

# Women in Motion

Meet several women who are making waves in the VT industry.

by *Vong Keovongsa*

This past April, I was attending the National Association of Elevator Contractors (NAEC) Spring Educational Conference in Miramar Beach, Florida, when I walked into a room full of women attending the Women in Motion meeting. I looked around and realized I was the only male in the room, and as I began to turn around to exit the meeting, one of the ladies in the room said, “Welcome! Please stay. We encourage everyone to attend our meetings, even men.” What was I thinking? The last time I felt this awkward in a room full of women was when I first graduated college and I was applying for a manager position at a women’s hosiery store. And once again, I find myself sitting in a room full of women at the NAEC conference. I was hoping no one at my table would ask me what the difference is between tights and panty hose.

As the Women in Motion meeting progressed, I was very glad I stayed. What I witnessed was a room full of highly successful, talented, intelligent women in our industry who were sharing about how they were overcoming business challenges, how they were taking over their family elevator businesses and describing what they wanted to see change in our industry so that more women can experience success in a historically male-dominated industry. I was inspired to see the level of camaraderie in the room. So much so that I wanted to spotlight several women who I met at the NAEC Spring Conference for this month’s Leadership Insights column.



## Veronica Querales, CEO/ President, Kohtler Elevator Industries

Veronica Querales has more than 30 years in the vertical-transportation (VT) industry. She got her start working for her family’s elevator service company while she was still in high school.

She continued to work for the family business while she pursued her education. She obtained a Bachelor of Business Administration in business administration and accounting and an electrical engineering degree from the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, then received her MBA in international management from the University of Phoenix.

Querales owns Kohtler Elevator Industries, which offers custom-made and standard elevator cabs in a wide variety of designs, structural variations and finishes. The company exports its products throughout the U.S., Caribbean and Virgin Islands. And under Querales’s leadership, Kohtler was nominated for the 2017 TOP Entrepreneurial Award by the Miami Chamber of Commerce.

**The [Women in Motion] group meets regularly to exchange ideas, network and to help “elevate” women in the industry.**



## Loannie Reyes, CEO/President, Authentic Elevator Services

Loannie Reyes, also known as “Elevator Chic,” has more than 25 years in the VT industry. Reyes is a great example of how hard work combined with a can-do attitude results in tremendous personal success. Reyes completed her Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and

computer science.

Reyes owns Authentic Elevators with her husband in the Greater New York area. The company was founded in 2008 and provides maintenance, modernization and repair services for residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

Reyes is a New York State Licensed Elevator Mechanic, and she also has her New York City Agency Director Inspector’s license.



## Charley Meeks, Director of Marketing and Business Development, Delaware Elevator

Charley Meeks was working in the fashion industry, and after attending her first NAEC convention, she fell so in love with the industry and the people she met at the convention that she left the fashion

industry behind to join her family’s elevator company. Meeks is the fourth generation to run Delaware Elevator, which was founded by her grandfather in the 1930s and formally incorporated in 1946.

Meeks is currently pursuing her MBA, and she has a deep passion for the VT industry. Delaware Elevator employs more than 500 employees and is a full-service elevator business. Meeks is excited to be part of helping shape the company’s success today and into the future.

After speaking with Querales, Reyes and Meeks, I am confident our industry is in very good hands. It is not by coincidence; they are all part of a dynamic group called Women in Motion. The group meets regularly to exchange ideas, network and to help “elevate” women in the industry.



A Women in Motion group photo taken during the 2023 NAEC Convention and Exposition in Reno; photo courtesy of NAEC.

Women in Motion is led by Chair Kelly Oberhardt, general manager, Kone Spares, and Vice Chair Querales. The Women in Motion group started with as few as 20 women, and today has more than 100 participating members. This is a true testament to the saying that “Behind every great woman ... is another great woman.” – Kate Hodges



**Vong Keovongsa** runs Elevator Services Group, a company that offers safety, recruitment and HR support to VT companies, with Susie Madden.