

2015 Best Of Our Valley Winners: People

Written by Suzanne Koch

Tuesday, 12 May 2015 10:10 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 May 2015 11:38

People

From philanthropy to fashion, these Valley movers and shakers are putting their passion to work.

BY MELISSA LARSEN



COVER MODEL

TOP CELEBRITY TWITTER

>>LADY LA,

@THELADYLA

With close to 14,000 followers, Lady La shares everything from quotes to live by to the fun happenings on her radio morning show on Live 101.5. She is a Twitter enthusiast because it's an instant form of communication with the audience, which she can control. Her most notable Twitter moment? "Jennifer Lopez tweeted me 'Happy Birthday.' That's definitely my coolest Twitter moment!"

PHOTO BY IGGY M., HAIR, MAKEUP AND STYLING BY DIANE AIELLO. SHOT AT THE RITZ- CARLTON, PHOENIX. CARMEN VALVO GOWN IN IVORY, \$1,075. SILVER CUFF, \$495. STEPHEN DWECK RING, \$495. NEIMAN MARCUS.



MOST ELIGIBLE MALE

>>ARIE LUYENDYKE, JR. TWITTER: @ARIEJR

Though he now has a girlfriend, Arie Luyendyk Jr., 33-year-old driver and racing team owner in the TORC series, sends hearts aflutter by offering "a good laugh every now and then, and wine—lots of good wine." In his dream woman, Luyendyk seeks wit, intelligence and the ability to be as sarcastic as he is. As far as dates, he enjoys traveling and experiencing new things together. "It's the best way to build memories," he says.

PHOTO BY MICHAELVOORHEES.COM.

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MOST FASHIONABLE IN THE VALLEY OVER 30: MALE

>>JAVIER SOTO TWITTER: @JAVIERSOTOTV

"Sale chic" or "ballin' on a budget." That is how Javier Soto, 3TV reporter and anchor, describes his signature look, proving you don't have to spend a million bucks to look it. His go-to outfit is a pinstripe suit, while Michael Kors and Calvin Klein are his favorite designers. Want to see him checking out the racks? You might find Soto at Macy's at Biltmore Fashion Park or Nordstrom Rack.



MOST FASHIONABLE IN THE VALLEY UNDER 30: FEMALE

>>KATHERINE

THORNHILL

TWITTER: @SPARKLEFARKLE

As the owner of Lucky & In Love wedding planning and event design, Katherine Thornhill spends her time putting together jaw-dropping weddings. When it comes to putting together her outfits, she is "drawn toward classic looks, understated sophistication and an effortless European-style dressing." Her favorite spots to shop are Neiman Marcus, Zara, Nordstrom, Madewell and J.Crew, with her go-to outfit being a black power blazer, casual white tank, black skinny jeans and pumps.

PHOTOS BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK, NOT PICTURED: MOST FASHIONABLE IN THE VALLEY UNDER 30: MALE: BROOKS BUTTERFIELD



FAVORITE COUPLE IN THE VALLEY

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>>BOB AND RENEE PARSONS

TWITTER: @NAYNAY3, @DRBOBPARSONS

After meeting on a blind date in May 2007, Bob and Renee Parsons married in October 2009. As the founders of The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, it is no surprise that philanthropy endeavors—along with golf—are among the couple's favorite things to do together. The Parsons' key to a happy marriage? "Laughing together, listening to each other, respecting each other's individuality."

MOST INFLUENTIAL MAN IN THE VALLEY

>>BOB PARSONS

From his philanthropic endeavors to his business ventures, Bob Parsons has had a great and long-standing impact on the community. Though he is the founder of GoDaddy, founder and CEO of YAM Worldwide and the co-founder of The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, his proudest achievement isn't what you might expect. "My shyness made everything more difficult and held me back from accomplishing many of the things I could have. I worked hard to overcome shyness and now, when I tell someone who knows me that I used to be very shy, they simply don't believe me. I like that." His goals for the coming year include many exciting projects for YAM Worldwide including opening the doors of the world's largest Harley-Davidson dealership, revealing a state-of-the-art marketing complex, beginning work on a new golf course and launching a complete line of golf equipment.

PHOTO BY CHADWICK FOWLER



2014 WINNER

MOST INFLUENTIAL IN VALLEY EDUCATION

PHOTO BY CHADWICK FOWLER

>>SISTER JOAN FITZGERALD

Sister Joan Fitzgerald, BVM, principal of Xavier College Preparatory, was inspired to pursue a career in education thanks to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sister Fitzgerald's teachers throughout her elementary and high school years. Since 1974, when she became principal, she has likewise inspired her students at Xavier. "In addition to preparing them with the knowledge, skills and integrity to succeed in college and to embrace the challenges of our changing global society, I hope to instill in them a deep commitment to service that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives."



