



2023 Board of Directors

Board Chair

Kirk Gafill

President/CFO / Nepenthe/Phoenix Corporation

Kirk Gafill, a native of Big Sur, is President/CFO of Nepenthe/Phoenix Corporation, a family business. He worked his way up from dishwashing to the helm of Nepenthe restaurant, founded by his grandparents.

"I am honored to join the Board of Directors of CFMCO to learn more about the challenges communities throughout Monterey County face and to support the foundation's mission to engage and address these needs through philanthropy and community support."

Gafill graduated from University California, Los Angeles with honors with a degree in economics. He is president of the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce, board member of the Monterey County Visitors and Convention Bureau and is Co-Race Director for the Big Sue River Run. Other board service includes the Big Sur Land Trust and the Carmel Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Vice Chair

Elsa Mendoza Jimenez

Director of Health Services/Public Administrator/Public Guardian / Monterey County Health Department

Elsa Mendoza Jimenez is the Director of the Monterey County Health Department, an organization with an annual operating budget of about \$270 million and 1,100 employees. Elsa earned a bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in sociology from Santa Clara University, and a master's degree in public health with an emphasis in community health from San Jose State University. She started her public health career at the Community Health Partnership in San Jose, coordinating a diabetes self-management program serving the underserved in Santa Clara County.

Elsa started her public service in Monterey County in 2001 and has served in various administrative, finance, management, and programmatic roles. Mrs. Jimenez was born and raised in South Monterey County and is proud to make this County home again, residing in North Monterey County.

Elsa is dedicated to improving the population's health through upstream approaches so that every person has an opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

Treasurer

Jesse Lopez

CPA - Managing Partner / Bianchi, Kasavan & Pope, LLP

Jesse Lopez is the Managing Partner of Bianchi, Kasavan & Pope, LLP. He was born and raised in South Monterey County and attended Fresno State University. Tax laws change often and nearly every financial decision leads to tax ramifications. Using his 20 years of experience Jesse can help you develop a strategy around your financial situation to minimize income tax and stay in compliance with federal and state income tax laws. When he's not servicing his clients or working with his partner's on firm projects, Jesse and his family enjoy time at the lake and supporting their favorite team, the Oakland Raiders.



Secretary
Loren Steck
Retired Psychologist

Loren Steck spent most of his career as a consultant in the entertainment industry, where his primary job was to improve television programming. His clients included each of the major television networks, as well as numerous cable networks and production companies. Among his personal highlights: being a member of the team that “discovered” Oprah Winfrey; playing a role in the film colorization controversy; bringing the first HDTV system to the United States from Japan; and helping create several cable networks.

Loren has a PhD in psychology from UCLA. He graduated from UC Santa Cruz in 1973 and has been associated with the campus for his adult life, including a stint as the President of its Alumni Association, 10 years as chair of the UCSC Foundation’s Investment and Finance Committee, and 16 years as a member of the faculty. Loren is a member of the Governing Board of Trustees at Monterey Peninsula College, and has also served on the boards of Community Human Services, the Carmel Valley Association, the Carmel Valley Forum and the Carmel Red Cross. He has long admired the Community Foundation for its good work throughout Monterey County, and is excited about the opportunity to become more closely involved with the organization.

Board Members

Deneen Guss
Monterey County Superintendent of Schools / Monterey County Office of Education

Dr. Deneen Guss was first elected and sworn in as the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools in January 2019. She was reelected in June 2022 and began her second term of office in January 2023. Dr. Guss continually supports Monterey County’s 24 local school districts and the over 74,000 students they serve.

Dr. Guss is a 35-year veteran educator with a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. She has been an administrator here in Monterey County for over 25 years, and has received numerous awards for her service in education and her service to the community, including the 2021 Ruth Vreeland Memorial Public Official of the Year award.

With a lens on community and equity, Dr. Guss is focused on strengthening community engagement and improving educational outcomes for Monterey County’s youth.

Romero Jalomo
Vice President for Student Affairs / Hartnell College

Romero Jalomo has served as the Vice President for Student Affairs at Hartnell College since 2013. He is the former Associate Vice Chancellor of Institutional Effectiveness for the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District. He previously served as the Dean of Counseling and Support Programs at San Jose City College and was Dean of Counseling and Matriculation at Evergreen Valley College. He served in several other college administrative and faculty positions and is a former Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration and Urban Community College Leadership at New York University.



