

OPHTHALMIC WOMAN   
**magazine**  
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Ophthalmic Women Leaders  
leadership | advancement | community



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## Ophthalmic Women Leaders

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# Random Acts of Courage

Courage is a concept that has many dimensions, depending upon the context, circumstances, and history of one’s life experiences. The expression of courage also comes in a variety of ways. For some people, courage may come from digging deep inside to overcome fears (real or imagined). For others, it may be triumphing over challenges that are either internally or externally imposed. Still for others, it may be a matter of taking some calculated risks that result in stretching oneself to new heights previously unimagined.

“Life  
shrinks or  
expands in  
proportion  
to one’s  
courage.”

Anais Nin

A non-conventional aspect of courage that is often overlooked or seldom mentioned is the ability to ask for help when needed. Some of us might not define this as an act of courage. However, if you think about what is required to allow oneself to be open and vulnerable, it takes an enormous amount of courage to ask for help.

One size does not fit all when it comes to courage. All of us are on the journey of becoming who we are meant to be! My hope is that we can all embrace that journey with confidence and courage. The opportunities for building a strong network with OWL members or participating in our mentoring program, as a mentor or mentee, are ways we can help each other develop and exceed our professional and personal goals.

The articles in this summer issue of *Ophthalmic Woman Magazine* – with courage as this edition’s theme – all reveal different approaches to courage by some incredibly strong and successful individuals.

Likewise, OWL as an organization is expressing courage. As we reach out across ophthalmology to partner with a variety of people and organizations to promote and develop diverse leadership to advance ophthalmic innovation and patient care, we are experimenting with new approaches to reach a broader group of stakeholders. We have strengthened our vision, mission, and values. We are launching new programs and venues for reaching those in all sectors of the ophthalmology space. We may be successful in some of our endeavors, and we may fail in others. However, with a board of directors and volunteer committee members who are courageous and dedicated to OWL’s future, we are not afraid to create new and different opportunities to ensure that OWL evolves into an even stronger organization.

We welcome your courage and help in making OWL an organization that truly makes a positive difference in the ophthalmology space. Enjoy the magazine, and have a wonderful summer with your families and friends.

Marsha D. Link, PhD  
President, Ophthalmic Women Leaders

# Career Path: Finding the Courage to Work for Yourself

By Brad McCorkle

About 24% of all start-ups fail within the first year, and 50% of new businesses close within the first 5 years, according to the Small Business Administration. For the millions of Americans who want to start their own businesses – but do not have the courage to do so – this metric looms largely in their decisions to put off pursuing their entrepreneurial dreams.

If you're one of the hopeful business-builders whose fear of failure is holding you back, let's examine why most new businesses fail. Here are 5 ideas – intermingled with lessons I've learned along the way – that may give you a new perspective on the risks associated with running your own business.

1. Actually, most start-ups don't fail – their founders just give up too easily. Thomas Edison said: "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." I believe virtually every business that fails in the first year is a victim of a founder who didn't have the courage to give the business a fighting chance. One year is not nearly enough time to understand the viability of a business. Even many of the 50% of new business owners who gave up after 5 years were just around the corner from success – they just didn't realize it. So, don't believe the hype about the great likelihood that a new business will fail. Instead, set proper expectations (See point number 2).
2. Success, however you define it, in your business will take 2 to 3 times longer than you think. I believe one of the reasons people give up so easily is that they expect to find success in 1 or 2 years. That's not realistic! A minimum of 3 to 5 years should be planned for – maybe even longer. If you go into entrepreneurship with these proper expectations, it should take off some of the pressure, and make it much less likely that you'll become disillusioned after a year or so and give up. Have the courage to go the long haul.
3. Work your plan, but have the courage to improvise along the way. I believe another factor holding back would-be business owners is that they don't feel their business plan is ready yet. Here's a tip: Don't waste much time trying to come up with the "perfect" business plan. I look back on my original business plan with a chuckle, because it looks drastically different from what I imagined and planned. I didn't know what I didn't know. As you plan, you will make some bad assumptions no matter how hard you try, and markets will change. You'll have to pivot, just count on it. So, take a shot at a good business plan, and then have the courage to go for it! Execution will teach you more than anything, and if you're in it for the long haul, then you won't be in a rush.
4. Build a business around a need you've personally experienced. It's not a foolproof way to measure viability, but if you have experienced the need for a specific product or service, chances are others out there have, too. After some additional research, you may have something here. (A word of advice: When your friends tell you they would pay \$25 or whatever for this or that product or service, don't believe them. You won't know – and neither will your friends – until you're out there asking people for real money. When they give you their hard-earned cash, then you'll know it is for real.)
5. You get out of your business what you put into it. I've talked with quite a few people who want to start a business, but their plan is to run it "on the side" – meaning they'll keep their day jobs. That's fine, but understand there is a direct correlation between your time, effort, focus, and the likelihood of success of your business. If you're okay with your business being only partially successful, then partial effort should work just fine. As adults we have responsibilities and bills to pay, but if you really want a business to thrive then at some point it needs your full attention.

Businesses aren't as likely to fail as people think. We simply need more courageous entrepreneurs who are passionate, committed, patient, and realistic. Hopefully, you will come to see that the only failure is in giving up, and that success is just around the corner! ■

Brad McCorkle is founder of Local Eye Site.

Brad McCorkle



# Strategies for Cultivating Courage

By Molly Schar



On facing the challenge of believing in ourselves, not despite our vulnerabilities, but because of them

A few years ago, noted research professor Brené Brown, PhD, gave a local TED talk in Houston about shame and vulnerability. She talked about understanding through her research that the key to human connection is vulnerability – emotional risk, exposure, uncertainty – and that vulnerability is how courage is measured. That TED talk struck a nerve, and soon it had been seen by millions of people (it's now had more than 15 million views).

Suddenly, Brown was very popular. Speaking opportunities came pouring in. Interestingly, she relays in her subsequent TED talk, the business sector wanted her to speak, but not about shame and vulnerability. They wanted her to talk about innovation, creativity, and change.

In response, Brown says this: “Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity, and change. To create is to make something that has never existed before. There’s nothing more vulnerable than that. Adaptability to change is all about vulnerability.”

“  
Courage  
is to tell the  
story of who  
you are with  
your whole  
heart ... Dare  
to show up  
and be seen.  
”

Brené Brown, PhD

## Courage in Business

Business courage is “a special kind of calculated risk-taking . . . making success more likely while avoiding rash, unproductive, or irrational behavior,” says Kathleen Reardon in her *Harvard Business Review* article, “*Courage as a Skill*.”

To make the courage calculation, Reardon suggests considering the following questions:

- **What are your goals?** Are your goals organizational or individual, or both? What is your primary goal? If your primary goal isn't met, what is your secondary goal? What does success look like? Is it obtainable?
- **How important are your goals?** Are they on the lower end of the scale – regarding an issue where you have an individual preference – or the high end – resting on your morals, values, or ethics? “Courage is not about squandering political capital on low-priority issues,” Reardon says.
- **Do you have a supportive power network?** Power is less about where you sit on the organization chart and more about relationships and influence. When more powerful people depend on you for advice, appreciation, respect, friendship, or network affiliations, your power grows. With a broader power base, you are better positioned to make bold moves. Be politically savvy to tip the power balance.
- **What are the trade-offs?** Take a look at the risks and benefits of the action you're considering. Are there any lower-risk alternatives that could still allow you to accomplish your goals?
- **Is now the right time?** Consider the pros and cons of waiting to act. Would obstacles be removed or reduced if you wait? Could you improve your odds of success by marshaling additional support or information? Are you personally ready to take the risk?
- **What are your contingency plans?** If you fail, will you be able to salvage things? What's the worst-case scenario?

Continued on next page

# Cultivating Courage *continued*

## Courage and Leadership Presence

Speaking in front of a group – large or small – offers an opportunity to go beyond conveying information to truly speak your values persuasively.

Elizabeth Powell, an assistant professor of business administration at the University of Virginia, teaches a course for executives who want to grow their leadership presence.

She urges them to project their presence and lead with rhetorical courage – To speak their minds. From the heart. Even when their voices shake.

- “Speaking your mind” – Powell encourages being honest and interesting rather than touting the party line.
- “From the heart” – It’s important for the audience not only to understand your message, Powell says, but also to feel your emotion. Tell your story to convey passion and vulnerability. You’ll find that the audience will reciprocate.
- “Even when your voice shakes” – It’s natural to be nervous and doubt yourself when speaking in public, but this can be tempered by centering yourself physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

## Courage to be Imperfect

In Brené Brown’s research, she turned up a phenomenon she calls “living wholeheartedly.” The difference between the people she studied who had a strong sense of love and belonging and those who did not was only that the people who had it believed they are worthy of it. Wholehearted, then, is living from a sense of worthiness.

Wholehearted individuals, Brown says, have the courage to be imperfect, the compassion to be kind to themselves first, and a connection with those around them as a result of their authenticity. This comes from a willingness to “let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they are.” They actually embrace vulnerability, believing their vulnerabilities are human and beautiful.

When we talk about courage, this to me is the most important point and the greatest challenge – believing in ourselves, not despite our vulnerabilities, but because of them. ■

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Molly Schar is the executive director of Ophthalmic Women Leaders, Washington, DC.



In his book “*The Courage Quotient,*” psychologist Robert Biswas-Diener posits that courage quotient (CQ) is your willingness to act divided by your fear. You need the former to be bigger than the latter in order to result in a courageous act.

To increase your CQ, you must manage fear and boost your willingness to act. Practicing controlled breathing and meditating can help you manage fear, Biswas-Diener says.

To boost your willingness to act, you must embrace failure as something that is inevitable and even useful. Take risks and experiment, he says. Practice failing.

Molly Schar





Member Profile: Lisa Peltier

# Showing Your Inner and Outer Courage

By Michelle Dalton, ELS

After a diagnosis of cancer, Lisa chose to share her struggles and successes openly in fighting the disease.

Some define courage as being brave in the face of adversity. If that's the case, then **Lisa Peltier** is one of the most courageous women in ophthalmology. When the non-smoker was diagnosed with lung cancer, the vice president of operations of BSM Consulting faced the challenge head on and felt that sharing her story with others would help inspire other women to be open about their own devastating diagnosis.

And through it all, Lisa says family (both her personal and professional ones) continually supported her and made her realize that "I can't let these people down."

"I knew I had to fight this," she says. "When I was first diagnosed, it struck me early on how many friends I had in industry and in my personal life. I'm very fortunate. I come from a really good gene pool, with a strong influence of my parents about being positive and not having a 'Woe-is-me' attitude."

Almost 30 years ago, Lisa's younger brother was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and although he died 6 months after being diagnosed, "watching him and the way he carried himself through all of it made a huge impression on me.

"He was always the pestering little brother," she says. "I never expected him to be the courageous person that he was."

For one thing, her brother refused to focus on himself – instead joking with the nurses, family, and friends who would visit, and doing his best to ensure his very young children would be all right.

"It wasn't about him at all," Lisa says. "He had a very positive influence on me during a really difficult time. I have felt strongly since my initial diagnosis that I didn't want anyone to feel uncomfortable around me, that I wanted to be able to talk about it because it helps me."

Lisa feels "very fortunate" to have her positive outlook.

## Drawing on Strength of Others

"What I want to be able to do is help other people who are suffering, who are not as fortunate as I am to have the support system that I have. I see it every time I go to the cancer center . . . patients and families who are sad and distressed," she says.

She attributes part of her positive attitude in the face of adversity to her religious beliefs as well.

*"God has blessed me with a very strong faith and is giving me strength and courage to turn this challenge into something that hopefully I can use to help other people," she says.*

When she was first diagnosed, she explained, "it's hard to describe that initial fear and that sinking feeling that you experience, but then I knew I had to go into planning mode and do as much as I could to give myself a fighting chance. I had to educate myself and figure out what role I could play. What did I need to do, because I didn't want to just leave it to a caregiver to tell me.

"I had to have a very active role and I have all along," Lisa says. "My husband and children have also been very involved, open, and supportive. I think that has allowed me to be very open about it with other people."

## Words to Live By

She also talked with three friends who each had close experiences with cancer, and asked for advice from them early on.

"There were two or three things that I really took away from those conversations," she says. "The first one was try to keep life as normal as possible. I don't think of myself as a cancer patient. I do, but I don't. I don't dwell on it."