MOST INFLUENTIAL IN VALLEY NONPROFIT

>>SUZANNE AND ANTHONY CONTI TWITTER: @WERPURPLETWEETS

After being diagnosed with cancer, Suzanne and Anthony Conti's daughter, Nitalia, set out to create a foundation, The Purple Society, to help children just like her battle the disease. "We had zero experience with the nonprofit world when Nitalia set out to create the foundation. Over the years, we have learned so much—good and bad—about the philanthropic world. Now, everything we do has a connection to the foundation in some form. We fully understand that keeping the momentum moving forward takes hard work and commitment, but in the end, it saves children's lives—and that is the true blessing."

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PHOTO BY JASON BLACK



MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMAN IN THE VALLEY

>>GINGER CLAYTON TWITTER: @GINGERLCLAYTON

2014 WINNER

In addition to being a busy mom, Ginger Clayton splits her work day between her company, Elontec, which provides commercial furniture, relocation and technology solutions in the Valley, and the nonprofit that she founded, Diaper Bank of Central Arizona as a program of Homeward Bound. "I spend a lot of time meeting with groups to educate them on the role that diapers have to play in the cycle of poverty," she says, noting that her favorite way to influence others is through the Annual Baby Diaper Drive, Elontec School Diaper Challenge. "My wish is that everyone would find a cause that they are passionate about, make a difference for the Valley in that way and spread this 'fever for serving' by getting others involved."



MOST UP-AND-COMING INSPIRATIONAL FEMALE

>> JENNIFER SMESTAD

TWITTER: @JENNIFERSMESTAD

Miss Arizona 2013. Student. Country singer-songwriter. Entrepreneur. Model. Rep for health and fitness products. Actress/host with Dani's Agency. It's safe to say that Jennifer Smestad might be short on free time but she is long on inspiration. "I was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome at the age of 10. As part of that, I struggled for many years with severe anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and a fear of being in public," Smestad says. "The challenges I have faced made me the confident woman I am today. I can relate to others who feel alone, ashamed and embarrassed, and hopefully my story will be able to help and inspire them."

PHOTOS BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE PRINCESS

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BEST SENIOR PASTOR

>>TRAVIS HEARN

TWITTER: @IMPACTCHURCHAZ

As the senior pastor at Impact Church, one of the fastest-growing churches in the nation, and team pastor for the Phoenix Suns, Travis Hearn—who has been a pastor for 20 years—has a passion for watching people find peace, hope and joy and watching their lives change as they are embraced with unconditional love. “I learned a long time ago that in order to live it up, you’ve got to first give it up. True living comes from giving,” he says. “The people and family of Impact Church are the most amazing people in the world. Every Sunday is a God-sized party, and we party hard!”

TRAVIS AND NATALIE HEARN, PHOTO BY MAG PIE PHOTOGRAPHY



MOST ELIGIBLE FEMALE

>>ALYSSA LIPSKY

Alyssa Lipsky, children’s therapeutic

horseback riding instructor, says that everything she does is with high energy and passion, traits that she can offer up to a potential mate. “I try to have fun with everything that life throws at me and am a low-maintenance truck-driving tomboy.” As for what this 32-year-old looks for in a significant other: “Ideally, a country boy with a city side and a business mind. And I like my men like I like my horses—tall and handsome.”

PHOTO BY BIGGERPICTUREIMAGES.COM, SHOT AT FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE PRINCESS



MOST INFLUENTIAL IN VALLEY FOOD AND OLD FAITHFUL IN FOOD

>>EDDIE MATNEY

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TWITTER: @EDDIEMATNEY

Though he is most recently known as the incredible force behind Old Town's Eddie's House for the past six years, Eddie Matney has been a chef for 28 years. He strives to create food memories for his guests and to show young chefs the ropes of the culinary world. "My goal each day at work is to have fun and hopefully create something new. Also, I want to continue to have the same passion I have always had." To really get a taste of what Chef Matney is all about, reserve a spot for Chef Eddie Unplugged Chefs Counter. For two, four or six people, Chef Matney whips up a menu on the spot.

PHOTO BY CHADWICK FOWLER



BEST ABS: FEMALE, BEST LEGS AND FITTEST FEMALE

>>NIKKI METZGER

TWITTER: @SCOTTSDALEBODI

As the owner of BODI in Scottsdale and a Nike Master Trainer, it is safe to say that Nikki Metzger knows a thing or two about physical fitness. "With owning a gym, there is never a day that goes by that I don't think about the physical fitness of myself as well as of my clients. And when I'm not at BODI, I'm outside taking advantage of this beautiful city, hiking, golfing or riding bikes with my husband." Though she admits to indulging in dessert and wine, Metzger is able to maintain her amazing abs by performing plank variations and HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training).



