

THE CONVERSATION 2026



Wayfinder
FAMILY SERVICES



CONGRATULATIONS
to my fellow honorees
Brian A. Barreto and
Kirchgessner Vision Foundation

— Linda Myerson Dean —
proud supporter and board member
of Wayfinder Family Services

PROGRAM

WELCOME

Jay Allen, President and CEO, Wayfinder Family Services

LUNCH

WAYFINDER AWARDS

Linda Myerson Dean
Brian A. Barreto
Kirchgessner Vision Foundation

PANEL

MODERATOR

Pete Kinser
Co-Founder and Managing Partner
of ThinkWyn

PANELISTS

Maja Matarić
Chaired & Distinguished Professor
at the University of Southern California

Jon Steinberg
Podcaster, Writer and
Wayfinder Independent Living Specialist

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THE PANEL



Maja Matarić is a Chaired and Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, (with appointments in Neuroscience and Pediatrics) at the University of Southern California, and Principal Scientist at Google DeepMind. Her PhD and MS in Computer Science and AI are from MIT, and her BS in Computer Science is from the University of Kansas. She is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, fellow of AAAS, IEEE, AAAI, and ACM, recipient of the Presidential Award

for Excellence in Science, Mathematics & Engineering Mentoring (from President Obama), Anita Borg Institute Women of Vision, ACM Athena Lecture, ACM Eugene Lawler, Mass Robotics Medal, NSF Career, MIT TR35 Innovation, and IEEE RAS Early Career Awards, and authored "The Robotics Primer" (MIT Press). She led the USC Viterbi K-12 STEM Center and actively mentors and empowers K-12 students, women, and other groups toward pursuing STEM careers. A pioneer of the field of socially assistive robotics, her research is developing human-machine interaction methods for personalized support for users with challenges, including autism, stroke, Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, anxiety, and other major health and wellness challenges. Her research group has conducted many of the first and still largest real-world studies in complex environments—including schools, nursing homes, retirement centers, and homes—to produce deep insights into complex human-machine interaction challenges with real-world users in situ.



Jon Steinberg is from Newport Beach, CA and obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona, followed by a double master's degree at Saint Mary's College of California. He has worked in Dallas, Chicago, the Bay Area and Orange County. Steinberg has published a memoir entitled "And So it Went" and has won numerous awards during his writing career.

He started as a student at Wayfinder's Hatlen Center in 2017.

He is currently the independent living skills instructor at

Wayfinder's Davidson Program for Independence and does not consider this just a job. He approaches each and every single class session with a positive attitude, meant to be contagious. He strives to reach students so that by the time they graduate from Wayfinder, they are doing so as the most capable, best possible versions of themselves.

THE PANEL



MODERATOR Pete Kinser works on making AI actually useful—which means starting with people before the technology. For over 20 years, he's helped organizations figure out how to adopt new tools without breaking what already works or harming the people they serve.

Pete founded ThinkWyn and advises leaders on AI strategy, governance, and implementation. His focus is practical: how do we bring AI into complex environments, nonprofits, public agencies and enterprises in ways that strengthen performance without sacrificing trust, equity, or accountability? Pete believes the hardest problem in AI isn't the technical aspects, it's aligning the systems we build to serve real human needs with real consequences in mind. This work requires placing human-centered design and the social sciences at the center of how AI is designed.

Pete graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia where he received a dual masters in information science and education with concentrations in human-centered design and human-computer interaction.



WAYFINDER HONOREES



In 1975, Karl Kramer Sr. created, funded, and endowed the original UCLA Mobile Eye Clinic. Following the initial success of that program, Mr. Kramer began the process of establishing a charitable entity to provide vision care to disadvantaged persons such as the young, the elderly and the working poor, and in 1979 The Karl Kirchgeßner Foundation was officially founded. Since its inception, UCLA, their Mobile Eye Clinic and the Stein Eye Institute have received over \$8.2 million in support from the Foundation.

In addition to helping fund vision care for the disadvantaged, the Foundation has also supported impactful research in the field of vision. From 1998 until 2017, the Foundation administered a research program to fund the vision research of promising young scientists affiliated with universities throughout the United States.

To more effectively promote its purposes, the Foundation changed its name in 2022 to Kirchgeßner Vision Foundation. The Foundation continues to make yearly grants to local organizations that provide much needed services in the field of vision, such as community clinics, outreach programs, and providers of vision screening, adaptive equipment, and assistive services. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded over \$20 million in vision-related grants.



WAYFINDER HONOREES



Linda Myerson Dean is the vice chair of Wayfinder's board of directors.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Linda is the granddaughter of candy manufacturer Ben Myerson, who opened Ben Myerson Candy Company in 1937. Her career in the family business started in high school working at the 'order desk.' Best known for Sunkist Fruit Gems, the company was sold to Jelly Belly Candy Company in 2006.

In 1973, inspired by their passion for wine, Linda's father and uncle opened Wine Warehouse, their beverage wholesale division. Linda continued her career, shifting from candy to wine, after graduating from Wellesley College in 1981.

The family built Wine Warehouse into one of the largest distributors of premium alcoholic beverages in the United States. Linda became its Senior Vice President in 2008 and eventually its co-owner with her brother, Jim. Breakthru Beverage Group acquired the company in 2023. She now enjoys a very busy retirement.

Linda credits her grandfather, Ben Myerson, for being her inspiration to serve. She recalls, "He considered it a blessing to have the time and treasure to help those in need." And, from him, she learned his favorite, fuzzy math equation, "Blessings double when half are given away."

