

ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar
3327 McMaude Place,
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

December 23, 2020

National Association of the Remodeling Industry
700 Astor Lane,
Wheeling, IL 60090

Dear NARI:

My name is Noah Ongart, and I am the social media manager for ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar (a member company of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry). I am writing to you today because I would like to nominate Letitia Hanke, the President and CEO of ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar for the Harold Hammerman “Spirit of Education” Award.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Letitia Hanke over the past five years. Throughout this time, she has become a close personal friend as well as business mentor of mine. I, along with anyone else who has the opportunity to meet her, stands by the statement that Letitia Hanke is a true leader and upstanding member of her local community. Letitia is the ideal candidate for the Harold Hammerman “Spirit of Education” Award because she spends her days constantly thinking of ways to give back to the youth in her community by introducing at-risk youth to gainful employment opportunities in the trades and remodeling industry. While I will discuss how she has been able to achieve this in the paragraphs to come, I first want to provide more background on who she is and how she has found success that she shares with her community.

Letitia is a small-town girl from Lake County, California. As a child, she was severely bullied in school because she was one of only a handful of black students in the entire district at the time. She would spend her days during recess hiding behind a big oak tree to avoid the harassment of other students. One day, the school music teacher took note and decided to extend a helping hand – something Letitia would never forget. The teacher asked Letitia to come to the music classroom in the days following during recess instead of staying behind the oak tree. Little did Letitia know that this random act of kindness would change her life.

Upon entering the music classroom the following day, the music teacher placed a trumpet in her hands. Letitia quickly found music to be her passion, and she was soon playing with the middle school band at age eight. By age ten, Letitia’s diligence led her to perform with the local High School marching band. Not only did music provide her with a creative outlet, but it gave her a sense of confidence that carried over to her academic studies as well – she even graduated high school a year early!

Letitia decided to continue pursuing her music career; she enrolled at Sonoma State University. During her time at Sonoma State University, Letitia worked multiple jobs just to make ends meet. While performing was her passion, working for tips as a guest singer at local venues could not meet the ever growing debt of student loans, food, and housing. In order to support

herself through college, she decided to look for a more stable job than performances, and it was this choice that introduced her to the trades & remodeling industry.



Letitia Turner was the soloist Monday night at Middletown's Annual Spring Concert. Little Letitia played the coronet with grace and precision. Backing her up is Band Director Cydney Dixon and the elementary band. More photos and story on page 8. [Photo by David Stoneberg]

A local roofing company was hiring a new receptionist, and Letitia jumped at the opportunity. Her positive attitude and strong work-ethic landed her the job. After spending a while with the company, Letitia was offered full-time employment; although a music career was her passion, this was an offer she simply could not refuse as she knew this would help her attain financial security in a way she never before thought possible. After a few more years as a receptionist, the owner of the company took note of her professionalism and integrity. He soon offered her the position of office manager, which she gladly accepted.

Soon after she was promoted to office manager, the owner of the company pulled her aside before a company-wide weekly meeting. He told her than he planned on retiring in a few years, and he wanted her to take over the company. In shock, Letitia stated the obvious: “how the heck can I run a roofing company when I’m not a roofer?” His response – “if you want it, then I’ll teach you.” Letitia spent the next four years working closely alongside the owner learning the ins and outs of the roofing industry. Due to her incredible drive for success, she quickly excelled in learning how to roof. Four years after that shocking conversation, in 2004, Letitia received her roofing contractor’s license and bought out the company which she rebranded as ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar.