FITTEST MALE

>>ANTON MACKEY

TWITTER: @ANTONYOGA

Yoga teacher Anton Mackey has been in the fitness field for more than 12 years. "I found yoga, and it became the greatest passion of my life. I knew I was meant to share it with others. It gives me the opportunity to make a positive impact in people's lives physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually." Want to try yoga for the first time? "Let go of your ego," Mackey says. "Try several different types of classes and teachers; there is definitely a class out there for you."

FAVORITE CHEERLEADER

>>ROXI JARVIS

Even though this is Roxi Jarvis' rookie year with the Arizona Cardinals cheer team, she has made a big impact—she has cheered most of her life, after all, including her time at Arizona State University. Though Jarvis says nothing can quite beat the feeling of walking onto the field for a game-day performance, she also enjoys engaging with the community. "I really enjoy going to appearances where I get to interact with our younger fans. My favorite place to visit is the Phoenix Children's Hospital. Recently, a few of us cheerleaders went to celebrate all the children's birthdays."

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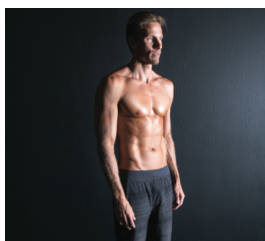


FAVORITE BIKINI BABE

>>LISA MALONEY

TWITTER: @LISAMALONEY03

To maintain a fit physique, Arizona State University student and server Lisa Maloney employs a combination of HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) and weight training to be lean and strong. "I work out regularly and try to make healthy decisions to improve my overall quality of life." And where does she like to don her bikinis (with Beach Bunny and Victoria's Secret being her favorite brands)? "The W Scottsdale and Maya Day + Nightclub in Scottsdale, and Vegas, Cancun, Cabo and the Hawaiian islands any chance I get!"



BEST ABS: MALE

>>ROLAND

SCHOEMAN

TWITTER: @ROLANDSCHOEMAN

Though Roland Schoeman is being spotlighted for his amazing abs, it is his shoulders that most often get him noticed. He is an Olympic gold medalist and swim consultant, after all (as well as a motivational speaker). "Physical fitness plays a fundamental role in my life," says Schoeman. "I'm currently training for my fifth Olympic Games. No South African has ever attended five Olympics, so that is an important goal for me."



BEST PERSONAL SHOPPER

>>RISA KOSTIS

TWITTER: @RISTYLE_RISA

With a mission to celebrate personal style, Risa Kostis founded RISTYLE in 2014. "RISTYLE consulting is about sharing a love of dressing, navigating wardrobes, and putting together the perfect look for whatever life calls for." Kostis works with her clients through organization, accompanied shopping trips and consultations about their overall appearance. One of her most recent projects was styling the celeb-studded Maxim Super Bowl party. ristyleconsulting.com.

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BEST EMERGING FASHION DESIGNER

>>MISHA MENDICINO DESIGNS TWITTER: @MISHAMENDICINO

Inspired by the beauty of the earth— from sunsets to elephant habitats in Asia and Africa—and wanting to meet the needs of busy on-the-go women, Misha Mendicino believes that simplicity is feeling naturally beautiful. “I keep my designs very simple without a lot of structure. Women these days are constantly on the move and, when it comes to our wardrobe, we want to look pulled together without having to fuss. Each Misha Mendicino piece is effortless and chic, and very flattering for all body types.” Mendicino says her trademark frock is the signature dress with kimono sleeves and elephant trim.

PHOTOS BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK



BEST FEMALE PR REP

>>LEELA BRENNAN

TWITTER: @LEELABRENNAN

Though a complete natural in the public relations field, as a youngster, Leela Brennan of YAM Worldwide didn't have dreams of pursuing the career that she is, today, so very good at. “You might say PR chose me. Public relations wasn't a career path I had considered during my years as an undergraduate or graduate student. As a young professional, I found myself inclined toward opportunities that involved strategic communications, storytelling and brand development. Eventually, I embraced the inevitable, and today I absolutely love my field.” She finds that working on projects that focus on philanthropy are the most rewarding, though she loves the opportunity to cultivate relationships, build brands and share great stories.

PHOTO BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK

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MARKETING GURU

>>ANTHONY

SARANDREA

For founder and CEO of SiteFlood, Anthony Sarandrea, his job is about more than just marketing. “It’s understanding the obstacles business owners face when generating leads that can grow their business. It’s creating a system that works 24/7 so the business can rely on a steady stream of opportunities, even when they are being pulled in seven different directions.” One of the most rewarding parts of his career is when his inbox begins to flood with e-mails. He knows it is from leads generated from the various campaigns his team has created. “I know my clients are getting those same e-mails and loving it. I love it too.”

