

### LASSO'S 2020 Top Women in Events

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them." – **Maya Angelou** 

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Charleston, SC and ATLANTA, July 15, 2020 - In today's world, it is increasingly difficult to be in the ever-changing and competitive event industry. A year ago, it was a fast-paced, high-stress juggernaut of an industry; in 2020, it was turned upside-down by COVID-19 and unfortunately many businesses have been forced to diversify or compete for the smaller opportunities that are left. Now, more than ever, we can see what it really means to be a strong woman in this predominantly male landscape and to motivate other women to be the best versions of themselves.

For the third year in a row here at LASSO, we are highlighting and celebrating some of the most influential women in this industry who have risen to the occasion to lift their teams and businesses up in the face of any circumstances they encounter. When we started this initiative a few months ago, we asked the people in our vast network of event professionals to nominate women who exemplified what it means to be a leader. We received a groundswell of support and an influx of nominations. It was harder this year than ever before to pick our winners. But, after much deliberation and additional feedback from the industry, we made the tough decision to showcase 100 women who had amazing stories and were recognized by a number of their colleagues and partners.

Without further ado, these are the hard-working and inspiring Top 100 Women in Events for 2020. Please join us in celebrating these women in our Top 10, Top 50, and Top 100 categories (in alphabetical order). Thank you again to everyone who participated and to all the women out there making a difference and setting a great example of how to rise to the top and make the world a better place for everyone around you.

### **Top 10 Winners**



Mia Choi Co-Founder & CCO MAS Event + Design



Stephon Crumbley BET LIVE Sr. Director of Operations



Melody DePree Labor Manager 3G Productions



Renee Horton
Producer
Mills James



Helah Kehati Founder & CEO JPO Concepts



Rachel Petty
Asset Supervisor
BlackOak Technical
Productions



Ryan Razori
Production Manager
David Beahm
Experiences



Julie Renninger
Director of Sales
IMS Technology
Services



Kylie Russell
CEO
Priceless One Management



Jill Vance
Co-Founder & Managing Partner
aVenue Event Group

# **Get to Know our Top 10 Winners**



Mia Choi Co-Founder & CCO MAS Event + Design

As CCO and Co-Founder of MAS Event + Design, Mia's specialty is in crafting strong brand messages married with cutting-edge technology alongside innovative creative. Her vision and unrelenting work on programs such as the Google Home Mini Launch Tour have won the agency many prestigious

awards. One of these awards is the Event Marketer's Best Pop-Up Retail Experience of 2018! Head of YouTube Events and Experiences and Google Ads, Nikki Garvey, describes Mia as "a true visionary in experiential marketing" who has "developed some of the most inspiring work with Google over the past years - from YouTube Brandcast to the Google Home Mini Donut Shop."

Mia is the reason why the top employees in the industry come to work at MAS. They wish to learn from her exceptional knowledge base built from years of experience in all-things experiential. They also strive to be a part of the diverse and unique work culture that she and her partner, Sneha, have built. This rare culture is one that collaborates without ego, embraces the hustle, finds solutions not problems, and believes hierarchy is not as important as the "good idea."

MAS started in Mia's loft apartment in Brooklyn and was founded from her desire to blaze her own trail in a primarily male-dominated field. The two female founders of MAS jokingly say that they "didn't want to work for men anymore!" It was in that sentiment and need for more women-owned businesses in the industry that really gave them the spark to start their own company. They are proud to have 80% of their leadership team made up of people of color. Moreover, 57% are women, 43% are men, 15% of employees identify themselves as LGBTQ and 57% as other than white.

"MAS means MORE. So, it's only fitting that during this time we are propelling ourselves forward and innovating on experiences and pushing our business to new realms," says Jessica Ritter, Account Executive at MAS. "During this time, the need for community has become paramount. We are only MORE at MAS because of our most valuable asset, our people, and our vibrant community. With this understanding we knew we had to think fast and think about impact. How can we reassess our capabilities for the greater good?"

