



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

NAWBO Chicago Empowers Women Business Owners Through Community



By Melissa Lagowski NAWBO Chicago Executive Director, Founder & CEO of Big Buzz Idea Group

Women helping women in the business world fosters a culture of equality, diversity and empowerment, which benefits not just female entrepreneurs, but society and the economy at large. At the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) Chicago Chapter, the mission is to propel women entrepreneurs into economic, social and political spheres of power worldwide. And every step taken to achieve that vision is reflected in the data.

According to NAWBO National, more than 14 million businesses are owned by women. Those businesses generate \$2.7 trillion in sales and employ 12

million people.

Angie Noll, NAWBO Chicago President and principal of Reconciled Solutions, said the biggest impact on fellow women business owners simply comes from being encouraging and authentic.

"I have been most inspired by other women business owners who were not afraid to share their flaws and mistakes. Claiming ownership to both our successes and our scars is empowerment in action, we can pay it forward by participating in a safe community like NAWBO Chicago. We are each validated and bolstered in strength by engaging in the heartfelt exchange of both flubs and triumph. This is a heroine's journey," Noll said.

Mastermind groups is a member benefit that provides women business owners the time to connect on a regular basis with the same group of like-minded entrepreneurs. This confidential space is meant to share wins, failures, seek input and new ideas.

NAWBO Chicago member Mary Lawrence, president of Richards Graphic Communications, said creating the type of tightknit community built through a Mastermind allows women to feel support.

"The most rewarding aspect of helping other women succeed in business is the empowerment and sense of community it fosters. When you support another woman in achieving her goals, it's not just about her success — it's about creating a ripple effect that extends to families, communities, and even entire industries," Lawrence said. "When another woman succeeds in business, I think it is a victory for all because it contributes to a broader shift toward equality, representation, and collective progress as a society."

NAWBO Chicago Immediate Past President Cheryl Vargas, founder and creativein-chief of Studio 928, said being in the position of a mentor is especially rewarding.

"One memorable experience I had was at a networking event where I met an inspiring woman navigating her own business journey. I've always believed in the power of collaboration and the importance of sharing resources and opportunities. Each



Photo credit: Victoria McDonald Photography

of us walks a unique path, filled with discoveries and challenges, and it was a true joy to be able to support her in her aspirations," Vargas said. "Witnessing her progress brought a profound sense of fulfillment, knowing that I played a small part in helping her move closer to her dreams. We created a bond through this experience as sister business owners."

NAWBO National is honoring 49 years of impact and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. Secure a seat at the table and join NAWBO Chicago today. Visit nawbo.org/chicago/membership for more information.





NAWBO Chicago is devoted to supporting female CEOs in the growth of their businesses through resource sharing, forging relationships with fellow CEOs and leadership development.

You're invited to join this community of influential women business owners today! Learn more at **nawbochicago.org**.





This program recognizes women in the suburban chicagoland area with strong records of leadership, performance and innovation in their industries plus meaningful community involvement.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS EVENT, EMAIL: SBEVENTS@DAILYHERALD.COM



LORRENE CONINO OWNER SALON LORRENE - PALATINE



Lorrene Conino is a dynamic entrepreneur and the driving force behind Salon Lorrene, a renowned salon and day spa located in Palatine, Illinois. Since founding the salon in 1998, she has transformed it into a premier destination for luxury beauty services. Under her leadership, Salon Lorrene has become synonymous with high-quality care, exceptional service, and personalized experiences that encourage clients to truly "spoil themselves."

Lorrene continues to inspire as a thought leader in the beauty industry, advocating for innovations, education, and the empowerment of the professionals.



ERICA FINE CHIEF ENTHUSIASM OFFICER COLLEGE H.U.N.K.S -HAULING JUNK & MOVING



Erica Fine is the energetic owner, who leads a team of passionate individuals dedicated to delivering top-notch service and an unbeatable customer experience. With a love for business and community, Erica has turned her franchise into a thriving suburban success story.

Erica is committed to making the franchise not just a business, but a pillar in the community. From sponsoring local events to collaborating with countless charities to donate used furniture, Erica's passion to give back makes her a true inspiration to others.



