

# SIGNATURE

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## A CONVERSATION WITH OUTSTANDING FEMALE LEADERS IN THE PRINTING INDUSTRY

In celebration of Women’s History Month, we brought female leaders together from PGCA’s Board and membership on a Zoom call to find out more about them. Kim Tuzzo, PGCA’s Marketing/Programs Director, had an in-depth conversation with:



- Loretta Andrews**, President, Graphic Communications, Inc., Warminster, PA
- Christine Bassil**, Vice President, NB Bookbinding, Clifton, NJ
- Kathy Holmes**, CEO, K & W finishing, inc., Baltimore, MD
- Kathy Keller**, Owner, Graphic Imaging, Pipersville, PA
- Hallie Satz**, Former CEO and Founder, HighRoad Press, Moonachie, NJ

All five women were very generous and open with sharing details about their careers, challenges, personal tragedies and successes. Read on to learn more about these five leaders and their inspiring stories.

### Running a printing business amid personal tragedy



**Loretta Andrews:** My father, Robert J. Lawler, Sr., started Graphic Communications in Warminster, Bucks County, Pennsylvania in '74. We had our 50th anniversary last year. I was recruited to help my dad part-time in between another job and going to community college. It was supposed to be temporary until he hired someone else, but I never left.



**Hallie Satz:** How long have you been there?

**Loretta Andrews:** It'll be 44 years in September. We print pressure sensitive labels and related types of packaging printing. Last year was a tough year. Normally I'm sales and marketing but my partner, Bob Lawler who was also my brother, passed suddenly in April. So, the past year I've just been focused on keeping things moving forward.



**Kim Tuzzo:** What happened, was it an accident?

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**SYRACUSE, NY:** 11:30 am - 1:30 pm  
 Wednesday, June 4, 2025  
 The Craftsman Inn, 7300 East Genesee Street, Fayetteville, NY

**BUFFALO, NY:**  
 Thursday, June 5, 2025  
 Reikart Ballroom at Jazzboline, 5010 Main Street, Amherst, NY

**PLYMOUTH, PA:**  
 Postponed, Date TBA  
 The 1912 Club, 888 Plymouth Road, Plymouth Meeting, PA



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**COVER CONTINUED**

**Loretta Andrews:** On April 14, 2025, Bob went out for a motorcycle ride with some buddies and didn't come home. It was extremely shocking. My dad retired in '97, but my brother and I had pretty much been running the company from 1993 on. Bob oversaw production and facilities, did engineering and estimating.



**Kathy Holmes:** Did you have people that could fill some of those shoes already? Or did you have to bring people in?

**Loretta Andrews:** The production operators all know what they're doing, so they can handle the equipment and repairs. If we had to "push it up the chain," I would call my equipment vendors and ask for help. We hadn't yet replaced our production manager before Bob passed, so that layer of oversight down in the plant was missing.

Fortunately, we got ISO certified in December of '23, so thankfully a lot of the work instructions, and procedures were recorded before he passed. There was a lot of good information we had, but trying to find someone that was trained, especially on the flexo side, to be a manager was difficult. I was able to hire someone with an ink background and management experience and I have been training him. He's been with us four months now and is starting to take things off my plate and doing the scheduling. There was some resistance from the operators in the beginning, but I think he's a good fit for our culture and things are working out really well overall.

So, it has been a tough year, I had to let two other employees go that couldn't manage the changes, but, I won't say we're through the woods yet, but we had a great year in 2024 despite all that. And we got through our audit for this year for ISO and got recertified.

**Kathy Holmes:** Coming up on one year of going it alone.

**Loretta Andrews:** Yeah. The hardest part is not having him around at the end of the day because we used to trade stories of what happened that day or discuss plans for the business.

**Kim Tuzzo:** I give you credit for making those tough decisions.

**Loretta Andrews:** Thanks. When people just push you to a certain point and you're like, I'm done. Once I decide I'm done, I'm done. But there's been a lot of mornings that I've woken up, I'm like, what the hell am I doing? You doubt yourself. It's really tough, but our staff has been amazing.

**Hallie Satz:** Every leader of a company feels like that. The key to leadership is showing you are at the helm. Sometimes this requires a leader to act like they are in control even when they are not sure of all the answers. Confidence is critical.

**Kathy Holmes:** My year went kind of similar to that actually.

**Loretta Andrews:** Oh no.

**Kathy Holmes:** So last January, my brother, Will Miller, moved to Florida. He had been with me all this time, but it took a very long time for him to take an active role. I was the one doing everything for years, and he was our die maker. But in the last 10 years or so, he really engaged on a high level. And during Covid, oh my Lord, I'm trying to run the place through Covid, and he was really there for that. So he had come a long way, and then he left, and that left a hole. I run a bindery, in case you don't know.

My plant manager is my husband, Bob, and he's also the estimator, doing two jobs, because we can't find people. In August, he was involved in an accident and he fell eight feet and landed on his head, broke his neck and was 100% paralyzed. This was in Tennessee, and I was not with him because I had to be at work. Really, it's a miracle all things considered. He got all his extremities back except for his left arm, which still does not work, and he has nerve pain, so he can't do the production manager job.

My son, Cory, was helping me run a couple of little companies I picked up in the last few years. He got thrown into being the production manager, trial by fire. Thankfully, unlike your situation, we do have Bob, my husband, still here as a sounding board to talk about things, but it's definitely not the same. And Cory's wife had her first baby the week before the accident, which was the reason I was at work and not on vacation.

Cory's pulled in two different directions by trying to fill these big shoes. He didn't used to work weekends, and now he is, and he's working more hours. I think in the long run this is going to be a blessing, because Cory's going to have a lot more time training with his step-father than if Bob just said, you know what? I'm retiring in two months.

But let me start at the beginning, now that I've told you the crazy. My dad, Ed Miller, started the company. I've been with him for 33 years, starting with afternoons in high school. I think it was different than a lot of father-daughter, father-son relationships, because when I started, he had maybe 10, 12 employees, and together we grew it to 100 at one point. As we grew, my dad ran the production side of things, and I ran the administrative side of things. I was learning things at college on Tuesday and applying the lessons on Wednesday.

