The UCI professor has dedicated her career to finding answers to a rare genetic disease’s most crucial questions.

Leslie Thompson Tackles Huntington’s Disease One Gene at a Time

The UCI professor has dedicated her career to finding answers to a rare genetic disease’s most crucial questions.

InfraDerm Takes a Deeper Look at Skin

Mind Brain Parenting Deals a New Deck of Cards for Mental Health

Richard Sudek Carves a New Path to Semi-Retirement
DEAR READERS,

About 15 years ago, I was a shy editorial intern at a surf publication in south Orange County. As my first editorial experience, I quickly learned many things, but one in particular stood out: it was clearly a man’s world at the magazine and within the surfing world in general. The magazine’s editorial staff was dominated by guys in board shorts only talking about more guys who were professional surfers charging the biggest and best waves. Though women surfers were participating in the same industry, they were not recognized like their counterparts. The only time a woman would appear in the magazine was if she was part of an advertisement.

As years passed, a woman’s voice began to surface from the depths and those advertisements evolved into a few stories and then the cover story of said magazine written by women writers and editors, as well. Eventually, the industry made great strides toward items like sponsorships and equal pay and now, more than ever, this progress has given young surfers a diverse roster of heroes to look to for inspiration.

When we look at a story from a different perspective, it allows room for more understanding, empathy and growth. Diversity in innovation creates a far more diverse innovation landscape and with that comes advanced solutions to bigger problems, partnerships that may have never been and products or services that can change lives.

There are so many brilliant minds and voices representing the diversity of our world on the UC Irvine campus and within its surrounding communities. Voices that, given a platform, can influence positive change in the world.

Our team’s ongoing mission is to share a variety of diverse voices with every new magazine issue, but for the March issue, we focus on bringing a few brilliant women’s stories to the surface in honor of Women’s History Month – a month that encourages the celebration of women’s vital role in history and contributions to society.

In this issue, The Brilliant Women at UCI edition, we feature women who represent those who continue to take the road less traveled, step out of their comfort zone onto a platform holding their passion up high for all to see, hoping that it can and will change society for the better.

We hope that some of these stories may inspire your next journey, whether it’s taking your idea to the next level, partnering with another startup or investing in women-led companies. We hope this issue inspires you to keep reaching and seeking out ways to make a difference in the lives of many.

It is with great pleasure that myself and the Rising Tides magazine team share with you the stories of some of the brilliant, innovative women across UCI’s campus and within the Irvine community.

Thank you for your readership.

-Jackie Connor
Editor-in-Chief

Stay up to date with news about UCI’s innovations and commercially promising technologies. Find this issue of Rising Tides at innovation.uci.edu/news

If you have story ideas, contact the editor-in-chief: connorj@uci.edu
Athira Pharma CEO Shares How She Broke Barriers during First Making Waves: Entrepreneur Conversations

Leen Kawas, Washington State’s First Woman CEO to Take a Company Public in 20 Years, Talks Lessons Learned in Building Her Company and How Failure Can Provide Learning Opportunities.

Launching a company is no easy task, much less for a woman in the biotech field. Leen Kawas, founder and CEO of Athira Pharma, Inc., has what it takes, and shared how she did it as the first guest in Making Waves: Entrepreneurial Conversations. Sponsored by UPS, UC Irvine (UCI) Beall Applied Innovation recently launched a new quarterly series, Making Waves: Entrepreneurial Conversations, which features successful entrepreneurs from the local community and around the world who share their stories at the Cove @ UCI, Applied Innovation’s physical location, to inspire the next great idea.

During the inaugural event, Kawas shared her experiences via a virtual fireside conversation with Richard Sudek, executive director at Applied Innovation and UCI chief innovation officer. Kawas spoke about being a woman entrepreneur and scientist in the biotech industry, going through the actual process of taking her company public in 2020 as well as finding strength in rejection.