PREETI GULATI CEO KIDDIE ACADEMY



Preeti Gulati, CEO of Kiddie Academy of Arlington Heights has demonstrated exceptional business acumen and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

Preeti embodies the six core values of Kiddie Academy - Integrity, Relationships, Responsibility, Curiosity, Passion, and Impact - in everything she does. Her integrity shines in her unwavering commitment to excellence.

Her ability to foster relationships has built strong, lasting connections within her schools and community. Her passion for education is the foundation of her success.



GREGG-BROOKE KOLENO PARTNER IA BUSINESS ADVISORS



Gregg-Brooke Koleno is a Partner at IA Business Advisors (IA) and Board Member of the Schaumburg Business Association, with over 25 years of expertise in leadership, business strategy, and community engagement.

A passionate advocate for meaningful connections and positive influence, Gregg-Brooke is dedicated to fostering growth and collaboration within her community.

Throughout her career, she has led with intention, inspired others, and nurtured meaningful relationships.



BONNIE LANE
PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT
FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES, LLC



Bonnie Lane is a graduate of National Louis University with a master's degree in developmental psychology, counseling psychology and special education. She is also a certified mediator and domestic violence counselor.

In addition to serving families, Bonnie is active in the community and in advocating for legislation in support of those with mental illness. Twice a month, she hosts a free support group for families and also runs a "boot camp" for families whose children are heading for college with a mental illness.

Families and loved ones are grateful for all she does.



JESSICA MEDRANO OWNER RJ O'NEIL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS



Jessica Medrano is a dedicated and passionate leader and owner of RJ O'Neil Mechanical Contractors. Her journey into the construction industry began while attending Waubonsee Community College, where the constant buzz of construction around her sparked an enduring curiosity.

Under Jessica's ownership, the company has grown in reputation and scope, solidifying its status as a reliable provider of essential HVAC-R, Plumbing and Piping services.

Her leadership has been instrumental in ensuring their growth while maintaining a strong focus on customer satisfaction.



JENNIFER PRELL
CEO & FOUNDER
ELDERWERKS EDUCATIONAL SVS.



Jennifer Prell has been working to help others since 2003, when she started her first company, focusing on specialty moves. It was in 2006, after watching families go through huge amounts of stress try to help loved ones, that she began guiding older adults and families navigate senior housing, care, benefits, and supportive services available to them.

As a connector, she has met thousands of people and has built lasting relationships through networking groups, senior programs and eductational groups.

Jennifer has created many companies to help others throughout her career and finds joy in seeing others succeed.



WENDY WHITE EAGLE PRESIDENT TEK PAK, INC



Wendy White Eagle is a transformational leader who oversees the management of capital, financial and operations assets and is the driving force behind the company's corporate governance, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives.

A strong advocate for women in manufacturing, Wendy has spearheaded programs aimed at recruiting and advancing women engineers and leaders within the company.

Wendy remains deeply involved in her community by raising funds for pediatric cancer and K9 officer program.



HELENA TRACHTENBERG PARTNER COOPER - TRACHTENBERG LAW



Helena Trachtenberg is an attorney that has dedicated her professional practice to family law and to guiding couples through the complexities of marital dissolution, family law decision and prenuptial agreements.

She mentors young legal professionals from associates, law clerks and interns within their office. In additon, Helena is routinely appointed by the courts in Cook County and Lake County on behalf of minor children to serve as a Child's Representative and Guardian Ad Litem.

Helena enjoys working with clients and developing strategies tailored to acheive their goals.









Thank you for the honor of being one of this year's Influential Women in Business!

LORRENE CONINO

Congratulations To All The Nominees!



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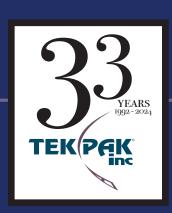






Congratulations to our own
Wendy K. White Eagle, President
of Tek Pak, Inc., on her **2024**Influential Women In Business
Award. While the award is in her
name, Wendy shares this honor
with every Tek Pak employee.

THERE IS NO LONG THE REAL TO T



TOP WOMEN LAWYERS CHICAGO METRO AREA BASED UPON A SURVEY OF THEIR PEERS



These LEADING LAWYERS have been recommended by their peers to be among the TOP LAWYERS in Illinois.

