



Karen M Blackwell

CEO & Founder

**Los Angeles, CA Chapter | Member Since 2008**

### **Bio/NBMBAA Story:**

Karen M. Blackwell is the founder and CEO of Sage & Alms™, a benefit corporation that houses the brands Kanda™ Chocolates and DewBurst™. Karen chose to create a benefit corporation to further illustrate her commitment to balancing social justice, environmentalism, and profits equally. As CEO, Karen develops and executes on business that helps to create a sustainable business through global partnerships; with a current focus on Ghana and China.

In 2018, Karen traveled on a NBMBAA Business Mission trip to Ghana and fell in love with the creamier texture, fruitier notes, and overall unique 'chocolately' flavor profile associated with chocolate made in Ghana. With Ghana being the 2nd largest exporter in the world, she was shocked to learn that bean-to-bar,

single-origin chocolate was absent among their leading exports. Later, it was no surprise to also learn that Ghanaian chocolate was either rare or absent from the shelves of major grocers within the United States. Kanda™ Chocolates was created to elevate the chocolate tasting experience while maintaining a commitment to social responsibility through fair-trade cocoa and the company's Almsgiving Campaign. You can learn more about Kanda™ Chocolates at <https://www.kandachocolates.com>.

Prior to creating Sage & Alms, Karen was a healthcare leader with 15+ years in the healthcare industry. She was most recently a Director of Strategic Solutions for the Americas Region within the Diabetes Group for Medtronic plc – a \$28.8B global healthcare solutions company. Karen has held leadership roles in Marketing, Strategy, Sales, and Operations.

Throughout her career, Karen has maintained her passion for service. She currently serves as Treasurer and Board Member for Social Justice Learning Institute. Prior to, she has held leadership roles as an Advisor and Chair for Medtronic Employee Resource Groups, as a Class Leader for Dupage AME Church, and as a Committee Chair for the Professional Organization of Women, Inc.

Karen is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Karen has a Master's in Business Administration from Webster University and a B.S. in Biological Sciences from Northern Illinois University.