Kathleen Lee
Executive Director / Point Lobos Foundation

Kathleen Lee grew up in Pacific Grove where she developed a profound love for the coast, open spaces, and community service. Kathleen is the Executive Director of the Point Lobos Foundation. Prior to joining the Foundation, Kathleen worked in public policy as the District Director for Rep. Jimmy Panetta and Chief of Staff to Monterey County Supervisor Dave Potter. Since 2011, Kathleen has served on the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. After working in public service for twenty-two years, she is enjoying working closely with California State Parks and the dedicated docent corps that volunteer their time at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. Kathleen enjoys working on issues involving open space management, fiscal stability, equity, and health benefits of nature.

Kathleen holds a B.A. in Political Science and an Executive Masters in Public Administration.

Kathleen lives on the Monterey Peninsula with her husband Rob and their two children. Both feel blessed to be active members of the community and enjoy community and public service.

Giff Lehman
Founder – Retired / Integris Wealth Management, LLC

Giff Lehman founded Integris Wealth Management, a Monterey based financial planning and investment advisory firm in 1997. Prior to founding Integris, Giff spent 20 years in New York City working as an institutional investment professional.

Giff currently serves as a trustee for York School and on the investment committees for the Monterey Peninsula College Foundation and the California State University at Monterey Bay Foundation. He has previously served on the boards of Pacific Repertory Theater, the Center for Photographic Art, and both the Silicon Valley and Monterey chapters of the Financial Planning Association. Giff has a BA from the University of Washington and an MBA from Carnegie-Mellon University.

On a personal note, Giff has been married to his wife, Pam, since 1977 and they are the proud parents and grandparents of two adult children and one granddaughter. Outside of work, Giff and Pam try to take a “lifelong learning” approach to life and are interested in history, genealogy, performing and visual arts, photography, and nature, which they pursue through hiking, reading, lectures, and travel.

Giff and Pam also appreciate that they have been very fortunate in many ways, and that Monterey County has been especially good to them. Being able to give back a little by serving on the Community Foundation board is a great honor.

Adriana Melgoza
Director of Organizing and Education / Center for Community Advocacy

Adriana Melgoza is an immigrant who grew up in Castroville, CA. She is proud to come from a family of farm workers. She graduated from CSUMB with a major in Human Communications, emphasis in Ethical Professional Responsibility. She is also a LEAD graduate. She worked for the Watsonville Law Center as Chief Programs Officer. She has worked with community leaders to provide thousands of hours of volunteer service in the Central Coast. She organizes, provides community education and staff training for community organizations serving families in the Central Coast. She also worked with the American Civil Liberties Union developing leaders in her community by providing trainings and public education on working for rights and justice for all in the community.



Adriana is passionate about human rights and social justice. She believes in recognizing the dignity of every person. She wants to continue to advocate for underserved populations by continuing to give back to the communities that have supported her growth. Adriana is a firm believer of alliance and solidarity and knows that it is only through direct communication and involvement of impacted community members in all capacities that a better world will be reached.

René Mendez
The City of Gonzales / City Manager

René has over 25 years of State and local government experience. After college graduation, he spent five years with the California Legislative Analyst Office. Following that, he spent five years with the Solano County Administrator's Office. Before coming to Gonzales in 2005, he spent the prior eight years as the County Administrator for the County of Inyo. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics from California State University, Stanislaus, and a Master of Arts Degree in Public Policy from Duke University.

He was born to Miguel and Aurora Mendez in 1965 and grew up working on a farm in Stanislaus County until the age of 21 when he went away to graduate school. He is the oldest of five brothers and considers his parents the two greatest influences in his life. He is most proud of the fact that all his brothers hold master's degrees from universities throughout the United States (Sacramento State University, Ohio State University, George Washington University, and the University of Michigan). He believes that with hard work, a strong family unit, and believing in oneself, anything is possible.

He has been the founding member of many regional efforts, including the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) where he was its first Co-Chair; Monterey Bay Community Power Agency where he was the first Chair of the Operations Board; The countywide task force that established the Salinas Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency; the Male Institute for Leadership and Education (MILE) at Hartnell College. He currently sits on the Board of the United Way of Monterey County.

Working with the Gonzales City Council, he was able to steer the City of Gonzales through the toughest recession in decades. He has implemented many long-term, local, and regional initiatives in economic development, youth engagement, early childhood development, and sustainability (Gonzales Grows Green – G3). He has enhanced community engagement and transparency and established a Health in All Policies governance framework. He has worked to increase community energy reliability and public safety.

In 2019, Gonzales was one of five national winners of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health Prize. The Prize honors and elevates communities for working at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity, and equity.

