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FLYING HIGH

After starting at Schubach Aviation (schubachaviation.com) in 2006 as the company's vice president, Kimberly Herrell recently acquired the San Diego-based jet charter operator, becoming CEO and co-owner. Here, the 19-year aviation veteran discusses how she got into the private jet industry, why there are so few women and her plans for the company moving forward. *BY JASMIN ROSEMBERG*

How did you get into aviation, and what do you love about the field?

I got into aviation 20 years ago, during the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. I'm an adventurer at heart, and being around private jets sparked a sense of excitement within me—these flying machines create so many possibilities and make the world so much smaller. I still feel that same sense of excitement around private jets.

Why do you think there are so few women in this industry, and how can we change that? There are very few female pilots, which I think stems from outdated gender roles—though, fortunately, we are starting to see more young female pilots entering the workforce. This is an industry primarily run by pilots, and it can be intimidating when you do not have this training and background. It's something that I personally had to overcome and learn—that while I am not a pilot, I have a great depth of experience and a business sense and creativity to contribute. ... It would be great for more females to take on this mindset when approaching an antiquated industry.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced? What are you most proud of? Buying a company in January 2020, only to have COVID-19 hit two months later, created a lot of unknowns to

navigate. In hindsight, I'm grateful for that challenge as it allowed me to progress faster as a business owner. Over the years, I have been proud that we were first to the table in offering curated client experiences with our Elevated Excursions packages and other luxury partnerships. I just joined the executive board of the National Air Transportation Association in Washington, D.C., and am looking forward to helping drive needed change in our industry.

What can we expect from you and Schubach Aviation moving forward?

Personally, I am excited to put my fingerprint on aviation in terms of raising the bar on client experience. It's a fun time within the company: With the new ownership, we have the energy and passion of a startup, with the legacy and experience of a 30-year company behind us.



PHOTO BY MONICA HOOVER