From a young age, Kawas had a personal connection with Alzheimer’s after her grandmother passed away from the neurodegenerative disease. This fueled her dream of finding treatments and a few decades later, Kawas is doing exactly that through her Seattle-based company Athira Pharma, a biopharmaceutical company that develops small molecules to restore neuronal health to create better treatments and stop neurodegeneration.

As Seattle’s first woman CEO to take a company public in 20 years, Kawas encouraged women entrepreneurs in the life sciences to feel confident about standing out. “If you’re in life science, there’s not a lot of women entrepreneurs,” said Kawas. “People will remember you—you’re going to be dressed differently, you look differently. You even think, probably, differently … what you’re doing is not common, so you should be proud and use that to your advantage.”

During the event, Kawas encouraged young entrepreneurs to use the rejection as an opportunity to listen to why investors are saying “no” because Kawas refers to their rejection as free advice and, if it’s the right advice, it can help an aspiring entrepreneur optimize their business development.

“When you get rejected, you have to think about things that are important for people and other things that might not be,” said Kawas. “Sometimes it’s not the right advice because people didn’t spend the time thoroughly researching your company, but at least you get an appreciation of how you might do things differently. You even think, probably, differently … what you’re doing is not common, so you should be proud and use that to your advantage.”

Watch the full event: bit.ly/3oy8hua

As of these events were held over virtual platforms and did not take place at the Cove @ UCI. All photos on this spread are screenshots from virtual events.

Since the Cove @ UCI has been open, an average of 40,000-50,000 people have come through the building per year in support of innovation, entrepreneurship, industry and the community. Take part! Check out and register for upcoming events: innovation.uci.edu/events.
InfraDerm Takes a Deeper Look at Skin

InfraDerm is developing a noninvasive imaging platform to monitor the effects of skin therapies, understand the biology that underlies skin diseases and skin conditions, and aid in the diagnosis of skin diseases.

TESTING TECHNOLOGIES

As a world-class interdisciplinary research institute for optics and photonics, the UC Irvine (UCI) Beckman Laser Institute & Medical Clinic (BLIMC) aims to improve lives through moving innovative technologies from the laboratory bench to the patient’s bedside. The BLIMC’s mission to develop technologies to benefit human health is what first attracted Mihaela Balu, Ph.D., who has been at BLIMC since 2007 and currently serves as an associate researcher and principal investigator.

In her time at BLIMC, Balu has been able to pursue her passion of addressing clinical needs with advanced imaging technologies. One such project had Balu, along with members of the UCI School of Medicine’s Department of Dermatology, evaluating the clinical potential of multiphoton microscopy (MPM) – an advanced imaging technology that uses ultrafast, near-infrared lasers to view beneath the surface of living tissue at the molecular level – for dermatological purposes. While the technology showed promise for the field of dermatology, the current MPM clinical machine had a number of shortcomings that limited its potential.

With that, Balu co-founded InfraDerm in 2017 with Bruce Tromberg, Ph.D., then director of BLIMC and current director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) at the National Institutes of Health, and Dr. Christopher Zachary, chair of the Department of Dermatology. The team co-founded InfraDerm to address the shortcomings of the current clinical MPM technology – including size, cost, speed and narrow field of view – and build a better platform optimized for clinical skin imaging.

BUILDING A BETTER PLATFORM

According to InfraDerm CEO Balu, the company’s recently developed imaging platform builds upon the core MPM technology by integrating innovations in its optical and engineering design, which is expected to bring significant positive change in clinical research and in the practice of dermatology.

“Based on our experience from working with dermatologist collaborators and communicating with others around the country, it is clear that dermatologists need better and more efficient tools to diagnose skin conditions, to monitor and understand treatment responses,” said Balu.

With InfraDerm’s noninvasive imaging platform, users will be able to quickly scan a patient’s skin and get a clear understanding of the molecular structure beneath the surface of the skin. This could eliminate the need for biopsies – or tissue removal – to diagnose or manage skin conditions, or even evaluate the efficacy of topical skin medications in a pharmaceutical research & development setting. Since its inception, InfraDerm has been a part of the Photonic Incubator at BLIMC, where they rent space, and in July 2020, was accepted into UCI Beall Applied Innovation.

Based on our experience from working with dermatologist collaborators and communicating with others around the country, it is clear that dermatologists need better and more efficient tools to diagnose skin conditions, to monitor and understand treatment responses.

– Mihaela Balu, Ph.D.
While in the program, InfraDerm innovation’s Wayfinder program* has found business plan guidance from Innovation Advisors* and assistance with Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)* grant proposals. Current efforts toward commercialization and development of the technology are led by Alexander Fast, Ph.D., chief technology officer at InfraDerm. The former postdoctoral researcher at BIMOC and UCI alum became the first full-time employee after they received their first source of funding in September 2020, a $236,000 SBIR award that will go toward building a prototype and an accompanying artificial intelligence-powered software to highlight features of interest to users. “We’re very lucky this technology is really good,” said Fast. “Looking forward, I’m very confident in it and being confident in your technology allows you to write better proposals.”

While there is a lot of potential for InfraDerm’s platform in a clinical setting, there are more regulatory hurdles as a diagnostic tool than for other applications. Because of this, the startup’s focus is to develop their imaging platform for researchers first.

“There’s a lot of need for noninvasive skin imaging – whatever the application, there isn’t a better tool,” said Fast of InfraDerm’s platform. “And as a research tool for drug developers, we are much closer and would not be subject to the same regulation as a diagnostic tool.”

From there, InfraDerm hopes to one day see their platform become as commonplace as other established medical imaging technologies and used by dermatologists in clinics around the world. Learn more about the Wayfinder program at innovation.uci.edu/wayfinder ///

The Research Translation Group manages over 1,000 inventions from UC Irvine (UCI) researchers spanning the areas of engineering, medicine and life sciences, physical sciences, communications and computer sciences. These innovative technologies are available for licensing.

**Tech ID #: 31990**

**LASER ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING METHOD FOR PRODUCING POROUS LAYERS**

To produce porous structures on a smaller size scale, the researchers at UCI have incorporated a novel etching process to print metallic layers with hierarchical porosity without the use of harsh chemicals in the etching process. The researchers believe that this technology can be utilized as bodily scaffolds/supports as well as fuel cells.

Iryna Zenyuk, Ph.D. / Henry Samuel School of Engineering

**Tech ID #: 30539**

**AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF OPHTHALMIC MEDICATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

Researchers at UCI are developing technology that allows visually impaired patients to use their smartphones to take pictures of their eye medication/eye drop bottles. The technology will recognize the eye medication and verbally communicate the medication and will audibly confirm the medication along with the instructions on use.

Ken Lin, M.D., Ph.D. / UCI School of Medicine

**Tech ID #: 30541**

**DUAL-SHELL FUSED QUARTZ RESONATORS AND METHOD OF FABRICATION**

UCI researchers developed a sturdy architecture and straightforward fabrication procedure for the core-sensing element in microscale gyroscopes for timing and inertial navigation applications. The structure can be designed to operate as a resonator, gyroscope or other vibratory sensor. The robust nature of this structure yields advantages for precision operation in harsh environments.

Andrei Shkel, Ph.D. / Henry Samuel School of Engineering
The Wayfinder Program has been, and continues to be, a valuable source of cutting-edge business information, tactics, and subject matter experts—all of which have meaningfully contributed to our success!

— Anthony Glenn
Founder & CEO of CarDana

One of the most valuable parts of the Wayfinder Program is the mentor program. It is made up of an amazing group of knowledgeable individuals with a wealth of expertise. They have given us invaluable feedback and unique insights; they have assisted us with connections to industry experts and extended opportunities to attend special events that would have been beyond our reach otherwise. We are so thankful to all of the Wayfinder mentors who have helped us along the way.

— Cynthia Kirkeby
Founder of Adaptifyed

The Wayfinder Program was provided a collaborative workspace to test my ideas and work alongside peers who provide amazing feedback who I otherwise would have not met.

— Josh Mundell
Founder & CEO of NeighborING

Thank you to the Wayfinder Program, my company gained valuable feedback from subject matter experts that informed the direction of my products and roadmap. I’m grateful for the thoughtful support and ongoing accountability built into the program.

