

NOTABLE WOMEN

HOSPITALITY, RESTAURANTS AND CATERING



The region's top leaders in
Hospitality, Restaurants and Catering
May 2022

BizWest
The Business Journal of the
Boulder Valley and Northern Colorado





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Female Board Executives

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After a total shutdown in their industries due to the pandemic, these women are pivoting to find ways to sustain and grow their businesses.

The leaders profiled in the following pages were nominated by their peers at work and in the community and showcase the diversity of talent in our market. The leadership shown by the individuals profiled here is setting an example to shape a better future for our region.

METHODOLOGY: The honorees did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials. This list features only individuals for whom nominations were submitted and accepted after a review by our editorial team. To qualify for the list, nominees must be employed at companies in the Boulder Valley and Northern Colorado.

To nominate for future Notables, please visit events.bizwest.com/notables.

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SUSAN ALBERT

FAT ALBERTS FOOD AND DRINK
OWNER

Years in industry: 40

“Sue [Albert] has been the mom to every college student who ever worked for her. She takes great pride in helping young people grow into responsible adults. And, she has successfully run one of Greeley’s favorite eateries for 40 years,” said Marria DeJohn, office manager for Bartels & Co. LLC.

“She still bakes the most delicious pies! Since the beginning of COVID-19 she has kept the business going and kept her employees employed when many places had to close. She has adapted to the new normal requirements and has kept our community fed.

“She has worked long hours when she didn’t have enough staff. She has reduced the open hours of the restaurant so as not to burn out her loyal employees. She is always there for area nonprofits by donating gift certificates for her ‘world-famous’ pies. St. Patrick’s Day is her big holiday; she even has a countdown clock. Every year droves of people show up to have corned beef and cabbage (along with a green beer.) Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day. Sue is a friend to everyone who comes in the door.



CANDY CAMPBELL

BIN 46
OWNER

Years in industry: 9

College, university: University of Colorado Boulder

“Candy Campbell is dedicated to excellence in business, lifting up women and engaging in her community. She is owner of Campbell - Scott Production and Bin 46, a catering company in Longmont,” said Ashley Kasprzak, development manager for the UCHHealth Longs Peak Hospital Foundation.

“For nearly five years, she operated Bin 46 Craft Bar and Restaurant. She decided to close that establishment early in the pandemic due to multiple factors. She pivoted and expanded her business to include event coordinator for high-end affairs from coast-to-coast and even Hawaii. While navigating the pandemic and her own battle with COVID-19, she managed to create a niche for her farm fresh creations with locally-sourced ingredients.

“Candy knows all of the best protein sources, cheese makers, wine and craft beer creators and has an incredible eye for detail. She brought her knowledge, talent and passion together by lifting up health care workers during the pandemic. UCHHealth provided meals to nighttime and weekend staff during the last intense wave of the pandemic. Candy was contracted to provide six meals, and she added a special fresh flair to what she provided. She delivered more than 120 small squashes to Longs Peak Hospital staff filled with soup. Some staff members had never seen or tasted anything like it, and they loved it.

“In addition, Candy serves on the Longs Peak Hospital Foundation board of directors. She most recently assisted with a corn hole tournament to raise money for health care workers to pursue higher education and special training.

“Candy finds joy in lifting up others, and she founded the Women’s Business Development Center in Boulder 12 years ago. Her bright eyes and thrill for new ideas motivate others to do their best and believe in themselves.”

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Lorna Sisko
Director of Sales & Events
The Water Valley Company
Windsor, CO



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ANN MARIE COLE

STONEBRIDGE COS.

AREA DIRECTOR OF SALES

Years in industry: 24

College, university: Johnson & Wales University

"Ann Marie [Cole] is an experienced director of sales with a demonstrated history of working in the hospitality industry. She is extremely skilled in catering, sales, delphi, leisure industry, and property management systems," said her friend, Sara Duffert, senior account executive with BizWest.

She has more than 30 years experience in forecasting, building partnerships and building teams. She specializes in hotel operations and sales and regularly attends and organizes for-profit and charitable events to grow her network of contacts and add to her experiences within a changing industry.