As a response, MAS has shifted some production capabilities to emergency device fabrication including producing much needed face shields for our heroic nurses and doctors who are on the front lines of the pandemic. Since the program launched, MAS has been able to fulfill countless deliveries to doctors and healthcare organizations all across the country. They have seen an outpouring of generosity with corporate sponsors providing over 2,000 face shields to doctors at Mt Sinai, Elmhurst, and The Brooklyn Hospital. And, that's just the beginning! "These are unprecedented times and we are doing what we do best: finding creative solutions, mobilizing and executing," states Jessica.

If MAS means MORE, then we want MORE of MAS! We're honored to announce Mia as one of the Top 10 Women in Events for 2020. We're so inspired by this company, why it was founded, and the inclusive nature of the organization.



**Stephon Crumbley**BET L!VE Sr. Director of Operations
BET

Stephon Crumbley is the Sr. Director of Operations for BET Live!, a division at BET Networks - a Viacom company. Here, she oversees & manages the day-to-day operations of BET live events and music festivals. Stephon has over a decade of experience in media and entertainment, working for reputable

companies such as iHeart Media and CBS Radio.

During her tenure at BET, Stephon has successfully overseen and developed multi-million dollar, top tier experiences such as the revamp of The Soul Train Awards, The Soul Train Weekend, The BET Experience, and The St. Lucia Jazz Festival, just to name a few. She plays a leading role in business development, identifying key opportunities to grow and expand the company, its capabilities, and strategic partnerships.

Stephon graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Middle Tennessee State University with highest honors.

"Stephon has always been extremely adaptable and willing to take on more and more difficult and challenging events. During this time of COVID-19, she stayed true to form," says Shanelle Dennis, Stephon's colleague.

Stephon has created an in-house show production that is strictly for BET staff, named BET L!VE Inside Out. This is a show where staff are able to reveal how they are coping with the quarantine. Whether it's through exercise, cooking, or meditating, it is featured and celebrated. The goal was to keep company morale high and to facilitate connection with colleagues. "Needless to say...she's succeeded. This project required her to do double the work, but of course that didn't matter to her," says Shanelle.

"Stephon is a wonderfully positive individual whose mind is always moving forward, communicating thoughts and experiences that have served her well in the past. It is my opinion that Stephon grows by turning every life situation into a true learning experience," concluded Shanelle.

Keeping morale high for team members during these strenuous times is critical. We're happy to award Stephon as a Top 10 Women in Events for 2020 due to her commitment to taking on more work, for the happiness of others.



Melody DePree
Labor Manager
3G Productions

Melody DePree is a Production Coordinator and Labor Manager from Los Angeles, CA. She began her career in the music industry working in marketing for Sony Music Label Group. More recently, she worked for premier audio companies supporting both crewing efforts and helping to produce some of the

largest music festivals and tours in the world.

"Melody DePree is somewhat of a Leprechaun to me," says Stephanie Barcomb, VP of Administration for 3G Productions. "Having spent 20 years in this industry with the same company, I can certainly attest to how difficult it is to find someone that is knowledgeable, especially after such a short time. She firmly understands WHY staffing works the way it does for our industry, truly appreciates the hard work our technicians put in day-in and day-out, and still has the best interest of the employer in mind at all times. Melody has repeatedly proven how truly talented and hardworking she is. It took me some time to get her away from her last company, but she was worth the effort!"

Early on in the pandemic she assisted her company in any way she could and kept continuous communication with the community of technicians, vendors, and clients to support them during these challenging times. In addition, Melody has become an advocate for live event workers across the country. She challenged herself and others to reach out to the media in order to get special pandemic unemployment compensation specifically for event industry workers. She continues to email national news outlets and present letters to elected officials. Her message? To be as loud as possible! "We are good at making noise for a living, so let's do it when WE need it most," says Melody.

It brings Melody joy to see people using their voices, writing op-ed pieces, and spreading the message through social media and the news. "I can't tell you how many crew members have thanked me for being their voice and my response is always, it takes more than one voice because we are louder together," continued Melody. Her efforts and "loudness" have paid off thus far. She was recently interviewed by a reporter from NBC Universal. To follow how she's been advocating, search #weareevents in your social media channels, or connect with her <a href="here">here</a>.

There is no question - Melody goes above and beyond for this industry. She is a true class act, and advocate, and an inspiration. Melody is more than deserving of this award!