Letitia quickly expanded the company by providing clients with a sense of trust and security that was unmatched by any other industry professional. The community soon took note of her accomplishments, and she was recognized accordingly. Below are only a handful of Letitia’s notable achievements since becoming CEO & President of ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar:

- 2008 Spirit of Sonoma Honoree award winner
- 2014 Small Business of the Year award from Governor Gavin Newsome



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152129207115028.1073741916.52906365027&type=1>

- 2015 Entrepreneurial/Innovative Spirit Award winner by the North Bay Leadership Council
- 2016 Northern California Small Business Award by the California Black Chamber of Commerce

Santa Rosa roofer named top small-business owner



SLIDE 2 OF 2

Letitia Hanke, owner of Santa Rosa-based ARS Roofing Solutions, and Ron Busby Sr., president and CEO of the U.S. Black Chambers Inc. Hanke was named the top small business for Northern California by the California Black Chamber on Aug. 27, 2016. (Blanc Communications)

NORTH BAY BUSINESS JOURNAL



“Roofing entrepreneur and business owner Letitia Hanke has been awarded the Small Business of the Year Award for the Northern Region by the California Black Chamber... Hanke started ARS Roofing Solutions Inc. (now ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar) in 2004 and currently employs 20 full-time employees (now 24+ full-time employees)... In 2013, Hanke founded The LIME Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that advocates for the disadvantaged by offering programs that provide housing repair and vocational training to those in need... The LIME Foundation also runs a vocational program which offers home repair services and specifically roofing to the underserved,

which allows seniors, veterans, the disabled and low income families to stay in their own homes.”

Source: <https://legacy.northbaybusinessjournal.com/industrynews/6040593-181/santa-rosa-roofing-construction-entrepreneur?artslide=1>

- 2017 Entrepreneur of the Year award by the National 100 Black Women Council
- 2018 North Bay Business Journal Non-Profit Leadership award

North Bay Nonprofit Leadership Awards winners honored



Source:

<https://legacy.northbaybusinessjournal.com/northbay/sonomacounty/8775136-181/journal-marin-sonoma-napa-nonprofit-awards>

- 2018 4 C's Champion of Children-Empowering Youth Award
- 2018 Walmart Community Playmaker Award by the Golden State Warriors



Community Playmaker: Letitia Hanke

The Lime Foundation

“Letitia started a non-profit called the LIME Foundation that is focused on three areas: Trades Education, Elderly Support, and Music. NextGen Trades Academy trains and educates disadvantaged youth from ages 16-24 in the construction trades to help them get into a career of construction. Senior Nutrition and Activities Program is a class that educates seniors to eat healthy and exercise by cooking healthy meals and participating in chair yoga. Turner Arts Initiative (TAI) is geared towards troubled youth to channel their energy into music and performing arts, with the goal to reduce teen pregnancy, drug use, and suicides.

Additionally, the LIME Foundation has worked with New York Life to deliver 1,000 coats to needy kids in the North Bay during an event called “A Night of 1,000 Coats”. She has also worked tirelessly in supporting victims of the North Bay Fires.” Source:

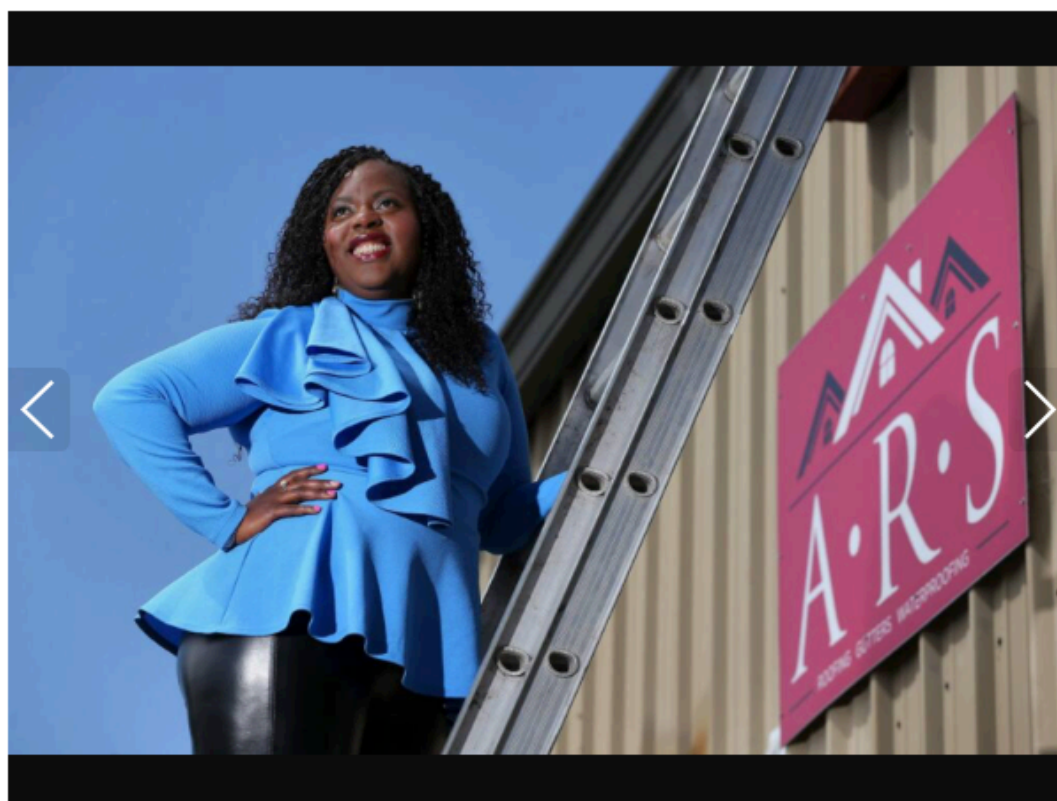
<https://www.nba.com/warriors/community/walmart-community-playmaker-letitia-hanke>

- 2020 North Bay Spirit Award Winner

“As a female CEO of her own roofing company, Hanke is prepared for those who might underestimate her because of her gender in the overwhelmingly male-dominated building trades. She’s developed a strong sense of self worth and a thick skin over some 20 years in the business. But as an African America, she’s found that racism has sometimes proven to be an even darker and trickier force to deal with... After she rebranded her company, ARS Roofing, as an African American female-owned business, she found it not only didn’t suffer but prospered, growing from a \$2 million company to one with \$3.5 million in annual sales... It wasn’t just the name change, she said, but the change within herself... The additional income and the transformation that came from her decision to publicly claim who she is led Hanke to create The LIME

Foundation. The five-year-old nonprofit offers enrichment programs that serve the disadvantaged community across different age groups. She diverts up to 5% of each roofing job to the foundation, which also is supported by small donations and grants... Her NextGen Trades Academy prepares high school students and young adults for whom college isn't a fit to enter well-paid jobs in the construction trades. The program focuses on the skills to get a job and partners with contractors in the community to hire the graduates and train them on the job... For her enthusiastic and persistent efforts to empower youth, particularly those struggling with poverty, low self esteem and often minimal family support, Hanke has been selected as June's North Bay Spirit Award Winner."

North Bay Spirit Award winner Letitia Hanke helps minority youth find path to success



SLIDE 1 OF 5

Letitia Hanke, president and CEO of ARS (Alternative Roofing Solutions) Roofing, Gutters and Waterproofing, is the founder of The LIME Foundation to support youth in the arts and construction trades.(Christopher Chung/ The Press Democrat)

Source:<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/lifestyle/north-bay-spirit-award-winner-helps-minority-youth-find-path-to-success/?sba=AAS>

- 2020 Featured on Mike Rowe's Returning the Favor Show
"As part of her involvement in the show, Hanke received recognition for her work with the LIME Foundation, a nonprofit that supports an apprenticeship program called the NextGen Trades Academy. Hanke founded the academy in 2015 to help young adults

launch careers in the trades. The LIME Foundation also received gifts totaling \$100,000 on the show, including more than \$60,000 worth of tools for the academy and \$25,000 to hire a new teacher.”