At some point, my dad started to back away. It started with him taking July off, and then it was June and July off; then it would be the summer off, and that turned into April through October, or

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## FEMALE LEADERS IN THE PRINT INDUSTRY CONT.

whatever. Before I knew it, he was gone and people kept telling me, "You're running this place." I'm like, "No, I'm not." I was in a state of denial thinking, he's running it, it's him. But he was never there. I literally woke up one day and realized I was running the company.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Maybe that helped you be more comfortable with what you're doing, because you weren't even realizing what you were doing.

**Kathy Holmes:** Exactly. And one time my dad and I flew somewhere on a plane together, and I was like, never again. Because if something happened to both of us, it would be really bad for everybody else. Between the two of us, we know all the things that make the business go. Not the technical side, but the business side of paperwork and what the structure is, and all that crap. So that's where we are.

I took over around 2000, I'm not even sure exactly. My dad started the traditional bindery, and then in 2019, one of my customers said, "Lucas Bindery is going out of business, I think you should contact them. I think it'd be a good fit." I had so much going on, I let it go in one ear and out the other, I thought, I don't have time for that. Then the owner of Lucas called me. And I'm like, "All right, tell me more." I ended up taking over his company in such a way, it cost me \$5,000. I just bought his equipment, and he gave me the customer list. I came in at such a late point, he was ready to throw everything in the trash because no one was interested. So, I stole it almost.

The business made padded document holders. Those things you get at graduation, or those things that President Trump signs his executive orders in. And that led to another business acquisition in 2020. Another person called me and said, "Hey, we're shutting the business down. Do you want to deal with the United States Senate directly?" After taking that first company over, we were making padded holders, and other types of certificate holders for the U.S. Senate. He knew I was trying to find a way to reach these buyers directly instead of through a series of brokers.



**They don't care if you're walking down the aisle at your own wedding, you better help the customer. It was the same culture I was used to...**

It was a way I could reach out to a bigger audience, without upsetting my current customer base. This time I got the telephone number, so their customers reach us directly. I was basically given the business; paid some money for his equipment and hired one or two of his people, same as I did with the first guy. We bought his engraving equipment which was a whole new learning curve. So I was running two new businesses during Covid.

But everything has worked out good and it's really neat the projects we get involved in. The padded holders, and also the speech boxes the speech papers go in and many other things. I had Biden's people picking stuff up from my house one day because they needed it quickly. The odd thing is no one from the government has come here for any kind of security check. I have access to things I don't think I should have access to without a security check. Cell phone numbers to military leaders and members of congress, that sort of thing.

We had our first DOGE job stoppage last week, because they cut the credit cards off and the people said, "I don't know if I'm going to be able to pay you, so stop work on it."

So that's my story and I'm sticking to it. And as Kim knows, I decided to start a travel agency too. I was already helping people with their cruises just for fun. I started thinking, man, I'm booking these cruises and I'm not getting anything for it. I looked up how to get started and didn't expect it to be a huge thing, but I sold \$330,000 in travel last year. It's worked out because at K&W we're very customer focused and so is the host agency I joined. They don't care if you're walking down the aisle at your own wedding, you better help the customer. It was the same culture I was used to and it's going pretty good.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Wow. Have you been able to go on cruises, or are you too busy?

**Kathy Holmes:** I'm too busy. We did two cruises last year and doing one next month. This summer I'm going backpacking with the Scouts for two weeks and then the Bahamas with the Scouts, summer camp with the Scouts for a week. The Scouts are owning my summer. I'm a Scoutmaster of a Boy Scout troop - actually a girl Boy Scout troop since they started allowing female units, right around the time my daughter was old enough to join. Now my daughter goes backpacking with me.

Once I went on a pretty strenuous back-packing trip with the Boy Scouts. I've been a leader for 22 years and counting. After the trip a man in another crew asked me what I was doing there. "There aren't many women here, and there really aren't many women

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**I reproduce fine art, and I'm getting into taking the fine art and putting it on a vehicle. Everything has evolved and changed.**

on that trek we just did." When I told the boys in my troop about the exchange, their response was, "Ms. Kathy, did you tell them you aren't really a woman???" Those boys have frequently said they don't like Moms coming but I can come "because you're not really like a Mom." I'm not sure how I became one of the boys but it clearly happened.

**Starting their own businesses from the ground up and responding to challenges along the way**

**Kim Tuzzo:** Kathy Keller, please tell us how you got into the business and a little bit about yourself.



**Kathy Keller:** Well, I don't have a predecessor. I started the business because I had a dream, and my dream was to have a retail art supply store. I went to school for graphic design, then worked for Lippincott in Philadelphia, doing galley stripping, and then darkroom work, all the traditional stuff. At that time, late '70s, it was all traditional. Then I started my little company in Bucks County. It was an arts and drafting supply store called Mixed Media. A real community-oriented family business. I had my daughter, who I put in the playpen, and my customers used to come in and see her and read her books.

*Continued on page 6*

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## FEMALE LEADERS IN THE PRINT INDUSTRY CONTINUED

Then, all of a sudden, things changed. In 1993, there was no film, so I no longer made film for step and repeat. The whole industry was changing. I still had my retail store for 28 years. Then I sold that and got into large format printing.

Now I do large format printing - wall murals, vehicle wraps. I reproduce fine art, and I'm getting into taking the fine art and putting it on a vehicle. Everything has evolved and changed. I've been in business for approximately 40 years, and it's been a struggle, especially Covid. No one wanted to come back to work. It was just me outsourcing everything in a garage. So it was like starting all over again, but we made it, and we're moving forward.

**Kathy Holmes:** You can do it!

**Kathy Keller:** ... there's so much, and I only have five weeks to do it. I have one more week to finish the first part of a large order. Both my son and my daughter work for me, they are the second generation. I am ready to retire. I wouldn't even know how to do that. I don't even know how to have fun anymore, you could say.

