



## **2022 Immigrant Entrepreneur Award Winners Announced**

### **Immigrants honored for their economic, social and scientific contributions in Massachusetts**

MALDEN, Mass, March 10, 2022 /In recognition of the tremendous contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs to the commonwealth, The Immigrant Learning Center (The ILC) honored four Massachusetts-based immigrant entrepreneurs Tuesday night at the Royal Sonesta Boston during the 2022 Barry M. Portnoy Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Benefit.

Launched in 2012, this awards program is the only one to celebrate immigrant entrepreneurs in New England. All proceeds benefit The Immigrant Learning Center (The ILC), which will be celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary later this year. The Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards highlight the crucial contributions immigrants from all backgrounds make to society. The ILC Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy, who came to the United States as a refugee child herself, thanked the entrepreneurs, saying, “Thank you not only for joining us this evening, but for coming to this country and making this country and our communities stronger.”

With the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s honorees have faced obstacles that previous awardees had not dreamt of, and they managed to keep their businesses thriving and even started new businesses. Whether through eco-friendly practices, a not-for-profit empowering women, new therapies for rare diseases or creating new jobs, they also all have had a powerful, positive impact on their community, employees, industry and the country.

**Jitka Borowick is an immigrant from the Czech Republic and the recipient of the 2022 Award for Neighborhood Business.** Jitka Borowick is the founder and CEO of yoga and wellness studio Nové Yoga in West Dennis, Mass, and award-winning eco-friendly cleaning business Cleangreen in Barnstable, Mass. Started in 2008 as a one-person enterprise, Cleangreen currently employs 18 people on a year-round basis. In August 2020, Borowick launched Nové Yoga to share her commitment to healthy living, which was needed more than ever during a pandemic. Borowick has received many accolades for her leadership, business acumen and commitment to Cape Cod, including being honored as 2016 Small Business Owner of the Year from Cape Cod SCORE and 2018 Alumna of the Year from Cape Cod Community College.

In accepting the award, Borowick honored the event’s namesake, entrepreneur and philanthropist Barry Portnoy, with the suggestion, “When we achieve our dreams, let’s take a page out of Barry Portnoy’s book.... May we all strive to be more like Barry and honor him through our unwavering belief in immigrants, in entrepreneurs and in each other.”

**Roger Magalhaes is an immigrant from Brazil and the recipient of the 2022 Award for Business Growth.** Roger Magalhaes is the founder of Shades in Place and Trading Up Consulting, LLC in Franklin, Mass. While he was employed as a truck driver, Magalhaes started installing window treatments part time. In 2006, he took the leap to start his own installation business, Shades in Place. With more than 500 five-star reviews from his growing list of satisfied clients, Magalhaes' services are sought after by clients and designers throughout the region. As an illustration of his broad impact, attendees came from across the United States to honor him at the Awards Benefit.

His advice is sought by professionals around the world, and in 2020 he took his commitment to this industry further with the launch of a training and consulting business, Trading Up Consulting, LLC. Tuesday night, Magalhaes said, "America is a great place for you to realize all your dreams," and to do that he advised, "Never stop learning, never give up."

**Avak Kahvejian is an immigrant from Canada and the recipient of the 2022 Award for Life Science Business.** Avak Kahvejian is a life science inventor, entrepreneur and CEO. Kahvejian developed and commercialized the world's first single molecule DNA sequencer for Helicos BioSciences. As a general partner at Flagship Pioneering in Cambridge, Mass, he leads a team to invent and launch new therapeutic platforms. The first company he founded, Rubius Therapeutics, engineers red blood cells to provide therapy for rare diseases, cancer and autoimmunity. Since 2011, Kahvejian has also helped found Cygnal Therapeutics, Generate Biomedicines, Ring Therapeutics, Cellarity and Laronde.

Kahvejian accepted the award humbly, saying, "I really don't feel like I deserve it.... I feel like the award goes to my parents who had to flee civil war in Beirut." He also highlighted the importance of a welcoming community, crediting the Armenian community, the biotech community and the philanthropic community in Boston for making his success possible. Kahvejian is now part of that welcoming community as a leader in the local Armenian community and chair of the board of directors for the International Institute of New England.