Renee Horton
Producer
Mills James

Renee Horton is a Producer with Mills James, one of the Midwest's largest video and event production companies. She has been with the company for more than six years, and currently leads a team of over 30 people to produce projects like Cash Explosion, Ohio Lottery's televised weekly game show. Her role includes

writing the show, managing talent, and overseeing the post-production process - every single week. With the onset of COVID-19, Renee was able to seamlessly transition this production from a monthly batch-taping, to an ever-evolving weekly production.

Within Cash Explosion, Renee created a series of retrospective episodes highlighting the 33-year history of the show, followed by an all new, one-of-a-kind "Play@Home" virtual game show - and, she was able to accomplish this in just a matter of weeks. By pushing the envelope of remote production, with the ultimate goal of achieving the same in-studio contestant experience, Renee blew her client's expectations right out of the water!

"Renee has embraced the technology available to do her job in the most professional manner, managing talent, contestants, crew, and clients," says Scott Lanum Managing Partner and COO of Mills James. "We're proud of Renee and what she's brought to Cash Explosion. She has pivoted with every challenge presented and has played a leadership role while writing and producing these shows every week." We are extremely honored to award Renee as a Top 10 Women in Events for 2020! Your work and attitude speaks for itself.



Helah Kehati Founder & CEO JPO Concepts

Born into a family of entrepreneurs, working for "the man" was never in the cards for Helah. After earning her business degree from Boston University, she first became interested in event planning while working for Comedy Cures (NPO) as a Program Coordinator. Looking to expand her logistics experience, Helah

switched industries and joined a boutique photo production studio. This gave her an "insiders look" into the world of high-end events and venues in New York City. It also became the platform to launch her own event planning company, JPO Concepts.

Now in the fourth year of managing her company, Helah is an industry expert who is highly respected by her peers. What began as a home business has grown into a million dollar company that owns and operates three event spaces in Manhattan and employs over 30 full and part time employees. JPO Concepts offers in-house catering, event planning & production services. They have quickly gained a reputation of being a trendy, down-to-earth event company with a single mission in mind: ensuring people enjoy the planning process as much as the event itself!

Helah relishes the time that she can spend interacting with other small businesses and freelancers. She takes great pride in being able to share her years of experience as well as hear stories from other local endeavors. Helah works diligently to create resources to help others in the community. Through partnerships with Make-A-Wish and other charitable foundations, her commitment to non-profit work still lives on!

In her spare time, Helah has dedicated herself to organic farming. She manages a small farm in upstate New York where she gets her hands dirty, raising her own laying hens for fresh eggs. Her passion for business has struck this venture as well, as she hopes to make her organic and healthy goods more readily available in the concrete jungle.

Helah's passion for business is infectious. Her clients and colleagues say they walk away from each conversation feeling invigorated. The enthusiasm with which Helah attacks her work resonates with everyone. It is with great pleasure to have Helah as one of the Top 10 Women in Events.



Rachel Petty
Asset Supervisor
BlackOak Technical

Rachel is the Asset Manager with BlackOak Technical Productions out of Chicago, IL. She's been in the industry since 2013 after receiving her degree from the Ohio State University. BlackOak has been honored to have her as a part of the team for the past 5 years: "Rachel works tirelessly to ensure that our

clients are involved with our work as well as all of her colleagues," says McKensie Bartz, Producing Coordinator for BlackOak.

According to Rachel's colleagues, she has gone above and beyond, demonstrating continued flexibility with the ability to pivot instantly to new items and work outside of her usual scope. She is described as tenacious, thorough, and committed. "She follows through on all projects until she knows they're completed to the best of her ability. She has been a tremendous support to the entire team," said Bartz.

Since the pandemic began, Rachel dedicated herself to safety and innovation, establishing long term safety procedures that will keep both her team and her clients healthy. She is empathetic and goes out of her way to help out anyone she can. Rachel is an asset to the BlackOak family and an asset to our Top 10 Women in Events. Congratulations Rachel and thank you for all you do!



Ryan "Q" Razori
Production Manager
David Beahm Experiences

Ryan 'Q' Razori, is the Production Manager at David Beahm Experiences. Born and raised in North Carolina, Ryan majored in French language and minored in Studio Art, graduating Summa Cum Laude from UNC Wilmington. Her Wilmington experience led her into the event industry at Design Perfection,

where she spent three years learning and cultivating her passion for event production.

