

SPOTLIGHT

IN THIS ISSUE

PEOPLE

A-F

Alexander, Laura	16
Anderson, Crystal	17
Arrowsmith, Julie	28
Barker, Jennifer	16
Baumann, Melissa	17
Bhagat, Anju	18
Broadnax, T.C.	3
Brown-Sanford, Christa	8
Brown, Cassie	10
Considine, Travis	3
Desai, Sejal	19
Fagadau, Tom	2
Fearing, Wanda Gierhart	19
Froswa' Booker-Drew	26

G-L

Gangi, Frank	17
Harmann, Julia	18
Hassmann, Holly	20
Hendrick, Judy	26
Hunt, Karen	20
Jenkins, Clay	3
Johnson, Eric	3
Jones, Diane Woodend	25
Jordan, Nichole	21
Khosrowshahi, Dara	3
Knodel, Sarah	22
Kraus, Autumn	22
Lensing, Maria	9

M-R

Meachem, Mia	29
Mow, Elizabeth	23
Nwaubani, Cynthia	12
Ogle, Vanessa	23
Petroskey, Dale	3
Philipovitch, Kerry	28
Pickens, T. Boone	2
Price, John Wiley	3
Rashid-Jones, Irum	21
Reynolds, Chris	8
Rogers, Sandra Phillips	8

S-Z

Salka, Susan	24
Simpson, Cindy	11
Thompson, J. Cleo	2

COMPANIES

A-F

3Headed Monster	17
Accenture	18
Aimbridge Hospitality	26
American Airlines Group Inc.	28
American Heart Association	15
AMN Healthcare	24
AT&T	9
Baker Botts	8
Barcelona Wine Bar	29
bartaco	29
Baylor Scott & White Health	22
Baylor University	18
BMO Harris Bank	6
BP Capital	2
Careington International Corp.	17
The Castañeda Firm	2
Children's Medical Center Foundation	20
Cinemark	19
City of Coppell	20
Communities Foundation of Texas	19
Del Frisco's Grille	29
Deloitte	28
DialCare	17
Dolce Riviera	15
Dorothy Miller Shore	24
Dwell with Dignity	10
Enseo	23
Estée Lauder Companies	29
Frost Bank	20

G-L

G6 Hospitality	28
Gensler	11
Grant Thornton	21
Highland Park Village	29
Hilltop Securities Inc.	16
Holiday Inn	28
Ignite Texas	2
J.P. Morgan	16
LadyPros	21
Lea+Elliott, Inc.	25
Limited Stores	19

M-R

Mesa Petroleum Partners	2
Miller Ad Agency	24
Motel 6	28
Neiman Marcus Group	29
North Texas Tollway Authority	23
Nothing Bundt Cakes	17
PRiMEwomen.com	24
Primexx Energy Partners	2
ProSupps	17

S-Z

Smart City Locating, Inc.	10
Southern Methodist University	12
Southland Corporation	17
State Fair of Texas	26
Studio 6	28
Texas Lawyer	2
Texas Women's Foundation	2
Toyota North America	8
Uber Technologies Inc.	3
United Way	26
University of North Texas at Dallas	26
Wells Fargo	12
Whitley Penn	22
Wingstop	17

Women
IN BUSINESS

CHRYSTA Castañeda

Founder and CEO,
The Castañeda Firm



JAKE DEAN

THE CASTAÑEDA FIRM

Website:
highenergylitigation.com

4
Employees

DFW lawyer founded a small firm that produced big results in the energy sector

Chrysta Castañeda took a brief sabbatical from practicing law in 2013 to work in crisis communications, but then she dove right back into the legal field in 2014 and founded her own law firm after realizing she had missed being a trial lawyer.

Castañeda is the owner and founder of The Castañeda Firm. She said she wanted to form a woman-centric company where she could offer opportunities to women and pass on her own expertise as well.

The four-person firm represents litigation clients in the oil and gas and energy industry, and others as well. The firm's clients include Primexx Energy Partners President and CEO Tom Fagadau and BP Capital Founder and CEO and Chairman T. Boone Pickens.

In 2016, the firm's first clients were Pickens and his company, Mesa Petroleum Partners. Castañeda won a \$145 million verdict for the company in a high-profile jury trial involving oil and gas rights. Mesa Petroleum sued J. Cleo Thompson and three Midland oil companies, and said the companies didn't

uphold an agreement in 2007 to acquire and drill over 160 oil wells in Reeves and Pecos counties. The case was the fifth-largest verdict in Texas, according to Texas Lawyer, and one of the largest cases in the country that year according to the National Law Journal.

As a result of winning Pickens' case, Castañeda was selected to the National Law Journal's list of Elite Trial Lawyers for 2018. She also owns public relations firm Canterbury Communications, which helps clients with both legal and public relations challenges that they face.

Castañeda spoke with the *Dallas Business Journal* about starting her law firm, why she loves her job and her involvement in the community:

Why did you take a sabbatical and then decide to start your own law firm? The practice of law is a marathon, not a sprint, if you're going to do it for your entire career. And in 2013, I had just tried a big case in the year before I had just come off a run for Congress. And I was in the "Let's still try new

things, and let's get out there and explore some other avenues." So I did that. I went to an international public relations business. But then, I really found that I missed the attorney-client relationship, which is unlike any other business relationship that I know of. Clients can tell you their most vulnerable and difficult problems. And they look to me to fix them, and that's just a really special relationship.

So tell me a bit about your involvement in the community the Dallas community in general? I am on the board of the

Texas Women's Foundation, which gives philanthropy to women and women's organizations to promote women's financial independence, health and education. I was the chair of the board for Ignite Texas, which is a 501(c)(3) organization. It's a nonpartisan organization that seeks to inspire political ambition in young women and college-aged girls, to encourage them to run for office. I've been active in a number of political organizations and my local church.

—Rebecca Ayers

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American City
BUSINESS JOURNALS

Alliance for
Audited Media
The New Audit Bureau of Circulations

Dallas Business Journal is a publication of:
American City Business Journals,
120 W. Morehead St., Charlotte, N.C. 28202
Whitney Shaw, CEO; Ray Shaw, Chairman (1989-2009)

© 2019 Dallas Business Journal
DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL
(ISSN 0899-4129) is published weekly with a subscription rate of \$140.

Published by DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL,
2515 McKinney Ave., Ste. 100, Dallas, TX
75201. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, TX.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the
DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL 2515 McKinney
Ave., Ste. 100, Dallas, TX 75201. Copyright
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