

PROFILE



PHOTO BY THOMAS WASPER

At the Table: Pegi Matsuda at Pegi Matsuda Consulting in Sherman Oaks. She has served in the boardroom for business groups, hospitals, schools and nonprofits.

Community Connector

Pegi Matsuda personifies business-civic engagement in the Valley.

By **MICHAEL AUSHENKER** Staff Reporter

Pegi Matsuda last summer opened Pegi Matsuda Consulting in Sherman Oaks. The move is the culmination of contacts and coalitions that she has built over several decades as her civic and community engagement has known no bounds. After all, Matsuda is or has been a board member for many of the Valley's best known organizations, such as the Valley Economic Development Center, Valley Industry and Commerce Association, Valley Economic Alliance, Woodbury University, Valley Presbyterian Hospital, West Hills Hospital and the Fernando Foundation. And she was named "Woman of the Year" in 2013 by the 42nd Assembly District, among other honors. Matsuda, 64, was president and publisher of the San Fernando Valley Business Journal, from 1999 through 2012. Then she began serving as foundation president at Valley Presbyterian Hospital, wrapping up her duties last year before segueing into her consulting practice, which specializes in organizational planning and design, board development, community relations, fundraising planning and marketing and communications. We caught up with Matsuda just as she and her longtime partner, Larry Haworth, were about to embark on a trip to Italy, Spain, France, Portugal and England. "It's a food and wine trip," Matsuda said, laughing. "We don't know anything about food or wine. I'm surprised we're going on this trip."

Question: How did you come to lead the San Fernando Valley Business Journal?
Answer: The San Fernando Valley Business Journal was launched out of the Los Angeles Business Journal because there was a perception

that the San Fernando Valley deserved a publication all of its own. There were plenty of successful people and businesses (in the Valley) and they'd need their own paper and they were right. When I came in, it was to build the paper as an influencer.

Did you have a lot of contacts at the time?

Even though I lived in the Valley — I lived in Studio City — but I didn't know a lot of people here. I remember going to VICA (Valley Industry and Commerce Association) and United Chambers of Commerce and being impressed and we really accelerated from there. They were looking for somebody who understood small business, who had business and community acumen, who could quickly build relations. I had worked for Sempra (Energy) for eight years (1981 to 1999), I had worked for GTE (Telephone Operations), which is now Verizon, of course, and the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Was running the newspaper a good experience?

If anything, it was really positive feedback. There was certainly plenty to write about. I arrived right after the formation of the paper. When I got there in 1999, the paper had been launched in 1996 and 1997. I learned a lot about business here in the region. I learned about the skills needed to make businesses successful. I knew about business community involvement.

Did you consciously try to differentiate the Valley's business journal from the flagship Los Angeles paper?

It was very conscious. Every story we wrote

Pegi Matsuda

COMPANY: Pegi Matsuda Consulting

AGE: 64

HOMETOWN: San Diego

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in human relations and organizational behavior from the University of San Francisco; master's degree in organizational leadership from Woodbury University. She's also a Certified Fundraising Executive from CFRE International.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Beeman Park in Studio City.

MOST ADMIRE PEOPLE: Former Business Journal editor Jason Schaff; late father Edward Matsuda.

PERSONAL: Has been with Larry Haworth, managing partner at Bessolo | Haworth CPAs in Sherman Oaks. They live in Studio City.

HOBBY: Two shelties, Ernie and Kacie, ages 8 and 6, respectively.

really had a Valley focus. If a company were headquartered elsewhere, it wasn't acceptable. It had to be Valley centric. We probably focused on businesses that were not well known. Here in the Valley, we had Amgen and others, and that was important (to cover big businesses as well).

What about format-wise? Did you follow the cues of the L.A. Business Journal with the same kind of sections, sidebars, etc.?

With (the) San Diego, Orange County, L.A.

and the Valley (Business Journals), there's a design format that we adhered to but where we tried to be different, it was all in the content. We also had community stories. We differentiated by having more business events, award events. We had a lot of industry forums — on health care, on e-commerce. We also did all the we tried to have more informational events.

Back then, e-commerce was still evolving.

We really got in early on the evolution of e-commerce. In 2000, we had our first e-commerce event. I remember we had to explain (a lot of basics): how do you pay online and we had to talk about cybersecurity.