In 2015, Ryan made the move to New York City after graduating early, eager to grow her skills in the NYC event scene. David Beahm gave her the opportunity to prove herself, by opening his doors and welcoming her as a production intern. This is how 'Q' was born. After completing her internship, she developed her skills even further by freelancing with various production companies such as Rafanelli Events, Van Wyck & Van Wyck, Frank Alexander, Raul Avila, Overland Entertainment, among others.

After one year of freelance work, David Beahm invited her to become the Head of Production at David Beahm Experiences, an opportunity she accepted with great pride. She fully dedicated herself to her new role and according to David, "She has revolutionized the way production works at David Beahm Experiences. Higher efficiency in time and money shown in better management, logistics and production."

This September marks five years that 'Q' has been honing her position alongside the DBE family. During this harsh time for the special event industry, 'Q' has taken on many fields and responsibilities that are not her core, but she excels at them anyway. She's helped her client facing colleagues by implementing technology in their day-to-day work, and also created a new design interface that will be used with clients moving forward. She offers a multilingual, meticulous, and logistics-inclined mind that thrives in the world of special events. It's for these reasons, and more, 'Q' landed in the Top 10 of our Top Women in Events for 2020. 'Q' is a role model to women in this industry, and beyond.



Julie Renninger
Director of Sales
IMS Technology Services

Julie began as an intern and boy, how things have changed! She steadfastly evolved her role to selling close to 8 million dollars in revenue in 2019. She's the Director of Sales for IMS Technology Services, an award-winning provider of systems integration and event staging solutions designed to foster

collaboration, productivity, learning, and business communication.

Julie is the definition of a team player. Not only is she responsible for bringing in revenue, she volunteers to train new hires, and is an integral part of the Executive Management team at IMS. To help her company continue to thrive in uncertain times, Julie had to quickly learn how to sell virtual meetings to prospects that had to suddenly pivot their in-person events to virtual. With the array of virtual event technology platforms currently on the market, this was no easy task! "She leads the way and has pushed for new technology at IMS," says Kip Meyers, Julie's co-worker. "She is a role model for all employees."

In her 'free' time, Julie volunteers for the Big Brothers Big Sisters South Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter. She's a Big Sister and mentor to a 7 year old little girl. Her role is to "help her see beyond her everyday world and to dream big." We appreciate her work ethic, sense of teamwork, and willingness to donate her time volunteering. This is why she's a Top 10 Women in Events for 2020.



**Kylie Russell** *CEO*<a href="Priceless One Management">Priceless One Management</a>

Kylie Alexis Russell, a CEO and international model, is the quintessential depiction of beauty and brains. Paying close attention to her business savvy parents, the Chicago-native developed an entrepreneurial mindset early. She later attended the illustrious Spelman College, majoring in Psychology with a

minor in Management and Organization.

Upon graduation, she met her future husband, Anderson Russell, and moved to Miami for a fresh start. Kylie established a very successful modeling career with the stage name Kye Alexis, appearing in commercials, hit TV shows, and billboards all over the world. In between modeling gigs, she was a Promotional Model and with her experience, she worked her way up to managing national events and production teams for liquor brands like D'usee Cognac and Bombay Sapphire.

In 2015, Kylie combined her passion for modeling, events, and her love of business to create Priceless One Management (POM). Working alongside brands like Nike, HBO, Coca-Cola, Google, and more, her agency's staff members have had opportunities to work with huge figures like Beyonce, Dwayne Johnson, and countless game changers of our time. After 5 years of success, Kylie has plans to expand the company to make a global impact and provide her staff with bigger and better opportunities.

"Kylie Russell is a prime example of leadership in the events industry as an event curator, producer, and manager. She's been known to help those in the industry get their foot in the door with effective delegation and education. She leads groups of minority men and women in the event world and selflessly watches them rise to the top," says Deli Rivera of Stellar Blueprint, one of Kylie's colleagues.

Plus, she's been able to help during the pandemic! Kylie has used her business platform to help over 1400 contractors find funding during these trying times as well as donating to their campaigns to raise personal funds. Her passion for giving to others and encouragement in helping people rise to success are some of the many reasons Kylie was named one of our Top 10 Women in Events.



