

# CRAIN'S

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CRAIN'S 2019



NOTABLE ENTREPRENEURS

The Chicago area's startup scene is varied, ranging from high-tech cybersecurity and biotechnology to basics in food and fitness. Crain's list of Notable Entrepreneurs includes 44 businesspeople who have identified needs and opportunities in the market, organized and run companies, and taken on greater-than-normal financial risk. This set of companies is on the young side, with revenue of less than \$10 million.

In biotechnology there are startups fighting the spread of cancer cells and developing skin patches that track biomarkers in real time. Some offer IT and marketing help to firms in fields such as finance and health

care. Others use the marketplace model linking buyers and sellers—one app connects sports fans at a game with nearby food vendors.

Several startups have a social dimension. One firm specifically hires workers with autism spectrum disorder. Another makes a point of offering opportunities to ex-offenders.

And others are bringing a fresh eye to food, retail, restaurants, real estate, public relations and event planning, as well as to industrial sectors like parts distribution and foam insulation. These startups reflect diversity as wide as the region's economy.

## MARY JOSEPHS

CEO and Owner | Verit Advisors

Mary Josephs leads Verit Advisors, which works with closely held middle-market businesses on employee stock ownership plans. The 10-year-old company also provides investment banking advisory services on ownership change and related strategies. Josephs built and led the ESOP group at LaSalle National Bank for more than 20 years. After Bank of America acquired LaSalle in 2007, she led teams she developed at LaSalle across Bank of America's middle-market investment bank and other businesses. When Bank of America de-emphasized its middle-market M&A focus, she saw the opportunity to become an entrepreneur. Verit has grown 500 percent over the past five years and generates more than \$8 million in annual revenue with a workforce of 15. Josephs has served on the board of Big Shoulders for nearly 20 years.