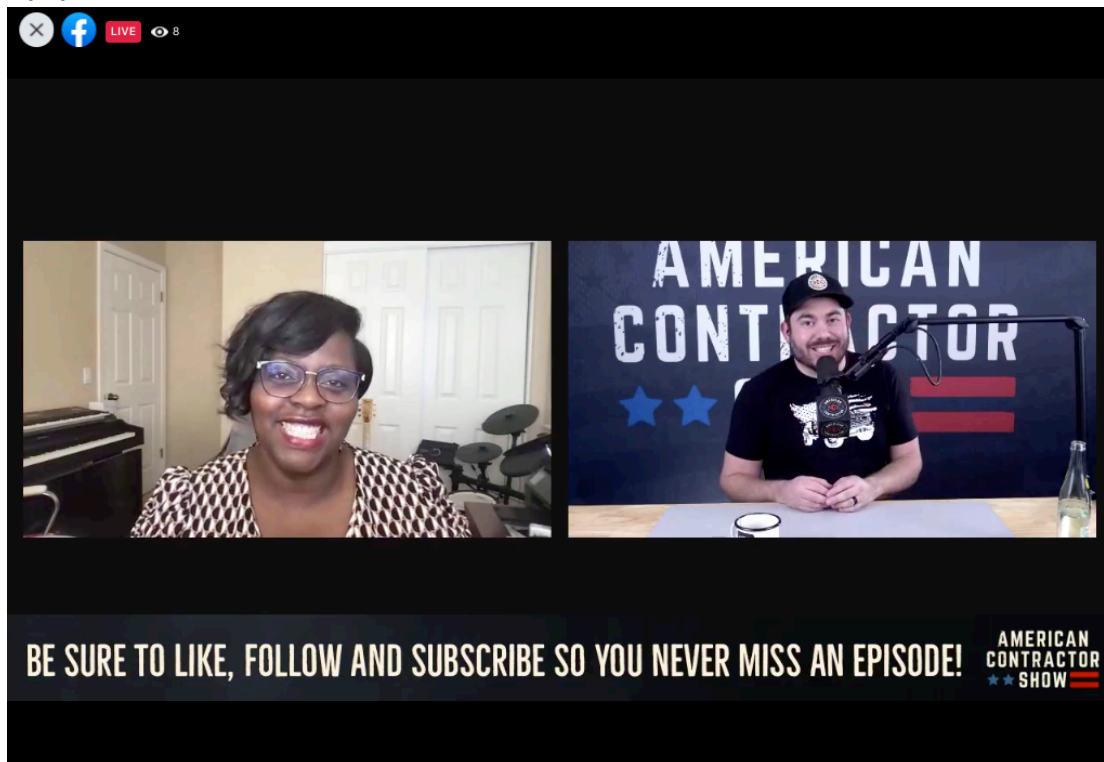
Source: <https://www.sonomamag.com/santa-rosa-construction-entrepreneur-raises-roof-on-mike-rowe-show/>

- 2020 Featured on the Kelly Clarkson Show

“My next guest is the perfect example of how hard work and staying grounded can lead to tremendous success. She’s not only the CEO of her own roofing company, but she’s dedicated to giving others the opportunity to succeed in all facets of life. That’s why she’s today rad human. Alright from the LIME Foundation, let’s say hi to Letitia Hanke!” – Kelly Clarkson.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpQMDSyMsn4>

- 2020 Interviewed on American Contractor Show



- 2020 Residential Roofing Contractor of the Year by Roofing Contractor – The Official Publication of The International Roofing Expo

“Right on par with her passion for the roofing business is Hanke’s penchant for giving back to her community. She started the nonprofit LIME Foundation as an avenue to expose teens to the arts and empower them to dream big about their futures. A big component of that is the NextGen Trades Academy, where she and about a dozen other contractors commit time and resources to training young people getting started in the trades. ‘I wanted to start a nonprofit to help young people that are struggling with something, whether it be bullying or obesity or sometimes it’s substance abuse. But give them a chance to channel a lot of that energy into something positive through the arts,’ Hanke said. That first year in 2017, Hanke said 17 of 20 students in the program were hired for skilled laborer jobs. ‘When that happened, it really started to build up,’ she said. ‘Now all these contractors have heard about the program and are ready for

these kids coming out. It's been really great.' She doesn't shy away from the notion that her work with local disadvantaged youth and exposing them to the trades is a bit self-serving when it comes to her business. She and the other contractors involved have a pool of job candidates in the pipeline that are continuously learning and honing their skills... 'I do these things because I care, and am really trying to help these disadvantaged youth in some way,' she said. 'We're trying to help them change their lives, and to get this kind of recognition was really huge for me to realize that I'm on the right path and doing the right thing.'"