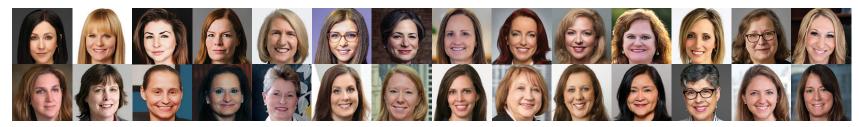
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Annemarie E. Kill	Avery Kill LLC	Chicago	312.648.9707 Employment: Employee; Family
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Rhonda E. de Freitas C-K Law Group of Chicago-Kent Chicago 312.906.043 Family; ADR: Family Kelly A. Coyle Clark Baird Smith LLP Rosemont 847.378.7700 Employment: Management; Labor: Management Jill D. Leka Clark Baird Smith LLP Rosemont 847.378.7700 Labor: Management Margaret A. Sewell Clark Baird Smith LLP Rosemont 847.378.7132 Employment: Management Laura A. Canulli Cogan & Power PC Chicago 312.477.2500 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Transportation Sara M. Davis Cogan & Power PC Chicago 312.477.2500 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Transportation Samantha N. LaFata Cogan & Power PC Chicago 312.477.2500 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice Caroleann S. Gallagher Coogan Gallagher Park Ridge 312.782.7482 Nursing Home Neg; Pl: Gen; Pl: Prof'l Mal; Pl Plaintiff: Prod Liab; Work Comp Michelle M. Kohut Corboy & Demetrio PC Chicago 312.346.3191 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice Tracy Ann Robb Curcio & Casciato Chicago 312.321.1111 Civil Appellate Amy Parise Delaney DDV Law Ltd Orland Park/Arlington Heights 708.675.7144 Elder Jill L. Nicholson Dentons US LLP Chicago 312.876.8000 Bankruptcy/Workout: Commercial; Creditor Rights/Commercial Collections Karen Munoz Dolan Law PC Chicago 312.676.7600 Personal Injury: General Michelle D. Nasser Dowd Bennett LLP Chicago 312.889.7345 Commercial Litigation; Criminal Defense: White Collar; Federal Regulatory Kathryn C. Casey **Dutton Casey & Mesoloras PC** Arlng Hghts/Chi/Naper/Skokie 312.899.0950 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate Helen Mesoloras **Dutton Casey & Mesoloras PC** Arlng Hghts/Chi/Naper/Skokie 312.899.0950 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate Elizabeth I. Reed Elizabeth I Reed Attorney at Law Wheaton 630.752.9256 Family Joanne P. Elliott Elliott & Associates Attorneys PLLC Des Plaines 847.298.8300 Real Estate: Tax Melissa K. Whitley Elliott & Associates Attorneys PLLC Des Plaines 224.220.2366 Real Estate: Tax Sandra M. Emerson **Emerson Law Firm LLC** Oak Park 708.660.9190 Foreclosure Defense: Real Estate: Residential Engler Callaway Baasten & Sraga LLC 630.313.6392 Employment: Management; Labor: Management