

## The Future of Forty Gala Honors WJA's Industry Legacy

The Women's Jewelry Association will host its annual celebration on November 13th at the iconic Guastavino's in New York City



**New York, NY. October 30, 2024.** [The Women's Jewelry Association](#) (WJA) is set to host the ["Future of Forty" Gala](#) at Guastavino's, marking the continuation of a milestone decade for the organization. Founded in 1983 to build a professional network for women in the jewelry and watch industries, the Women's Jewelry Association has grown into a global organization supporting women's careers through education, networking, and business development, while championing diversity and inclusivity. WJA's gala will honor the accomplishments of the past while paving the way for future thought leadership and will be held on the evening of Wednesday, November 13, 2024.

"Our vision has always been to provide women with the tools, education, and networks they need to succeed, while also developing a community that uplifts and supports each other," said Susan Chandler, WJA President and Chief Merchandising Officer for Citizen Watch America. "The Future of Forty Gala allows us to honor the legacy of our founders, while continuing to drive our mission forward with vigor, passion, and creativity."

Guastavino's was originally designed by renowned architect Rafael Guastavino and his son as part of the Queensboro Bridge, using the Catalan vaulting technique. Originally a marketplace, it transformed into a restaurant in 2000, and then a premier event space in 2005. Guastavino's offers a stunning architectural backdrop, perfect for hosting WJA's gala and celebrating an industry that values enduring beauty and craftsmanship.

The evening will commence with a VIP welcome, sponsored by [Aphrodise](#), wherein VIP guests will be greeted and escorted towards the red carpet and step & repeat for photographs. After forty-five minutes, the doors will open to all guests for red carpet entry, and they will enjoy delicious, passed cocktails and canapés, followed by an elegant dinner buffet. The program begins with opening remarks from WJA President Susan Chandler, and DJ Renata will set the mood with the first musical set of the evening.

As a fundraiser in support of WJA, the gala is not only a celebration of past achievements but is also a reflection of the organization's mission to continue pushing boundaries. The highlight of the "Future of Forty," honors visionary leaders and trailblazers who are currently shaping the future of the trade by driving change, nurturing originality, and sharing resources with the industry. In line with this, the evening will spotlight community champions with a re-envisioned Awards for Excellence presentation.

Annie E. Doresca is the recipient of the evening's Community Award, honoring her outstanding dedication to fostering positive change and inclusivity within both the jewelry industry and her local community. As Chief Financial and Operating Officer at Jewelers of America and founding president of the Black in Jewelry Coalition, Annie's work embodies a commitment to service, collaboration, and innovation. Her impact extends to her nine-year tenure on the Baldwin Union Free School Board, where she champions educational excellence, equity, and community upliftment. Annie's extensive leadership in nonprofit financial strategy and governance underscores her deep-rooted dedication to ethical, sustainable practices across all her professional and personal endeavors, making her a truly deserving recipient of the award.

The Legacy Award will honor Alexis Padis, recognizing her family's enduring contribution to the jewelry industry and her next generation leadership in ensuring its continued success. As President of Padis Jewelry since 2019, Alexis has skillfully navigated the family business through challenging times, most notably during the pandemic, by embracing innovation and an omnichannel approach that has set new benchmarks for the industry. The Legacy Award celebrates businesses like Padis Jewelry, which have spanned multiple generations and made an enduring contribution to the trade. Founded in 1974 by Steve Padis, the San Francisco-based independent jeweler, Padis Jewelry, has built a reputation for excellence in quality, ethical practices, and community involvement. His daughter Alexis, an AGS Certified Gemologist Appraiser, exemplifies the resilience and strategic vision that are hallmarks of the award. Her dedication to upholding the values of the independent jeweler, promoting ethical standards, and fostering a culture of continued education has earned her widespread recognition, including the 2021 Young Titleholder of the Year Award and a place among Jewelers of America's "20 Under 40." Now serving as Board President of the American Gem Society (AGS), Alexis continues to inspire the industry while carrying forward the legacy of her family's business. Her ability to adapt and thrive in changing times make her a fitting recipient of the award, which honors those whose businesses have set a standard for quality and influence across generations.

Grant Mobley will be awarded with the inaugural WJA Innovator Award, a recognition honoring his transformative impact on the jewelry industry through creativity and visionary leadership. As the Jewelry & Watch Editor for *Only Natural Diamonds*, Mobley has used his platform, and exceptional writing skills, to elevate natural diamonds, showcasing their beauty and global significance. With roots in his family's retail jewelry business to overseeing diamond sourcing and manufacturing in China and Thailand, and leading sales for a world-leading diamond sightholder, Mobley embodies the experience behind this award. His

gemological knowledge, paired with his passion for sharing their natural wonder, has made him an industry go-to across mainstream media outlets and red-carpet events. Grant's Instagram following tunes in for a daily dose of education mixed with playfulness, keeping his audience engaged. His exceptional ability to communicate the magic of natural diamonds across media perfectly reflects the spirit of the Innovator Award.