Tsuneo Larry Oda
Retired / City of Salinas

A third generation Japanese American, Larry Oda was born in a Justice Department Internment Camp in Crystal City, Texas during World War II and lives in Monterey, California. He was educated in Monterey City Schools and earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees from California State University, Fresno.

Larry's grandfather immigrated to the United States in 1906 to work in the fishing industry. He established his own cannery, the Sea Pride Cannery on Monterey's Cannery Row in 1926. Larry's father immigrated to the U.S. in 1917 and was the manager of the abalone processing Co-Op on Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf prior to World War II.



Larry is Chair Emeritus of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation and served two terms as the National President of the Japanese American Citizens League. He has served on the National Board of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), and as President of the BCA Coast District Council. He is a Trustee of the Big Sur Land Trust and is the author of *The Seaprime Canning Company* and *The Oda Family History*. Larry retired from the City of Salinas, California after 27 years as the Maintenance Superintendent and Administrative Hearing Officer. He is a Vietnam Veteran.

Colby Pereira
Chief Operating Officer / Braga Fresh Family Farms

Colby Pereira is the Chief Operating Officer at Braga Fresh Family Farms, a vertically integrated company that grows and ships organic and conventional fresh vegetables worldwide.

Colby holds a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural business with a minor in crop science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. She lives where she was born and raised, in Soledad, Calif., also home of Braga Fresh and the company's brand, Josie's Organics.

Colby is active in several professional and community organizations. She served as president to the Salinas Valley Chapter of California Women for Agriculture, representing Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties.

She is the current board president of the Monterey County Farm Bureau and is a board member of the Grower Shipper Association of Central CA, where she participates on the Food Safety, Land Use and Water Use Committees with both organizations. She also sits on the Leafy Green Marketing Agreement Technical Committee, the California Leafy Greens Research Board, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Board, the Hartnell College Foundation Board, the Community Foundation for Monterey County, is an elected director to the Salinas Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency and an elected member of the Mission Union School District Board of Trustees.

Outside of work, Colby enjoys volunteering, traveling and spending time with friends and family.

Joe Pezzini
Senior Director of Ag Operations / Taylor Farms

Joe Pezzini is a native of Salinas and from a third-generation farming family. He began his career with the Ocean Mist Farms group of companies in 1983 as a farm manager for Boutonnet Farms. In 2001, Joe became Vice President of Operations at Ocean Mist Farms where he was responsible for Cooling Operations, Food Safety, Quality Assurance and Human Resources.

Joe became the Chief Operating Officer in 2009 and was appointed to the CEO role in 2015. He has served on many industry boards including; Central California Grower-Shipper Association and Foundation, California Leafy Greens Product Handler Marketing Agreement (LGMA), Ag Against Hunger and Produce Marketing Association. Joe has been a leading advocate for produce food safety and was instrumental in forming the LGMA following the spinach crisis in 2006. Joe is a Hartnell College alum, UC Davis graduate and has an MBA from the University of Santa Clara.

Joe and his wife Mary have two grown children, David and Bess. Joe and Mary are avid gardeners, runners and share their home with a wide variety of animals including horses and peacocks.



Francine Rodd
Executive Director / First 5 Monterey County

Francine Rodd has been the Executive Director for First 5 Monterey County (F5MC) since January 2004. The vision for F5MC is to ensure that all children reach their unique potential in a family and community that values, respects, and invests in early childhood. F5MC supports children from the prenatal stage through age five by: providing funding to local organizations implementing direct services; supporting knowledge development for providers and parents; and advocating for changes in policies and systems that promote inequities.

She has been active in community initiatives including, Bright Beginnings, the Bright Futures Cradle to Career Initiative, the Child Care Planning Council, and the Monterey County Children's Council.

Francine grew up in Marina. Prior to returning home after college, Francine worked overseas developing and implementing programs supporting women and children living in vulnerable communities. She lived and worked in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 15 years - including working in Haiti for 5 years as the Peace Corps Country Director. She can 'get by' in Spanish and Haitian Creole and lives with her husband in Marina, California. She has a daughter at college and a son who is a Mechanical Engineer in San Jose.

Julie Roth
Wealth Private Manager / Monterey Private Wealth

Julie Roth is a Wealth Manager at Monterey Private Wealth. Prior to joining MPW, Julie spent 20 years in the U.S. Air Force and retired as a lieutenant colonel in 2013. She worked in acquisitions conducting data analysis on newly developed weapons systems, and later in international relations advising senior leaders on military-political affairs. Julie holds an MS in Financial Planning from the University of Georgia, an MA in Organizational Management from the George Washington University, an MS in Applied Statistics from the University of Northern Colorado, and received her BS in Mathematics from the University of Arizona.