**Jill Vance**Co-Founder & Managing Partner

aVenue Event Group

Jill Vance is the Managing Partner of aVenue Event Group, a national event planning firm based in Orlando that focuses on corporate planning, destination planning services, and venue representation and sales. With offices and exclusive venues in Orlando, Tampa, and Minnesota, Jill and her team

manage clients' events all over the country. Her team specializes not only in event production, and execution, but they have revolutionized the way non-traditional venues host events. Their tagline is #ditchtheballroom, encouraging their clientele to take a step out of their comfort zone, and into a unique and memorable venue that is guaranteed to wow clients and their guests.

Jill's passion for creating memorable events begins and ends with her clients. She began her career in the event industry in college, at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality, where she majored in Event

Management. She realized while working at a single venue, that there was a need in the market for clients to host turn-key events, at non-traditional venues. And, that's how the idea of aVenue Event Group came to life! With 7 years under its belt, aVenue Event Group has grown from operating a single venue, to 35 nationwide venues, and successfully hosted over 1000+ events.

Whether producing a corporate concert in an airport hangar or hosting an evening reception at a Las Vegas Nightclub, Jill prides herself on taking her client's vision, bringing it to life, and exceeding all their expectations. Her enthusiasm is so contagious that it rubs off on everyone she meets. Like the traditional saying goes, "love what you do, and you'll never work a day in your life." With over 10 years of industry experience, Jill is just getting started!

"She is the hardest working person I know and has such a passion for what she does," said Jennifer Worrell, one of Jill's co-workers. According to another co-worker, Lexis Lapp, "She is absolutely amazing. I couldn't have asked for a better manager or mentor in life." Jaclyn Farber from ACSI Translations describes Jill as a ray of light. "Not only does she have great relationships with each and every client, but an even better relationship with her aVenue team. Jill has devoted her time and hard work for over 10 years to build her company from the ground up and the growth certainly does not stop now. Jill deserves this."

We think Jill deserves this award too. Those are just a few quotes from the several people that nominated her. There were a lot more (24 to be exact!). We're delighted to announce her as one of the Top 10 Women in Events for 2020. This award is obviously more than well deserved!

### **Top 50 Winners**

Here are the 40 additional inspirational women nominated this year that round out LASSO's 2020 Top 50 Women in Events list. These women should be celebrated alongside our Top 10 due to their years of experience, dedication, and the positive impact they had had on the event industry.



