



# NEWS

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## El Camino College Honors Nine “Women of Distinction”

Nine exceptional community leaders were recently honored at the 2013 El Camino College Women of Distinction Ceremony.

All nine of these “Women of Distinction” were recognized for their dedicated service and contributions to the community: Antoinette Brown-Leon, of Gardena; Bonnie Jean Coronado, of Lawndale; Mattie Eskridge, of Gardena; Leslie Fletcher, of Torrance; Christina Gold, of Lakewood; Heidi Maerker, of El Segundo; Penny Rahmeyer, of Torrance; Lisa Raufman, of Long Beach; and Marna Smeltzer, of Redondo Beach.

Nominated by friends, family, and colleagues, award winners were selected by the ECC

Women’s History Month Committee, based on service in one or more of the following areas: professional accomplishments; leadership and/or mentorship; and social, educational, or health services. All honorees live or work within the El Camino Community College District.

The accomplishments of these award winners will be featured on the El Camino College Women’s Wall of Fame (in the Schauerman Library) throughout the year and their names will be engraved on a plaque that is a permanent part of the display.

### ECC Women of Distinction 2013 Profiles

**Antoinette Brown-Leon** is the executive director of the Asomugha Foundation, a non-profit organization in Torrance, chaired by NFL defensive back Nnamdi Asomugha. The Foundation was established in 2010 to support disadvantaged youth in the U.S. and underprivileged orphans and widows in Africa through education and empowerment. After earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration from California State University, Long Beach, Brown-Leon led a successful career in cable TV marketing and sales. She is a strong advocate of education and focuses on the foundation’s mission to ensure that those with less means are given the opportunity to obtain a quality education, and thereby transform themselves, their families, and communities.

**Bonnie Coronado** is an ECC graduate and a fourth-grade teacher in the Compton Unified School District. She was the first Hispanic woman elected to the board of the Lawndale Elementary School District more than 25 years ago, and has served as school board president six times. A 48-year resident of Lawndale, she has been a leader in the community for many years. Coronado was recognized this year as a Distinguished Woman by Senator Roderick Wright, and serves as a dedicated Neighborhood Watch member. After earning an associate degree from El Camino College, where she was also a peer counselor, she transferred to UCLA to complete her bachelor’s degree.

**Mattie Eskridge** has worked at ECC for more than 30 years, currently serving as assistant to the vice president of Student & Community Advancement, in addition to working as an assistant to five previous vice presidents. Eskridge graduated from Sawyer College of Business and is now working on a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Phoenix. She is a licensed missionary for her church, working with shelters for battered women, feeding the homeless, and assisting orphanages in foreign countries. She has served as an elected member of the board of directors for her church, as well as a Sunday school teacher for missionaries. She is also a lecturer, workshop presenter, mentor, and volunteer.

**Leslie Fletcher** is an ECC graduate and registered nurse. After becoming a R.N., Leslie had several nursing jobs, and was eventually hired by a plastic surgeon. This led her to pursue a career in esthetics, and soon created two companies in this industry. She runs the InjectAbility Clinic in Torrance, and the InjectAbility Institute, which trains thousands of doctors and nurses, in addition to lecturing at national and international conferences. She has been published in a number of periodicals and has appeared on local media shows. Over the years, Fletcher developed a technique known as the ArqueDerma Lift, and now has hundreds of licenses worldwide that use this trademarked and patented technique.

**Christina Gold** has been a U.S. history professor at ECC since 2005, where she developed two new courses: Los Angeles History and Asian American History. A published author, she has presented papers at various historical society meetings. She received her master's degree and doctorate in U.S. History from UCLA, and was a postdoctoral scholar at the California Institute of Technology. Gold has served as president of the ECC Academic Senate since fall 2010, where she has worked to facilitate communications among faculty, administration, the board of trustees, and other key campus groups. Gold's leadership is also seen through her service on many campuswide committees.

For many years, **Heidi Maerker's** work at Herald Publications (which publishes six community newspapers in the South Bay) has been helping to build and expand relationships between private businesses, local and state government, and residents of El Segundo, Inglewood, Lawndale, Hawthorne, Manhattan Beach, and Torrance. Her commitment to providing the residents of the South Bay a voice through which they can express their concern, joy, and gratitude has made her a successful business woman and a trusted source for residents of these communities. Maerker has also shown her commitment to various non-profit organizations by supporting their local advertising efforts.

**Penny Rahmeyer** has served as a foster parent to more than 150 children over a period of 46 years. While raising five children of their own, Rahmeyer and her husband devoted their lives to bringing love, stability, care, and guidance to foster children with significant disabilities. These children were hard to place and needed constant care, including rocking, counseling, physical therapy, hearing aids, heart/apnea monitors, g-tube feedings, tracheotomy tubes, leg braces, wheelchairs, and diabetes testing/shots around the clock. Many of these children, after moving on to adoption and adulthood, have stayed in touch with "mom" to this day. Rahmeyer attended foster parent training at ECC years ago, often serving as a source of instruction and inspiration for the class.

**Lisa Raufman** has been a community college career counselor since 1975, beginning at Moorpark College before joining ECC. She worked as an instructor and career center coordinator at both colleges, as well as dean of counseling, and faculty development coordinator at ECC. She also served on the California Community College Chancellor's Office statewide Career Development Advisory panel for more than 12 years, in addition to other statewide organizations. Lisa is co-author of *The Career Fitness Program: Exercising Your Options*, a career book used in community colleges and universities. Lisa earned a doctorate from UCLA in higher education, work and adult development, and has been a marriage and family therapist since 1979.

Recognized as one of the leading chamber executives in California, **Marna Smeltzer** has been president and CEO of the Redondo Beach Chamber of Commerce since 1995, and has worked as a chamber employee for more than 25 years. A graduate of Stanford Institute of Management, she's mentored a number of people, guiding them toward career mobility. Smeltzer is one of the founders of Leadership Redondo, which has produced more than 200 graduates. She is also involved in the Redondo Beach Unified School District, and the Western Association of Chamber Executives Foundation board of directors. Smeltzer was instrumental in assisting three cities participate in the Blue Zones Project – implementing methods and changes to help people live longer, better lives.

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### **Photo Cutline for 2013 ECC Women of Distinction**

The 2013 El Camino College Women of Distinction were recently honored for their contributions to the community. Honorees include (from back left): Leslie Fletcher, Heidi Maerker, Lisa Raufman, and Christina Gold; and from front left: Antoinette Brown-Leon, Bonnie Coronado, Mattie Eskridge, and Penny Rahmeyer. (Marna Smeltzer was unable to attend.)

*Image attached.*