"She is also a strong sales professional with an associates degree in occupational studies in pastry arts, a bachelors in hospitality management focused in hospitality administration/management from Johnson & Wales University. She was awarded the director of sales of the year by Providence Hospitality Partners in December 2019. The CEO of Providence Hospitality said in a news release, 'Ann Marie Cole demonstrated servant leadership, care for their associates, service to the community and unmatched professionalism.'

"A firm believer in the power of positivity and fearless collaboration, she has built several award-winning teams throughout her career. When not working on the next sale, Ann Marie can be found traveling with her two favorite people — her husband of more than 25 years and her about to head off to college son.



BETSY CRAIG

MENUTRINFO LLC

PRESIDENT AND CEO

Years in industry: 12

"Betsy [Craig] has been a passionate leader in the industry of food allergy management in food service throughout the country. She has fiercely focused her attention on serving the needs of others in this area as well as serving those who serve this community," said Betsy L'Italien from the University of New Hampshire dining services. "She is personable and uplifting and demonstrates tenacity and dedication. She has led her team to create and implement allergen awareness and safety programs, speaks around the country for education of the importance of food safety with allergen and is a lead in creating consistent programs for learning and implementing, in a variety of food service operations including college and universities."

Jeff Weissinger, general manager at Vanderbilt University, concurred. "Whether it's menu labeling, restaurant nutrition, or food allergy best practices, she has proven herself as an invaluable subject matter expert to restaurants, university dining halls, food manufacturers, and more. ... Our allergen program is a leader because of Betsy."

Gayle Rigione, CEO of Allergy Force, called her a visionary. "[She] is passionate about ensuring that people, regardless of dietary restrictions, have equal access to food and food-related experiences. She and her team have built a value add offering, building block by building block, to equip restaurants, food services providers, dining services and manufacturers with knowledge, training and processes to do just that."

Said Mulay Weisman, president of Mulay's Sausage Corp., "Betsy Craig has been a leader in the food service industry for more than a decade. Her start in this industry was in helping large restaurant groups, universities and independent restaurants develop informative labeling components on their menus. ... Once in the industry, Betsy realized the need for these restaurants and universities to safely learn how to handle foods that contain allergens in the kitchen, avoiding potentially fatal cross contamination. Starting a new branch in her company, AllerTrain, Betsy and her team developed a training system for restaurants so both management and employees were trained in best practices."



LOUANN DECOURSEY

PANHANDLER'S PIZZA

CEO AND PRESIDENT

Years in industry: 30

College, university: University of Northern Colorado

"Panhandler's Pizza was originally founded in 1975 and was almost shut down for good when developers bought the location. After much public outcry, Louann DeCoursey decided to buy Panhandler's brand and recipes to create Pan's 2.0 in 2018," said Lani Brlecic, general manager.

"She kept the recipes and the heart to continue serving the pizza that tastes like a memory to thousands of Pan's Fans everywhere. While many restaurants floundered over the past two years of the pandemic, Panhandler's pivoted to not only survive but thrive under Louann DeCoursey's leadership. During COVID, Panhandler's expanded its reach to deliver pizza to hungry Pan's Fans up and down the Front Range, added outdoor concerts, expanded nationwide shipping to all 50 states, added breakfast — all because Louann wanted to make sure Panhandler's was still standing strong at the end of the pandemic.

"The last year saw unprecedented sales growth due to Louann's vision of creating experiences for Pan's Fans focused on the amazing pizza. By creating different channels of distribution, Panhandler's has reached a bigger audience in not only Fort Collins but throughout Northern Colorado.

"Louann has a firm belief that 'we have to support the community that supports us.' She launched Slices of Kindness to pay it forward for someone in need to grab a slice. Pan's works in partnership with a number of schools and organizations to do fundraisers and sponsor events. Also, under DeCoursey's vision, Pan's started a job program with the Cooper House through Poudre School District for students with disabilities. Pan's is developing several other work programs through the Colorado Restaurant Association.

"Beyond raising four amazing kids with her partner, Mike, Louann also volunteers time at Off the Hook Arts and for more than 17 years in the Poudre School District in various volunteer capacities."



