

## RHONDA L. SCHULDT - PRESIDENT, THE SYNERGOS GROUP & FOUNDER/OWNER, LOCAL GOODNESS

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### CURRENTLY

Rhonda Schuldt, MBA, is President of The Synergos Group LLC, a private consulting practice formed in 1998 to provide mission-centric, customer-focused business and strategic consulting for early stage and evolving organizations in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. The firm specializes in optimizing organizational outcomes through results-focused strategic and business planning, organizational and market assessment, partnerships and collaborations.

Rhonda launched Passionate Food in 2005 as a division of The Synergos Group LLC, to combine her consulting expertise and culinary experience with her love of food and teaching to offer culinary team building and hands-on cooking instruction. In 2006 she created Local Goodness, a project of Passionate Food, to raise awareness of small local family farms across southwestern Pennsylvania and their importance to our food supply and local economies as a regular contributor and columnist for TABLE Magazine since its creation in 2005; creating and producing a regular bi-weekly live television segment for Pittsburgh's CBS Station, KDKA; and as a regular guest in print, on radio and at events on *all things local*.

In order to actually connect consumers with *all the best of all things local* she then founded Local Goodness LLC in 2013, creating and launching the Local Goodness Marketplace, an online market for local farms, small food producers and independent artisans across the country.

In 2015 Rhonda joined the University of Pittsburgh's College of Business Administration as an Entrepreneur-in-Residence where she supports and advises students in the University's first Innovation & Entrepreneurship Living Learning Community and co-advises Pitt's chapter of Enactus, a global student entrepreneurship club focused on entrepreneurial enterprises with a social impact. She has been asked to serve as an adjunct professor for the College's new certificate in entrepreneurship. Her areas of focus include social innovation and entrepreneurship, food-related entrepreneurship and "the business of food".

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### PREVIOUSLY

From 1998 to 2001, Rhonda served as a Vice President with TissueInformatics, Inc. (tii), a Pittsburgh-based bioinformatics company. At TissueInformatics she developed and guided the company's marketing strategy, led the development of the company's business plan resulting in a successful multi-million dollar round of financing, and established and managed a specialty consulting division within the company. tiiConsulting provided scientific, regulatory, and business expertise to early-stage biotechnology companies and due diligence assistance to prospective biotechnology investors.

Prior to TissueInformatics, she was Assistant Director of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development/Pennsylvania Economy League and the Founding Director of the Working Together Consortium, a broad-based collaborative of civic leaders committed to implementing the goals and strategies of the Regional Economic Revitalization Initiative (1994). As Director of the Consortium she mobilized, prepared and facilitated public, private and community leadership and managed specialized teams of expert professionals to successfully implement an economic revitalization plan for southwestern Pennsylvania. The first collaborative effort of the Consortium was the development of the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative to focus on the creation of a specialty biotechnology niche for the Pittsburgh region. Other collaborative accomplishments include the transformation of the historic Alcoa Headquarters building into a center for regional development; the establishment of the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance to coordinate regional development efforts; the creation of a regional workforce development strategy and plan to support key growth industries; and the development of a marketing strategy for regional economic and tourism development. Since the inception of the Working

Together Consortium in 1994 and the commitment made by many throughout our region to work together to revitalize its economy, the Pittsburgh region has, among other things, realized:

- A resilient, diverse economy
- Recognition as a premier travel destination and designation as a “most livable city”
- Increased investment capital and a strong, vibrant entrepreneurial culture
- Pittsburgh’s recognition as a strong region for technology and intellectual property development
- An increased presence of our world-class universities in regional economic development and drivers of economic opportunity
- Meaningful workforce development initiatives
- A community openly engaged in issues of diversity and inclusion

Prior to moving to the Pittsburgh region in 1994, Rhonda was the Executive Director of SHARE, Inc., an incubator for human services, bringing community organizations and leaders together to meet unmet and under-met needs in Kansas City, Missouri. In addition to managing SHARE’s various programs, she worked with community leaders to assess the need for and develop a number of new initiatives. Programs included: Project S.A.V.E., a five-year pre-reading, literacy pilot program; the Good Neighbor/Family Program, a cooperative program providing a holistic approach in combating the dependency of clients of The Community Pantry; SafeHaven, a shelter and program for female victims of domestic violence and their children; a foster program; an adoption agency; a camp for children with Spina Bifida and Cystic Fibrosis; and other programs for children and families.

Her background also includes positions with the University of Missouri in the Department of Research, distance learning, and the University’s research parks; in sales and marketing for Kelly Services, Inc.; and running small businesses, including a restaurant with her husband.

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Rhonda has served on many community boards, and volunteers for a variety of community and charitable organizations.

Rhonda holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration and a Bachelor’s degree in Finance from the University of Missouri. She is trained and experienced in the Drucker Planning Process and the Hoshin Strategic Planning Process. She is a graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh XIII and has been recognized as one of Pittsburgh’s “40 under 40” whose creativity, vision and passion help enrich the Pittsburgh region.



[www.SynergsoGroup.com](http://www.SynergsoGroup.com)

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[rschuldt@synergsgroup.com](mailto:rschuldt@synergsgroup.com)

[rhonda@localgoodness.com](mailto:rhonda@localgoodness.com)

412.551.4408

P.O. Box 560  
Sewickley, PA 15143

## Sampling of Representative Work & Results:

Directed a public-private leadership group and managed a professional working group in the development of a Business Plan for the transformation of the historic Alcoa headquarters building into a *regional resource center* to foster and enhance economic and community development in southwestern. Based on the plan, Alcoa donated the building to a regional development organization when it relocated to its new headquarters in 2001. The new Regional Enterprise Tower became a home to government entities, regional nonprofits and small start-up companies. In 2012 a private company acquired the Regional Enterprise Tower.

Analyzed market opportunities and potential for a technology company within a large healthcare system and worked with CEO creating a Business Plan for potential spinout.

Wrote the Business Plan for, established, and managed a specialty consulting division within a local biotech company. The practice provided scientific, regulatory, and business expertise to early-stage biotechnology companies and due diligence assistance to prospective biotechnology investors.

Facilitated and wrote the Business Plan for start-up bioinformatics company, resulting in a successful \$4 million private investment round in an unfavorable market and subsequent \$20+million follow-on round. Funding led to eventual acquisition.

Developed Business Plan for a real estate development company specializing in technology companies/spaces.

Developed plan and secured funding for a five-year pre-reading, literacy pilot program in cooperation with an urban school district and program of a nonprofit agency.

Developed plan and secured funding for a cooperative program developed in conjunction with a local hospital and area social service agencies to provide a holistic approach in combating the dependency of clients of a local food pantry.

As a result of strategic planning with the executive committee, developed multi-year Business Plan for a nonprofit umbrella organization to reorganize management and right-size the organization.

Created a plan for and executed the acquisition and merger of two very different faith-based (Jewish/RLDS) foster care & adoption agencies.

Worked with CEO and other team members of a start-up technology company (related to corporate training) to evaluate market opportunities and develop a Business Plan for the company.

Worked with leadership and staff of a nonprofit social service organization to create a Business Plan for an innovative fund-development approach in collaboration with the arts community.

Multiple other planning efforts within the nonprofit community including, but not limited to, organizations working to meet the needs of:

- Persons with chronic disease
- Children and families with learning disabilities
- Women in recovery from addiction
- Youth seeking meaningful mentoring relationships
- Children and families of the incarcerated
- Displaced/disadvantaged workers
- Disadvantaged/"at-risk" youth
- Victims of domestic violence