

East County Chamber Presents WILL Awards

By: Rick Griffin

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The San Diego East County Chamber of Commerce recently honored seven women with Women in Leadership Luncheon (WILL) awards.

Honorees included: Alison Cummings, St. Madeleine Sophie's Center (SMSC); Marlee J. Ehrenfeld, MJE Marketing; Theresa Kemper, Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD); Jill Meyers, Women in Aviation International; Dana Rivers, Barona Resort & Casino; Catt Fields White, San Diego Public Markets; Sherry Yarbrough, Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC).

According to Leah Mclvor, 2016 event chair, 35 nominees were considered by the committee for the awards program, now in its 14th year. She said the recipients were honored for their outstanding leadership, exemplary character and integrity in the community, as well as their efforts to empower women to succeed and prosper in life and business.

"All of these women, the nominees and the awardees, are very deserving of the recognition they've received today," said Mclvor. "They've had a positive impact on the local economy, and have contributed in many other ways to the greater San Diego area."

Mclvor has served as 2016 board of directors chair of the 600-member San Diego East County Chamber of Commerce.

Cummings has served on the SMSC's board of directors since 2004 and is currently board chair. Her 33-year career with the Cajon Valley School District included 21 years as principal at four elementary schools, including Crest Elementary, Anza Elementary, Fuerte Elementary and Meridian Elementary. She retired in 2002. She has been a member of the El Cajon Rotary Club since 1988.

Ehrenfeld, a third-generation San Diegan and second-generation La Mesa resident, founded MJE Marketing in 1994. Her firm's clients have included the San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego State University, San Diego Zoo, County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation, City of La Mesa, Anthony's Fish Grotto and Jamul Indian Village, operator of the Hollywood Casino Jamul-San Diego. In 2017, she will serve as president of the San Diego Bowl Game Association, the nonprofit entity that produces San Diego's two college football bowl games, the Holiday Bowl and the San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl. Kemper has served as assistant superintendent of educational services with GUHSD since 2011. She previously served as principal of Grossmont High School from 2002 to 2011. During that time, Grossmont was recognized as a California Distinguished School and California and Exemplary Career Technical Education School. She also directed a successful Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Grossmont. She has worked in education since 1989, when she began teaching English at El Cajon Valley High School.

Meyers has lived in San Diego since 2014 and works as a senior manager for Northrop Grumman Corp. on the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter program. She also is currently serving as 2016 president of Women in Aviation International's San Diego chapter. In September 2015, she organized the chapter's inaugural Girls in Aviation event that gave 45 young girls and their parents an opportunity to learn about aviation and meet an all-female crew of a Navy H-60 Seahawk helicopter.

Rivers has worked with Barona Resort & Casino since 2002. Her current title is community relations manager. Under her direction, Barona Resort & Casino's community giving programs have received industry awards from the California Hotel & Lodging Association, American Gaming Association and Casino & Marketing Technology Conference. She also has served on the board of the Boys & Girls Clubs of East County (BGCEC) for the past 10 years, including two years as board president. She is currently serving on the BGCEC's La Mesa Capital Campaign committee for a sixth club location.

As co-founder of San Diego Public Market, White has organized four weekly farmers markets held in Pacific Beach, North Park and Downtown San Diego at the County Administration Building, along with the Little Italy Mercato. The four markets generate more than \$4 million in annual sales. She is a member of the Little Italy Association of San Diego, as well as the California Small Farm Conference and Berry Good Food Foundation.

Yarbrough serves as executive director of ABC's Apprenticeship Training Academy in Poway. Since the training program began in 1989, more than 2,200 graduates have launched rewarding careers in five different construction crafts, including electrical, plumbing, pipefitting, sheet metal and air conditioning and heating. She is a member of the National Association of Women in Construction. She also is a founding board member of the North County Trade Tech Charter High School, a school providing an alternative educational path for at-risk youth through New Haven Youth & Family Services. After a 17-year career at ABC, she is retiring at the end of this year.

The Sept. 16 luncheon drew about 360 attendees to the Town and Country Resort Hotel in Mission Valley. Emcee was former TV anchor Lee Ann Kim who now serves currently serves on advisory boards for the Women's Museum and San Diego Chinese Historical Museum. Kim was a WILL honoree in 2014. Keynote speaker was fitness instructor, dancer and choreographer Dionne Thomas, a licensed Zumba instructor and speaker at a 2015 TedX Temecula event.

Sponsors included Hollywood Casino, Barona Resort & Casino, The East County Herald newspaper, Sharp Grossmont Hospital, Jasmine Creek Florist, Kaiser Permanente, San Diego Gas & Electric, St. Madeleine Sophie's Center, Sycuan Resort & Casino, Diamond Creations by Ramona, Leah McIvor - Coldwell Banker, Foothills Christian Church, Grossmont Cuyamaca Community College District, Grossmont Healthcare District, Nancy Dennison - Keller Williams La Mesa, iMortgage, Mail Management Group, Inc., MJE Marketing Inc., Oak Tree Escrows, Inc., Toward Maximum Independence, USS Midway Museum, Walmart, California Bank & Trust La Mesa branch, Point Loma Credit Union, RCP Block & Brick, Waste Management and XL Staffing/Excell Security.

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