NATALIE EHLERS

PF CHANGS

OPERATING PARTNER

Years in industry: 25

"Natalie Ehlers has been a focal point in Northern Colorado for the past 20-plus years. She has been a leader with her team and represents strong female leadership in a difficult industry," said Jeannie Valliere, human resources with HRX Services.

"She provides her team resources and guidance to grow professionally while meeting the daily needs of her customers. Her demeanor is always positive, professional and filled with a lead-by-example attitude to her team. As a customer of PF Changs, it has been easy to see her level of engagement with her team and customers.

"I believe she is unique in meeting Changs corporate initiatives and maintaining a positive team culture. She always remembers repeat customers and is kind and professional in every interaction with her team and customers. During the last years during COVID, I have watched her face much adversity with staffing challenges and COVID restrictions. Yet, she remains confident, kind, and professional to everyone she engages."



CYNTHIA EICHLER

VISIT FORT COLLINS
CEO

Years in industry: 7

College, university: Colorado State University-Pueblo

“Cynthia [Eichler] successfully navigated the challenges of COVID as CEO of Visit Fort Collins. Besides assisting the destination tourism efforts of VFC, she was instrumental in the implementation of a tourism business improvement district in truly establishing Fort Collins as a tourism destination while putting the organization’s funding more in line with peer cities and towns,” said Gary Ozzello, director of university relations for Canvas Credit Union.

“Cynthia tirelessly worked behind the scenes with city officials and the hospitality industry to secure the BID, despite the continued challenges related to COVID. She has continually turned challenges into opportunities in moving the organization forward. She is in the midst of developing, with a consultant, a tourism master plan for Fort Collins. She is nationally recognized in the tourism realm, serving in various advisory capacities within the state and regionally, and is engaged nationally to connect with trends and developments.

“As the board’s immediate past president and as a member of the organization as a board member for more than 15 years, without question she has guided the organization through incredible challenges with a positive attitude, encouragement, and a servant leadership that has served the entire community and tourism industry. Cynthia has gained the trust of city government leaders, the chamber of commerce, local hotels and tourism businesses to firmly continue the successful track in Northern Colorado.”



DONNE ERWIN

EMBASSY SUITES, LOVELAND
EXECUTIVE HOUSEKEEPER

Years in industry: 35

College, university: Colorado Mountain College

“Donne Erwin, executive housekeeper, started with Embassy Suites Loveland prior to its opening in 2009 and has been with us through the best and worst of times still to this day,” said Lou Ann Hoehne, director of sales.

“Donne is a huge part of the reason that our hotel has won awards each of those years both for cleanliness and guest satisfaction. Her record has 16 consecutive outstanding quality audits, and she works very hard to ensure that streak is not broken. The reason for her success is simple: genuine care about the hotel, her team, and our guests.

“It is no secret that the hospitality industry was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic. During the worst of times, Donne worked as an hourly associate to ensure that the hotel and the few rooms we were selling stayed clean. Even during this trying time, Donne never let her quality suffer.

“You can bet that Embassy Suites Loveland has the cleanest laundry room in the company. She leads our company in cleanliness scores. No small feat when you consider the current labor market — continually short staffed and at the mercy of who actually shows up to work each day. She has advocated for hiring folks who may not otherwise be considered employable and has helped mold them into respectable, hire-able associates. She participates in the Clean the World program, creating more work for her, but allowing others to have access to basics like soap and shampoo.

“[She’s] a mentor to many people working their way up in our industry, who have gone on to be extremely successful. Every team member in her department receives a warm welcome and truly heartfelt thank you, along with a snack purchased from her own pocket, every single day. This is the spirit of hospitality.”



TIFFANY HELTON

STUFT (FORT COLLINS)
OWNER

Years in industry: 20

“Tiffany [Helton] has been a tremendous change agent through COVID. She created places and spaces for restaurateurs to collaborate, find solutions and survive the impact of closures, guest limits and more,” said Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce CEO Ann Hutchison.

