

ISSUE 16

SEP 2025

POOLNATION

SIX WOMEN

Changing the Industry

SPOTLIGHTS & INSIGHTS



**2025 NEXT GENERATION
FEMALE LEADERS**

**SARAH HOOPES, RACHEL HOFFER,
JOHANNA MALDONADO-CERDA, NATALIA
GUZMAN**

**2025 POOL NATION MOST
INFLUENTIAL WOMEN**

**STACEY GEARHART
& CASEY MCGOVERN**



WELCOME LETTER

Dear Pool Nation,

Just a few weeks ago, we found ourselves in the back of the room at the 2025 Pool Nation Women's Summit, completely captivated by what was happening in front of us. The atmosphere was charged with energy and possibility. All around us were women who are innovators and leaders, redefining what is possible in this industry.

Some of these incredible women have been with us from day one, supporting our vision when it was barely more than an idea scribbled on a napkin. Others had just stepped into this world for the first time, bringing fresh perspectives and enthusiasm. But here's what struck me most: whether they're household names in our industry or heroes known only within their own communities, every single woman in that room shared the same fierce determination to not just survive, but to absolutely thrive. This Summit became something beyond our wildest expectations.

Here's the thing though – none of it would have been possible without the incredible people who poured their hearts into making it happen. We want to give a special recognition to Heritage Pool Supply Group

for believing in our mission from the very beginning; your support means everything. Doreen King, our VP of Talent Development, orchestrated this entire event with the kind of precision and care that made every attendee feel valued. And Alicia Stephens brought such warmth and energy as our emcee that she made every moment feel like a celebration. Behind them were speakers who shared their deepest insights, partners who opened doors, and sponsors who invested not just money, but genuine belief in what we're building together.

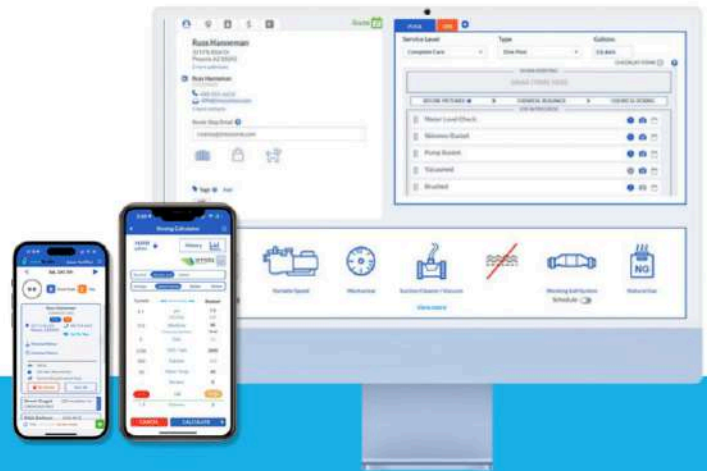
As you read this issue, you will see faces and stories of women who inspire us all. You will meet the two Most Influential Women of 2025 and our Next Generation Female Leaders. But more than that, I hope you catch the spirit of what is happening across Pool Nation. This is about legacy. It is about courage. And it is about a future where women continue to lead, innovate, and elevate the pool business.

Thank you for being part of this journey. The best is yet to come.

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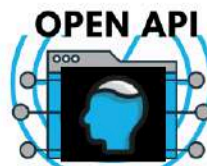
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THE 2025 POOL NATION WOMEN'S SUMMIT

A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN WHO LEAD

When tickets for the 2025 Pool Nation Women's Summit went on sale, they were gone in less than a week. Registration sold out in just six days, with a waiting list of nearly 50 women hoping to get in. The overwhelming response sent a clear message: women across the pool and spa industry are hungry for authentic connection, practical tools, and a safe space to learn and grow together.

What began as a modest networking gathering of 22 women four years ago has evolved into a premier industry summit, drawing 150 attendees from across the United States and Canada to North Texas this year. The event brought together women from every sector of the business world, including executives from major corporations, independent service professionals, owners of small family operations, marketing directors and other leaders.