**Kathy Holmes:** I need to send you on a cruise.

**Kathy Keller:** Yeah, there you go. I'll go with you. My granddaughter also works for me. She's 17. So that is the nicest part. My son does all my installs. My daughter does a lot of admin and project management. And we have now 14 people plus 10 more to do this one job. So, it is completely insane right now. Nothing's changed, everything's chaotic, which it always is. But the main thing is to keep evolving, or you will go static.

And just like Kathy Holmes buying another business, A friend/colleague was retiring from her framing business—so I purchased her equipment and asked her to work for me part-time, and expanded my Framing & Fine Art Department. So the business just evolves. I've been blessed, I want to say in nearly 40 years in business. It's been up and down. We've gone through the recession; we've gone through 9/11. We do a lot of work in New York City, so that is a challenge in itself. I try to stay out of Philadelphia but have some work in Philadelphia and Jersey.

New York is a different city compared to Philadelphia, it's a lot more diverse. There's a lot more different work there, and we've been doing that now for 15 years. My son travels there three days a week, and my other installers will go with him when needed. We just expanded our vehicle wrap department next door. I know a lot of small format printers want to get into the large format,

it's a completely different animal. If they're ready to do that, they can talk to me about it, because I've learned all the mistakes, I guess. That's who I am.

**Kim Tuzzo:** What type of installations do you do in New York City?

**Kathy Keller:** We do a lot of window clings in the Washington Square area. We do a lot of work for the New York Public Library for their events, like the Lou Reed event. We do a lot of museum and university work. And it's been great. People appreciate what you do, which is amazing, because a lot of times you work really hard on projects, and you don't get any thanks whatsoever.

**Kathy Keller:** I like what I do and after Covid I realized I'll never retire. I do have a really nice house up on the creek, which I kayak occasionally and ride my bike. I try to stay active but I'll never retire. The poor kids, they're looking for me to retire but oh, well. So that's where I am. Every day is a different challenge.

**Hallie Satz:** Your stories are fascinating today. My story is a bit different. I had my own company. It was not a family business, but I did start out in a family business. My grandfather and his brothers started a company in New Jersey in 1922 that got passed down to the

men in the family. There was a company rule that only men could hold management positions. The business, Barton Press, became very successful.

I went in temporarily as office help because my husband wanted to go to law school. My degree was in social work. I was a counselor for women who were victims of domestic violence. There were no jobs available at the time, because President Reagan had cut most social programs.

At Barton Press, an opening came up in production, as the first female, and subsequently, I ended up going into estimating.

I found my original success in sales. I was cold calling, and I was calling on new businesses, new young businesses, and shortly thereafter, I became one of the top salespeople and changed the company bylaws to allow woman ownership. It was very satisfying and proved to me that perseverance could translate into driving your own path in life.

I soon became president of the division in New Jersey and stayed there seven years.

We were purchased by private equity thereafter. After several years, I left after my contract was over and I could leave, and I started my own business in Manhattan called HighRoad Press. I ran that company for 20 years.



I became one of the top salespeople and changed the company bylaws to allow woman ownership. It was very satisfying and proved to me that perseverance could translate into driving your own path in life.

The company grew to 90 employees. I got very involved with the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) and other organizations. I got to know the printing organization (now known as Print & Graphic Communications Association) and got very involved, serving on the board of directors and on the merger committee. The organization was very helpful in my career path.

**Hallie Satz:** Selling my business was difficult as selling a WBE business was not like selling any business. Nobody was really interested in a WBE-certified women-owned business, even though we had significant sales. Potential buyers said, just shut it down and we'll just take you and your top salespeople. I was not going to let that happen and I focused not only on a fair price, but also, protecting my loyal employees and other aspects of the business.

I was able to make a deal, but it took a very long time, because I wanted to keep that building secure, keep the employees secure, and be able to exit with knowing the business was viable over the long term and ongoing for all stakeholders. I can say that I achieved these goals and now I'm enjoying the dream of retirement.

**Loretta Andrews:** What type of printing did you do?

**Hallie Satz:** We did high-end commercial printing. We worked with JPMorgan Chase and a lot of pharmaceuticals, Janssen, Bristol Meyers and Bloomingdale's, all their marketing materials. And then financial materials as well.

**Kathy Holmes:** How many employees did you have?

**Hallie Satz:** When I exited, we had 90.

**Kathy Holmes:** Well, you did better than those couple of guys that pretty much gave me their company, because they never found anybody to take over.

**Loretta Andrews:** That was interesting.



**Christine Bassil:** We're a family-owned business. I grew up watching my father sewing books and foil stamping on covers. I used to come during the summer and help with collating. Without knowing it, I started to like binding books. I officially joined the company in 1998. At one point in time, I thought I'd be working for an agency as a graphic designer, but I realized that making books is more fun. It has become my passion.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Christine, what are some challenges you have faced?

**Christine Bassil:** A few years ago, I went to visit a new client and the minute he walked into the conference room he said, I don't want to hear about book binderies, you guys always fail me. I felt that if a man was sitting there, he wouldn't be as rude as he was with me. I smiled and said I'm not like any other binderies. I deliver what I promise. He pulls a bunch of books and said what would you have done any better binding these books. I went on and explained how we do things differently. And I made sure to

mention that if he works with us, he'd better be ready listening to my complaints as we dig into every printed job we receive, he smiled and didn't say anything. The meeting concluded with a positive impact.

I left that day thinking to myself he probably won't contact me. He emailed the following week asking for a quote. He started sending jobs and has since become one of our big clients.

I'm a big listener by nature. Through the years, I learned to listen to my clients' complaints and bad experiences they would share with me from dealing with other companies. My challenge was to find a way to distinguish our bindery from others. I had to constantly read books, attend shows, browse the internet to keep on educating myself about the latest technology and invest in new equipment.

Another big challenge is having to deal with people who refuse to make an extra effort to retain what they learn and to widen out their knowledge. I constantly repeat the same things every time we're working on a project. Things like cover wrap must print with the grain parallel to the spine. Endleaves should run on uncoated stock, laminate litho wraps, apply AQ to avoid scratches...etc.

### Printers giving back to their community

**Kim Tuzzo:** I appreciate everybody being so honest, telling all your secrets and stories. I wanted to ask all of you about what you do for your community. Kathy Holmes, I've heard you're on the committee to rebuild the bridge in Baltimore, what can you tell us about that?