“Her leadership in helping to create the Level Up Program in Larimer County set us up as an example for the entire state. As well, she created Online Restaurant Academy to continue excellence in the industry. Tiffany has been willing to share her insights, failures and successes to make the industry more resilient. As well, she has been a resource for new entrepreneurs who want to enter this space, freely sharing her time to make sure they are successful.

“Finally, she is an SBDC adviser, working with new companies wanting to grow in Northern Colorado. Thank you for providing the opportunity to celebrate this amazing female leader in Fort Collins. We celebrate all that Tiffany has done for her industry and Northern Colorado.”



SARA HOCKHALTER

DICKEY’S BARBECUE PIT
OWNER, OPERATOR

Years in industry: 2

College, university: Minnesota State University Moorhead

“Sara Hockhalter and her husband opened Dickey’s in Windsor in December 2019. They were so excited to bring another food option to this growing community as well as provide job opportunities,” said Stacy Miller, economic development director for the town.

“Sara is an ambassador with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce. She works with the community to provide schools, sports teams and first responders fundraisers through the restaurant. Being involved with the community is key for Sara. Building relationships with the town, other business owners and people in the community in general is top priority.

“All of their guests know Sara appreciates them and welcomes them in like they are coming into her home. Sara creates an environment where employees and guests feel like they are important as well as have a fun experience. This was evident once they opened Dickey’s and COVID came into the world. Guests would drive from out of town just to come in, eat, feel like the world was normal.

“Building a business during the past couple of years has been a massive challenge and adjusting to that in addition to a time where the world was shut down isn’t an easy task. Having tenacity and positivity to keep things going has been the biggest learning experience of her life.”



JENN KENDERS

HOT CORNER CONCEPTS/MOOT HOUSE

GENERAL MANAGER

Years in industry: 15

"Jenn Kenders is a rock in our company. For more than a decade in leadership, she has proved to be capable, dependable, and an all-around star. Her Hot Corner Concepts tenure has seen her serve in all management positions across five full-service restaurant locations in Northern Colorado, finally landing a permanent role as general manager of The Moot House," said Adam Vander Sande, director of operations.

"Jenn consistently performs at the highest level and has a gift for leading with a firm, no-nonsense, but ever kind, hand. Building her team up around her, she has a knack for recognizing and developing talent. She leads a restaurant staff of more than 50 individuals. Her placement at The Moot House was providential when our industry and the rest of the world was hit with the pandemic in 2020. As most restaurants shut down in the initial wake of lockdowns and mandates, Jenn resolutely kept her kitchen open — but not for business as usual.

"Partnering with the Bohemian Foundation, she oversaw the execution of the Feeding Our Community program, with The Moot House being the first restaurant partner in Fort Collins. The effort grew into a network that included seven restaurants, four delivery truck teams, two dozen distribution partners (nonprofits, mobile home communities, and affordable housing providers), and hundreds of staff, volunteers, and community leaders who coordinated, delivered, cooked, and so much more. This activated network kept restaurant workers employed, provided meals to community members impacted by COVID-19, and cultivated connection with one another during an isolating time. The meals were the mechanism, community-building was the result. The program ran for more than a year and produced more than 250,000 meals for anyone in need or impacted by the virus.

"Jenn went above and beyond to ensure her team was safe, taken care of, and the meals that people depended on made it into their hands."



KRISTIE MELENDEZ

VECINOS MEXICAN GRILL & CANTINA

OWNER

Years in industry: 15

College, university: Colorado State University

"A lifetime entrepreneur, Kristie Melendez always knew she was destined to do something special and help others. Her latest business venture, Vecinos Mexican Grill & Cantina in Severance, came about after the matriarch of Senor Jalapeno died, and the family approached her to take over the business," said Stacy Miller, economic development director for the town of Windsor.

"Her business philosophy is simple — you join a family when you come to work for us. Family members have respect for one another and do their best to not let each other down. A CSU graduate and fourth generation Windsorite, her community roots are why she continues to serve and provide Stepping Stones with soup for its soup suppers, free meals and gift certificates to veterans and first responders, and supports as many local community events as possible. She serves as the Windsor-Severance Historical Society president, the Lariat Loop president, and is a member of the Windsor, Severance, and Loveland Chambers of Commerce."