Abigail C. Rogers Oak Brook Jayme R. Matchinski Epstein Becker & Green PC Chicago 312.499.1430 Health Wendy M. Musielak Esp Kreuzer Cores LLP Wheaton 630.871.1002 Family Janet E. Boyle Family Law Solutions PC Chicago 312.332.1344 Family Brenda H. Feis FeisGoldy LLC Chicago 312.523.2200 Employment: Employee Suzanne Glade Fischel | Kahn Chicago 312.726.0440 Family Mary Kathleen Fitzgerald Fitzgerald Law Group Burr Ridge 312.346.3000 Real Estate: Tax Jennifer M. Fletchall Fletchall Group LLC Chicago 312.803.6965 Family Christina M. Formeller Formeller & Formeller LLP Chicago 312.207.1683 Close/Private Held Business; Commercial Litigation 773.248.9455 Advertising/Media; Arts/Entertainment/Sports; Copyright/Trademark; IP Kimberly White Alcantara Friedman Law Group Ltd Chicago Sara L. Busche Goostree Law Group Saint Charles 630.584.4800 Family Marcee C. Duvall Saint Charles Goostree Law Group 630.584.4800 Family Saint Charles Tricia D. Goostree Goostree Law Group 630.584.4800 Family Ruth A. Bahe-Jachna Greenberg Traurig LLP 312.456.8421 Class Action/Mass Tort Defense; Products Liability Def; Telecommunications Chicago Michael R. Cedillos Greenberg Traurig LLP Chicago 312.456.1062 Banking/Financial Institutions; Comm Lit; Creditor Rights/Comm Collections Gretchen N. Miller Greenberg Traurig LLP Chicago 312.456.6583 Class Action/Mass Tort Defense; Products Liability Defense; Toxic Torts Def Melissa A. Grund Grund & Leavitt PC Chicago 312.640.0500 Family Alyssa Mogul Grund & Leavitt PC Chicago 312.640.0500 Family Laura M. Presto **Grund & Leavitt PC** Chicago 312.640.0500 Family llene E. Shapiro Grund & Leavitt PC Highland Park/Chicago 312.640.0550 Family Elizabeth Davies Shindler Grund & Leavitt PC Chicago 312.640.0500 Family Jennifer Wintroub Stoller Grund & Leavitt PC Chicago 312.640.0500 Family Jody Meyer Yazici Grund & Leavitt PC Highland Park/Chicago 312.640.0500 Family Kirsten M. Dunne **GWC Injury Lawyers LLC** Chicago 312.245.2109 Civil Appellate Autumn K. Leslie **GWC Injury Lawyers LLC** Chicago 312.245.2115 Personal Injury: General Karen A. Hagnell Hagnell Law Offices LLC Chicago 312.445.0545 Tax: Individual; Trust/Will/Estate Pamela J. Kuzniar Haid and Teich LLP Chicago 312.236.0990 Family Kristin G. Bagull Handler Law LLP Chicago 312.641.2100 Tax: Individual; Trust/Will/Estate Nina G. Stillman Handler Law LLP Chicago 312.641.2100 Close/Private Held Business; Employment: Management; Trust/Will/Estate