Second, while allowing herself to continue to work, Lisa's friends advised her to "carve out more time for myself. I worked long days; starting early in the morning and many weekends, as well."

*Continued on next page*

## Inner and Outer Courage *continued*



*Far left photo:  
Lisa hiking  
with her dog*

*Left photo:  
Lisa with  
her husband,  
Gene, along  
with children,  
John and  
Emily*

Her oncologist pegged her as a “super-Type A personality” and gave her just 10 days to clear her desk off and delegate to others. Being told she should not work for the months she underwent chemo was difficult, but Lisa took the time for herself to enjoy her



*‘Lisa’s Army’ at Squaw Valley Mountain Run 2013*

family, friends, and the beauty of Lake Tahoe, which was very healing. She also looked forward to the day she could return to work.

“I’m back to work full-time, but I’ve been able to cut back on my hours and maintain the ability to do what I want to do on a personal basis,” she says, and that’s been important to her recovery. She thinks nothing of prioritizing her family and friends and hopping on a plane to go visit spontaneously.

“Before I wouldn’t necessarily allow myself to do those kinds of things. I always felt the need to plan in advance,” she adds. “That’s been really important, just to focus more on allowing myself to do things for myself but still being able to contribute at work and being close to my work life.”

She advises others who might be facing similar challenges to try their best to get care close to home.

“Part of the healing process is being at home because that’s where your support system is. That’s where your family is,” she recalls a friend telling her. Luckily, she

found a terrific cancer center close to her home that is affiliated with UC Davis Cancer Center “so I get the benefit of that, but at the same time I’m home every night. Right now I’m on a daily oral cancer drug,” and not having to travel a long distance for care is a big benefit.

On the day she had been scheduled for surgery (after chemo and radiation to reduce the tumor size), she found out the cancer had spread to her leg. Although the news was hard to take, she promptly went into planning mode, went through another two rounds of chemo, sought a second opinion, and underwent genetic testing that found she has a specific gene mutation for which the FDA recently approved a drug to treat.

She stopped chemo this past January and started on the oral medication to which she is responding well.

### Never Look Back

“Another important message I took away from early discussions that made a big impression was to educate yourself so you can make an informed decision,” she says. “Once you make a decision, stick with it and don’t ever second-guess yourself and don’t think back and say, ‘I wish I had done something differently’ because you’ll drive yourself crazy and it doesn’t do you any good.”

She’s taken that attitude across into her professional life as well.

“I don’t doubt business decisions I make,” she says. “I don’t know that I did a lot before my diagnosis, but I definitely don’t now. I’ve got a great group around me. It’s amazing. I don’t think people realize the little things they do that keep my spirits up everyday.”

*Continued on page 9*



# A Personal Perspective on Courage in Advancing Your Career

By Jane Rady

Before I even begin writing an article, I always reflect on what it is I want the reader to take away. Sounds simple, but I've found myself finishing articles by others wondering exactly what was their point. So as I think about courage and significant pivotal points in my career, I'll give you the "punch line" upfront: Do not associate courage with fear.

business in agriculture but also as a means to enter pharmaceuticals and nutrition.

The courage to take that challenge and push myself into new areas – but areas where I had a base of skills upon which to build – has been the foundation of my career growth and development.

Courage is the ability to challenge ourselves. We all have that ability but like any skill, challenging ourselves needs to be honed and developed through use and experience. We gain judgment through incremental challenges and the courage to do so. That judgment builds and drives each of us to take on greater challenges through the courage of our experience.

If you do a Google search, all sorts of quotes emerge, most of which connect courage with overcoming fear: "absence of fear," "triumph over fear," and they go on.

## Reaching an Inflection Point

I started my career at Abbott working as a technical supervisor in the basement of an R&D building. I supervised a handful of technicians doing routine and developmental work on antibiotic assays. Meager beginnings, but wonderful memories. Using my technical background and training, I developed my skills as a manager and continued to advance through Abbott's technical community until I got to what I call an inflection point.

Everyone has these. It's a point where if you don't change – challenge yourself with the courage to change – you're stuck. In my case, my career was moving more into the business side, and I had zero training. I needed an MBA and spent two challenging years at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management in the Executive MBA Program (with the support and encouragement of Abbott).