2020 Residential Contractor of the Year: ARS Roofing

Rising Up



Letitia Hanke and the team at ARS Roofing endured wildfires, project delays and some of the harshest COVID-19-related government shutdowns in the country on their way to their most successful year yet. Photo by Lens Queen Photography.

Source: <https://www.roofingcontractor.com/articles/95096-residential-contractor-of-the-year-ars-roofing>

As you can see, since her time becoming the CEO & President of ARS Roofing, Gutters & Solar, Letitia has worked tirelessly to give back to her local community through the nonprofit she founded – The LIME Foundation.

The LIME Foundation's mission is to support, educate, and uplift underserved and disadvantaged communities across all ages and income levels by engaging with key community leaders to provide access to vocational training, education, music and the arts, and healthcare initiatives. Founded in 2015 by entrepreneur Letitia Hanke, The LIME Foundation has grown to encompass three essential programs:

- NextGen Trades Academy (NGTA) – NGTA provides workforce development to socioeconomically disadvantaged youth, ages 16-24, via education and interaction with industry leaders and employers in 14 different construction trades. Youth who complete the program receive their OSHA-10 construction worksite safety certification and are exposed to numerous employment opportunities in the trades. The LIME Foundation aims to serve 60+ youth in 2021 through NGTA.
- Turner Arts Initiative (TAI) – TAI provides disadvantaged youth with opportunities to develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially through the performing arts. Each year, TAI awards a scholarship that helps fund post-secondary education for an aspiring youth in the performing arts. This program also features a biannual talent show and an arts-focused summer camp (to be resumed post-COVID). TAI aims to serve 30 youth in 2021.
- Senior Activities Program (SAP) – SAP enables adults 55 and better to reclaim or enhance control over their own wellness through health and nutritional education. The program features nutrition workshops, culinary workshops, group stretching, gentle exercise guidance, and individualized health coaching. The LIME Foundation aims to serve 45 seniors in 2021 through Senior Activities Program.

Since its inception in 2016, Letitia's NextGen Trades Academy has helped 59 youth, ages 16-24, secure gainful employment in the trades upon graduation by providing them with classroom instruction as well as hands-on experience (pre-COVID-19). The program is focused on improving the lives of the traditionally under-served and often at-risk youth in Sonoma and Marin counties, and approximately 80 percent of participants served are considered low moderate income (LMI). Accordingly, many of the students do not have – or may not desire – higher education after secondary school. The NextGen Trades Academy provides students from diverse backgrounds a chance for lifelong success in four phases:

- **Identify and Enroll:** NGTA must identify and enroll eligible students. The LIME Foundation has strong relationships with community leaders and organizations that allow it to continually connect and engage with our target population. For example, their partnership with Sonoma County Juvenile Probation allows them to serve students in juvenile detention – students who have been granted early release on the condition of immediate employment facilitated by NextGen. Local high schools and nonprofits also recognize the value of the program and refer students to the class on a regular basis.