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Vidmar Nijman Franzetti LLP Chicago 312.596.2362 Energy; Environmental Leslie J. Finebera Nottage and Ward LLP Chicago 312.332.2915 Family Gail M. O'Connor O'Connor Family Law PC Chicago 312.445.0577 Family Elizabeth L. Gracie O'Keefe Lyons & Hynes LLC Chicago 312.422.9159 Real Estate: Tax 312.530.7988 Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Administrative Anita J. Ponder Ponder Diversity Group LLC Chicago Michelle D. Porro Porro Niermann Law Group Aurora 630.264.7300 Workers' Compensation Kathryn L. Conway **Power Rogers** Chicago 312.313.0202 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice Carolyn S. Daley **Power Rogers** Chicago 312.313.0202 Aviation; False Claims Act; Pl: General; Pl: Prof'l Mal; Pl Plaintiff: Prod Liab Kathleen A. Duncan Quarles & Brady LLP Chicago 312.715.5113 Land Use/Zoning/Condemnation; Real Estate: Commercial Jacalyn Birnbaum Reed Centracchio & Associates LLC Chicago 312.500.8344 Family Nicole L. Centracchio Reed Centracchio & Associates LLC Chicago 312.551.1552 Family Clare McMahon Reed Centracchio & Associates LLC Chicago 312.500.8344 Family Regina Picone Etherton Regina P Etherton & Associates LLC Chicago 312.529.5500 Personal Injury: General Danielle L. Rickard Rickard Law LLC Chicago 312.981.5040 Family **Amy Curtner Andrews** Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8756 Commercial Litigation Olivia Luk Bedi Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8765 Copyright/Trademark; Intellectual Property; Patent; TradeSecrets/Unfair Comp Kalia M. Coleman Rilev Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8715 Commercial Litigation: Criminal Defense: White Collar Sarah E. Finch Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8728 Class Action/Mass Tort Defense; Commercial Litigation; School Sondra A. Hemeryck Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8724 Ad/Media; Class Act/Mass Tort Def; Comm Lit; Copyright/Trade; Trade Secrets Hon. Patricia Brown Holmes (Ret.) Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8745 Commercial Litigation; Criminal Defense: White Collar Monique B. Howery Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8742 Commercial Litigation; Copyright/Trademark; Intellectual Property LaVon M. Johns Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8730 Assoc/Non-Profit; Land Use/Zoning; Public Finance; RE: Comm; RE: Finance Abigail L. Peluso Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP Chicago 312.471.8774 Commercial Litigation; Criminal Defense: White Collar Carolina Y. Sales Robbins DiMonte Ltd Chicago/Park Ridge 312.782.9000 Bnkrptcy: Indiv; Bnkrptcy/Wrkt: Comm; Credit Rights; RE: Comm; RE: Finance Stephanie L. Stewart Robinson Stewart Montgomery & Doppke LLC Chicago 312.782.5102 Professional Malpractice Defense Donna F. Hartl Roetzel & Andress LPA Chicago 312.580.1250 Tax: Business; Tax: Individual; Trust/Will/Estate Gina A. DeBoni Romanucci & Blandin LLC Chicago 312.253.8620 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General Stephanie B. Rubin Rubin & Machado Ltd Chicago 224.487.0172 Personal Injury: General Catherine Krenz Doan Rubin Law Group Ltd Chicago 312.899.8333 Workers' Compensation 847.249.1227 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General Tara R. Devine Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC Waukegan Heidi L. Wickstrom Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC Chicago 877.953.9772 Class Action/Mass Tort Plaintiff; Pl: General; Pl Plaintiff: Product Liability



