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SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS & WEALTH MAGAZINE 2021 APOGEE AWARDS

ACCOUNTING



STEVEN KLEIN
MANAGING PARTNER OF GERSON, PRESTON, KLEIN, LIPS, EISENBERG & GELBER P.A.

Upon reflection on the journey I have taken, the key for me has been my ability to reinvent myself, both professionally and personally, as a catalyst for growth. Timing and instinct have always been critical. From an aspiring audit manager at Ernst & Young in NYC, then Miami, and onto my firm, GPKLEG, I have always endeavored to expand my knowledge and skill base to meet the multi-disciplinary challenges of our practice. Currently, as a leader in our firm, I continue to grow and learn as a third-generation successor in a practice spanning over 60 years. My compass always remains true. It has been a privilege working with talented leaders and professionals and most importantly, sharing my journey with all of its successes, failures, and personal growth with family and friends.

ARCHITECTURE



MARIO CARAYZA
Chair Executive Director
Carayza and Associates,
Aventura, FL
One sunny April morning in 1978, Bob Carayza and I sat with Bill Moss wanting to create a collective lease for a 1,000 square foot second floor office space at 880 East Las Olas Blvd. I was 27 years old and scared out of my mind. With some of us wanting to be solely responsible for the lease, Moss came up with an ingenious and hilarious solution, deciding to identify the lease as "We the People." That Mr. Carayza and Associates Architects PA was born. It was the realization of my childhood dream, the need to express myself through my designs, and begin a legacy career in the beautiful city I had chosen to live, play and work in a couple of years before. During the first two years that followed that unassuming first day of Carayza and Associates Architects PA, I grew a firm based on honest designs, unimpeachable integrity, and an unending drive for excellence.

BANKING



BRIAN E. HAGAN
Florida Market President
First American Bank
Over the 35 years I have been with First American Bank, I have had the pleasure to oversee its expansion into its first middle-market branch in Florida and its engagement with its local community. The trust the bank has placed in me to expand its reach into regions such as South Florida, as well as its operational expansion divisions and training programs such as the analytical training program for commercial lenders, has taught me how to be an understanding and value-driven leader. I am grateful as Florida Market President to continuously lead and advocate the banking community of tomorrow to go into the world of banking finance as well-informed, well-equipped professionals with a personal and caring touch.

BANKING



ABEL L. IGLESIAS
President and Chief Operating Officer of Performance Bank
As the 17-year-old son of immigrant parents that I was when I landed my first banking job, I never imagined I'd become the banking executive I am today. I am so grateful to my parents which taught me to work hard, get educated and do right by others. And, as very thankful to the industry that welcomed me and gave me the opportunity. To those that mentored and coached me a long the way. And finally, the South Florida business community and its many successful leaders that proved the way and set the example.

BANKING



JULIO C. RAMIREZ, JR.
Executive Director
First Bank Bank
South Florida
In a few words, it's been a whirlwind. Having the opportunity to become the Commercial Banking Executive for Fifth Third's South Florida Region was not on my immediate radar. My entire professional career was based in Tampa Bay, taking care of a growing family, establishing myself as a collaborative business and community partner while working to support my team and clients. During my career, I've worked hard to improve operational processes for my direct reports, ideally creating better experiences for our clients. My commitment to constantly wanting to improve and develop myself has afforded me the opportunity to grow and excel at leading intricate groups. None of this would have been possible without the support and patience of my family and countless mentors and friends who have encouraged me along the way, saying, "You got this!"