PHOTO BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK



TOP DOG

>>ABBY

Meet Abby, the two-year-old English Sheepdog who won the 2014 Dog of the Year title in AZFoothills.com’s annual Dog Days of Summer contest. This prized pooch enjoys dressing up in her arsenal of costumes—from a cute cow to a pretty princess—as well as playing tetherball. Well-rounded Abby is working on her therapy dog certificate, and she has even appeared in a stage production of “The Little Mermaid.”

PHOTO BY DERRICK JONES-NELSON



TOP CHEF

>>DUSTIN CHRISTOFOLO

Dustin Christofolo started at Quiescence at The Farm at South Mountain as the front-of-the-house manager and sommelier more than 10 years ago. After leaving the restaurant to pursue culinary programs in Manhattan and Italy, he returned to the Phoenix restaurant as executive chef and owner in 2013. “Food has always been a way of life but I did not find my passion until I started working at Quiescence in 2004. I think it was

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the local and seasonal drive from the slow foods concept that really sparked my passion," he says. Though Chef Christofolo says there is no real star of the menu because it changes so often, he is "very eclectic in [his] style, so every dish has to be a star in its own unique way."

PHOTO BY CHADWICK FOWLER

TOP CHEF

>>BEAU MACMILLAN

AFM FAVE

Executive Chef Beau Macmillan, of Sanctuary on Camelback since 1998, has long been a Valley foodie favorite, both for this amazing Asian-inspired dishes at elements restaurant and his fun, larger-than-life personality. In addition to being in the kitchen at elements, you may have seen him as a staple on Food Network in shows like "Worst Cooks in America," "Best Thing I Ever Ate," and "Guy's Grocery Games."



BEST MALE PR REP

>>JOHN GLYNN

TWITTER: @GLYNNMANIA

For John Glynn of Scottsdale- based The James Agency, being a publicist is about telling his clients' stories—and feeling gratitude when a client is excited about media attention that they get a real result from. "I'm proud of securing national coverage over the years in Vogue, Popular Mechanics, Fox News, CNN, Golf Digest, Travel + Leisure. It also was a really gratifying experience to work with Waste Management to recycle 144,000 golf balls for their water feature at TPC Scottsdale. We received national coverage on CBS and had their blimp feature it from the air."

PHOTO BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK



BEST TWITTER FEED

>>STEPHANIE LOUGH, @STEPHLOUGH

Stephanie Lough has exchanged tweets with Lance Bass and Kevin Smith and can call President Obama and Britney Spears her followers.

Lough, publicist at Pitch Public Relations, delights her followers with everything from quips on pop culture to interesting current events comments. "I keep it lighthearted and not too personal. I think it can be difficult to incorporate humor when discussing current events without

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coming across as too opinionated or purely satirical. I just say funny things about trending topics, and people seem to like that."

PHOTO BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT THE CLAYTON ON THE PARK

MOST INFLUENTIAL IN VALLEY POLITICS

>> DOUG DUCEY

Arizona's 23rd governor, Doug Ducey, was elected to office in November 2014. A champion of limited government, economic development and Arizona businesses and families, Ducey's priorities are growing the economy, creating jobs, improving outcomes in K-12 education and balancing the budget. Prior to his current post, the Arizona State University grad was chief executive officer of Cold Stone Creamery before becoming state treasurer.



BEST INSTAGRAM FEED

>>COURTNEY MONTES, @COURTMONTES

For about two and a half years, makeup artist Courtney Montes has delighted her nearly 52,000 Instagram followers with photos spotlighting beautiful makeup—with plenty of reader service, thanks to expert tips and product reviews. "Instagram helped me turn my passion into a business. Through hashtags and different followers sharing my page and posts, I was able to form CourtMontesArtistry LLC. Instagram helped get my name, as well as my work out there, by posting different makeup looks on either myself, or my clients."



MOST FASHIONABLE IN THE VALLEY OVER 30: FEMALE

>>TYLER BUTLER

TWITTER: @TYLERJBUTLER

No frills. Nothing over the top. Tyler Butler, director of community outreach at GoDaddy, describes her fashion sense as chic and simple. "I like durable pieces in basic colors that I can mix and match with a variety of other items." Though Butler admits that she lives in BCBG, she also likes the work of Michael Kors, Tory Burch, Marc Jacobs and Diane Von Furstenberg. For rare fashion gems, you can find Butler shopping at My Sister's Closet or "anywhere that might have hidden treasures."

PHOTO BY JASON BLACK, SHOT AT FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE PRINCESS