**Kathy Holmes:** Oh, me? I don't know how I get myself involved in these things. During Covid, we applied for a manufacturing grant to make face shields and we actually became, they claimed, I can't even believe it, the highest producer of face shields, in the world.

But I got so lucky, so lucky. I'm very proud of my Covid years. My competitor, Bindagraphics, had a 50% off sale when they got their PPP money. And the printers were calling me asking, do you have 50% off? And I said, well, my payroll was 75% of my sales last month, so it'd be cheaper for me to close the doors than offer a 50% off sale. When this volunteer organization called me about making face shields, I said, well, we'll try anything once here. That's really what sets us apart from others, is our willingness to just make things happen. This volunteer group was connected with Coca-Cola, so at a time when you could not get plastic, I had Coca-Cola sending me plastic.

Through that process, I got on some board of essential manufacturers in Maryland. Whenever anything at all is happening, they email me a situation report. If they expect riots might happen, or if a tornado is supposed to come, anything, I get an email.

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## FEMALE LEADERS IN THE PRINT INDUSTRY CONTINUED

The bridge collapse was part of that process. We had bridge meetings all the time, because they are very interested in how the collapse of the bridge affected businesses. Before that, I got myself in the middle of a problem that started at the Panama Canal. They were widening the Panama Canal, which meant that they had to make changes here in Baltimore, which meant that they needed to increase the rail line, and they wanted to put this facility in our industrial park. And so, I accidentally created a business association that I was accidentally president of. I definitely have a way of getting myself into things.

**Kim Tuzzo:** It sounds like they just throw problems at you, and you come up with a way to make it work.

**Kathy Holmes:** Yeah, I guess so. I don't know. We had our air conditioning unit stolen, and that landed me on the scrap metal task force, next to the police chief in the meetings, because I was very frustrated. In my industrial park, my neighbor's air conditioning units were all stolen. The thieves rip them apart and steal the copper out to recycle it. From \$100,000 in air conditioner units, they can get a couple hundred bucks in copper. And because I'm in Baltimore City, no one did anything about any of it. If they don't enter your building, it's petty theft. And I'm like, there's \$2 million in theft here with these HVAC units just in our park. That's when I pulled all the owners in the business park together and the business association was started. I just kept fighting it, I'm a doggone fighter.

**Christine Bassil:** I volunteer my time to help a widow in her late 80's who lost both of her brother and sister in one year and has no kids. I do her food shopping, take her to the doctor's visit. I enjoy reading books and playing sudoku with her.

**Kim Tuzzo:** I'm sure you make her day when you spend time with her. That's so nice.

### A new source of employees, the prison system

**Kathy Holmes:** A community organization that has really helped is the prison system. I'm on the board of a program at a jail where they teach fundamental printing skills.

My company is a bindery where no one wants to work. It's low skilled. I make pocket folders and we can't afford to pay \$30 an hour. Hiring from the prison system is a win-win. Ex-prisoners are happy to have a job versus the 19 year old who starts at 7 am and at their first break you never see them again. I've probably had 400 prisoners come through here over the years.

I'm willing to give them a chance. When I first started doing it, NPR did a new story on me and my peers in the printing industry were

not happy with me at all. They thought I was making our industry look like a bunch of jailbirds. And then a few years later, one of my customers said, "You're lucky I like you, because your truck driver is so awesome. I would hire him in two seconds if I didn't like you." I said, "Well, you know what? My truck driver is one of my ex-offenders." His mind was blown.

**Loretta Andrews:** How do you go about it? Because we're struggling to find two production people.

**Kathy Holmes:** What I would try to do is look up training programs in the prison system in your area. In Baltimore it's called the Baltimore Pre-Release Unit. And once you've reached a certain point in your sentence, you're eligible to go to the school to train, to learn things. I will tell you that the prisoners with the longest sentence are the most rehabilitated. If someone has just a few years in, they still have what they call at the prison, the slick and fast. They haven't been kicked around long enough. They're not far enough removed from the street.

**Hallie Satz:** When I had my business in New York I did hire through the probation system, but it was a recent probation guy and a drug situation, and it backfired on me. I would've tried it again though.

**Kathy Holmes:** That's one thing I tell these guys, no one's going to want to hire graduates of this program if you go in there, screw it up for everybody else.

**Hallie Satz:** I listened to a great podcast ([wisconsinhumanities.org/podcast/three-convicts-twenty-dollars-and-a-newspaper/](https://www.wisconsinhumanities.org/podcast/three-convicts-twenty-dollars-and-a-newspaper/)) about prisoners printing a newsletter. And the printing presses were taken away, or something like that. The prisoners had gotten so upset, because they had really relied on information in the newsletter. It was just fascinating.

**Christine Bassil:** It's very hard to find skilled people. What we have done is incentivize our existing employees to learn how to run different machines, equipment and get a salary raise.

### What do you value about your Association membership?

**Kim Tuzzo:** Would you all say what you get out of being a PGCA member or serving on the board? What do you value about being part of the Association?

**Loretta Andrews:** For me, I don't participate in a lot of stuff, but I feel like it's nice knowing there are other people that are going through some of the same things I go through in the print industry. It's nice to know you're not alone.

“  
I accidentally created a  
business association that  
I was accidentally president of.  
I definitely have a way of  
getting myself into things.”



**Kim Tuzzo:** I think that a lot of people feel they have a connection with the Association. You know you can reach out to us or a fellow member and talk things over.

**Kathy Keller:** Since I'm on my own and have no one here I can really talk to, I call Melissa (Jones, PGCA's Co-President) all the time. She'll help me or direct me; she has given me all kinds of guidance. I've talked to Nick (Fiorenza, PGCA's Association Counsel). I had Steve Stankavage (PGCA's Director of EHS) out for safety stuff. It's a resource with good information that will help me keep from floundering. I had been with the Graphic Arts Association (GAA) for a long time, and now it's the combined association, PIA or PGCA.

**Kim Tuzzo:** You can call us anything you want.

**Kathy Keller:** Okay. But it's been a great group. You don't have a lot of printing companies that do what I do, but it's all business. So, it really has helped.

