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## **Optical Women's Association Announces 2023 Award Honorees**

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The Optical Women's Association (OWA) has announced their 2023 OWA award honorees:

**Karen Roberts**, Head of Global Customer Enablement for Carl Zeiss Vision International, will receive the Pleiades Award, recognizing her exceptional dedication and support in advancing the leadership role of women in the optical industry.

**Dr. Beverly Bianes**, Optometrist/Partner/Owner of Pack & Bianes Vision Care Optometry, is the Pyxis Award honoree, acknowledging her service and commitment to growing the OWA and promoting it throughout the optical industry.

**Talia Bruno**, Senior Director of Key Accounts for De Rigo REM, will receive the Emerging Leader Award, given to rising stars within the optical industry who display exemplary leadership qualities.

Deb Bulken, OWA President, had this to say: "On behalf of the entire OWA Board of Directors, I would like to congratulate our 2023 awardees! Each year at the highly anticipated Vision Expo East Champagne Breakfast, we honor select women who have had a meaningful impact on their peers, companies, the OWA membership, and our beloved industry. Karen, Beverly, and Talia have all made impressive contributions over the course of their respective careers. They share in common the passion and desire to see women excel in leadership roles, and they set an amazing example of what "great" looks like. What has moved me personally, knowing their stories, has been the communities they have created and the support and inspiration they have provided to so many. I invite you all to join me in celebrating with them in March!"

The award recipients will be honored at the OWA's annual Champagne Breakfast on Thursday, March 16, 2023 during International Vision Expo East. Sponsored by EssilorLuxottica and the OWA, this event will once again be held at Gotham Hall in New York City. For more information, [click here](#).

### **About the Honorees**

**Karen Roberts** is the head of a global business division at Carl Zeiss Vision International. In this role, she works closely with corporate and local commercial teams to assist customers with bespoke business solutions and after-sales technical and business support.

The optical industry has been Karen Roberts' passport to the world. During her 38-year career in optical, she has lived and worked in Australia, Asia, Europe, and the U.S., and currently resides in Adelaide, South Australia.

Her career spans leadership roles in R&D, operations, new product management, and business development. An active participant in leadership and strategy forums within both ZEISS and the broader industry, Karen has also contributed to two Harvard Business School case studies on disruptive technology and large-scale change management.

Roberts' passion for optical is driven by the positive transformation that good quality eyecare and eyewear have on the quality of people's lives. "New technologies and the innovative solutions they enable are expanding access and driving better outcomes for people in need".

She has been active on the executive board of The Vision Council for over 10 years and has been chair for the last 2 years. "It's been an interesting time, helping steer TVC through the worst of the pandemic and be better positioned and more relevant to the industry as it evolves". She is appreciative of the strong team at TVC and grateful to her extremely competent and engaged executive board colleagues.

Roberts was named one of *Vision Monday's* "Most Influential Women in Optical" in 2017. She sees influential women advancing all facets of the optical business, bringing with them a strong emphasis on listening, customer focus, and collaboration. She continues to be inspired by how diverse and interesting the optical business is and amazed at the rapid evolution of the industry with new technologies.

**Beverly Bianes, OD**, completed her undergraduate studies at the University of California, San Diego, and received her Doctor of Optometry degree from the Southern California College of Optometry. Soon after graduation, she started her first private practice in San Diego with her husband, Dr. John Pack, and later went on to open second and third locations. Dr. Bianes is an active board member of the San Diego County Optometric Society and currently serves as its 2023 President. As the director of Charitable Outreach for Total Vision LLC, she was recognized and named as one of the *Most Influential Women in Optical* in 2021 for her program ***Neighbors Helping Neighbors***, an initiative that allows the local community to nominate neighbors impacted by COVID-19 to receive free exams and glasses.