- **Educate and Train:** Letitia's program consists of 14-20 hours of Zoom-based instruction coupled with 10 hours of self-study towards OSHA certification. Each class is focused on a specific trade or subject including Architecture & Drafting, General Contracting & Carpentry, Roofing, Plumbing, Electrical, HVAC, Flooring & Tile, Painting, Restoration, Sheet Metal & Gutters, Interior Design, Solar & Green Technology, Green Building, Financial Literacy, and Resume Writing & Interview Skills. Each class begins with a lesson on a specific trade taught by NextGen staff. Following the lesson, a professional contractor joins the class to lead a presentation and rich discussion on each trade. This allows the students to see what life is like as professionals in the trades we cover. More importantly, it allows the students to begin fostering relationships with prospective employers. All students must complete homework assignments and quizzes designed by NGTA for each trade covered as well as OSHA-10 safety certification through self-study in order to graduate. During in-person cohorts, students complete hands-on solar panel projects – something The LIME Foundation will resume once in-person instruction is permitted. Lastly, this program recognizes the importance of life skills as a vital component of ongoing, successful employment. The NextGen Trades Academy dedicates approximately 5 class hours to financial literacy, resume writing, interview skills, and workshops that allow our students to practice these techniques.
- **Prepare and Connect:** NGTA invests significant resources into building partnerships with professional contractors in Sonoma and Marin counties. The numerous partner contractors are enthusiastic about NGTA, often presenting to the classes, inquiring about graduation dates, and communicating hiring needs. NGTA concludes each course cohort by facilitating employment interviews between graduates and partner contractors. Furthermore, the instructors offer the opportunity for private mock interviews with any student interested in rehearsing prior to their interview. These numerous employment preparation components that Letitia offers sets students up for success in their new careers.
- **Follow-up:** In part, the success of NGTA comes from Letitia's persistent dedication to the students – past and present. By staying connected with former graduates, Letitia is able to support students over time and improve the program for future participants. Many of the graduates have even helped enroll new students! This allows Letitia and The LIME Foundation to continue the cycle of uplifting underserved youth in the community.

The outcomes of the NextGen Trades Academy are encouraging. In 2018, 63% of work-eligible students found gainful employment within 60 days of graduation. In 2019, this number rose to 79%. **To date in 2020, The NextGen Trades Academy is on track for 80% of the graduates to secure full-time employment** in the trades within 60 days of graduation. With the average employed graduate earning \$17-23 per hour, beginning wages in the trades near that of a student graduating from college with a Bachelor of Arts degree. (According to the Society for Human Resource Management, the average starting salary for recently awarded bachelor's degrees is just under \$51,000.00 per year, or around \$25.25 per hour).

It is because of her tireless dedication to educating youth in the trades that go on to work in the remodeling industry that I nominate Letitia Hanke, the CEO & President of ARS Roofing, Gutters

& Solar as well as the Founder of The LIME Foundation & The NextGen Trades Academy, to be the Harold Hammerman Spirit of Education Award winner. Even when faced with the complications of something like a global pandemic, she never missed a stride. She is a person who will spend the rest of her life uplifting and educating youth in the remodeling industry because she knows firsthand how lifechanging this career path can be.

As you can see, I have nothing but the highest praise for Letitia Hanke and her dedication to educating youth in the remodeling industry. While I hope my words have inspired you to grant Letitia the honor of being the Harold Hammerman Spirit of Education Award winner, I want to leave you with testimonials from her students (below). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Noah Ongart

- “I have a full time job as an apprentice and I know what is expected of me. I finally have an understanding of the path I am on.” – Rancho Cotate High School NextGen Student, Spring 2019
- “It was absolutely spectacular. It opened my eyes to what I might do in the future.” – Chop’s Teen Club NextGen Student, Summer 2019
- “My experience has been positive and rewarding, I had not been in a classroom setting for a long time so it was a lot of fun and very refreshing.” Conservation Corps North Bay NextGen Student, Winter 2019
- “I have been struggling in school the past few years, especially with geometry. I was ready to sign up to join the Army because I didn’t know what else to do. Then I found Letitia and the NextGen Trades Academy. Now I am confident and want to work.” – NextGen Trades Academy student: cohort of December 2020

NextGen Trades Academy students’ solar panel project:



December 2020 NextGen Trades Zoom Cohort:



NextGen Trades Academy Students receiving their toolboxes upon graduation (each toolbox is valued at over \$600):





Students practice teambuilding skills in class:



Student graduation:



Students learn about building strong foundations while playing giant jenga:

