

## 2010 EXCELLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP NOMINEE PROFILES

**Mitch-Stuart, Inc., Laguna Niguel***Michelle Cohen, President*

Mitch-Stuart, Inc. president Michelle Cohen is an entrepreneur with a truly altruistic vision; her company has pioneered several programs in the travel industry that have helped nonprofit organizations raise almost a billion dollars in revenue since 1994.

Mitch-Stuart's clients include the United Way, American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, Boy Scouts of America, Rotary Clubs, Boys & Girls Clubs and Salvation Army. The organization works locally with CHOC Foundation for Children, Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation, Anaheim Memorial Medical Foundation, Orange County Museum of Art, Temple Bat Yahm, Heritage Pointe, Coastline College Community Foundation and Orange County Coastkeeper.

Cohen is a recognized speaker at numerous national conventions and is a member of Association of Fundraising Professionals both locally and nationally.

**Moxxe Public Relations, Laguna Beach***Mona Shah, Owner*

As a one-woman operation, Mona Shah has her hands full with multiple clients—and yet she manages to give them all equal attention. But what really sets her apart as an entrepreneur is her acumen for social media, which serves her clients with tremendous dollops of free advertising. Her social media skills have put her in high demand lately as a growing list of clients have reached out to her to manage their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts.

Shah's client list is impressive. Currently she represents The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar, Lucca Cafe, SOL Coccina, Prego Ristorante, Don the Beachcomber, American Career College, West Coast University, Daddy Cakes, Food Power, and the Orange County Restaurant Association.

**Netlist, Irvine***Chuck Hong, CEO*

Led by CEO and co-founder Chuck Hong, Netlist started out designing and manufacturing custom memory and in late 2006 went public. Shortly thereafter, Hong found that expectations for the entire semiconductor industry were out of whack. When Vista floundered, prices in the memory market dove along with it. At the same time, Netlist found competition from companies based in other countries increasing. Faced with heavy losses and impossible market conditions, Hong cut general expenses, lowered operating costs and invested \$10 million in research and development, the result of which ultimately changed the focus of Netlist. His vision also led to two entirely new lines of chip products called HyperCloud and NetVault. HyperCloud, when introduced in November 2009, captured investors by storm—millions of shares traded each day for a week and the stock price shot up to almost \$8, even before the chips had been tested by potential customers.

**OC Restaurant Association, Inc., Aliso Viejo***Pamela Waitt, President/Founder*

A mother of two and the president and founder of OC Restaurant Association, Inc., Pamela Waitt is at the helm of the organization that has brought us Orange County Restaurant Week, Happy Hour Week, and Kid's Restaurant Week. Passionate about Orange County's dining scene, Waitt strives to create fun and innovative events that appeal to a wide variety of consumers.

Waitt's involvement within the local restaurant industry has opened several doors for her—she relishes having been given the opportunity to sit on the board at Share Our Selves (S.O.S.), a locally based nonprofit that aims to provide free assistance to those in need of basic living essentials.

**Olenicoff & Zinser, PC, Irvine***Kelly Zinser, Attorney/President*

Kelly Zinser started her law firm just four months after giving birth in 2008 amid the worst stretch of the economic downturn. Her tireless work ethic, attention to detail and compassionate approach to client service have allowed her to build a successful practice not only in a very short amount of time, but in spite of less than desirable circumstances. Zinser's practice focuses on consumer bankruptcy, estate planning and probate. She assists those facing financial difficulties and harassing calls from creditors, enabling them to embark on a fresh start. She approaches each client individually and helps them determine their best course of action, which may or may not include bankruptcy.

**Option Investments, Inc. (OpVest), Irvine***Scott Altenburg, CEO*

In 1989, Scott Altenburg started his first business, a mobile restaurant, which helped pay for his college education. In the early 1990s, he began working 100-plus hours a week as a broker's assistant and a waiter. Eventually, he became a top broker and sales manager at multiple firms.

In 1999 he started his own firm, Summit Financial Services, with his wife Jennifer, who in

2001 left to raise the family. Altenburg then brought in Andre Julian as CFO to help him build the company. Summit ultimately became Option Investments, Inc. (OpVest).