Did the newspaper suffer problems during the Great Recession in 2008-10?

I felt that the relationships that we had, the Business Journal's employees, I think that saved us. I didn't really see a downturn in advertising because we had very loyal readers and advertisers.

Why did you leave the Business Journal position?

I was at the Business Journal for 13 great years and I felt it was time to do something different.

It seemed to be quite a jump from publishing a newspaper to running a foundation. Did you pursue the hospital foundation position?

No, it pursued me. I've only had a few jobs in my career, they've always been very, very different. Here I go from growing a small

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business and (former Business Journal editor) Jason Schaff, who was there at the time, we worked very well together. (Schaff went on to become the editor in chief of the Santa Clarita Signal before leaving the position last year.) We were really proud of that. I was on several nonprofit boards including Valley Presbyterian. I felt very connected with the mission. I still feel connected with the mission, to serve a very vulnerable segment of the population through fundraising and building their board processes. The idea that you go to work every day and, you know, you're doing work to help somebody, I really drew satisfaction from that. I had the same feeling at the Business Journal, we knew we were helping businesses. At the hospital, I guess I would call it that we were serving a broader good. I knew it was for something really important and it was going to help the community.

Why did you leave your position at Valley Presbyterian Hospital Foundation after six years?

I'm one of those people where I seem to know when it's time to make a move and I can't tell you what that move is. I've always been recruited to all of my jobs. I had been there for six years, we built a community relations program, we built the board. But ever since I was in my 20s, I always wanted to be a consultant. In the 1990s, we used to call it an internal consultant. Inside a company and organization like an intrapreneur, as opposed to an entrepreneur. I've always had jobs like that. I think more like a consultant. I hear about things, I try to find solutions. I find ways to address and scope out solutions. While it's never easy launching your own practice, it felt very natural to me.

How many clients do you have at the moment?

I was originally thinking I would have a couple of clients and work 20-30 hours a week and devote the rest of my hours to my community. That was my plan. But I have several clients, all my clients are very different. I have seven clients, I work with my sidekick Kacie (the dog). (Another pet dog) Ernie likes to stay at home but Kacie loves to come to work. She attends all of my meetings at my offices. I don't want to disclose who my clients are but about 50 percent are community organizations. They're pretty large. The other half are small business and entrepreneurs.

What kind of work do you do for your clients?

Process, organizational planning and design, fundraising planning, community engagement. I do some writing projects, I write speeches, programs, you name it. I also offer marketing and communications services but I'm focusing more on board development.

At this point, you must have a lot of contacts.

I do. It's important for me to keep in touch with people because a lot of my business colleagues have become friends. I feel like I'm a better person because of all the people I meet.

Given your perspective, seeing the San Fernando Valley grow over the years, how would you characterize the Valley in 2019?

From what I've seen of business over the last 25 years, I think the economy is stable. It seems like there's a lot more women starting businesses. I was speaking at a business access event, there were 200-300 women in various stages of starting businesses. A couple of women, they had several different businesses going. I think there are more business programs



PHOTO BY THOMAS WASPER



All Smiles: Matsuda, top, with her sheltie Kacie; below, speakers recognize Matsuda's work at the 2017 VICA Hall of Fame.

targeting women. I think there are more resources available. I don't know if that's driven by the economy or by women themselves.

And you're still involved in local causes?

Yes, the VEA, VEDC, the Fernando Foundation. I'm chairing the Fernando Gala in September, with David Honda and Wayne Adelstein. I've known them both for years. I went to the Fernando Awards many times over 20 years. I joined the board this year and

became the dinner committee chair. It's really a great award.

From where did this drive to serve the Valley manifest?

I was the kid who went door to door. My first job was raising money for Muscular Dystrophy. I went door to door asking for dimes and quarters. My parents were very supportive. I grew up in San Diego (Paradise Hills, near National City). I would have events at my

house, charge them a quarter to come through the door and donated the money (to charity). I think I did my first donation solicitation when I was 10. When I first moved to L.A., I joined the now-defunct Los Angeles Junior Chamber Service and I've been doing it ever since.

Anything you still want to do?

I've never been to Asia. I want to do some traveling. I want to meet more people, learn more about different cultures. I would love to have more dogs. I'm a simple person.