DENISE MOCK-GRAVES

SWEETS BY DENISE

OWNER

Years in industry: 20

"Denise [Mock-Graves] started her baking career at the famous Schmidt's Bakery in Loveland. She also worked at Panera in the catering department. Since the pandemic, she has boosted her baking business from home," said friend Donna Rupert.

"She is an amazing baker. Not only are they beautiful, they taste wonderful. Check out the photos on her Facebook page; she has made some beautiful cakes, cupcakes, and other goodies. I've used her for birthday and holiday cakes. I believe her cupcakes are sold locally on one or more food trucks in town.

Her Facebook page says, "I am a from-scratch baker who enjoys making cakes when I'm not working. I've had many years of cake and pastry experience." And her website says, "Born to bake. I have been baking and cooking all my life. It wasn't until I moved to Colorado in 2008 that I was introduced to baking on a professional level. I started working as a pastry chef for Schmidt's Bakery the same year I arrived in Colorado. I worked there off and on until it closed. Since then, I have been working as a head caterer at a local restaurant during the day. At night, I continue to work on my passion: baking and decorating. For me, the best moment is the first time my client opens the box and sees what I have created."



JENNA SAMPSON

UCHEALTH

COORDINATOR OF NUTRITION

Years in industry: 14

College, university: Colorado State University

"Jenna [Sampson] was tasked with keeping our patients at MCR, PVH, Greeley Hospital, and Long's Peak Hospital safe and appropriately nourished according to their medical dietary restrictions. Jenna is responsible for tracking ingredients, dietary supplements, and products meant to feed our patients, all of which became scarce while supply chain issues stressed our systems," said Mark Culloton, director of hospitality for UHealth.

"Jenna received notifications of out-of-stock products on a daily basis and made quick decisions on potential substitutions to ensure that patients are healthy and safe. To provide patients with the items offered on the menu, she recoded several substitute products to accurately reflect any changes made to ingredients and nutritional while not compromising the quality of the food. These changes are essential to match what doctors have ordered for their patients' medical diets.

"She revamped the menu to meet standards on the amount of calories and protein patients should eat during their hospital stays so that we could provide the best care to patients. Jenna has gathered information on types of food and what alterations need to be made and has educated each hospital's food and nutrition department on the changes that will be made.

"On top of managing all of this she trained our call center, which takes thousands of meal orders a day to accurately reflect the constant changing environment. Stress hit health care hard in these past two years, but you'd never know from Jenna. She is a key driver of culture at the four northern UHealth hospitals. She's never lost focus that the end goal is patient satisfaction and safety. She sets the bar that we all work to reach. The scope of her influence for these four hospitals was 397,000 meals served to patients last year alone."



DAWNN SHORT

SHORTD'S

OWNER

Years in industry: 21

"Dawnn Short loves roasting coffee beans. She even left her corporate job to focus on her hobby-turned-business full time during the pandemic, and she attributes much of her success to her community involvement," said Jenn Venerable, executive director of the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce.

"Not only did she bring her coffee truck to the Marshall Fire victims to give them a cup of warm comfort, but she gives her time and talent all year long as an active board member and treasurer for the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce, which serves Dacono, Firestone and Frederick. She sincerely believes that being a good partner to other businesses and organizations in the local area contributes to a company's success, and her actions follow suit.

"ShortD's has contributed to a number of local benefits and fundraisers in the Carbon Valley, including several puppy adoption events at Mac-n-Charlie's (local pet supply business in Firestone) and with Soul Dog Rescue out of Fort Lupton. It donated to a local Realtor's Shred-Hunger event (gift basket and percentage of sales from the event), ReMax Nexus' Children's Hospital/ Fall Festival donation and coffee sponsor, the Carbon Valley Half Marathon coffee sponsor, and donated a portion of sales to local schools when participating in fall festivals and teacher/staff appreciation activities. Dawnn did hold down a full-time 'day-job' working for a medical device company in Gunbarrel until February this year when ShortD's went full-time.