**Ling Chai Maginn is an immigrant from China and the recipient of the 2022 Award for High-Tech Business.** Ling Chai Maginn is the founder, president and CEO of Jenzabar, Inc., a Boston-based software and services provider for educational institutions at more than 1,300 campuses worldwide, and the not-for-profit All Girls Allowed. In 2021, she was recognized by EY as an Entrepreneur Of The Year New England Award Winner. Maginn was so touched by the Immigrant Entrepreneur Award she said, "I was blessed to have a few other awards, including a Nobel Peace Prize nomination [for her work as a student leader in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests], but the one that is near and dear to my heart is this one." Perhaps this is explained by her comment, "For many of us, becoming an entrepreneur is not an easy thing, but being an immigrant is probably the most challenging thing in our lives."

#### **About The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.**

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that gives immigrants a voice in three ways. The English Language Program provides free, year-round English classes to immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston to help them become successful workers, parents and community members. The Public Education Institute informs Americans about immigrants and immigration in the United States, and the Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture with George Mason University, conducts research on the economic contributions of immigrants.

For more information, visit the website <http://www.ilctr.org>. The ILC can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

**Photo Caption:**

(From left to right) Roger Magalhaes, Jitka Borowick, Avak Kahvejian and Ling Chai Maginn

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Quotes:

**Jitka**

Next year will mark two decades since I first came to the United States. Not a day goes by that I don't hold firm to my roots and where I come from. While I am immensely proud of my Czech heritage, I'm also very thankful for everything America has given to me. This is truly the land of opportunity, but that opportunity doesn't come without conditions. When you mix toil with sweat with a vision and also a plan of what you want to achieve, your dream can come true. And this is what happened to me with Cleangreen and also my latest business Nove. But none of this would be possible without the help along the way. And some of the people who supported me on my journey are here with me tonight. My friend and colleague Annette, my friend Iliana, and of course my family, my husband Ivan and my daughter Misha. One of the big lessons from tonight is that we all can serve as examples for others, and this is what I'm trying to do for my daughter. To show her that dreams are great, but they will not happen without hard work and support of colleagues, friends, family and even complete strangers. And when we achieve our dreams, let's take a page out of Barry Portnoy's book. While I unfortunately haven't had a chance to meet him, I recognize the importance of the intrinsic values that he held so dearly. May we all strive to be more like Barry, and honor him through our unwavering belief in immigrants, in entrepreneurs and in each other.

**Roger**

America is a great place to make your dreams come true, but your dreams only come true when you have an awesome wife to support your workaholic lifestyle. ... America is a great place because you find great co-workers to help you carry the load. America is a great place because your colleagues come from all over the country to be here with you tonight. But most important, America is a great place for you to realize all your dreams, but the only person that can prevent you from reach your dreams is yourself. Never stop learning, never give up. If it was easy, anyone would do it.

**Avak**

I thank you, The Immigrant Learning Center, for the award, but I really don't feel like I deserve it considering everything that's going on in the world today with Ukrainians, with Haitians, with Afghans and beyond, people we're not even talking about today. I've been lucky, I've been very, very fortunate. I feel like the award goes to my parents. My parents who had to flee civil war in Beirut and carry me practically in a basket to N. America. And take me to Montreal and give me opportunities I had to learn and integrate and succeed here in N. America. My mother is here with me. I'm very happy to have her.

They are the ones who truly suffered the practically refugee hardship of coming here. The other people who deserve this award are the people here in Boston, the Armenian community, the biotech community, the philanthropic community here in Boston made it very easy for me to come here from Canada. Had they not been here, I don't think I would have been as successful and as comfortable here. My wife and I came here 17 years ago and we had a welcoming community.

**Ling**

I was blessed to have a few other awards, including a Nobel Peace Prize nomination, but the one that is near and dear to my heart is this one. ... Today, Jenzabar not only provides a technology platform, we also provide that with a purpose. We believe everybody is a masterpiece in this world. ... Our job is to help everybody find their purpose at home, at work and in the world. An entrepreneur is someone who creates jobs, creates solutions, creates a future for a lot of people.

For many of us, becoming an entrepreneur is not an easy thing, but being an immigrant is probably the most challenging thing in our lives. We have to leave so much things we love, cherish and dear behind.

I know if I had done this alone, I would never have arrived where I am, because I cannot become what I am today without all the people have given me the future.