Joan T. Berg Schoenberg Finkel Beederman Bell Glazer LLC Chicago 312.648.2300 Close/Private Held Business; Real Estate: Commercial; Real Estate: Finance Neta Nodelman Schwartz Wolf & Bernstein LLP Riverwoods 847.459.4999 Family Jill Rappin Schwartz Wolf & Bernstein LLP Riverwoods 847.459.4999 Family 312.644.6983 Civil Appellate; PI Defense: General; Products Liability Def; Toxic Torts Def Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney Ltd Chicago Jill M. Felkins Shelley B. Ballard Shelley B Ballard PC Evanston/Chicago 312.316.0912 Adoption/Reproductive Technology Lynne M. Damsma Smith Blake Hill LLC Chicago 312.471.8079 Health; Medical Malpractice Defense Chicago Taylor V. Nora Smith Blake Hill LLC 312.471.8076 Health; Medical Malpractice Defense; Professional Malpractice Defense Speers Reuland & Cibulskis PC 630.264.2626 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General; PI Plaintiff: Product Liab Julie L. Cibulskis Aurora Laura I. Baldwin STG Divorce Law PC Chicago 847.772.7913 Family Juli A. Gumina STG Divorce Law PC Naperville 630.384.8169 Family Abeer H. Zanayed STG Divorce Law PC Naperville 630.384.8168 Family Ann M. Williams Storino Ramello & Durkin Rosemont 847.318.9500 Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Administrative Melissa M. Wolf Storino Ramello & Durkin Rosemont 847.318.9500 Employment: Mngmnt; Gov't/Muni/Lobby/Admin; Land Use/Zoning/Condemn Lindsey S. Strom Strom Yen Injury Attorneys Chicago 312.609.0400 Workers' Compensation Martha Swatek Swatek Bucko Law Group LLC Geneva 630.232.6440 Personal Injury Defense: General Kathryn Kovitz Arnold Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4031 Real Estate: Associations/Condominiums; Real Estate: Commercial Elizabeth E. Babbitt Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4116 Commercial Litigation; Employment: Management Jillian S. Cole Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4019 Commercial Litigation; Creditor Rights/Commercial Collections Kimberly Marie Copp Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4068 Gaming/Casino; Public Finance Heather A. Jackson Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4172 Class Action/Mass Tort Defense; Employment: Management Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP 312.836.4195 Commercial Litigation; Creditor Rights/Commercial Collections Brianna M. Skelly Chicago O. Kate Tragesser Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.840.4326 Gov't/Muni/Lobby/Admin; Land Use/Zoning/Condemnation; Public Finance Kim R. Walberg Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP Chicago 312.836.4164 Commercial Litigation; Gaming/Casino Carlina Tapia-Ruano Tapia-Ruano & Gunn PC Chicago 312.281.4867 Immigration: Employment; Immigration: Individual Laurel G. Bellows The Bellows Law Group PC Chicago 312.332.3340 Commercial Litigation; Employee Benefits; Employment: Employee Ruth I. Major The Law Offices of Ruth I Major PC Chicago 312.893.7544 Employment: Employee Heather A. Begley Tomasik Kotin Kasserman Chicago 312.605.8800 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice Kara E. F. Cenar **UB Greensfelder LLP** Chicago 312.345.5018 Copyright/Trademark; Intellectual Property; Patent; Trade Secret/Unfair Comp Susan Meyer **UB Greensfelder LLP** 312.345.5019 Ad/Media; Copyright/Trademark; Franchise/Dealer; International Bus/Trade Chicago Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel PC Aurora N. Austriaco Chicago 312.238.9061 Commercial Lit; Foreclosure Def; RE: Assoc/Condo; RE: Comm; RE: Resident Lydia A. Bueschel Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel PC Chicago 312.238.9063 Commercial Lit; Creditor Rights/Comm Collect; Employment: Management Erica N. Byrd Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel PC Chicago 312.238.9003 Real Estate: Commercial; Real Estate: Residential Sandy L. Morris Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel PC Chicago 312.238.9545 Commercial Litigation; Employment: Management Susan Valentine Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel PC 312.238.9062 Commercial Litigation; Creditor Rights/Commercial Collections Chicago Rachel T. Copenhaver Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7514 Commercial Litigation; Federal Regulatory Sara B. DeBlaze Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7534 Immigration: Employment Deborah Bielicke Eades Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7661 Securities/Venture Finance Arlene N. Gelman Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7833 Bankruptcy/Workout: Commercial; Creditor Rights/Commercial Collections Vedder Price PC Marie H. Godush Chicago 312.609.7674 Banking/Financial Institutions; Secured Transactions Jennifer Durham King Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7835 Corporate Finance; Securities/Venture Finance Shelby E. Parnes Vedder Price PC Chicago 312.609.7500 Mergers/Acquisitions; Secured Transactions; Securities/Venture Finance Elizabeth Felt Wakeman Wakeman Law Group PC Crystal Lake 815.893.6800 Family Weiss-Kunz & Oliver LLC Elmhurst/Chi/PrkRdg Julie A. Johnson 312.605.4041 Family Appellate; Family Maxine R. Weiss Kunz Weiss-Kunz & Oliver LLC Elmhurst 312.605.4041 Family Kelly A. Cahill Zukowski Rogers Flood & McArdle Crystal Lake 815.459.2050 Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Admin; Land Use/Zoning/Condemnation Jennifer J. Gibson Zukowski Rogers Flood & McArdle Crystal Lake 815.459.2050 Civil Appellate Brandy S. Quance Zukowski Rogers Flood & McArdle Crystal Lake 815.459.2050 Close/Private Held Business; Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Admin Ruth Alderman Schlossberg Zukowski Rogers Flood & McArdle Crystal Lake 815.459.2050 Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Admin; Land Use/Zoning/Condemnation