With my newly minted MBA in hand, I was eager for a challenge and seized an opportunity to join Monsanto heading its venture capital investment program. Here again, I used skills in technology, management, and now business to challenge myself in a new industry. Monsanto was investing heavily into biotechnology, not only as a driver for its established

## Springboard for Further Growth and Development

Monsanto's efforts led to the acquisition of G.D. Searle and a return to my pharmaceutical roots. Within Searle I held numerous roles including general manager of Lorex, a joint venture with Synthelabo that developed and launched Ambien. If you do international travel, you likely have used Ambien on some of those long trips to help you sleep.

In 2000, Monsanto and Pharmacia merged. As the operations of Searle consolidated into Pharmacia, I took a break from big pharma, consulting and freelancing for about a year. That work led to a small biotech company in Chicago where I became CEO for a short period until approached by Advanced Medical Optics (AMO) and Jim Mazzo.

I had interviewed several years earlier with Allergan. With a son in high school, I turned down the opportunity, always remembering what a great group of people I had met. Curious to see if those leaving Allergan to start AMO were as impressive as those I had met years earlier, I went to Orange County and interviewed. Conclusion: Yes, and the rest is history.

Within two weeks I had joined AMO prior to the spin-off from Allergan. That was April 2002.

*Continued on next page*

## Advancing Career *continued*

By July we were a publicly traded company, and in September 2002 we were on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange ringing the opening bell. As it turns out, in 2005, we did it again after the VISX acquisition and changed our stock symbol from AVO to EYE.

Moving from pharma into medical devices was challenging – more than I had anticipated. But to date the courage to challenge myself, moving from family and friends in Chicago into this industry, has been the most gratifying move of my career.

Ophthalmology is about restoring sight. Working with the dedicated people in this industry to improve vision and patient outcomes drives me every day.

Each day we all experience challenges. Experiment with them. Push your courage to take a new step. Some work and others may not, but you will begin to develop the judgment to take calculated risks that will drive you forward in your career. But remember that uneasiness you may feel is courage, not fear. It will serve you well. ■

*Jane Rady is divisional vice president, business development, at Abbott Medical Optics. She is the 2014 recipient of OWL's Visionary Woman Award.*

Jane Rady



Ophthalmic Women Leaders **WOMEN** IN OPHTHALMOLOGY  
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### JOIN US for Upcoming Online Programs:

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### JOIN US in California Southern California Chapter Event

**Tuesday, Sept. 2 | 5:30 - 7:00 pm**  
This chapter event will consider how we can develop more fruitful relationships at work.

### JOIN US in London OWL Roost at ESCRS

**Monday, Sept. 15 | 5:30 - 7:00 pm**  
OWL members attending the ESCRS meeting are invited to gather for this casual networking event.

Visit [www.owlsite.org](http://www.owlsite.org) for details and to register

## Inner and Outer Courage

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Lisa believes getting her story out is key to helping her heal emotionally and she hopes to inspire others as well.

“Sharing what you’re going through with other people is very important because what you get back from them is so much strength,” she says. “That’s probably one of the key things that I would hope to be able to share and inspire people to do. Then allow yourself to appreciate all of the things that make you tick, and make you feel good, and not to feel so committed that you have to do something because somebody else expects you to,” she adds. ■

*Michelle Dalton, ELS, is a founder of Dalton & Associates,*

Michelle Dalton, ELS



“Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.”

Mary Anne Radmacher

# A Profile in Courage: Daniele Aron Rosa

By Ellen Troyer, MT MA

Courage does not mean the absence of fear, because fear is an integral part of what makes an action courageous – at any level.



Women of courage fiercely or quietly defy complacency to reach their goals. The reach may require a lot of noise and bold decisions, or it may require a quiet look into their souls to find courage not to be afraid to speak the truth.

**Daniele Aron Rosa's** courageous life inspires me. She is a beautiful visionary with daunting life experiences that helped her develop the cellular courage to defy complacency – in her personal life, as an innovative ophthalmologist, and as a fiercely avant-garde artist who dares to grab her audience and not let them go. Her passionate approach to work in both ophthalmology and art has been fueled by her complex curiosity and intellectual daring, with a cultural and political intensity requiring an audience to stay in story-thought with her.

