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- Home
- Local News
- State / National / World
- Sports
- Opinion / Letters
- Business
- Arts / Entertainment
- Lifestyle
- Obituaries
- Calendar
- Special
- Submit Event
- Comics / Games
- Classifieds
- DJ Designers
- Archives
- Advertise With Us
- About Us

Mayors celebrate diversity

May 20, 2010, 01:55 AM By Bill Silverfarb Daily Journal staff

Diversity will be celebrated today in Redwood City as the San Mateo County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce hosts its second Mayors' Diversity Celebration Awards.

The event is meant to extol the unique contributions that people from diverse backgrounds add to the community.

The Mayors' Diversity Celebration Awards will honor 23 diverse individuals from every city in the county who make a difference in the community — from a tribal chief who inspires other women to lead to a rabbi that created a unique interactive multi-faith network of over 400 clergy members.

The event is the brainchild of chamber President Jorge Jaramillo who looks to link Hispanic and other minority youth with respected role models.

"We need diverse perspectives and leaders to find new approaches to solve the ever complex issues our communities face today," Jaramillo said.

The 23 individuals being honored today were nominated by mayors and other community leaders from across the county.

Among the honorees are Rabbi Jay Miller, who created an interactive network of 440 clergy members of all denominations to promote multi-faith awareness and increased interaction between religious and civic leaders.

Ohlonne Coastanoan Indian Tribal Chief Irenne Zwiertein is being honored for serving as a role model to other women and for sharing the history of the region and Native American cultures.

Farmacía Remedios Chief Executive Officer Mauricio Simbeck is being honored for helping to improve the health of underprivileged residents and for donating health services throughout the region.

Malissa Netane, founder of Rise-Up, a program that provides young adults and their parents with tutoring, athletics and other activities aimed at reducing youth violence in the Tongan community is also being honored.

Kalimah Salahuddin, a single working mother of three, is being honored for volunteering her time by leading fundraising efforts to improve area schools through her organization Saving Pacifica Schools.

"We are honoring those who give back to the community," Jaramillo said. "It is important for Hispanic youth to have role models. Hopefully these honorees can provide motivation to our youth that dreams can be achieved."

Others being honored are: Christian Baquero, an Atherton school teacher; the Rev. Kristi Denham of the Congregational Church of Belmont; Brisbane's Roel and Vanessa Villacarlos, owners of 7 Mile House; Hillsborough police Lt.

Caroline Serrato; Patricia Hatfield, founder of the Colma Historical Association; Daly City's Daisy Li, owner of the MoonStart restaurant; East Palo Alto's Patricia Foster, executive director at Girls to Women; Foster City's Ronald Chang, Boy Scouts of America; Linda Cozzolino, community volunteer in Half Moon Bay; Hillsborough's The Bridge School; Menlo Park's Kersti Lannos Delgado, director at Peninsula Volunteers Little House; Millbrae Community Youth Center's Denis Fama; Pescadero's Rita Mancera, community coordinator at Puente de la Costa del Sur; Fernando Vega, a community volunteer in Redwood City; Bonnie L. Addario, founder of the Bonnie L. Addario

volunteer in Redwood City; Bonnie J. Addario, founder of the Bonnie J. Addario Lung Cancer Foundation; San Mateo police Officer Paul Pak, executive director at the Police Activity League; and former county supervisor Ruben Barrales.

The Mayors' Diversity Celebration Awards is today, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City.

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