

Meet the 2018 Women Who Mean Business honorees

By [Emily Van Zandt](#)

– Associate Editor, Washington Business Journal

Sep 21, 2018, 2:25pm EDT

Updated Sep 25, 2018, 3:03pm

The Washington Business Journal is pleased to announce the honorees for our 2018 Women Who Mean Business awards program. Now in its 15th year, the program saw a record number of nearly 400 nominations.

Honorees are selected by an outside panel of judges comprised of Women Who Mean Business alumni and Washington Business Journal staff. The final honorees are chosen based on criteria including commitment to community service, strong leadership skills and continuing success in their field.

These women are joining an alumni group of more than 350 women including Nicky Goren of the Meyer Foundation, Sheila Johnson of Salamander Hotels and Resorts, Sachiko Kuno of Sucampo Pharmaceuticals, Jodie McLean of Edens, Susan Tynan of Framebridge, D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton and more.

In addition to our annual class of 25 Women Who Mean Business, we have added a new category this year: Rising Stars. The category honors three young women in business who are making strides in business and philanthropy in Greater Washington. We're excited to see what the future brings as their careers continue to develop.

For more on each of our 28 honorees, click the links below.

[Claire Alexander](#), general manager and group vice president at [Capterra](#), [Gartner](#)

[Virginia Ali](#), co-founder, [Ben's Chili Bowl](#)

[Serene Almomen](#), CEO, [Senseware](#)

[Maris Angolia](#), president and CEO, [Karin's Florist](#)

[Moina Banerjee](#), executive vice president of investments, [JBG Smith](#)

Valerie Camillo, chief revenue and marketing officer, Washington Nationals

Cristina Carvalho, firmwide managing partner, Arent Fox LLP

Natalie Madeira Cofield, CEO, Walker's Legacy

Allison Dyer, group partner-in-charge, audit and assurance, Deloitte

Beth Gorman, executive director, The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, National Capital Area Chapter

Catherine Graham, CFO, 2U Inc.

Cecilia Hodges, regional president, Greater Washington and Virginia, M&T Bank

Alexandra Jaritz, senior vice president and global head, Tru by Hilton

Jo Ann Jenkins, CEO, AARP

Melonie Johnson, president and COO, MGM National Harbor

Stephanie Landrum, president and CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership

Laura Lane, president of global public affairs, United Parcel Service (UPS)

Rebecca Linder, founder and CEO, Linder Global Events

Sonia McCormick, senior vice president, director of client and community relations, PNC Financial Services Group

Diana Mendes, Mid-Atlantic division president, HNTB Corp.

Meghan Ogilvie, CEO, Dog Tag Inc.

Lisa Osborne Ross, president, Washington region, Edelman

Kimberly Roy, CEO, Hitt Contracting

Kim Rupert, senior vice president and chief risk officer, SAIC

Leslie Thornton, senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary, WGL Holdings Inc. and Washington Gas

Simone Wu, senior vice president, general counsel, corporate secretary and external affairs, Choice Hotels International Inc.

Diana Mendes



Diana Mendes, president, HNTB Mid-Atlantic

JOANNE S. LAWTON

By Lisa Rabasca Roepe – Contributing Writer
Sep 20, 2018, 7:00pm EDT
Updated Sep 21, 2018, 4:10pm

Diana Mendes has dedicated her career to solving one of life’s most vexing problems: traffic congestion.

She has spent more than 30 years working on critical transportation issues in the region. In her current role at HNTB Corp., she oversees the Express Lanes in Northern Virginia, the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge and South Capitol Corridor project in D.C., the Purple Line in Maryland, expansion of Arlington National Cemetery and on-call consulting contracts for the [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority](#).

Mendes’ interest in transportation stems from her time spent in Europe as a child. Her father worked for Mobil Oil and was transferred often, causing the family to move every year or two. “I took a public bus to school when I was 8 years old living in Rome, and I remember moving to a U.S. suburb and not having that option,” she says. “I thought everyone should be able to do that. I’ve always felt trying to provide opportunities to travel outside a single-occupant vehicle would make places better.”

Multiple transportation options can also improve people's lives, Mendes says. "When people can't move around easily, they have to [forfeit] opportunities, not just access to jobs but also the ability to spend time with family and friends."

Diversity is a guiding principle for Mendes, whether it's diversity of transportation or diversity in talent acquisition. "In diversity, there is balance," she says.

Mendes says she is committed to diversity for a number of reasons. Her father was an immigrant who came to the United States from Portugal in his 30s. When he moved here, he could already speak Portuguese, Spanish and French. English became his fourth language. "I used to hear a lot of stories about his work day," she says. "I would hear about not belonging and being different. People would comment on his accent, and he would ask my mother if she could help him have less of an accent."

In diversity, there is richness, Mendes says. "Diversity is always going to add value," she says. She points to herself as an example of diversity within her profession. "I'm a planner, not an engineer. Right there, that is diversity."

When hiring talent, Mendes says she tries to create teams that are reflective of the problems needing to be solved. "That means giving people opportunities for which they might not be the obvious choice for," she says. "People often point out to me that my teams are very diverse and they ask if I do that on purpose. Half the time, I didn't even notice. I'm just looking for people who had passion for the job, and the drive and commitment to do it well."

What was your first job ever? Working at a local horse stables that would allow me to take the horses out in exchange for cleaning the horses and the stables.

What's a lesson from that job that you're still using today? There is opportunity in every situation and you shouldn't pre-judge something based on how it sounds. I also learned about working with other people, working in teams and being efficient — because the sooner we got the stalls cleaned, the faster we could go out on horse rides.

What moment in your career are you most proud of? Being asked to help rebuild lower Manhattan after 9/11. I spent a lot of my career working on environment documents and it always felt like I was holding up the implementation of the project because of permits and regulations. When I was tapped to work on lower Manhattan, all that accumulated knowledge about environmental review could be put to good use to help New Yorkers recover from a devastating and tragic event.

Who is a female CEO or icon in business or nonprofit you admire? Carmen E. Turner, the former general manager of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority who died in 1992 and who presided over a critical period of construction, growth and operation. She was very generous with her time mentoring me.

If you could have any actress play you in a movie about your life, who would it be? Meryl Streep