"The excitement this year was off the charts," said Edgar De Jesus, CEO of Pool Nation. "Everywhere you looked, women were inspiring each other, sharing stories, and building each other up. That is exactly why we started this movement, to create a place where people could come together without judgment, learn from one another, and shine a spotlight on the incredible talent in our industry."



HERITAGE LEADERS SET THE TONE

The Summit opened with heartfelt words from Pool Nation's longtime partners at Heritage Pool Supply Group. Matt McDermott, President of Heritage Family of Companies, welcomed attendees alongside Scott Frost, President of Heritage Pool Supply.

McDermott reflected on the growth of the event and the power of community. "The excitement, the awe, the pride, it gets bigger every year. We joked that we now need a bigger space, a bigger boat. But that is a great problem to have because it means this community is thriving. What I see here is unity. People from all different companies, even competing companies, all coming together to support each other. That is powerful, and it is why we are so proud to play a part in this."



FROST, ATTENDING HIS FIRST SUMMIT SINCE JOINING HERITAGE, SHARED SIMILAR THOUGHTS.

"THIS INDUSTRY IS ABOUT MORE THAN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. IT IS ABOUT HEALTH, WELLNESS, JOY, AND CREATING MEMORIES. WHEN I LOOK AROUND THIS ROOM, I SEE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS WHO ARE GOING TO CARRY THAT FORWARD. THE WORK YOU ARE DOING HERE IS GOING TO ELEVATE THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY."

Their words set the tone for two days filled with professional development, empowering workshops, and stories from trailblazers who are reimagining what leadership looks like.

BUILDING A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

For Edgar, the growth of the Summit is a reminder of Pool Nation's three foundational principles: supporting the financial well-being of pool professionals, creating safe spaces for learning without judgment, and shining a spotlight on the industry. Those principles guided the creation of the Women's Summit and now fuel its expansion.

"We never wanted this to be just another conference," John Flawless said. "This is about legacy. It is about courage. It is about investing in women at every stage of their careers so that the entire industry grows stronger. When people leave here, we want them to take tools and confidence that they can put into action the very next day."

That commitment inspired the launch of the new LeadHERship Drive Program, unveiled at this year's event. Designed as a year-round initiative, the program guides women through four key stages:



The schedule also featured panels and networking opportunities that gave participants both inspiration and tangible strategies to take back to their businesses and careers.

“THIS SUMMIT WAS ABOUT MORE THAN GATHERING IN A ROOM,” ZAC NICKLAS SAID. “IT WAS ABOUT LIFTING EACH OTHER UP, BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS, AND CREATING A LEGACY THAT WILL OUTLAST US ALL.”

Leading with Confidence, Managing with Impact, Celebration at the Women’s Summit, and Elevating with Strategy. Participants will engage in live and virtual sessions, mentorship opportunities, case studies, and certifications, all with the goal of building practical skills and preparing the next generation of female leaders.

“The LeadHERship Drive is about more than checking a box,” Edgar added. “It is about building careers, building confidence, and building the future of this industry.” The 2025 Summit was themed: Inspire. Empower. Elevate. The event was brought to life through keynote sessions, breakout workshops, and powerful personal stories of resilience. Attendees heard from Melissa Kieling, co-founder and CEO of Hyve Security, who opened the summit with her keynote message “Turning Adversity into Innovation.”

Industry pioneers including Stacey Gearhart and Crystal Lengua-Rowell shared their journeys during a fireside chat.





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POOL NATION

2025 MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN AWARDS

The 2025 Pool Nation Women's Summit recognized two trailblazing leaders with the prestigious Most Influential Women award, honoring their lasting impact on the pool, spa, and outdoor living space. The award was created to spotlight women whose contributions extend beyond professional titles, celebrating leadership, mentorship and resilience in an industry that has not always done enough to acknowledge its pioneers. This year's honorees reflect the heart of that mission. Here are their inspiring stories...