**Kathy Holmes:** I really think it's an obligation. The people that are non-members benefit from the best things that the association does. Whether you're a member or not, when they're fighting for sales tax exemption, you are part of it. Many, many of the things that we do that are the most influential to our industry impact the non-members as much as they impact members. I try to tell them all, if you want to be part of the solution, then you have to jump on board. And it's also got me involved in things like the prison system. This morning I realized I've been on the board of the Association since 2004.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Wow. Thank you for your service and support!

**Kathy Holmes:** Now there was a hiatus for a few years where I was off. I think a competitor may have complained about the access I had, or whatever. Then Rusty Coolidge from Chroma was the chairman and he told me, "The last thing I do before I leave is going to be, get you back on the board, because they need you here." Because I speak up. And when I first joined the board, I graduated from college in '97, so you figure in 2004, I was pretty young, and I was the only female in the room. And I was thinking, these old men, they probably don't want anything to do with me. But you know what they started to do? They started to call me between meetings and tell me what they wanted me to bring up in the meeting. I thought, okay, I guess they respect me more than I realized.

**Loretta Andrews:** That's pretty awesome. I love that.

**Hallie Satz:** I'm like Kathy Holmes, I've been on the board since 2004, but for the New York based Association, with Tim Freeman. When I grew up, my dad was always involved in trade groups. When I came into the business, and went into sales, I was involved with a local group. When I had my kids, and I was doing so much in sales, I decided, something's got to go, I needed to drop out of the association. But when I started HighRoad in 2004, I came back. In North Jersey, there weren't a lot of New Jersey printers and they were owned by men. I was definitely a lone wolf, super lonely and



**And like Kathy said, yes, I do think it's also part of an obligation, because how does anything get done, if you're not involved in associations? I think it's really important for the community, so I'm still on it.**

on my own. But I met Tim Freeman (Co-President, PGCA) and he invited me to get involved, meet some people.

There were no women on the board at that time but I just could not believe how welcoming they were. And like Kathy said, yes, I do think it's also part of an obligation, because how does anything get done, if you're not involved in associations? I think it's really important for the community, so I'm still on it. I retired, and I'm still trying to contribute where I can.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Hallie was part of our merger committee to bring PIA and GAA together, and she hosted the group at her place and helped facilitate those meetings. They liked meeting at HighRoad.

**Hallie Satz:** I felt really strongly that the two groups needed to come together. I was watching printing companies starting to merge around us. I thought, why don't the Associations do that? I'm glad we did it.

**Kim Tuzzo:** Thank you, everyone, for being so forthcoming and honest. Your stories were fascinating, and I learned so much about all five of you. I hope we can meet at a future event soon.

**PGCA's 23rd Annual  
Human Resources & Employment  
Law Solutions Conference**

**May 1 & 2, 2025**

**Turning Stone Resort, Verona, NY**



Nearly 150 owners, managers and human resource directors attend this annual HR conference.

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**Register now for the 2025 PGCA HR Conference at [printcommunications.org/events/2025-HR-Conference](http://printcommunications.org/events/2025-HR-Conference)**

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By Nicholas J. Fiorenza, Association Counsel, Ferrara Fiorenza PC

### Pennsylvania Update

#### LGBTQ+ and Transgender Discrimination Law Challenge

Lawsuit filed by 2 school districts and parents in light of conflict between school policies regarding transgender and gay students and interpretation of sex discrimination used by Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission.

Ruling for school districts could weaken or eliminate protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

### New York Update

#### AI Usage Monitoring and Worker Protections

Under the "LOADinG" Act, which impacts only state agencies, use of generative AI must be monitored, and a biennial impact assessment of its use must be undertaken. Agencies are to limit AI-induced reductions in employee functions or hours.

This is a good reminder to consider and actively address the use of AI in private sector workplaces, including:

- Determine whether you are using AI in decision-making now (special concerns)
- Develop SOPs governing the process
- Develop internal policy regarding use of AI by employees
- Disclosure or prior approval
- Address violations of third-party IP
- Conduct bias evaluation as part of each process assisted by AI (similar to recommended bias checks during RIFs)
- Make humans directly responsible for their use of generative AI

### New Jersey Update

#### Pay Transparency

Effective June 1, 2025, New Jersey will join the growing number of states requiring pay and benefit transparency in job advertisements and postings. Required disclosure applies to employers of 10 or more employees, measured over 20 calendar weeks in a year. Employers doing business in or accepting job applications in the State must disclose the hourly (or annual) pay for the job and provide basic employment benefit information. The law applies to transfer and promotion opportunities as well.

### Maryland Update

#### 2024 Equal Pay for Equal Work Law Amendments

1. Maryland's *Wage Range Transparency Act* applies to all employers where a job is performed at least partially within Maryland. Similar to the New Jersey law, it requires minimum and maximum salary range disclosure for all jobs and transfers. Opportunities for additional compensation through bonuses, etc. must also be disclosed, as well as a general statement of employment benefits. If disclosure

is not made in a posting, it must be done before financial discussions with a prospective employee and any time an applicant requests it. Employers must keep records documenting compliance.

2. The amendments also expanded discrimination law protection with respect to sexual orientation, race, disability, sex and gender identity.

**Virginia Update**

**Non-Compete Prohibition Salary Threshold Increase**

Virginia has, since 2020, banned non-compete agreements for “low wage employees”. Since its inception the definition of “low wage” has changed to include more employees within its scope. Maryland has a similar law.

The current annual threshold for Virginia non-compete enforcement, covering agreements entered into 7/1/2020 or later, is \$73,320. Any employee earning at or below this salary may not be compelled to sign a non-competition agreement or threatened with non-compete enforcement. The law contains an important exception for commissioned employees and those paid significantly through bonuses or incentives.

