

25 FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

AND THE BUSINESSES THEY CREATED

Despite the ups and downs of the local economy and the city of Detroit earning the not-so-honorary award for filing the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, those who still dare to dream are bringing back Michigan's entrepreneurial spirit that first started with the colonial period fur trade. More and more, these bright ideas are coming from women.

We've selected 25 female entrepreneurs in metro Detroit who are willing to take the necessary risks to have a successful business and to propel the economy forward.



RONIA KRUSE

Ronia Kruse started the information-technology consulting business OpTech LLC in 1999. In the company's early years, she worked more than 70 hours a week, but all of that hard work and long hours have paid off. In 2005, the company earned a revenue of roughly \$7 million.



TEKISHA LEE

The most successful entrepreneurs create a business that fills a void in the community or industry they're working in – and that's exactly what Tekisha Lee did. DiverseNote connects minority job candidates to organizations seeking top talent. In 2013, the company's revenue was more than \$1 million – an amount that Lee projects will continue to increase each year.



TATIANA GRANT

Many who study public relations dream of the perfect job after they graduate. But for Tatiana Grant, it was only a matter of time before she started her own public relations and event planning company: Infused PR. She's already worked with big-name clients such as Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, and has co-founded a second business, Flash Delivery, a restaurant delivery service for greater downtown Detroit.



ANDRA RUSH

In 1984, 23-year-old University of Michigan nursing grad Andra Rush realized her true dream of creating opportunity for her family and the Native American community in which she grew up. What started as a trucking company with just one van and two pickups has grown into the Wayne-based trucking firm with roughly 800 tractors, 1,350 trailers, 485 employees – and, of course, ongoing opportunities for growth.



DJ THORNSTRYKER

EMILY THORNHILL

Emily Thornhill holds many titles – like fashion designer, account executive and the founder of Homeslice clothing – but she's also the official DJ of the Detroit Pistons as DJ Thornstryker, the name she uses when she's playing tracks that make the crowd go wild.



ALISON VAUGHN

A former flight attendant and model, Alison Vaughn founded the nonprofit organization Jackets for Jobs to help low-income individuals with employment etiquette, career skills and training, and professional attire. Since 2000, the organization has helped over 15,000 clients achieve their job-seeking goals.

ELDORADO GENERAL STORE

ERIN GAVLE

After spending time in New York and Los Angeles, Erin Gavle settled back home in Detroit, opening up El Dorado General Store in July 2014. Positioned on the busy corner of Cochrane Street and Michigan Avenue in Corktown, El Dorado is shaping up to be more than just a store full of quality vintage wears and trinkets – it's a chance to take in Gavle's travel experiences and memories firsthand.



RACHEL LUTZ

As a fourth-generation business owner and a second-generation Midtown Detroit business owner, it simply makes sense that Rachel Lutz has the business acumen needed to grow a successful women's retail store – and she's done just that and more with the Peacock Room and the more recent Frida, both inside the Park Shelton.



SAMANTHA WHITE



With several years of acting and theater experience under her belt, Samantha White created Shakespeare in Detroit in 2012 to enhance city life and engage audiences. Featuring the work of the world's most prominent English dramatist, poet and playwright William Shakespeare, the performances have been seen by more than 3,000 Michiganders in venues throughout Detroit.

ANGELA WILLIAMS

Angela Williams founded Detail XPerts with her husband, Emmanuel, in 2002 as the first steam-cleaning carwash franchise in North America. Today, the company has its headquarters in Detroit and roughly 50 locations across the United States and Saudi Arabia, with plans to increase its franchises and create more than 30,000 jobs.



DROUGHT

THE JAMES SISTERS

These five sisters – Caitlin, Jane, Julie, Jessie and Jenny – opened the doors of their organic, cold-pressed raw juice business in downtown Plymouth in 2012 after earning roughly \$13,000 via Kickstarter in 2011. Since then, the sisters have brought the subculture of healthy living to Detroit, Birmingham and Royal Oak.



SISTER PIE

LISA LUDWINSKI

The always smiling, always energetic baker Lisa Ludwinski has been riding the success train since she won \$50,000 in Hatch Detroit's 2014 contest. In February, she hosted a 24-hour "Dancebreak-a-Thon" at record shop Paramita Sound, where more than \$26,000 was raised for Sister Pie's storefront build-out in Detroit's West Village.