STACEY GEARHART: **'WHAT MATTERS MOST IS THE IMPACT WE CONTINUE TO MAKE'**

When Stacey Gearhart walked on stage to accept her recognition as one of Pool Nation's Most Influential Women of 2025, she admitted the award was unexpected. The hardware in her hands was meaningful, but for her the words spoken in that moment carried even greater weight. "I feel very honored to be recognized like this," she said. "I just think there is so much more I can do, but if I have made some sort of impact and it is being recognized, that is a great legacy to leave."

For Gearhart, leadership has always been about impact. Today, she serves as Vice President and General Manager of Commercial Water and Pool at Rheem Manufacturing, one of the most respected names in the industry. She is widely regarded as a leader who develops talent, invests in people and places customers and employees at the center of every decision. Her recognition as Most Influential Woman is not only a reflection of her professional achievements, but of the culture she has built and the influence she has had on those around her.

FROM MICHIGAN ROOTS TO CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

Gearhart's life began in Howell, Michigan, a small town where her father ran his own business. Watching him as an entrepreneur shaped her early understanding of work and leadership. She attended the University of Michigan, earning a degree in mechanical engineering. "I was good at math and science, and people told me I should be an engineer like my dad," she recalled.



She began her career at General Motors, gaining experience in engineering and manufacturing before realizing her true calling was not in design but in business. After completing her MBA at Michigan State University, she shifted her career path, spending time at Whirlpool before finding her way to Rheem in 2013.

Her rise through the company has been steady and deliberate. She started in product management and strategy, expanded into marketing and training, then took on responsibility for Rheem's global water business. About two and a half years ago, she was tapped to lead the commercial water division, which includes the pool business. Today, she oversees two significant businesses under the Rheem umbrella, driving growth while keeping customer needs at the heart of every initiative.



A CULTURE OF PEOPLE FIRST

Gearhart is quick to credit Rheem's culture as one of the most important aspects of her work. "We are a very employee and customer centric organization," she explained. "We think about the customer every day, but we also make sure the employee is happy and supported in every way possible. When it comes to our pros, whether on the pool side or elsewhere, they are at the center of everything we do."

That people-first approach has become her hallmark. Colleagues consistently describe her as the kind of leader they would follow anywhere, a mentor who recognizes talent and helps it grow. Gearhart's connection to Pool Nation began when she took on her current role. The marketing team introduced her to the organization, explaining its unique mission of supporting pool professionals and elevating the industry as a whole.

"I ASKED A FEW QUESTIONS, AND I REMEMBER SAYING, 'OKAY, SOUNDS GREAT,'" SHE RECALLED WITH A SMILE. "BUT THEN IT SPIRALED. EDGAR REACHED OUT, I SPENT MORE TIME LEARNING ABOUT WHAT THEY DO, AND AFTER ATTENDING EVENTS, I BECAME MORE AND MORE ENAMORED WITH THEIR MISSION."

That partnership deepened as Gearhart saw firsthand the impact Pool Nation has in creating community and shining a spotlight on an industry that deserves more recognition.



WHY THE WOMEN'S SUMMIT MATTERS

One of the events that has left the deepest impression on Gearhart is the Pool Nation Women's Summit. She has attended many women's leadership events throughout her career, but said the atmosphere of this one is different. "Every time you bring women together, the energy is impossible to recreate," she said. "The support, the engagement, the excitement, the motivation you do not see that every day. When you have moments like that, they can be real amplifiers for how we work afterwards."

Beyond the boardroom, Gearhart is a proud wife and mother of two. She and her husband are raising a 15-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter in Southern California, where she balances the

demands of leading a major business with the everyday joys and challenges of family life. Parenting teenagers, she admits, comes with its share of surprises, but she approaches it with the same resilience and humor that define her professional career.

Receiving the Most Influential Women award is, for Gearhart, less about recognition and more about responsibility. It is a marker of what she has accomplished, but also a reminder of the work still ahead. "I take a lot of pride in this," she said. "But what matters most is the impact we can continue to make. That is what inspires me to keep going."