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Margaret M. O'Donoghue	Ahlgren Law	Chicago	312.782.1804 Immigration: Individual
Lauren E. Dreifus	Amundsen Davis	Chicago	312.894.3200 Commercial Litigation
Lisa M. DeLeon	Anderson Rasor & Partners LLP	Chicago	312.673.7826 Medical Malpractice Defense; Products Liability Defense
Jennie E. Miskell	Anderson Rasor & Partners LLP	Chicago	312.673.7815 Medical Malpractice Defense
Taylor Spooner	Ariano Hardy Ritt Nyuli Richmond Lytle & Goettel	South Elgin	847.695.2400 Family; Real Estate: Residential; Trust/Will/Estate
Samantha R. Donne	Avery Kill LLC	Chicago	312.648.9707 Family
Emily E. Dory	Barnes & Thornburg LLP	Chicago	312.214.5639 Personal Injury Defense: General; Professional Malpractice Defense
Amber M. Parris	BCM Law PC	Chicago	312.334.9496 Workers' Compensation Defense
Amelia A. Schwingle	BCM Law PC	Chicago	312.334.9519 Workers' Compensation Defense
Olga Sheinman	BCM Law PC	Chicago	312.334.9510 Workers' Compensation Defense
Elisheva Bernstein Cohen	Boodell & Domanskis LLC	Chicago	312.300.5502 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Jessica L. Nelson	Bradford & Gordon LLC	Chicago	312.346.6911 Family
Elizabeth Jahn Newman	Bradford & Gordon LLC	Chicago	312.346.6911 Family
Victoria Vaillant	Bradford & Gordon LLC	Chicago	312.346.6911 Family
Chelsy L. VanOvermeiren	Breen & Pugh	Chicago	312.360.1001 Criminal Defense: Felonies/Misdemeanors
Jennifer A. Parks	Camerlingo Parks LLC	Chicago	312.463.4875 Family
Lauren Sanuw Sinico	Campbell Sanuw Law Offices LLC	Western Springs	708.485.4500 Real Estate: Residential; Trust/Will/Estate
Christine A. Barone	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.855.4348 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Ashley C. Coppola	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.849.4125 Trust/Will/Estate
Melissa N. Turk Firmage	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.855.4332 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Christina M. Mermigas	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.855.4354 Close/Private Held Business; Trust/Will/Estate
Mallory A. Moreno	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.855.4317 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Margaret M. Salinas	Chuhak & Tecson PC	Chicago	312.855.6126 Close/Private Held Business; Mergers/Acquisitions; Secured Transactions
Roxana M. Underwood	Clark Baird Smith LLP	Rosemont	847.378.7134 Employment: Management; Labor: Management
Rebecca L. Schade	Cogan & Power PC	Chicago	312.477.2500 Personal Injury: General
Kathryne R. Hayes	Collins Bargione & Vuckovich	Chicago	312.706.2513 Commercial Litigation; Professional Malpractice Defense
Amy N. Gjesdahl	Dutton Casey & Mesoloras PC	Chicago	312.899.0950 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Melissa G. Kallio	Dutton Casey & Mesoloras PC	Arlng Hghts/Chi/Naper/Skokie	312.899.0950 Elder
Lauren C. Elliott	Elliott & Associates Attorneys PLLC	Des Plaines	224.220.2388 Real Estate: Tax
Rachel Kolesar	Fischel Kahn	Chicago	312.726.0440 Family
Holly Roberts	Grund & Leavitt PC	Chicago	312.640.0500 Family
Deanna Cairo Arthur	GWC Injury Lawyers LLC	Chicago	312.245.2121 Personal Injury: General
Allison L. Dolan	GWC Injury Lawyers LLC	Chicago	312.245.2127 Personal Injury: General
Kate Kirwan Searls	GWC Injury Lawyers LLC	Chicago	312.245.2128 Personal Injury: General
Cassandra R. Shashaty	GWC Injury Lawyers LLC	Chicago	312.245.2130 Workers' Compensation
Beth L. Fox	Harrison LLP	Chicago	312.621.5248 Trust/Will/Estate
Greta R. Staat	Harrison LLP	Chicago	312.621.5220 Close/Private Held Business; Tax: Business; Tax: Individual; Trust/Will/Estate
Taylor K. Real	Henderson Parks LLC	Chicago	312.262.2900 Family
Gabriela O. Asrow	Hoffenberg & Block LLC	Chicago	312.853.8000 Family
Leynee Cruz Flores	Howard & Howard Attorneys PLLC	Chicago	312.456.3657 Elder; Trust/Will/Estate
Lacee J. Wentworth	Ice Miller LLP	Chicago	312.705.6022 Close/Private Held Business; Securities/Venture Finance