Non-competes are increasingly disfavored throughout the US, and employers would do well to closely examine their approach to using them, including:

- ❑ Be pro-active in crafting non-competes and other restrictive covenants
- ❑ Consider the actual (limited) protection you really need
  - What is “competition”
  - Who should sign?
  - Time limitations
  - Geography – IT and remote issues change scope
- ❑ Evaluate which employees should be bound
  - Likely higher-level executives for non-competes
  - Consider relying on proprietary/IP protection (NDA) for all employees

Members with questions or concerns regarding any of these issues are encouraged to reach out to:



**Nick Fiorenza, Association Counsel**  
**Ferrara Fiorenza PC**  
**(315) 437-7600**  
**njfiorenza@ferrarafirm.com**

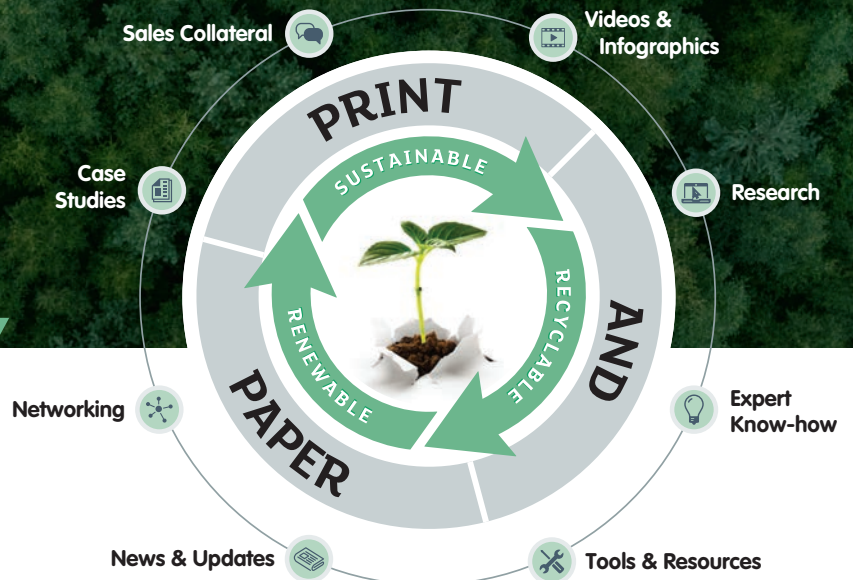
Nick Fiorenza, along with fellow partners Mike Dodd and Katherine Gavett, will be presenting at PGCA’s Annual HR Conference on May 1 & 2, 2025. See ad on page 9 or visit [printcommunications.org/events/2025-HR-Conference](http://printcommunications.org/events/2025-HR-Conference) for complete details.

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  - June 5, 2025  
Reikart Ballroom at Jazzboline, Amherst, NY
  - Postponed, date tba  
1912 Club, Plymouth Meeting, PA
- **23rd Annual Human Resources & Employment Law Solutions Conference**  
May 1 & 2, 2025  
Turning Stone Resort, Verona, NY
- **Maryland Networking/Happy Hour**  
May 8, 2025 | 4:30 – 7:30  
Barley's Backyard Uptown, 408 York Rd, Towson, MD 
- **Maryland Golf Outing**  
June 12, 2025   
Woodlands Golf Course, Windsor, MD
- **Raymond A. Bubar Classic**  
July 25, 2025   
Terry Hills Golf Course, Batavia, NY
- **PGCA Annual MD Crab Feast**  
September 11, 2025   
Kurtz's Beach, Pasadena, MD
- **Virginia Golf Tournament**  
September 17, 2025   
Hunting Hawk Golf Club, 15201 Ashland Rd., Glen Allen, VA

## WEBINARS

- **Webinars with Kelly Mallozzi**
  - Marketing Brief**
    - April 3, 2025 | 1:30 pm  
Using Customer Insights to Build Stronger Client Relationships
  - Culture Brief**
    - April 10, 2025 | 1:30 pm  
Embedding a Sales-Driven Culture
  - Sales Brief**
    - April 17, 2025 | 1:30 pm  
The Art of Asking Better Questions to Close More Deals

## Print[ED] DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

Through its standards, competencies, and professional oversight, Print[ED] aligns teaching programs in graphic communications with the requirements of the graphic communications industry.

## Print[ED] RENEWS ITS DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN GRAPHICS EDUCATION

By Patrick Henry, Liberty or Death Communications

One of the many good things about the alliance between PGAMA and PGCA is the continuing lease on life that it gives to Print[ED], a nationally recognized school accreditation program that has been enriching the quality of education for careers in graphic communications for almost 40 years. By inheriting Print[ED] from PGAMA, PGCA will be able to promote the program not just to schools and educators in its membership region, but to eligible participants everywhere.

# Print[ED]

The message will be that the industry has its own powerful tool for assuring high standards of training at high schools and junior colleges in the skill areas that are most essential for new employees to possess. Businesses that hire graduates of Print[ED]-accredited programs get motivated people with a full set of basic skills and a built-in understanding of how production works – a grounding that often takes months for employees without the benefit of Print[ED] training to acquire.

Mike Vares, PGCA's Director of Development, started working with Print[ED] when he joined PGAMA five years ago. "We're a national accreditation program for high schools and post-secondary college programs, basically saying, these guys know what they're doing," Vares states. "They are teaching up-to-date, consistent competencies and curricula for printing and graphic communications across the country."

### Already Up to Speed

Because Print[ED] accredited programs and curricula reflect what the industry believes students of graphic communications should be learning, graduates of Print[ED] programs get a fast break from the gate when they enter the job market. As Vares explains, "if they were to leave either their program and go into a job on day one, or if they were going to college to pursue a degree there, they can walk in and say, I already have this base set of knowledge."

Schools can earn the Print[ED] distinction by demonstrating that their teaching programs come up to the benchmarks that the Print[ED] methodology applies. These have been developed over many years by experts in trade associations and research foundations with deep knowledge of both the technology and the business of graphic communications.

**Print[ED] currently offers accreditation to school programs in six skill areas:** Introduction to Graphic Communications; Graphic Design; Digital File Preparation and Output; Digital Production Printing; Offset Press Operations; Bindery & Finishing; and Screen Printing.

Vares says that a goal for 2025 is to develop new skill areas such as wide-format output for signage and fabrication "because that is such a growing part of our industry."