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CASEY MCGOVERN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EVERY CHILD A SWIMMER, CARRIES A MOTHER'S PROMISE FORWARD



A LIFE UPENDED

Casey McGovern never expected her life to be defined by one August afternoon in 2009. At the time, she was living what felt like a season of abundance. Married to her husband, Shannon, and raising three daughters in Coral Springs, Florida, she described those days as ordinary in the best possible way. The family had recently purchased a house with four bedrooms and a backyard pool, the kind of dream that

When Casey McGovern's name was called at the 2025 Pool Nation Women's Summit, the entire room rose to its feet. The applause was loud, but it was also laced with tears. Everyone understood this was more than an award. It was the fulfillment of a promise born from heartbreak. For McGovern, now serving as Executive Director of Every Child a Swimmer, being named one of the year's Most Influential Women was a powerful reminder of the vow she made 16 years ago after the unimaginable loss of her 19-month-old daughter, Edna Mae.

"I can't bring her back," McGovern said, her voice steady with conviction. "But I promised her I would never stop. This is my mission until my last breath."

seemed almost scripted for South Florida families. Her youngest daughter, Edna Mae, was the joy of that chapter. She arrived just weeks after McGovern lost her own mother during a heart transplant, and her birth brought comfort and healing to a family still raw with grief. With snowy white hair, wide blue eyes, and a spunky spirit, the toddler everyone called "Em" quickly left her mark. She loved cookies, ice cream sandwiches,

and dancing to her own rhythm. At just 19 months old, Em's personality filled the house. "She beat to her own drum," McGovern said. "She was meant to carve a place in this world."

On August 3, after a long day in the pool with her sisters, Casey laid Em down for a nap in her bed and paused to admire her angelic face before heading out for groceries. By the time she returned home, Em had woken up. Casey placed her in a chair while she began putting the groceries away. The house was busy and full of distractions, with conversations pulling her into another room. When she came back, the chair was empty. The sliding glass door stood open.

"I walked outside and saw her in the pool," Casey recalled. "Her eyes were still open. In that instant, my world stopped." McGovern remembers the chaos of what happened next in fragments. She pulled her daughter from the water, screamed for help, and watched as her husband performed CPR. In the ambulance, she rode beside her baby's small body, now surrounded by tubes and machines. For a week, the family stayed at the hospital, praying for a miracle. Casey brushed her daughter's hair, placed drops in her eyes, and whispered again and again that everything would be okay. On August 11, they said goodbye. Edna Mae's organs were donated to save four other lives. "From the time I checked out at Publix to the moment I came home and found her, only 29 minutes had passed,"

McGovern shared. "In that short span, I went from being part of a normal family of five to living my worst nightmare." The grief was crushing. But even in the hospital, Casey felt a seed of something larger taking root. She made her daughter a promise: while she couldn't bring her back, she would dedicate her life to ensuring no other family endured the same devastation. "God entrusted me with this mission," she said. "I promised her I would never stop. That promise became my purpose."



EVERY CHILD A SWIMMER

Drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children ages one to four and the second leading cause for children up to 14. For every child lost, eight more suffer nonfatal injuries that often leave lasting effects. Casey learned quickly her family was not alone. Thousands of others had lived her nightmare, most in silence.

She refused to stay silent. She began telling Em's story in libraries, parenting groups, and community meetings. "This happened to me, but it doesn't have to happen to you," she told them. Her grief became a message of urgency: children can begin swim lessons as soon as they are mobile, pools can have barriers and alarms, and water watchers can prevent tragedy.

Her advocacy soon stretched far beyond her local community. Casey spent eight years with the Florida Department of Health, running drowning prevention programs and chairing child death review committees. She pushed for campaigns that framed water safety as empowerment rather than fear. Her leadership helped bring about the 2021 passage of the Every Child a Swimmer law in Florida, requiring schools to share water safety information with parents and connect them to swim lessons. Similar legislation has since passed in Georgia and Arkansas.

Casey was quick to point out that she was not the one who carried it across the finish line.

That credit, she says, belongs to Dr. Bill Kent, Chairman of the Board of the International Swimming Hall of Fame and a pioneering leader in the pool industry. "I assisted him, but he was the



lead person who got it done,” she said. “He not only spearheaded the legislation, but he also believed in my ability to build a program that’s driven by change and takes a bottom-up approach. His leadership has been the foundation that’s allowed me to do what I do.”