— Jenny Woo
Founder & CEO of Mind Brain Parenting

Because the Wayfinder program takes no equity, I was able to maintain ownership as my company grew. Yet, I received incredible value in the form of legal, strategic, marketing, funding, and partnership mentorship—tangible contributions to VolunteerCrowd’s success.

— Amy von Kaenel
Founder & CEO of VolunteerCrowd

The Wayfinder program provided a collaborative workspace to test my ideas and work alongside peers who provide amazing feedback who I otherwise would have not met.

— Tim Murphy
Co-founder of Brevvie

Because the Wayfinder program takes no equity, I was able to maintain ownership as my company grew. Yet, I received incredible value in the form of legal, strategic, marketing, funding, and partnership mentorship—tangible contributions to VolunteerCrowd’s success.

— Tim Murphy
Co-founder of Brevvie

One of the most valuable parts of the Wayfinder Program is the mentor program. It is made up of an amazing group of knowledgeable individuals with a wealth of expertise. They have given us invaluable feedback and unique insights; they have assisted us with connections to industry experts and extended opportunities to attend special events that would have been beyond our reach otherwise. We are so thankful to all of the Wayfinder mentors who have helped us along the way.

— Cynthia Kirkeby
Founder of Adaptifyed

The Wayfinder program has been, and continues to be, a valuable source of cutting-edge business information, tactics, and subject matter experts—all of which have meaningfully contributed to our success!

— Anthony Glenn
Founder & CEO of CarDana

I didn’t know how to pitch before we went through the Wayfinder program, and that pitching format has changed the way that I conduct business internally at my day job and I’ve been far more successful.

— Tim Murphy
Co-founder of Brevvie
An estimated 30,000 genes make up the human genome, with an individual’s entire uniqueness created by genetic mutations. From tissues and blood as well as distinctive physical features, like eye and hair color to temperament and so much more, genes are the coded instructions for building an entire person. But sometimes those instructions contain errors and genes can mutate to form many different things, including diseases.

One such disease, Huntington’s disease, is a rare, inherited disease triggered by a single genetic mutation that causes a progressive breakdown of nerve cells in the brain and affects over 30,000 people in the U.S. with another 200,000 who are at risk of developing the disease, according to the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

In UC Irvine’s (UCI) School of Medicine and School of Biological Sciences, Leslie Thompson, Ph.D., UCI Chancellor’s professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and Chancellor’s professor of Neurobiology and Behavior, has been studying this rare genetic disease for over 30 years. Along with her team at The Thompson Laboratory, they aim to learn more about the disease and find treatments.

Pursuing a Passion
Originally from New York and then Wisconsin, Thompson first found a passion for music when she discovered the flute. However, after her family moved to Mexico, at age 13, Thompson learned about science through her enthusiastic ninth grade teacher, and her newfound passion for science turned into a decades-long pursuit.

During her senior year of high school, Thompson’s family moved to California where she attended UCI San Diego to study biology. It wasn’t until she was pursuing her Ph.D. at UCI that Thompson discovered her interest in genetics and Huntington’s disease in particular, an interest that was once again propelled by a passionate teacher, the late UCI professor and world-renowned genetic researcher John Wasmuth.

During this time, Thompson also met pioneering geneticist Nancy Wexler as well as families affected by the disease, which kept her forever engaged in the research.

Following Wasmuth’s human genetics class, Thompson dove head first into studying Huntington’s disease and, eventually, was on an international consortium that discovered the gene for Huntington’s disease, or the HD gene in 1993. The following year, she also co-identified the genetic mutation for the most common genetic form of short-limbed dwarfism, achondroplasia. However, Huntington’s disease has always been her focus.

“I’ve been working on Huntington’s disease now for over 30 years and I’ve been committed ever since. It’s absolutely a passion,” said Thompson.

Having been a lab tech, researcher and, since 2000, a faculty member, Thompson found a home at UCI and thrives utilizing the resources from one of the top research universities. She is grateful for the support she has received over the years.