Print[ED] identifies six operational and administrative standards as the baselines of an accreditation-worthy training program. A program seeking to become accredited must show that it can meet these standards in the classroom and teach at least two of the six skill areas, one of which must be Introduction to Graphic Communications.

### Straight to the Core

Curricula seeking accreditation must also align with the competencies that Print[ED] has defined for each of the six skills areas. The competencies provide frameworks for the learning outcomes that Print[ED] expects the schools' programs to achieve. Vares says that as long as the coursework imparts the core knowledge that students need, how the material is presented is up to the instructor.

"Our goal with the competencies is to give the instructors a road map on the core subjects of what needs to be taught, and the freedom to teach it the way that they want." Vares adds that instructors need to cover only 85% of the competencies for a skill area if they so choose. "This gives the instructor the ability to focus more on certain areas they find more prudent for their students," he says.

Accreditation begins with completing an application for review by the Print[ED] team. The program then has 12 months to complete the process. A team of industry professionals conducts a review of the standards and final evaluation, and if accreditation is granted, the program holds it for five years until reaccreditation is required.



**The main thing is helping the students. It's important for employers to know that if you see a kid coming into your shop with a Print[ED] accreditation, they're going to be ready to go right out of the gate.**

Achieving Print[ED] accreditation used to mean accumulating volumes of hard-copy documents in ring binders. This is no longer how the process works. As Vares says, "we've converted everything to a digital file format. We tried to consolidate a lot of the redundancies that were part of the original accreditation process." Vares says digitization has cut the completion timeframe from 12 months to an average of four to six – and in one case, to just two.

### Keeping the Credential

Once accreditation has been earned, it isn't administratively burdensome to maintain. At the five-year mark, the Print[ED] team looks at the instructor's record of professional development, updates to the curriculum, additions of classroom equipment, and the program's budget. But the entire wheel of accreditation does not have to be reinvented as it did in the past.

"Our main goal is to make it easier on the instructor to be able to get through this so they can focus on teaching the students versus making sure that they have triplicates of some form that we're only going to see every five years," Vares says.

Vares says that digitizing the Print[ED] program also has included creating an online professional learning community where instructors can share teaching materials and answer each other's questions.



Example of a Print[ED] classroom at Richmond Technical Center, VA

Vares points out that a school seeking Print[ED] accreditation isn't required to have heavy-duty printing equipment on the floor, as few schools nowadays do. A small-format digital printer or a heat transfer press would be enough as long as the unit can give students an idea of what an actual production environment consists of.

"If you're teaching your students graphic design, we want to make sure that they're getting that proper industry instruction as well," he explains. "Safe space, margins, and bleed for example – not just learning how to run a program."

Another benefit of accreditation is eligibility for Perkins V funding: a federal program that supports industry-approved career and technical education (CTE) programs in fields like the ones Print[ED] endorses. The money, administered at the state level, can be used to help cover the cost of classroom equipment and supplies, field trips and conferences, teacher compensation, and more.

### 'Still Going Strong'

Currently, about 125 programs taught by 250 to 300 instructors throughout the country are fully accredited. Vares estimates that more than 500 other programs are eligible for Print[ED] accreditation. He says that to get them interested in applying, the task will be to "get the word back out that Print[ED] is still here, we're going strong, and we're ready to shake it up a bit."

*Continued on page 14*

## Print[ED] Continued

Vares says that as custodian of the program, PGCA will use its close-knit connections with other regional printing trade groups to put “boots on the ground” in support of Print[ED] wherever eligible programs exist.

“The main thing is helping the students,” he declares. It’s important for employers to know that “if you see a kid coming into your shop with a Print[ED] accreditation, you know that they’re going to be ready right out of the gate.”



Being known as a graduate of a Print[ED]-accredited program is a great added bonus for students entering the job market.

This highlights the fact that Print[ED] accredits individual learners as well as the programs they graduate from. Students can earn the credential by taking a test of their knowledge in the program’s six skill areas. The Print[ED] competencies also form the basis of the SkillsUSA national competition in graphic communications.

“The biggest thing we hear from companies who hire from Print[ED] programs is that the students don’t have to take that however many months training period,” Vares says. “In terms of actual production skills and things like industry terminology, they’re already tons of steps ahead on that.”

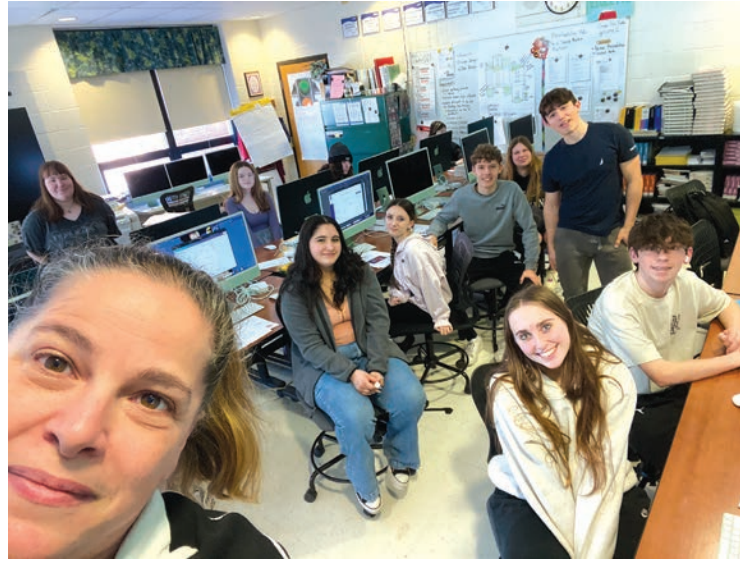
### Class Is in Session

The first steps toward proficiency are taken in classrooms where Print[ED] keynotes the instruction and prepares students for the opportunities that await them in graphic communications.

At Moreno Valley High School in Moreno Valley, CA, Ricardo Torres teaches a graphic design class built around a textbook that is correlated to Print[ED]’s skill competencies in graphic communications. He says that the class, which currently enrolls 144 students in five sections, is always popular and always full.