Allison Aaron
Owner
J&M Special Effects



Dawn Abbott
Owner
Fun Productions



Christine Altieri
Founder
AE Events



Stephanie Barcomb
VP of Admin
3G Productions



Heidi Brumbach CEO Technische Creative



Elle Chan
Co-Founder
Trademark Event
Productions



Tammy Dickerson
President
The Baker Group



Eliote Durham
CEO
BD + 20



Amanda Fulda
Executive Creative
Director
OVATION



Jasmine George
Event Designer
Monte Carlo
Productions



Dayna Gilchrist Founder & CEO The Hype Agency



**Annie Hancock**Head of Creative

AWS



Jodi Harris
CEO of FUN / Founder
Sight & Sound Events



**Kate Hoben**Director of Creative
Mills James



Jana Kotrbata
Sr. Immigration Advisor
Cirque de Soleil



Michelle Krage
President
StarEvents



**Kathleen Kronauer**Director of AV Services
Prestige AV



Nina Lauren Event Specialist The Event Mark



Melissa Lintinger SVP, Production Finance NBC Universal



Pam Markiewicz Owner, President Audio Logic Systems



Nicole Marsh
Partner
Imprint Group



Heather Mason Founder & CEO Caspian Agency



Amber Mathis
Production Manager
Empire Entertainment



Jessie McDaniel
Partner/Production
Manager
Fresh AV



Brittany Menestrina
Owner
InVoque Marketing



Debbie Meyers-Shock
CEO
BRAVO! Entertainment



Eliza Niaki
CEO
BEL Event Productions



Elle Nucci Founder/Owner EN Events



Melissa Perez
Events Manager
Mission Cloud Services



Rebekah Reed Field Production Manager Mills James



**Genevieve Roja**Founder
Lily Spruce Events



Becky Schaefer
Sr. Director
The Elevation Group



Lyn Stout
Owner/Creative
Director
Bond Events



**Lizz Torgovnick**Chief Creative Officer
Sequence Events



**Tori Trice**VP of Events

Medalist Sports



Danielle Turner
Ops & Logistics
Manager
Van Wagnerl



**Stephanie Wahlers**Talent Coordinator
Night Media



Karen Waldmann Sr. Manager, Event Production Entire Productions



Sydney Wolf
Director of Sales
metroConnections



Courtney Young
VP, Special Events &
Hospitality
Circuit of the Americas

# **Top 100 Winners**

Frances Andahazy
Creative Director
Party By Design

Sam Bass Producer Mirrored Media

**Erin Cook**Director of Operations
Sony Hall

Noreen Esson
Sales & Marketing
Manager
EPIQVision

Alisha Gehrke
Lighting Designer
GhostLight Productions

Bettina Hahn Owner/Designer Bettina Hahn Events **Deb Armstrong**Director, Program
Operations

Meeting Alliance

Sneha Bhatia Co-Founder & CCO MAS Event + Design

Ann-Margret Crater
Head of Events
Marketing
AlixPartners

Kaycie Fellows
Director+Designer
Critic's Choice Catering

Monica Gomez
Founder/President
The Concierge Club

Erica Helphand Managing Partner & COO OP3 Inc. JoAnn Aubry-Smith Founder & President Promotional Brand

<u>Ambassadors</u>

Kimberly Carlisle
Creative Director
Runway Images
Productions

**Lauren Dembeck**General Manager
RMC

Nickey Frankel
Executive Producer
Preview Events

Bianca Gutierrez CEO Bianca Starr Agency

Heidi Hiller
Owner
Innovative Party
Planners

Elizabeth Baker
Sales & Ops Manager
Resource
Entertainment Group

Leslie Cole
Director of Sales
Marquee Event Rentals

Virginia Dodge
President
VA Productions, Inc.

Carol Galle
President & CEO
Special D Events

Amber Guyton
Executive Creative
Director
Soho Experiential

Lucy Himsl
Master Electrician
Arvada Center for the
Arts & Humanities

Joan Immediato
President
Aranco Production

Kim Johnson-Smith
CEO
Go Stagestruck

Tess Jones Manager Bisnow Brittney Kelley
Account Manager
FWR Rental Haus

Amanda Ma
CEO & Founder
Innovate Marketing

Lucy Magee
Entertainment
Producer
West End Worldwide

Ashley Mercurio
Managing Partner
The Anthem Group

Daria Misnik
Marketing Specialist
Innovative Event
Services

**Talley Moore**Specialist, Experience
Marketing

<u>Ciena</u>

Kerry Neal-Shaw
Director of Events
Tavern on the Green

Jayse Nelson
Director of Marketing
Ultimate Ventures

Laura Paganucci
Production Manager
Diversified Production
Services

**Ann Parsons**Sr. Account Director
EEI Global

Dusty Rhodes
President
Conventures

Krista Robbins Stage Manager/Show Caller <u>Freelancer</u> Laura Ryan
VP, Visitor Experience
Toronto International
Film Festival

Janeen Saltman
President

JKS Events

Stephanie Selig Sr. Producer One Smooth Stone Tinzar Sherman
CEO & Co-Founder
Digital Media Wire

**Diana Solis**Talent Manager
3rd Rock Events

Cathy Taylor
VP
Your Event Solution

**Tina Teich**Marketing Manager
High Five Events

Louise Thomas
Owner/Designer
Louise Thomas Events
Made Special

Kali Trautman
Sr. Event Designer
The Event Company

**Eithne Treanor**Founder & CEO

ETreanor Media

Beth White
Owner
White Door Events

#### **About LASSO**

LASSO is a workforce management software company dedicated to helping event companies manage their mobile talent – from electronic onboarding and document management, to crew scheduling, communication, time-tracking, travel management, spend forecasting, payroll, and more. The LASSO platform and mobile app were created to tackle the unique challenges faced by event companies when managing their on-the-go workforce. LASSO recently announced the launch of the LASSO Marketplace – a curated, compliant, and cost effective database of crew that event companies can tap into in order to expand their talent pool when they need it, where they need it.