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The momentum grew into something larger. Casey was asked to lead Every Child a Swimmer (ECAS), a division of the International Swimming Hall of Fame. ECAS provides scholarships for lessons, builds partnerships with swim schools, and works with lawmakers to expand water safety education.

Under her leadership, ECAS has become a national force. In 2025 alone, the program reached 1,493 children, dispersed \$510,342, and provided 21,522 swim lessons. “Every dollar, every lesson, every child represents a life that may be saved,” she said.

It costs \$500 to take one child from risk to safety in the water. ECAS now partners with 362 swim schools across the country, each approved to spend up to \$10,000 a year to reach underserved families. Together, that represents more than \$3 million dedicated to drowning prevention. Still, the need is far greater. Pool professionals are in a unique position to expand this reach. By sponsoring, advocating, or connecting families to resources, industry leaders can ensure no child is left behind. “We operate with full transparency and hold our swim school partners to the highest level of accountability,” she said. “We need partners to come alongside us so we can reach even more children.”

Casey’s focus remains sharp: expand access to lessons, maintain integrity in scholarship programs, and foster accountability to drive

real change. For her, it is not about policy alone but about protecting families from living her story. “Every child lost to drowning is one too many,” she said. “The statistics are grim, but they are not unchangeable.”



CARRYING THE PROMISE FORWARD

Recognition is something Casey says she has never sought. Faith and family bring her the greatest purpose, and she prefers to clap for others

“I don’t feel worthy,” she said after receiving her award. “But on the hard days, recognition like this is God’s reminder to stay the course.”

Her work is as personal as it is public. Each year on August 3, the family honors Em's memory with acts of service, often at the pediatric intensive care unit where she spent her last week. "Those heroes saved us," Casey said. "They knew what we needed when we didn't even know how to ask."

Life also made room for joy again. Not long after Em's passing, Casey and Shannon welcomed a son, born on May 31. "He was meant to be here," Casey said. "And she is here too, just in a different way." This December, Edna Mae would have turned 18 years old. Though her time on earth was short, her life continues to inspire a movement that is saving countless children. Casey believes her daughter would encourage the pool industry and communities everywhere to come together, to protect families, and to make water safety a priority. "Her life mattered," Casey said. "And through this mission, her legacy is saving lives."



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POOL NATION

2025 NEXT GENERATION FEMALE LEADERS

Pool Nation knows the future of this industry will be written by the next generation of leaders. The veterans have blazed the trail, but new voices are already stepping up with fresh ideas, bold vision, and the courage to do things differently. The 2025 Next Generation Female Leaders Award was created to honor changemakers who are already making an impact. This year, four dynamic women stood out from the crowd. They are innovators, problem-solvers, and leaders who are shaping the way forward.

Meet our 2025 Rising Stars.



RACHEL HOFFER

Heritage Pool Supply

Area Sales Manager - Great Lakes Region

Rachel Hoffer has built her career on embracing change and rising to new challenges. She started out as a sales rep with Quality Pool Supply and, after the company's 2021 acquisition by Heritage Pool Supply, quickly climbed the ranks. Earlier this year, she stepped into the role of Area Sales Manager for the Great Lakes region, proving that hard work and adaptability can open doors.

When her name was called as one of the Next Generation Female Leaders of 2025, the applause said it all. "This event is refreshing," Hoffer said. "I love connecting with people, hearing their stories, and realizing just how many corners of this industry we all represent."

Her advice to other women in the field is simple but powerful: take the leap. "Don't be scared, just go with it," she said. "The connections you make, the network you build, and the confidence you gain are worth it. This industry isn't easy, but when we come together, it becomes something extraordinary."



SARAH HOOPES

Business Owner, Operations Manager & Pool Industry Consultant

Phoenix, Arizona

For Sarah Hoopes, 2025 has been a breakthrough year. Based in Phoenix, she has not only been nominated for Pool Pro Magazine's prestigious 30 Under 40 list but was also named Pool Nation's Next Generation Leader of 2025. She is also an active member of the Pool Nation Business Matrix, where she sharpens her skills alongside other up-and-coming professionals.