Torres expects to complete accrediting his program at Moreno Valley by the end of the current school year. He also teaches the subject in an accredited program at Riverside City College in Riverside, CA. He describes the accreditation process as “pretty smooth” now that most of its documentation has been digitized. “A lot of the duplication has been taken out,” he observes.

He notes that the measurements Print[ED] uses to track student outcomes can also be used in applying for Perkins V funding, which is granted to professionally certified teaching programs.



Crystal Violette, instructor at Regional Career & Technical Center (RCTC) at Coventry High School, Coventry, RI, and her students

According to Torres, accreditation has worked well for his programs because they were already teaching the content and the competencies that Print[ED] is based upon. Earning the designation also lets his students become individually certified by taking a final exam in the skill areas of their choice.

Being known as a graduate of a Print[ED]-accredited program is a “great added bonus” for students entering the job market, Torres says.

### Schoolroom Is A Print Shop

Crystal Violette, an Instructor in Advertising, Marketing and Design, teaches five 20-seat classes in graphic communications in the Regional Career & Technical Center (RCTC) at Coventry High School, Coventry, RI. Her resources for teaching production include a Konica Minolta digital press, a direct-to-garment printer, a pair of embroidery machines, a 10-station screen press, along with postpress and laminating equipment.

The shop, which has qualified for tens of thousands of dollars in Perkins V funding by virtue of its Print[ED] accreditation, prints for the local police department and nonprofit organizations.

Violette first achieved Print[ED] accreditation at Coventry in 2005 and has reaccredited there at five-year intervals ever since. Over the years, she has earned the distinction in all six Print[ED] skill areas.

Violette says that maintaining Print[ED] accreditation has helped her curriculum to evolve in step with the times while keeping students grounded in print’s essential skills.

“You have to go with the flow of the industry,” she explains. “Now you have AI coming around the corner, so you have to incorporate some of that. But I try to tell the students, you can’t just rely on AI to build your logo. AI is not going to know how to trap or register. You have to have the other basic skills.”

Violette measures the value of Print[ED] accreditation in the professional success some of her students have achieved since graduation. “It’s quite the list now,” she says.

Several have started their own businesses, including Zack Deus, who runs an advertising and marketing firm; and Garrett Cole, who launched a screen printing and embroidery company while he was still a senior in Violette’s program.

### A Formative Experience

After graduating from Coventry in 2012 and from New England Institute of Technology in 2014, Deus spent several years as a freelancer for an agency specializing in industrial design. In 2019, he and three partners founded BLK MKT Studios\*, a multi-disciplinary creative agency in West Warwick, RI.

“Our main niche right now is with content creation and social media management for a lot of different local companies, specifically in the restaurant and construction industry,” Deus says. The business, which employs 10 people, offers a variety of branding and production services that include apparel, print, and promotional products.

Deus regards his Print[ED]-accredited studies at Coventry as a formative professional experience. He says the things he learned in Violette’s classes “showed me what was out there and led me down the road of eventually doing what I do now. It provided a lot of the base skills and base knowledge that were easily applied with jumping into college and then allowing me to start freelancing pretty much immediately in college.”

“It definitely gave me a leg up,” Deus observes. “I think if had I not had that opportunity, it’s hard for me to say that I’d be in the same place that I am now.” He returns the favor by serving on Coventry High School’s RCTC Advisory Board, where he helps Violette and other instructors to keep their study programs up to date with trends and developments in the subject areas they are teaching.

### Couldn’t Wait for the Diploma

Cole was still enrolled in the Advertising, Marketing, and Design program at Coventry High School when he launched his business in 2013. Today, High Octane Print Studio in Coventry is a full-service facility that provides screen printing, embroidery, and promotional products to businesses, churches, and other organizations in the area.



Michael Born, instructor at Center for Applied Technology North, Severn, MD teaching Offset Press Operations

Cole credits Print[ED] training with jump-starting his entrepreneurial ambitions. He says that what he learned in the program “gave me the knowledge I needed to start my business, and it’s what really inspired me to want to be involved in the industry from the start. Working in the print shop in class showed me the workflow of the print industry, from understanding work orders to fulfilling orders accurately and on time for customers.”

“This is what I really enjoyed and is what led me to be inspired to run my own print shop today,” Cole says.

For more information about Print[ED], contact Mike Vares at [mike@printcommunications.org](mailto:mike@printcommunications.org), (443) 276-3146 or visit [print-ed.org](http://print-ed.org).

**About the author:** Patrick Henry, the director of Liberty or Death Communications, has covered the printing and graphic arts industry as a journalist since 1985. He holds numerous awards for his industry service and support of professional education. Contact him at [pathenry@libordeath.com](mailto:pathenry@libordeath.com).





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**IS IT TIME TO BUY? SELL?**

As a new year begins, it's not unusual for company owners to contemplate whether it's time to buy another company . . . or to sell. Many a conversation with M&A consultants starts with this question. Should I be a buyer or seller? The advice given is you can't be both. A buyer needs to be in a position financially, as well as mentally, that growth through acquisition is the best way to improve the company. A seller needs to be comfortable with the idea that selling the business is an exit plan for themselves and the company.

As one contemplates the direction, make sure to include your associates (business and family) in the discussion to ensure a total commitment. It's not uncommon for a business to venture on the path of selling or buying and then stop the process once the reality of an acquisition or sale is on the horizon. Although it's better to stop than moving forward, the amount of time and money wasted can be significant. It's best to have contemplated the process prior the journey's start, and it never

hurts to explore the idea with a business associate who's been there or an expert in acquisitions.

**AI - FRIEND OR FOE?**



Depending on who you ask, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is either an angel or a demon. Regardless billions of dollars are being spent on the technology and many businesses are introducing AI into their day-to-day practices. Although AI may not be ready for use in small businesses, it pays for thought leaders to better understand the technology. IBM can provide insight into this technology at <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/artificial-intelligence>.

**About the Author:** quoins2pixels is written by Joe Polanco. The author has spent decades in the printing industry, and held various management positions within the industry. As a value-added service of PGCA, Joe is available to expand on these articles, or aid with projects. Contact Joe at [jspolanco49@gmail.com](mailto:jspolanco49@gmail.com).

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