The Kaiser Award is a prestigious honor, recognizing a man in the industry who exemplifies the qualities that the late Ben Kaiser embodied—wit, wisdom, ethics, leadership, and unwavering support for the trade. This year, the award's distinguished recipient is Terry Chandler, whose career spans an impressive 57 years. Terry is best known for his leadership as President/CEO the Diamond Council of America (DCA), where he has played a pivotal role in elevating jewelry professionals through innovative education and certification programs via distance education in five countries. His influence extends beyond education, as a champion of ethical standards and a guiding figure in shaping the future of the industry through mentorship and advocacy—consistently supporting organizations, trade shows, and related events with tireless dedication and a collaborative spirit. Terry's commitment to excellence is evident not only in his professional achievements but also in his personal values, supporting his wife Cindy's career and being actively involved in the Women's Jewelry Association as a speaker and sponsor. With a reputation for fairness, charm, and a visionary outlook, Terry Chandler embodies the high standards and character that the Kaiser Award celebrates.

Following the awards program, guests will savor an exceptional dessert selection as DJ Renata sets the tone for the evening's second set. The WJA Gala will also feature Mystery Boxes, each available for purchase at \$100, offering guests a chance to unwrap a surprise. All proceeds from the Mystery Boxes will go towards

the WJA Foundation – a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides scholarship and grant funding for women who are pursuing or furthering their careers specifically in jewelry-related fields throughout the supply chain.

With each box concealing a unique luxury item, participants have the chance to win gifts such as: a \$1,000 gift card and shopping experience to Veronica Beard, a Hearts on Fire diamond pendant, Artistry sterling silver earrings, a set of rainbow sapphire rounds by Nash James Enterprises, a jewelry business account health report from Accounting for Jewelers, a \$1,500 gift card to Foundrae, luxury watches from Citizen, Bulova, Frederique Constant and Alpina, a premium cleaning kit from The Kingswood Company and more. All boxes are identical in appearance, adding to the excitement as guests discover the special item they've received.

The “Future of Forty” gala reflects WJA's commitment to advancing the jewelry industry through community support. The inspiring evening offers the perfect opportunity to unwind, connect with fellow attendees, and enjoy a night of memory-making and philanthropy. Guests will be treated to an unforgettable experience as they join in shaping the Women’s Jewelry Association’s future.

The Women’s Jewelry Association would like to acknowledge the support of its gala sponsors, who make this extraordinary event possible, especially Silver Sponsors: Citizen Watch America, GIA, JCK, Jewelers Mutual, and Smiling Rocks. WJA is also incredibly grateful to its Radiant Sponsors: the Centurion Jewelry Show and De Beers. Additionally, many thanks to the “Forty Sponsors”: Accounting for Jewelers, Ashi Diamonds, BC Clark Jewelers, Casadevall Group, David Yurman, Elias World Media, Goldstar, Helzberg Diamonds, Jasani, Jewelers of America, Lagos, M. Schamroth & Sons, Owl Financial Group, Pac Team Group, Inc., Richline, Sheetal Group, SRK, Stuller, Synchrony, and TNG. WJA is very proud to partner with [Aphrodise](#), the “Future of Forty” VIP in-kind cocktail sponsor. The company’s

generous contribution of their award-winning luxury sparkling rosé wine will be a highlight of the evening.

The success of this year's gala is attributed to the dedicated efforts of an exceptional team, led by gala co-chairs Monica Elias and Gabrielle Grazi. Sponsorship Chairs, Rebecca Boyajian-Pecnik and Tanya Parikh, played an instrumental role in securing key partnerships that have elevated the evening's impact. The gala committee includes an impressive lineup of industry professionals: Lotanna Amina (Mina) Okpukpara, Briana Belbeck, Rebecca Boyajian-Pecnik, Kendra Bridelle, Jennifer Brock, Shauna Brook, Susan Chandler, Mariel Diaz, Rachel Goldflam, Michele Lau-Gush, Nikia Levesque, Morgan Miller, Lily Mullen, Tanya Parikh, Melissa Rodgers, Nora Saari, and Ivette Stephanopoulos. Their dedication and vision have ensured a remarkable event that celebrates the achievements and bright future of the industry.

Attire for the WJA "Future of Forty" Gala is Cocktail/Festive (Dress to Impress). Tickets for the gala are limited, and available for purchase at <https://wedoauctions.com/bidapp/index.php?slug=wjagala>. For sponsorship opportunities and further information, please contact [info@womensjewelryassociation.com](mailto:info@womensjewelryassociation.com). Sponsorship options are listed on the registration page. For inquiries regarding this press release, contact Pietra Communications by calling 212-913-9761 or email [info@pietrapr.com](mailto:info@pietrapr.com).

**About the Women's Jewelry Association:**

The Women's Jewelry Association (WJA) is a trailblazing organization dedicated to empowering and advancing women within the jewelry and watch industries. In 1983, WJA was founded on the belief that women could create lasting change by connecting, mentoring, and recognizing one another's accomplishments. Today, WJA stands as a global network of professionals spanning diverse roles, from

designers and manufacturers to retailers and media representatives. The organization's mission is to facilitate professional growth through networking, education, leadership development, and a wide range of member services. Through its numerous chapters across the U.S. and around the world, WJA offers a spectrum of benefits, including networking events, educational programs, mentoring initiatives, scholarships, and grants.

**About the Women's Jewelry Association Foundation:**

The WJA Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Women's Jewelry Association (WJA), dedicated to furthering the organization's mission of providing women in the jewelry and watch industries with educational and business opportunities to help them achieve their full career potential. The Foundation operates as a 501(c)(3) corporation, actively engaging individuals and corporations to contribute and make meaningful impact through the distribution of scholarships and grants.