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M. Catelyn Viggiano	Keating Law Offices	Chicago	312.239.6787 Personal Injury: General
Mallory A. Milluzzi	Klein Thorpe & Jenkins Ltd	Chicago	312.984.6458 Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying/Administrative; School
Lisa M. Ciharan	Levin & Perconti	Chicago	312.332.2872 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General; PI: Prof'l Malpractice
Lauren E. Park	Levin & Perconti	Chicago	312.332.2872 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General; PI: Prof'l Malpractice
Florina Bandula	MDR Law LLC	Chicago	312.229.5555 Personal Injury: General
Jaclyn Rose DeSana	Merel Family Law	Chicago	312.408.7000 Family
Melissa Caballero Dunn	Merel Family Law	Chicago	312.408.7000 Family
Aurelija G. Fitzpatrick	Merel Family Law	Chicago	312.408.7000 Family
Ashley R. Margason	Merel Family Law	Chicago	312.408.7000 Family
Josephine R. Norton	Merel Family Law	Chicago	312.408.7000 Family
Lauren E. Edmunds	Meyers & Flowers LLC	Saint Charles	630.232.6333 Personal Injury: General; PI Plaintiff: Product Liability; Workers' Compensation
Marni B. Held	Nottage and Ward LLP	Chicago	312.332.2915 Family
Jennifer M. Rice	Pacin Levine PA	Northbrook	312.239.3933 Personal Injury: General
Lauren Jaffe	Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP	Chicago	312.471.8726 Class Action/Mass Tort Defense; Commercial Litigation
Grace M. Rohan	Rohan Law LLC	Chicago	773.841.8287 Family
Daisy Ayllon	Romanucci & Blandin LLC	Chicago	312.458.1000 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General; PI: Prof'l Malpractice
Michelle Rose DiSilvestro	Romanucci & Blandin LLC	Chicago	312.458.1000 Civil Rights; Class Act/Mass Tort Def; ADR: Comm Lit; Pl: Gen; Pl: Prof'l Mal
Bhavani K. Raveendran	Romanucci & Blandin LLC	Chicago	312.253.8606 Personal Injury: General
Emily T. Art	Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC	Chicago	312.372.1227 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professiona Malpractice
Jennifer M. Cascio	Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC	Chicago	312.372.1227 Class Action/Mass Tort Plaintiff; Personal Injury: General
Jaclyn J. Kurth	Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC	Waukegan	847.249.1227 Nursing Home Negligence; Personal Injury: General; PI: Prof'l Malpractice
Eirene N. Salvi	Salvi Schostok & Pritchard PC	Chicago	312.372.1227 Personal Injury: General; PI: Prof'l Malpractice; PI Plaintiff: Product Liability
Danielle L. Pearlman	Sarnoff Property Tax	Chicago	312.448.5352 Real Estate: Tax
Kelly M. Cronin	Schoenberg Finkel Beederman Bell Glazer LLC	Chicago	312.648.2300 Commercial Litigation
Monika W. Trujillo	Schouest Bamdas Soshea BenMaier & Eastham	Chicago	312.690.5556 Workers' Compensation Defense
Nadia Shamsi	Sila Family Law LLC	Hinsdale	630.686.7382 Family
Heather Smith Grattan	Smith Grattan Vivanco LLP	Chicago	312.741.1046 Family
Kathryn McMahon Vivanco	Smith Grattan Vivanco LLP	Chicago	312.741.1046 Family
Valerie A. Letko	Stinar Gould Grieco & Hensley	Chicago	312.728.7444 Civil Rights/Constitutional; Personal Injury: General
Symone D. Shinton	Stinar Gould Grieco & Hensley	Chicago	312.728.7444 Civil Rts; Class Act/Mass Tort Plaintiff; Pl: General; Pl Plaintiff: Product Liab
Liz L. Butler	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	Chicago	312.836.4121 Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; Land Use/Zoning/Condemnation; RE: Commercial
Katherine A. Twardak	Tomasik Kotin Kasserman	Chicago	312.605.8800 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice
Chloe J. Schultz	Wise Law Offices LLC	Chicago	312.985.0930 Personal Injury: General; Personal Injury: Professional Malpractice
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2025 PLANNING CALENDAR

DATE	FOCUS SECTION	LISTS
January 12	Business & Economic Outlook	
January 26	Banking & Finance	
February 9	Wealth Management	Wealth Management
February 23	Law Firms	
March 9	Accounting & Consulting	
March 23	Community Banks	
April 6	Energy Efficiency / Sustainability	
April 18	BOOK OF LISTS	
May 4	Small Business Week	SBA Lenders
May 18	Business Meetings / Venues	
June 1	Economic Development	Economic Dev. Administrators
June 15	Human Resources & Employee Benefits	HR Management Firms
June 29	Best Places to Work in IL	
July 13	Banking & Finance	Largest Banks
July 27	Commercial Real Estate & Construction	Commercial Real Estate Firms
August 10	Workplace Security	Cypersecurity
August 24	Law Firms	Law Firms
September 7	Banking & Finance	
September 21	DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion)	
October 3	EVENT PLANNING & MEETING GUIDE	
October 12	Credit Unions	Credit Unions
October 26	Entrepreneurs	
November 9	Accounting & Consulting	Accounting Firms
November 23	Banking & Finance	
December 7	Influential Women in Business	
December 21	Small Business Resource Guide	Small Business Centers

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