Hoopes says the Pool Nation Women's Summit gave her something different from any other industry event she's attended. "It's totally transformative," she said. "The energy here makes me want to go back and make real changes in my community, with my company, and throughout the Phoenix area." Recognition, she says, feels especially meaningful in an industry where women's contributions can sometimes go unnoticed. "It's such an honor," Hoopes said. "This is something I did on my own, for me. To be recognized for that, in a room full of trailblazing women, is something I'll never forget."



NATALIA GUZMAN

Heritage Pool Supply

*Regional Product Manager -
Southern California*

Natalia Guzman grew up in California's San Fernando Valley, but her roots run deep in Mexico, where she spent several formative years of her childhood. That blend of cultures, she says, gave her a unique perspective on people and community. Today, she brings that same perspective into her career with Heritage Pool Supply, where she was recently promoted to National Pool Finishes Product Manager. After joining the company in 2022 as a territory manager, Guzman quickly rose through the ranks, proving herself as both a strategist and a leader.

For Guzman, success comes down to connection. "Value the network that you have," she said. "From the counter staff to upper management to your vendor reps and the social groups that bring us together, we all need each other. This industry isn't easy, but the more family we create around ourselves, the stronger it becomes."



JOHANNA MALDONADO-CERDA

Only Pools Service & Repairs Owner

San Diego, California

For Johanna Maldonado-Cerda, success is a family pursuit. Alongside her husband, she co-owns Only Pools Service & Repairs in San Diego, a business they have built with grit, faith, and determination. What began five years ago as a small operation was rebranded into a full corporation two years ago, marking a new chapter in their journey. Johanna oversees administration and operations while her husband manages service, making the company a true partnership built on trust and vision.

Her drive to learn has fueled their growth. She first discovered Pool Nation through its podcast, eager to find insights to help their young company thrive. “We were eager to learn and just started listening, attending classes, and staying engaged,” she said. That commitment led them to the Pool Nation Business Matrix and ultimately to the Women’s Summit, where Johanna found both inspiration and practical tools. “It helps you dive deeper into the why and how of running a business and gives you the tools to take back home and apply with your team.”

At the 2025 Women’s Summit, Johanna was stunned to hear her name called. “It’s an honor,” she said. “We’re always trying to grow, learning from every aspect of the business, and taking what we learn back home to make our team stronger.”





WOMEN'S SUMMIT 2025 PHOTO GALLERY















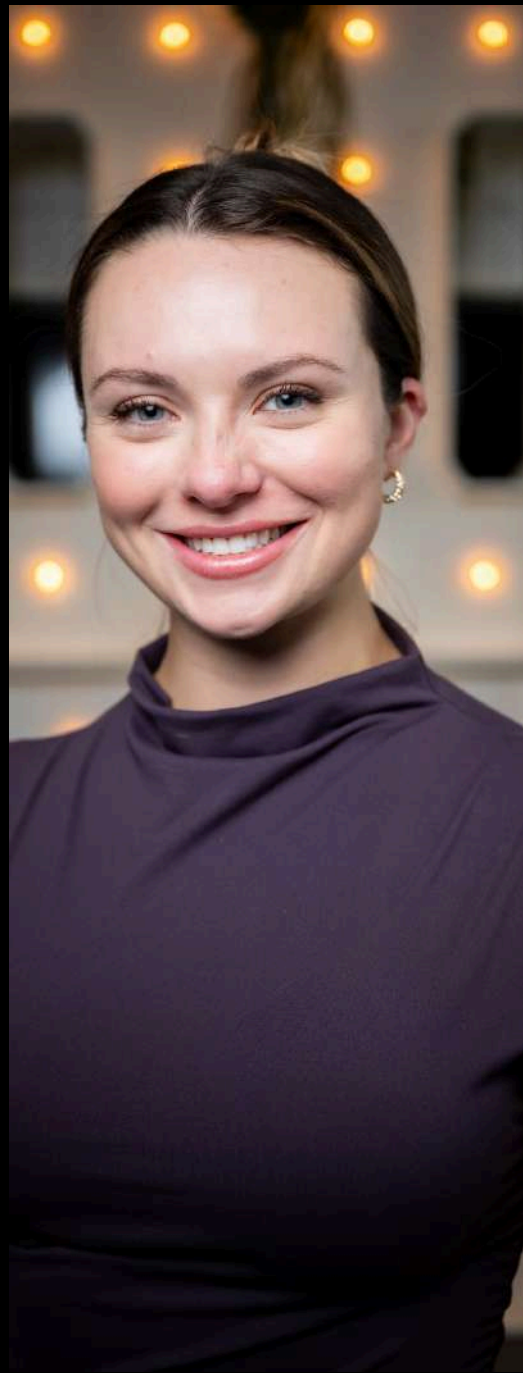
WOMEN OF BIOLAB SHOW UP IN FULL FORCE AT 2025 WOMEN'S SUMMIT

The Biolab logo is displayed in a large, bold, grey sans-serif font. A thick blue curved line, resembling a stylized wave or a swoosh, is positioned directly beneath the text.

This year, the Women of BioLab made a powerful statement with their presence at the 2025 Pool Nation Women's Summit. More than a dozen leaders and rising professionals filled the room with energy, camaraderie, and unmistakable support for one another. Alicia Stephens, Director of Training & Education at BioLab, served as emcee for the event, bringing her trademark mix of energy and humor to the stage.

Mallory Wachowski also represented BioLab as a featured speaker, sharing personal insights that resonated deeply with attendees. Together, the BioLab team demonstrated what it means to stand as one – showing not only the strength of their company, but the strength of women shaping the future of the pool industry.





JANA AURINGER

NATIONAL PLASTERERS COUNCIL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

A 40+ year veteran of the swimming pool industry, Jana has owned a swimming pool plaster company, a weekly pool service company, and a third party independent plaster consulting company in which she has compiled a vast knowledge of swimming pool plaster research and science to resolve plaster problems. She has promoted the industry through her affiliations with the National Plasterers Council, previously on the Board of Directors and various committees, as well as the Advisory Board of the National Pool Industry Research Center. She served on the APSP Board of Directors & was Chair of the APSP Service Council for two terms, volunteered on the Service Education Committee and is an active IPSSA member. Jana was recognized as the APSP Region 3 Volunteer of the Decade in 2012, selected as the NPC Member of the Year 4 times by her peers and was honored as an "APSP Fellow" in the 2012 inaugural Fellows class.



She currently serves as a Subject Matter Expert on the PHTA Recreation Water & Air Quality Committee and a member of the PHTA/TPSC - ASR Task Force. Jana is a certified instructor of the NPC Start-up Certification course as well as a faculty member of Genesis. A native Texan, she is currently the Director of Education for the National Plasterers Council.















WOMEN'S SUMMIT 2025

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NETWORKING: THE POWER OF AUTHENTIC CONNECTION
DOREEN KING - POOL NATION
10:45 AM TO 12:15 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION
LIFT AS YOU LEAD: THE MENTORSHIP EFFECT
1:15 PM TO 2:15 PM

BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS
CRYSTAL LENGUA-ROWELL
COVER VALET
2:30 PM TO 4:00 PM

LEADING WITH COURAGE AND CONNECTION
ALICIA STEPHENS - BIOLAB
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- Exclusive access to the SRS Hospitality Suite at Mandalay Bay
- Two tickets to the SRS Exclusive Concert at the House of Blues Las Vegas — **Dec. 30**
- Entry to the SRS Las Vegas Bowl Fan Fest Tailgate Party at Allegiant Stadium — **Dec. 31**
- Premium game day tickets to the SRS Las Vegas Bowl at Allegiant Stadium — **Dec. 31**
- Round-trip airport transportation in Las Vegas for two — **Dec. 30 & Jan. 1**

NOTE:

- Round-trip airfare not included
- Meals outside SRS-hosted events not provided
- Additional personal expenses & guests not included



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24-25



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- 5:00



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