"In addition to holding the position of vice president in a local networking group the past year and a half, she has served as treasurer for the Carbon Valley Chamber since December 2020."



LORNA SISKI

THE WATER VALLEY CO.

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND EVENTS

Years in industry: 15

College, university: Northwestern University

"I have had the pleasure of working alongside Lorna [Sisko] since I joined The Water Valley Co. in 2018," said Jason Kusel, chief operating officer of Hospitality & Experiences at The Water Valley Co. in Windsor. "In her role as the director of sales for the company, there are a couple of attributes I would like to mention and recognize. Lorna presents a genuine approach to customer service and drive for perfection to all clients who host an event with The Water Valley Co. Whether it is a wedding on our private island, an intimate private dining experience at one of our multiple dining locations or a birthday party at one of our pools — her customers are treated like VIP's the moment they walk in the door.

"Through hard work and relentlessness, Lorna is dedicated to making the best experience for all her clients. Lorna leads a sales and events set-up team that strives to create lasting memories for every one of her guests."



AMY SNIDER

CUPS COMMUNITY COFFEE

OWNER

Years in industry: 2.5

College, university: Cornell University

"Amy Snider, who founded the USL1996 W-League champion Colorado Force Women's pro-am soccer team, decided she was ready to do something other than soccer. In the summer of 2019, she purchased Cups Community Coffee on Taft Hill Road in Fort Collins, after the then-owner let Snider, a regular customer, know she was ready to sell," said Mishelle Baun, principal of Baun Business Communications.

"Snider enlisted her husband Matt and children, Summer and Jackson, to help put on her own touches. Things were going well, then when COVID-19 arrived in March 2020, overnight the cafe had to pivot as it could no longer welcome customers inside. And pivot she did. The always-positive Snider started a program called CupLift, to help 'lift up' those helping on the front lines by delivering coffee and breakfast goods.

"She received donations from friends and customers to help her deliver CupLift packages to hospitals, fire stations, and even those preparing take-out meals at the now-closed schools for needy students. It was gratifying to see the smiles on the recipients' faces, and donors were proud of the small role they played to help lift up those who were actively serving our community.

"Amy has always been a leader who finds the silver lining in any situation, and though her cafe weathered some challenging times, she forged a path through the pandemic to keep it open while providing the community much-needed positivity."



LAUREN STOREBY

SNACK ATTACK

OWNER

Years in industry: 20

"Lauren [Storeby] has been a tremendous change agent through COVID. She created places and spaces for restaurateurs to collaborate, find solutions and survive the impact of closures, guest limits and more," said Ann Hutchison, CEO of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Her leadership in helping to create the Level Up Program in Larimer County set us up as an example for the entire state. As well, she created Online Restaurant Academy to continue excellence in the industry. Lauren has been willing to share her insights, failures and successes to make the industry more resilient. As well, she has been a resource for new entrepreneurs who want to enter this space, freely sharing her time to make sure they are successful. Finally, she is an SBDC adviser and a member of the chamber board of directors, working with new companies wanting to grow in Northern Colorado. Thank you for providing the opportunity to celebrate this amazing female leader in Fort Collins. We celebrate all that Lauren has done for her industry and Northern Colorado."



AMANDA ULLOA

SILVER GRILL CAFE
GENERAL MANAGER

Years in industry: 22

"Amanda's role in our success is a key reason Esquire Magazine named us one of '100 Restaurants America Can't Afford to Lose' during the pandemic," said John Arnolfo, Silver Grill owner for 42 years and during COVID. "Her effective leadership style centers on deep respect for all team members, from servers, cooks and assistant managers to dishwashers, cashiers and hosts. She empowers, inspires and guides them.

"By developing a 1:1 relationship with employees, Amanda tailors her coaching to fit individual learning styles. She says it's inspiring to watch them grow and become better versions of themselves."

New owner Alan Jantzen added, "Amanda's positive influence is evident in our hundreds of 5-star reviews during COVID and today. An August 2020 review praised our ample space between tables and 'fantastic service and outstanding food.' Another in April 2022 noted that staff were professional, efficient, kind and 'free to let their personalities shine.'