“It’s an incredible environment and has incredibly strong neuroscience,” said Thompson. “At the very highest level of leadership, UCI accepts, strengthens and promotes ideas. UCI enables innovation and, at the same time, has that collaborative nature, that nimbleness of being able to put things in place quickly.”
Huntington’s disease is a rare, inherited disease triggered by a single genetic mutation that causes a progressive breakdown of nerve cells in the brain and affects over 30,000 people in the U.S. with another 200,000 who are at risk of developing the disease.

Despite the disease’s debilitating effects, Thompson finds the most inspiration when working with the families affected by Huntington’s disease well as working with several foundations, such as Hereditary Disease Foundation, Huntington’s Disease Society of America and HD CARE, a UCI support group. “The HD families are incredibly brave, knowledgeable, and interested and go through pain and suffering that most of us will never experience,” said Thompson. “The hope and courage they show every day is constantly inspiring and drives us to keep it in mind with everything we do in the lab.”

TRANSLATING THERAPIES

The Thompson Lab is currently studying how the genetic mutation of Huntington’s disease causes specific brain cells to prompt motor and cognitive skill regressions and premature dysfunction and death. Through years of dedicated research, the lab has utilized Huntington’s disease patient’s skin cells, which are formed into specific type of cell called a neural stem cell to model and study the disease. “The patients donate their skin cells to develop those stem cells,” said Thompson. “Even once patients pass away, we still are working with their cells in the lab. So, their families take some comfort from the fact that their family members are still alive in the lab.”

The lab is also developing a stem cell therapy product to transplant into a patient’s brain in which a specific type of cell called a neural stem cell can start to differentiate and make the damaged neurons functional. “They have a lot of hope for protecting the brain and then also repairing some of the circuitry that is disrupted in Huntington’s disease. There’s a lot of promise for stem cell approaches,” said Thompson. With the help of UCI Beall Applied Innovation’s Research Translation Group* and Industry Sponsored Research* team, Thompson recently entered into a sponsored research agreement as well as an option agreement with AgeX Therapeutics, a biotech company that develops therapeutics for aging and regeneration. And with her technology, the teams are forming their own company to develop cellular therapies to treat neurodegenerative disorders and diseases, such as Huntington’s and Alzheimer’s. “I would love to see treatments or a cure for Huntington’s disease in my lifetime and I think we will because with the way things are moving, that’s a definite reality,” said Thompson. “This is a global effort and we are one little piece of that. It takes a worldwide village.”

“A LOT OF THE FAMILIES SAY IT’S THE WORST OF PARKINSON’S, ALZHEIMER’S AND AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS ALL LUMPED TOGETHER WITH THIS DISEASE, YOU CAN’T DO YOUR JOB, PERFORM DAILY TASKS OR TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY.”

– Leslie Thompson, Ph.D.

“THE HOPE AND COURAGE THEY SHOW EVERY DAY IS CONSTANTLY INSPIRING AND DRIVES US TO KEEP IT IN MIND WITH EVERYTHING WE DO IN THE LAB.”

– Leslie Thompson, Ph.D.
Applied Innovation connects the community and industry with university through events such as networking opportunities, celebrations, coworking space and serves as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship for Southern California.

Richard Sudek CARVES A NEW PATH TO SEMI-RETIREMENT

FROM LEMONADE STAND TO ENTREPRENEUR TO INVESTOR, Sudek leaves a legacy of growth within UCI’s and Orange County’s entrepreneurial communities.

Building a hub for the university, business and collective communities to successfully collide takes a mixture of innovation and entrepreneurship combined with an extraordinary amount of investments and interest.

And, according to Richard Sudek, Southern California has the right ingredients.

Sudek, Ph.D., UCI Beall Applied Innovation executive director and UC Irvine (UCI) chief innovation officer, has experienced many different aspects of entrepreneurship – from bootstrapping his own company to becoming an angel investor. This is in addition to teaching and mentoring students and building a place, Applied Innovation, for university and faculty innovation to intermingle with the Southern California community.

A lot has changed since Applied Innovation’s opening, and Sudek now passes the baton to transition into a semi-retirement.

“With Applied Innovation, it was about trying to accelerate and improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Orange County and Southern California in a more general way,” said Sudek. “It was about taking what was already here and simply connecting it, growing it and accelerating it.”

Applied Innovation all started when Don Beall, chairman of The Beall Family Foundation, approached Sudek about the idea of building an innovation ecosystem at UCI that connects the university to the community. In 2014, tasked by UCI Chancellor Howard Gilman, Ph.D., Sudek and his team built UCI Beall Applied Innovation as a central hub for the UCI campus and Orange County community to connect.

“We just did everything we could to get going. And the real enabler was Howard Gilman allowing Michael Arias, who was the Chief of Staff at the time, to provide us support and help in getting things done quickly in a university, which is typically a challenge,” said Sudek.

Sudek introduced business communities to Applied Innovation, and brought investors into the ever-growing space to hold events, hear startups from UCI and the community pitch and become a part of a network of individuals who offer startups free professional guidance through the Innovation Advisor* program.

“I think that the public university of the future has to be better connected to the community at large, the business community and the entrepreneurial community,” said Sudek. “Public universities need to bring value to the community and that’s the design behind Beall Applied Innovation – we’re trying to help the community.”

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES NEED TO BRING VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY AND THAT’S THE DESIGN BEHIND BEALL APPLIED INNOVATION – WE’RE TRYING TO HELP THE COMMUNITY.

– Richard Sudek, Ph.D.
But this entrepreneurial success is nothing new for Sudek. And as it turns out, he always had a passion for entrepreneurship since a young age. At five years old, Sudek was already on the path toward an entrepreneurial career. After starting various endeavors, such as opening a lemonade stand, or seizing an opportunity to wash his neighbor’s cars while they held a party, it was apparent that Sudek already had entrepreneurship on his mind.

Fast forward decades later, at 24 years old and with $250, Sudek founded Nadek Computer Systems, a computer consulting company and, after 17 years, sold the company to multibillion-dollar technology company, Science Applications International Corporation. He was the director at The Entrepreneurship Center at Chapman University and gave a TEDx talk about having the courage to fail. As an angel investor, Sudek has viewed over a thousand startup presentations and pitches.

Reflecting back on the years of being an entrepreneur and working with entrepreneurs, Sudek doesn’t see much change within the typical entrepreneur personality – intensity, drive and perseverance being mainstays. “Entrepreneurs are not big risk-takers. However, they have a high tolerance for ambiguity, which means that they don’t know if they’re going to make payroll, they don’t know if the product’s going to work, but they’re calculated risk-takers and they have a willingness to risk failure,” said Sudek.

As he looks toward the future, he wants entrepreneurs to remember that success isn’t always measured by exceptional monetary achievements. “I think a successful entrepreneur is someone who can build a company, make money and create an environment that people want to work in – a culture that allows people to grow and pay people well enough that they can have a good living, but do it with integrity,” said Sudek.

During his semi-retirement, Sudek plans to dedicate a sizeable portion of his time to helping under-resourced and underrepresented entrepreneurs be successful as well as coach entrepreneurs one-on-one. “Any entrepreneur should be able to get anywhere, and there are certain populations that have not had the access to the networks, mentors and the capital, and I’m working on changing that,” said Sudek.

Learn more about Applied Innovation at innovation.uci.edu ///

The Cove @ UCI has expanded to 100,000 square feet in University Research Park and has become a staple in the Orange County entrepreneurial communities under Sudek’s leadership. February 2020 marked Applied Innovation’s second grand opening after moving into the large space flush with nothing less than the latest technology, high-quality design and top-notch staff of 65 employees.

In early 2020, prior to stay-at-home orders, the Cove @ UCI expanded to a 100,000-square-foot building in UCI’s Research Park and held many engaging events for the community, startup companies, investors and much more.