SHERI CRAWLEY

In response to the harmful messages about skin tone and beauty in the media and the effect it was having on her young daughters and their classmates, Sheri Crawley founded Pretty Brown Girl in 2010 to affirm that brown skin tones are beautiful. What started with a baby doll has now grown into the Pretty Girl Movement, with expanded products, workshops, events and more.

DETROIT SOUP

KATE DAUGHDRILL

Founded in 2010 with Detroit musician Jessica Hernandez, Detroit Soup is a monthly dinner – featuring soup, salad and dessert prepared by different community members – that funds micro-grants for creative ventures in Detroit. Daughdrill's concept continues into its fifth year as a nonprofit headed by Amy Kaherl.

KACEE MUST



If you start practicing yoga at age 10, it's safe to say it will stick with you for the rest of your life – or at least your work life. For Kacee Must, who opened Royal Oak's Citizen Yoga in 2013, the calming and therapeutic practice is something she grew up on. In January, she opened a second location in Detroit beneath The Z parking garage on Library Street.

JOUMANA KAYROUZ



It's undisputed that Joumana Kayrouz is one of the most recognized attorneys in Michigan. We've seen her face on billboards and buses, and it makes sense that sometimes it might feel like she's everywhere when you start tallying her personal and career accomplishments.

LUCY CARNAGHI & MOLLY MITCHELL

Located on the east side of Detroit on Jefferson Avenue, Rose's Fine Food has quickly become the community's go-to neighborhood diner, offering locally sourced, made-from-scratch food. Cousins Lucy Carnaghi and Molly Mitchell have created a no-fuss, vintage diner environment, where no tips are necessary because employees earn a livable wage.



JENNIFER & ESPY THOMAS



In its second generation of family ownership, Sweet Potato Sensations has been operating for more than 26 years. Sisters Jennifer and Espy Thomas are the current owners taking care of their family's brand, adding their own flair and personalities to the mix of sweet potato cookies, pies, cakes and more.



PAULA TOMPKINS

Founded by Paula Tompkins in 1985 as SoftAd Group and renamed as ChannelNet in 2014, the web marketing and sales innovator based in Dearborn took advantage of the early digital age. Tompkins is an acknowledged computer expert, who has helped hundreds of companies utilize technology to sell their products – including the launch of *Ford.com* in the mid '90s.



FLORINE MARK

Although Florine Mark wasn't the founder of Weight Watchers, she brought the program to Michigan and has utilized her passion, energy and positive experience with the program to become the leading U.S. franchise holder of Weight Watchers International. She's also the host of the weekly morning radio show *Remarkable Women* and the weekly news segment *Ask Florine* on Channel 4.



VERONIKA SCOTT

At just 20 years old, College for Creative Studies student Veronika Scott came up with a product design in 2010 for a school project to help the homeless community that has burgeoned into one of metro Detroit's most significant nonprofits. Today, the organization employs roughly 20 previously homeless individuals who help manufacture the highly esteemed coats that double as sleeping bags.



AMY PETERSON & DIANA RUSSELL

Founded in 2013, jewelry company Rebel Nell employs, trains and empowers underserved women from Detroit shelters to help them transition into an independent life free from abuse. In 2014, the company was a Martha Stewart American Made crafts finalist.

ALICIA GEORGE



In 2010, Alicia George opened Motor City Java & Tea House in Detroit's Brightmoor neighborhood. Alongside her husband, John, who founded Motor City Blight Busters, George joined a group of fellow community leaders working to create positive change in the neighborhood. The local coffee shop is also a part of the Artist Village, a collaborative project that utilizes public art to encourage economic development.



RACHAEL ADADEVOH-WOODS

Established in 1992, Artloft is the creative vision of owner Rachael Adadevoh-Woods, who grew up in Ghana, West Africa, where she was surrounded by the work of local artisans. The company started off as a contemporary gallery in Birmingham, but has since flourished into a business that offers personal and home merchandise from local, national and international artists and designers.

JULIA CHURCH DIERKER

As the founding shareholder for the intellectual property law firm, Julia Church Dierker has experience with domestic and foreign patent prosecution and an extensive technical background in the fields of chemistry, biotechnology, information technology and more. In 2013, she was listed as one of Martindale-Hubbell's Preeminent Women Lawyers on the Bar Register.

