

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS



— W. — WOMEN WHO MEAN BUSINESS

*Honoring Hawaii's most influential women
from local businesses and community*

SPECIAL SECTION, PAGES 9-43

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS • March 13-19, 2026, Vol. 64, No. 3

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MINNA LEHTI

Chief Operating Officer, Hawaii Dental Service

Minna Lehti’s career at Hawaii Dental Service began more than 15 years ago in the compliance department, where she advanced to chief administrative officer.

Later promoted to COO, she led the launch of Medicare dental benefits for adults at HDS, expanding access to care for residents who do not have coverage, among other accomplishments. She also serves as vice president of Hawaii Client Services, an HDS subsidiary. Lehti is a Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional and certified in Healthcare Privacy Compliance, along with other professional designations.

Born in Helsinki, Finland, she moved to the United States for higher education and earned a BSBA in International Business and an MBA in Finance from Hawaii Pacific University. She serves on the boards for the Aloha United Way and The Salvation Army Hawaiian and Pacific Islands division.

“What sets Minna apart is not just her capability, but her character,” Nancy E. Pace, board chair of The Salvation Army Advisory Board, wrote in a statement.

“She is articulate, caring, considerate and unfailingly supportive of her fellow board members.”

What was your first paying job? “I am originally from Finland, so my first paying job was an admin person in Finland’s treasury. There, I did learn the basic office skills, but more importantly, I learned the value of friendships and connections.”

What advice do you have for young women just starting their careers? “My advice for a young woman is don’t be afraid to take risks. If you are given an opportunity, step into it, even if you think you don’t qualify for it, because you can learn your skills, you can gain the experience, but it’s very difficult to get good opportunities, so don’t be afraid to take that risk.”

What’s one thing most people don’t know about you? “... Since elementary school, I played basketball. While I was in high school, my team actually won Finland’s national title. So what did I learn from that? We often put limitations on ourselves, but we shouldn’t, because you can really turn your weaknesses into strengths.”



ELVIRA LO

President, P.H. Hawaii Corp. and Best Aloha Partners LLC

Elvira Lo, who leads multiple companies in commercial investment, property management and product development, has a 40-year career spanning Hawaii, San Francisco, Phoenix, Scottsdale Hong Kong. She is a licensed real estate agent and general contractor.

Lo also founded Hibiscus Aloha Corp., dba Elvira Chocolat of Hawaii and Hawaii Monarch Chocolate. The macadamia nut chocolates sell locally, nationally and internationally on the Home Shopping Network and was a first runner-up on the national program Quest for the Best.

Lo serves on the Hawaii Pacific Export Council and represented Hawaii at the 2024 National DEC Conference, where the council received the U.S. Department of Commerce’s District Export Council of the Year Award. She helped conduct 15 export seminars and generated \$7.6 million in new export sales for the council.

Her community work includes serving on the

Chinese Chamber of Commerce Board, leading the West Honolulu Rotary Club Foundation and chairing the board for Palolo Chinese Home.

“Elvira’s financial acumen and trusted relationships throughout the business community have strengthened our donor base and secured vital new partners,” Darlene H. Nakayama, CEO of Palolo Chinese Home, wrote in support of her nomination. “This is invaluable to a nonprofit operating on thin margins as we work to ensure a full continuum of care for the seniors we serve.”

What advice do you have for young women just starting their careers? “They have to believe in themselves. They have to allow themselves to expand and chase after their dreams, and they have to believe that their capacity is beyond their imagination. Continue to go after what you believe in yourself until you reach the point where you feel satisfied with yourself. This is about yourself. This is not about what other people are looking at.”