Julie serves as Trustee, Treasurer, and the Investment Committee Chair for the Naval Postgraduate School Foundation in Monterey, as the Treasurer of the Rotary Club of Pacific Grove, and is a mentor for the Pay It Forward Scholarship program at CSUMB.

Julie is a native of South Dakota and has lived in several places during her military career, but is very happy to call Pacific Grove home. She enjoys spending time with her husband and son, traveling, golfing, and soaking up the beautiful scenery around the Monterey Bay.

Abby Taylor-Silva
V.P. of Policy & Communications, Grower-Shipper Association

Abby Taylor-Silva has been with the Grower-Shipper Association (GSA) since 2007, but her ties to the agriculture industry and to our local area go back generations. Her family farmed in Monterey County for 50 years, and she is a native of Monterey and San Benito Counties. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from UC Davis, where she also minored in Agricultural and Managerial Economics. Abby has devoted her career to representing the ag industry and more recently GSA's members on topics ranging from government regulation to pending legislation, water issues to food safety, and many other issues related to the ag industry.

Abby has received much recognition for her service to Central California. She was recognized as the Salinas Jaycees' 2008 and 2012 Young Farmer of the Year, received her Young Farmer's & Ranchers chapter's 2010



Star YF&R award at the local and district-wide level, received Produce Business' 40-Under-40 Award in 2010, and was recognized as Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito County's Ag Woman of the Year in 2011.

Jan Vanderbilt
CPA-President / Vanderbilt CPAs

Jan Vanderbilt, of Carmel Valley, is a CPA and the president and CEO of Vanderbilt CPAs PC. Jan has been a CPA on the Monterey Peninsula for over 30 years. Her firm specializes in proactive consulting, planning, accounting, and other tax services for businesses, individuals, and estates and trusts. Jan is a graduate of Golden Gate University from whom she holds a degree as Master of Science – Finance. Jan currently serves on the Board of the Monterey Peninsula College Foundation and the CPE Forum of the Central Coast. "CFMC is a wonderful resource for our community and I am extraordinarily proud to have the opportunity to serve."

Jennifer Walker
Attorney, Leach & Walker, a Professional Corporation

Jennifer Walker was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She earned her B.A. with honors from The Johns Hopkins University and her J.D. from the University of California, Davis. She was admitted to practice law in California in 2001. Jennifer is a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust and Probate Law pursuant to the State of California Board of Legal Specialization.

Jennifer is a member of the Trusts and Estates Section of the Monterey County Bar Association and the Monterey County Women Lawyers Association. She is an art docent with the Washington Union School District and has served on several school site councils in the district. She is an active adult volunteer with the San Benancio 4-H Club. Jennifer served on the Board of Directors for the Monterey County Youth Museum and the Continuing Professional Education Forum of the Central Coast. She was a member of the Planned Giving Advisory Council at California State University Monterey Bay and the Planned Giving Committee of the Hospice Foundation. Jennifer has volunteered for Legal Services for Seniors and the Naval Postgraduate School Foundation.

Jennifer lives with her husband, Eric, and their two teenage daughters, two dogs, one cat, and guinea pig, in the Highway 68 corridor.

Tyller Williamson
Monterey City Councilmember

Tyller Williamson was elected to the Monterey City Council in 2018. He has worked at the Naval Postgraduate School for the last 12 years where he currently serves as a Human Resources Specialist. He earned his bachelor degree in Human Communication, Pre-Law from Cal State Monterey Bay and a Master of Business Administration from the Naval Postgraduate School.

Tyller managed 30 staff and over 500 volunteers as a Deputy Regional Field Director for President Obama's 2012 re-election campaign out of the San Francisco headquarters.

Tyller is a co-founder and Co-Chair of Monterey Peninsula Pride, an organization dedicated to celebrating the LGBTQ+ community on the Monterey Peninsula. These powerful events unite attendees through their commitment of respect for all and regional solidarity!

As a Monterey Councilmember, Tyller has prioritized housing by pushing the City to address tenant protections; championing 100% affordable housing development on City property; and leading the Monterey Peninsula Housing Coalition, a group of elected representatives across the Peninsula to look at housing



solutions from a regional perspective. He supports transparency, seen through his success of passing campaign finance reform in the City.

Tyller enjoys collaborating with regional partners to improve the quality of life on the Central Coast.