Dr. Bianes has a passion for giving back to both her local community as well as communities abroad. She participated in several medical mission trips to the Philippines, and for the last 30 years has provided free exams and glasses to the underserved in her local community. Her efforts have been recognized by community leaders such as Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez and by organizations such as the South County Economic Development Council and the Military Employer Support League. She was featured in *20/20* magazine for her efforts supporting homeless transitional adult youth. Recently, the ***Neighbors Helping Neighbors*** program partnered with the EssilorLuxottica Vision Foundation's ***Changing Lives Through Lenses*** program to further expand their reach of charitable giving.

Dr. Bianes joined the OWA in 2019 and was the creator of the virtual event series known as "**Coffee Break . . . connecting one sip at a time.**" It was designed to provide an online platform allowing women to connect and feel supported during challenging times. In 2021 she also created and launched "**Food for Thought... where food breaks down barriers and brings us all to the table.**" This series used food as

a way to share traditions, cultures, and embrace one another's diversity. She currently serves as OWA's Vice-Chair of the Events Committee and is a member of the OWA Connection and Enrichment Committee. Dr. Bianes is a champion when it comes to women in leadership roles. She serves on the board of *Women in Optometry* and is an Ambassador for the *Optometry Divas*. She has served as a panelist speaker for both the American Academy of Optometry *Women's Leadership Conference* and Johnson & Johnson's *Power of Women in Optometry*.

**Talia Bruno** is a sales director, entrepreneur, mentor, and most importantly, mom to three children aged 8, 5, and 2. Prior to entering optical, Talia began her career in the consumer-packaged goods industry, holding account management positions at Fortune 500's Miller Coors Brewing Company and at A.T. Cross, both globally recognized companies. In 2008, she entered the optical industry by joining Luxottica as a regional account manager and quickly rose to Senior Key Account Manager, overseeing a third of the KA channel sales. Recognizing her passion for business development and corporate strategy, she left Luxottica and used her experience to grow Modo's KA Channel as a KA Sales Director. It was at Modo that her skill for cultivating new business opportunities was challenged. Facing ongoing challenges of practice consolidations, she searched for business opportunities outside of the typical optical customer, such as developing a reader's program for Bed Bath & Beyond and Whole Foods. She also broke into the department store and off-price channels, furthering her knowledge outside of optical.

Displaying a deep interest in analyzing corporate structure and building from the bottom up, Bruno was asked to join De Rigo REM in July of 2018 as Senior Key Accounts Director of North America. Here, she leads the development and alignment of the KA Channel and plays a vital role in cultivating new business and aiding the corporate sales strategy to drive revenue and growth for North America. Her first year at De Rigo (pre-covid) led to a 34% sales growth in the KA channel. Throughout her career, Bruno has been the recipient of various awards. At Miller Coors, she received an *On Premise* award for highest sales and brand distribution; at Luxottica, she was inducted into the President's Circle for having met all sales and MBO goals for two consecutive years; at De Rigo REM she received the *Above and Beyond* award. Outside of optical, Bruno serves on the board of a local advocacy group in Georgia that preserves medical freedom for GA constituents.

In recent years, Bruno has come to realize that her true passion is helping other working moms in business by sharing her own strategies with them. She finds great satisfaction in helping women rise to their true potential and being a positive mentor for them. She joined the OWA in late 2021 and serves on the Professional Development Fund Committee, working hard to get the Individual Contributor Program up and running post-Covid and overseeing OWA's Sponsor Ambassador Program. The OWA's mission to connect, inspire, and lead is dear to her heart, and she greatly appreciates how this organization empowers women to be the best version of themselves.

*For more information on the Optical Women's Association, please visit [www.opticalwomen.com](http://www.opticalwomen.com).*

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About the Optical Women's Association: Founded in 1997 as a non-profit, the Optical Women's Association is committed to supporting and promoting the professional development of women involved in all facets of the optical industry. As the vision of the OWA evolves and expands, it maintains the focus of the OWA's founding principles and core mission: to enhance and promote the leadership role of women in the optical industry through networking, education and peer support.