## Courage Not Only to Survive but Succeed

Daniele is a small, elegantly formidable force of nature who always leans in.

She was born in Paris in 1934. When Germany invaded France in 1940, her Jewish parents were forced into hiding after giving their six-year-old daughter to an unknown concerned Protestant family who agreed to try to keep her safe by presenting her as their own child. She was returned to her family after Paris was liberated. She was then 10 years old.

Daniele studied physics before she received a medical degree in 1962 at the University of Paris, specializing in ophthalmology. Her professional career began with researching tumors on the back of the eye.

*After watching early ruby lasers with very slow pulses, Daniele turned to her university physics background to research and create a faster laser pulse, which became the YAG laser she used for the first laser surgery inside the human eye.*

Daniele courageously worked all alone in a small basement room at Trousseau Hospital in Paris for a number of years to prevent discovery until her work was complete and proven, so she could demonstrate to herself and to her detractors that the idea of cutting tissue inside the eye was feasible without causing thermal damage, swelling of surrounding tissue, or causing acute elevation of intraocular pressure.

*Continued on next page*

## Profile in Courage *continued*

When presenting her findings to the French Ophthalmological Society in Paris, she was challenged by male colleagues who accused her of fraud, claiming that she was surgically opening the clouded posterior capsules rather than using a laser beam. They even went so far as to forbid her to present her laser surgical results to the French Society. Fortunately for the world, she courageously persevered and presented her results to the Netherlands Ophthalmology Society and to friends in Moscow and the United States, where her presentations received standing ovations.

### Rising Above her Challenges

Daniele is a Laureate of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, a member of the Ophthalmology Hall of Fame, a Ridley Medal professor at the University of Tennessee, Memphis, and an officer of the French Legion of Honor. Daniele pointed out when she gave the Sir Harold Ridley lecture titled “Creativity and Innovation in Ophthalmology” that – as was the case with Sir Harold Ridley in the development of the intraocular lens and Charles Kelman in his development of the phacoemulsification technique – visionaries and courageous innovators are frequently criticized and isolated by those who refuse to acknowledge the value of new technology.

Daniele became one of the leading international educators in ophthalmology and has produced hundreds of articles, papers, and scientific books, as well as several teaching films. She has served as professor and chair of ophthalmology at Paris University and chair of ophthalmology at Foundation Rothschild, Paris. Daniele has mentored many lucky ophthalmic surgeons with generous unbridled passion for their successes.

### Another Renaissance of Sorts

Daniele assumed the name Genskof when she felt it necessary to keep her artistic life separate from her medical professional life. She added Aron to Genskof when she retired. She is now an internationally celebrated artist whose work can be found in museums, galleries, and impressive corporate, university, and private collections.

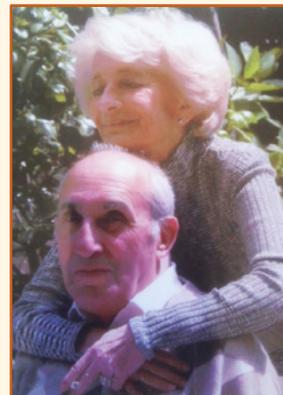
Her delightful self-portrait (shown below) greets me in my kitchen



every morning and serves as a constant reminder to live every day with purpose.

*Daniele uses the proceeds from her paintings to support women's shelters in Paris.*

As an example of her generosity, Daniele immediately volunteered to create a collage for the Ophthalmic Women Leaders' 2013 auction fundraiser as soon as she was told about the event.



*Daniele and husband, J.J.*

Daniele is a renaissance woman. She is a supportive wife to pediatric ophthalmologist, John Jacques (J.J.) Aron; a devoted, always-working mother of successfully grown-and-flown children and a loving grandmother – not to mention an accomplished golfer, skier, sailor, and repeated nominee for the Nobel Prize in medicine. Her many achievements reflect courage, creativity, innovation, perseverance, and productivity. ■

*Ellen Troyer, MT MA, is chief executive officer and chief research officer of Biosyntrx. She was a 2014 finalist for OWL's Visionary Woman Award.*

*Ellen Troyer, MT MA*



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