The Applied Innovation team has grown to more than 65 staff members who work to connect startups, the community, industry and university to one another. The Applied Innovation staff specialize in many areas, ranging from research translation, industry contracts, new ventures, intellectual property and more.

DEEP DIVE

ANY ENTREPRENEUR SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET ANYWHERE, AND THERE ARE CERTAIN POPULATIONS THAT HAVE NOT HAD THE ACCESS TO THE NETWORKS, MENTORS AND THE CAPITAL, AND I’M WORKING ON CHANGING THAT.”

– Richard Sudek, Ph.D.
If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

What’s one of the most memorable destinations you’ve traveled to?

Sienna, Italy. I went in college to study the Palio, an ancient horse race that has been run for centuries. It was a magical sort of place because it was built on a hill where traffic wasn’t allowed. I almost felt like I was stepping back in time.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My favorite movie is from 1939 called “The Women.” It’s filled with all the movie stars from that era: Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford. It has an all-women cast, which was not heard of at the time. It is a wonderfully witty movie.

If you could only pick one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I’m a big fan of salted caramel, so, as long as the food has that at its core. It’s creamy and creamy and the sweet salt to offset the sweet just makes everything that much sharper.
Mind Brain Parenting Deals a New Deck of Cards for Mental Health

THE WAYFINDER STARTUP CREATES A SISTER BRAND TO EXTEND ITS MENTAL WELLNESS TOOLS BEYOND CAREGIVERS TO COLLEGE STUDENTS AND WORKING PROFESSIONALS.

Companies that truly champion entrepreneurial spirit aren’t afraid to adjust their strategies after discovering new needs they can meet. Wayfinder startup Mind Brain Parenting is no exception.

Since its launch in 2018, Mind Brain Parenting’s mission has been to build social-emotional learning skills, literacy and trust between children and their parents. Through its two conversation-promoting card games, Mind Brain Parenting has been a widely used resource to help kids and parents better communicate and connect.

After being featured in The Harvard Gazette and winning the 2018 Parents’ Choice Awards, Mind Brain Parenting’s first card deck, 52 Essential Conversations, gained national and international recognition among educators and caregivers. The company’s first two decks have been used in over 50 countries worldwide.

But recently, Mind Brain Parenting founder and CEO Jenny Woo, M.Ed, MBA, has embraced a new goal: helping college students and working professionals develop the emotional resilience they need to succeed in the classroom and workplace.

Under Mind Brain Parenting’s new mission, Woo created a sister brand to her company, named “Mind Brain Emotion.” The new brand is now home to her second card deck, 52 Essential Relationships, as well as the latest card deck, 52 Essential Coping Skills. Unlike Woo’s first two conversation-based card decks, 52 Essential Coping Skills can be played solo, on one’s own time. Each card in the deck features a research-based exercise that helps the user better manage their emotions and wellbeing.

“Without an executive team, Woo has found the support of entrepreneurial incubator programs like Wayfinder and virtual meetings with Innovation Advisors to be invaluable to her company’s growth.”

“52 Essential Coping Skills is an extension of the course that I’ve taught here at UCI called ‘Emotional intelligence for School and Job Success,’” said Woo.

Despite how much Mind Brain Parenting has grown since its 2018 launch, Woo still juggles her company’s marketing, graphic design and product development amongst other central operations. But she says support from UCI Beall Applied Innovation’s Wayfinder program, in the form of Innovation Advisors and fellow entrepreneurs, has helped her immensely in her entrepreneurial journey.

“The Wayfinder program has introduced me to other Wayfinder teams, advisors and experts, which created a sense of community and accountability that enabled me as a one-woman show to continue to grow and expand.”

– Jenny Woo, M.Ed, MBA

Mind Brain Parenting’s first two decks have been used in over 50 countries worldwide.

From stress-management to social-emotional learning, each card deck cultivates a different cognitive skill essential to mental wellness.
UCI Beall Applied Innovation is a dynamic, innovative central platform for the UCI campus, entrepreneurs, inventors, the business community and investors to collaborate and move UCI research from lab to market.