflicts and allowed for better resource allocation. Consequently, the firm saw significant improvements in efficiency, timely project completion and overall client satisfaction.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I have become a trusted advisor to countless nonprofit organizations. I am actively involved with my clients and community and work tirelessly to help my clients meet their strategic goals and further their mission.
- I have helped to grow the nonprofit niche by presenting various webinars for the firm.
- I have mentored and coached numerous team members in their careers.



Robert Wooley

AGE: 29
COMPANY: Apple Rehab
TITLE: Chief Operating Officer
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 4
WHERE I LIVE: Simsbury
WHERE I WORK: Avon
COLLEGE: UConn
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's and Graduate Certificate in Health Care Management, UConn

Robert Wooley is the chief operating officer of Apple Rehab, managing 20 skilled nursing facilities, 2,500 employees and 1,600 residents. At age 26, he co-founded Nurses at Home, a home health agency, serving around 100 seniors daily.

Wooley started his career working full-time in senior care while a full-time student at UConn. He later became one of the youngest administrators of a skilled nursing facility in Connecticut, quickly growing to be a regional

operator and recognized nationally as a future leader of long-term care.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My biggest professional accomplishment was leading on the front lines as an administrator throughout the pandemic. Supporting residents, family members and my team during this challenging time was a profound experience that contributed significantly to my professional and personal growth.

How are you involved in the community?

I am a co-founder and volunteer for Senior Care Young Professionals (SCYP), a group that aims to draw young professionals to the senior care sector and facilitate meaningful connections among peers to reduce burnout.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I was recently blessed with the birth of a daughter, so most of my free time goes there! But when I do get a chance, I love to spend some quiet time fishing and golfing.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- Lead operations of one of the largest skilled nursing companies in Connecticut.
- Co-founded a home health agency that reached profitability in 12 months.
- Was formally recognized as a "Future Leader of Long-term Care in America."



Sheri Yuschak

AGE: 36
COMPANY: Goodroot LLC
TITLE: Vice President and Controller
NO. OF YEARS WITH CURRENT COMPANY: 4
WHERE I LIVE: Bristol
WHERE I WORK: Collinsville
COLLEGE: Western Connecticut State University
HIGHEST DEGREE: Bachelor's in Business Management, WCSU

Sheri Yuschak, vice president and controller at Goodroot, boasts over 15 years in finance, steering all accounting operations and risk mitigation for the company and its affiliates.

She has successfully integrated financial protocols post-merger, transitioning entities to public status within a month. In addition to her role at Goodroot, she serves as treasurer for the Connecticut Technology Council. Her leadership has directly supported entrepreneurial growth and sustained financial health across multiple business sectors.

What's been your biggest professional accomplishment so far in your career?

My most significant professional achievement is receiving Goodroot's Mentorship Award. Recognized through peer and leadership nominations, this accolade affirms my daily impact as a role model in finance and my commitment to fostering success across our community of businesses.

Why do you deserve to be a 40 Under Forty?

- I helped lead an efficient merger of a private company into a public corporation within a month, cutting the close cycle by 10 days and establishing robust accounting policies.
- I developed and standardized financial, human resources and business processes across numerous Goodroot affiliates, setting benchmarks now adopted as templates by our expanding network.
- I earned two promotions in three years, gaining recognition through the mentorship award at Goodroot and the emerging executive award at Hubbell Inc.

How are you involved in the community?

I am a member of the Connecticut Technology Council's (CTC) executive committee, a nonprofit that harbors technology businesses by creating a platform for sharing ideas and resources and granting scholarships. I play an active role in managing the finances for all of CTC's activities, including the annual Women of Innovation Awards.

Goodroot is proud to congratulate

Sheri Yuschak
VP, Controller



On being honored as one of
Hartford Business Journal's
40 Under 40!

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