Since opening its doors, OpVest has traded over half a million option contracts and grown tremendously, employing more than 60 today. The company has received numerous accolades, including a spot on the Business Journal's 2009 Fast-Growing Private Companies List and being named one of INC 500/5000's Top 100 Financial Companies.

Altenburg and OpVest currently donate to multiple causes, including local charity, Project Access and the Special Olympics.

**O'Quinn Clothing, Huntington Beach***Dean Quinn, President/Creative Director*

At the age of 16 Dean Quinn became one of the hottest up-and-coming surfers in the region—soon after, he found himself getting paid for his passion. Worried that a career as a pro surfer wouldn't last forever, he began working for some now-defunct surf brands, including Team Gear and Gotcha. In the summer of 1994, Bob Hurley (then the licensee of Billabong America) asked Quinn to join their sales team, and he accepted the offer; four years later, Hurley asked Quinn to join him as the VP of sales for Hurley, his new brand. Quinn leveraged this impressive experience to launch O'Quinn clothing in 2007. The Huntington Beach-based lifestyle brand has become well known among trendsetters, athletes and celebrities for its unique fits and impeccable attention to detail.

Today, O'Quinn is a premium surf lifestyle brand selling to more than 150 accounts worldwide with estimated annual sales between \$5 million and \$7 million.

**Pacific Pharmacy Group, Mission Viejo***Tom Pascoe, CEO**Scott Tyree, COO*

Tom Pascoe and Scott Tyree founded Pacific Pharmacy Group in 2006, working together to implement their business plan of acquiring and opening successful, independent community pharmacies.

With Tyree's wealth of operational know-how and industry contacts and Pascoe's expertise in raising capital and leading high-growth companies, the two were able to concurrently raise nearly \$4 million to start Pacific Pharmacy Group while completing its first three acquisitions in 2007. They have demonstrated the foresight and flexibility that are calling cards of the true entrepreneur, adapting their business strategy and moving quickly to take advantage of new opportunities. Together, they have grown Pacific Pharmacy Group to nine locations with more than \$30 million in revenue.

**Palo Capital, Newport Beach***Kevin O'Grady, President & Chief Investment Officer*

Palo Capital is an SEC-registered investment advisor that manages investments for individuals and non-profits. Founded in 2005, the company's mission is to deliver investment results that regularly and significantly outperform market averages. Assets under management have increased by more than 100% in the last year.

Palo Capital's strong investment returns have benefited from O'Grady's unique background which includes training in economics, medicine, and business, and hands-on experience running healthcare and tech companies. Not many investment managers have been CFO for a semiconductor company.

Client assets are invested based on Palo's in-house, research-intensive investment process. Virtually every stock placed in any client account is owned by Palo's principals. All assets are custodied at Charles Schwab.

**Paragon Software Group, Irvine***Tom Fedro, President & CEO*

Fedro co-founded Paragon Software Group in June 2008 to provide disaster recovery and server optimization software and services to small business and mid-enterprise clients, and also to deliver a unique portfolio of file system drivers to large technology manufacturers and OEMs. Over the past 20 months, the company has become a true tech success story; in the midst of a struggling economy Fedro has navigated the business to profitability and cash flow-positive status, growing it from a startup to a powerhouse with millions in revenue—all the while building up its local team with nothing but the strongest talent in Orange County. To accommodate its rapid growth, Paragon is moving into its new headquarters this year and is poised to double revenues in 2010.

**Passco Companies LLC, Irvine***Bill Passo, Founder/CEO/Chairman of the Board of Directors*

Bill Passo, CEO of Passco Companies, LLC, has directed the formation of more than 100 private and public limited liability companies and limited partnerships along with the acquisition, disposition, entitlement, management and leasing of more than 150 commercial real estate properties valued at approximately \$3 billion since 1978. Touted as the "Pioneer of the Tenant In Common industry" by the New York Times, he is consistently quoted in major real estate, business and financial publications. An engaging public speaker, Passo has participated in