"When COVID hit, she was a calm influence," Arnolfo said. "Her excellent problem-solving skills helped overcome the onslaught of daily challenges. Amanda and the leadership team instituted safety protocols for staff and guests exceeding Health Department requirements. She launched our takeout, delivery and online ordering. We brainstormed unusual marketing ideas to keep Silver Grill top of mind. For one, both of us peddled a rickshaw around Old Town giving away cinnamon rolls. It led to a full-page news story."

"Silver Grill set sales records during COVID," Jantzen said. "Before the pandemic, we sold an average of 1,600 cinnamon rolls on Christmas Eve. In December 2021, Amanda launched a new ordering system and sales jumped to more than 2,000 rolls. Amanda is an exemplary general manager. Her leadership style and communication approach create smooth operations and a well-trained team delivering a 10 out of 10 guest experience."



COURTNEY WHITEHEAD

HOMEWOOD SUITES BOULDER/
SAGE HOSPITALITY

GENERAL MANAGER

Years in industry: 12

"During the uncertainty and tumultuous time of the pandemic, Courtney [Whitehead] was taking on her first GM role at a new property. However, she was also continuing in her current role as the director of housekeeping at a dual hotel property overseeing roughly 60 employees in addition to her new team," said Bonnie Becker, director of sales for Homewood Suites.

"During the transition, Courtney worked tirelessly to ensure her employees had everything they needed to succeed during unprecedented times, splitting her time between the three properties. Since her full transition to the new property, she has improved customer service scores, enriched the property with new amenities and updates for guests, and built a successful team. She was also able to effectively manage her hotel and not require any reserve funds from ownership throughout the worst of the pandemic, an incredible feat considering she not only improved the hotel, but also increased wages for every single employee who fought alongside her.

"She has invested her time in training and developing new managers, strongly believing that opportunity is the key to a bright future, and improved resources and job roles for each and every employee under her direction. Her drive, encouragement, and love for this industry is truly unmatched. Her dedication to her team and love for her guests is rare and commendable. We are honored to work for her and truly believe she deserves this recognition."



KRISTY WYGMANS

POUR BROTHERS

OWNER

Years in industry: 8

College, university: Michigan State University

"Kristy Wygmans has worked incredibly hard during COVID. The past 18 months has been a test for those in the hospitality industry. She has made all the changes required from the state, city and county to ensure protocols have been met. She was able to be a stalwart of professionalism and positivity for her staff," said Nathan Scott of Foothills Gateway.

"Accommodating every required safety measure, she managed to create a place that was a refuge from the isolation that COVID created. To further illustrate this pattern, she provided a place in Old Town for people to still make wonderful memories. That included business meetings, proposals, happy hours, outside/curbside dining.

"She is a great example of someone deserving of this award. A woman of integrity and a continued contributor to many great causes, she's an inspiration to others in the field. I'm grateful for her in my professional network, and I'm proud to call her a great example of a small business owner and my friend."



RACHEL YENDRA

GIB'S BAGELS/SPOONS

PRESIDENT

Years in industry: 16

"Rachel Yendra has been in the restaurant industry for approximately 16 years. She started at the age of 15 and worked in many capacities before becoming a teacher and moving to California," said Tom Loftus, director of operations for Gib's Bagels.

"She returned to Fort Collins and went back to work for Gib's Bagels. She seamlessly transitioned from store manager to operations manager and eventually to president. She spearheads all of the company's many community-minded endeavors. Those include working to employ developmentally challenged individuals, volunteering at events, participating in adopting a family for Christmas, donating to area churches and the food bank. Rachel does all this while being responsible for the day-to-day operations and financial responsibility of running a multi unit company.

"Her smile and positivity inspire others and make the workplace that much better. She has worked to help others grow and move up within the company, personally and within the community. All this while raising a family and caring for her many animals that she loves so much. Don't get her talking about goats.

"Recently the owner of Gib's Bagels purchased another local restaurant company, Spoons. Rachel was instrumental in this being possible. Without her it would not have happened. She was excited for a new opportunity and challenge and handled it extremely well. Rachel is helpful, kind, caring and motivates those around her to achieve their goals."