It was also Ben Myerson's legacy that led Linda to Wayfinder. Ben and his wife, Edna, were close friends of Davre and Charlotte Davidson, founders of Aramark and beloved donors who were instrumental in the organization's early success and growth. They enlisted many years of support for Wayfinder from the Myerson's. Passing the torch a generation later, Harold Davidson, their son, invited Linda to visit Wayfinder. "I immediately knew this organization stood apart from others and I wanted to get involved," Linda recalls. "My time on the board has witnessed Wayfinder demonstrate its remarkable ability to serve ever more Californians, increase its impact and secure recognition for excellence. It is a blessing to be a part of this extraordinary institution that improves the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and families."

Linda also serves as Board Chair of the UCLA Division of Geriatrics and is a Board Member of the Ebell of Los Angeles. She and her husband, Rod, are steward partners with The Wildlands Conservancy and have recently established a 1300 acre nature preserve on the Eel River in Humboldt County that will be rewilded and opened with free public access.

WAYFINDER HONOREES

Brian A. Barreto was appointed as California American Water External Affairs Manager for Southern California in December 2008. In his role, Brian delivers initiative-taking, strategic communications including customer communications, government and interagency communications, community relations and website content that support the company's continued success in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Ventura Counties.



Brian is a board of director to the Temple City, Coronado, and Imperial Beach Chambers of Commerce and is a former board member/president of the Duarte Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Brian serves as a Board of Director to Foothill Unity Center, East Los Angeles College Foundation, YMCA of San Diego Overnight Camps, Border View Family YMCA, Los Cerritos YMCA, the Imperial Beach Neighborhood Center and is a member of the Impact Council to Wayfinder Family Services.

With more than 20 years of external affairs experience Brian has practical knowledge about the processes and internal workings of local, state, and federal governments; but also, a deep understanding of the importance of creativity, strategic communications and coalition building in conducting policy objectives.

Brian served as a government relations and public affairs consultant prior to joining California American Water. Preceding his consulting he worked at Fannie Mae as the government and industry relations manager for the Western United States. Brian also served as director of Latino Outreach at the Office of Public Liaison and as deputy chief of staff at the National Economic Council at the White House for President Clinton.

Brian holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Whittier College and is a candidate for a master's degree at the Claremont Graduate School. In his spare time Brian is the assistant cross-country coach at St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower, California. Brian lives in Fullerton.

Congratulations

to our honorees



PREVIOUS HONOREES

2022

George Hoag Family Foundation

2024

Dr. Harold A. Davidson

Camilla Walker

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

2025

Glenn Sonnenberg

Jason Russell

W. M. Keck Foundation





Congratulations Linda

Your care and dedication are an inspiration.

Love,
Madeleine and Jeff



As a former leader of Junior Blind, I am proud to support Wayfinder and extend my appreciation for its steadfast commitment to supporting children and adults who are blind and expanding opportunity for all those you serve. Your work continues to make a meaningful and lasting difference.

Annette and Leonard Shapiro



With great appreciation to Jay Allen and the amazing team at Wayfinder Family Services for all they do to make our world a better place.

Andrea and Glenn Sonnenberg



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Thank you to Wayfinder's

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for hosting The Conversation

**with deep gratitude,
Wayfinder Family Services**



Wayfinder
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VASQUEZ
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Photo: Wayfinder Family Services

The Vasquez Team supports Wayfinder Family Services as they provide critical resources and compassionate care to individuals and families in our community.

Vasquez + Company LLP is a global CPA and business advisory firm based in Los Angeles.

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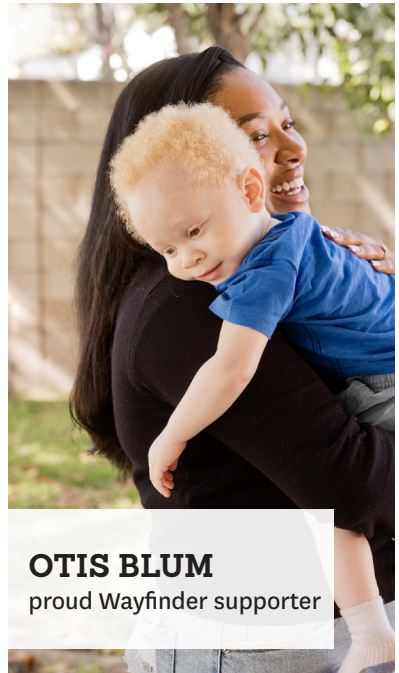


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Congratulations
to Wayfinder
on your great work.

**Thomas Schwartz,
Goldman Sachs**



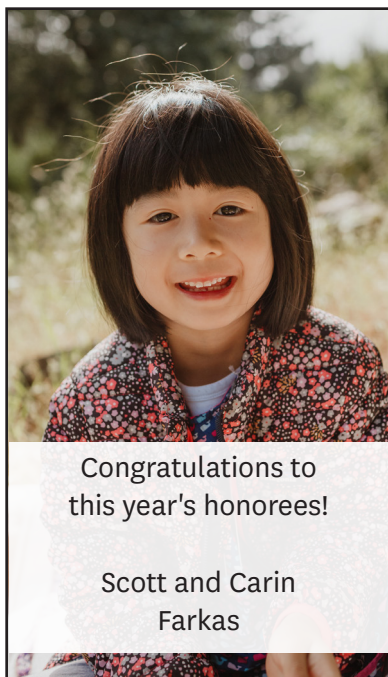
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In honor of Jon Steinberg
and proudly supporting
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