



January 18, 2017

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Announces Award Honorees**  
**for 96th Annual Awards Luncheon Presented by Rabobank**

**DATE/TIME:** Thursday, February 23, 2017 from 11am-1pm  
**LOCATION:** Sherwood Hall  
940 N. Main Street, Salinas  
**TICKETS:** \$55/members, \$65/non-members (available via Chamber Website)

The Salinas Valley Chamber has announced the recipients of its Annual Awards Luncheon which will take place on Thursday, February 23 from 11am-1pm at Sherwood Hall. With attendance of over 500, the Annual Awards Luncheon is the single largest gathering of businesspeople in our area. The Chamber is celebrating its 96th event this year, presented by Rabobank.

The Chamber will honor the following businesses and individuals for their accomplishments:

**Small Business of the Year: A & O Pharmacy**

A & O Pharmacy comprises two entities: a Specialty Pharmacy which prepares custom medications tailored to an individual's needs and a Clinic Pharmacy, an independent retail pharmacy serving Salinas and Monterey County since 1976. Pharmacist and Owner David Smith purchased A & O Clinic Pharmacy in 2003 and opened A&O Specialty Pharmacy in March 2006. Since then, many local pharmacies have succumbed to the proliferation of big box chains, but David and his team have differentiated themselves and thrived by specializing in custom medications.

David is a leader in his industry. He has served as President of the Tri-County Pharmacists Association and in 2012, he earned the distinction of Fellow with the International Academy of Compounding Pharmacists.

Just as importantly as his professional qualifications, David contributes to the community. An active member of the Salinas Downtown Rotary since 2011, David has a warm smile and a ready sense of humor. He's not one to seek the spotlight or ask for credit, but he is always a willing participant when it comes to helping others.

**Large Business of the Year: KSBW 8 (NBC) - Central Coast ABC - Estrella TV Central Coast**

When informed of this recognition, President and General Manager Joseph W. Heston expressed his pleasant surprise, "While we've been here a long time, we're often overlooked because we serve such a large area." The Chamber Awards Selection Committee wanted to recognize the many contributions made by the local family of stations owned and operated by Hearst Television Inc.

A member of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce since 1970, the Hearst Television stations (KSBW 8 NBC, Central Coast ABC, and Estrella TV Central Coast) are the local leaders of local news, information and entertainment. KSBW Action News 8 provides 28.5 hours a week of live, local, #1 rated newscasts. KSBW.com and the KSBW News App are the #1 local digital platforms for local and breaking news. The combined platforms operated by KSBW provide over \$2.5 million annually in free PSA support to local non-profits.

### **Businesswoman of the Year: Susan Black, Pinnacle Bank**

The Chamber is excited to have Susan Black join the pantheon that is our Businesswoman of the Year. Susan is the founder of not one, but two local community banks. She founded Pinnacle Bank in 2006 and has served as its CEO since 2008. Since it began, her outstanding stewardship has helped grow the bank's assets from \$100M to \$300M.

She enjoys a long list of accolades as an industry leader, including serving on professional banking councils and as the Treasurer/Vice President of the Hartnell College Foundation Board.

The Businesswoman of the Year is chosen not just for their own personal success, but also for how well they have supported other women in developing their professional lives. By this measure, Susan is even more outstanding. She is a founder of the WELI Economic and Leadership Summit of the Hartnell College Foundation which has raised over \$250K to support and endow the Women's Education and Leadership Institute at Hartnell. 150 women have graduated the program and 97% of them remain or have completed their education. The Chamber offers our thanks and congratulations to Susan.

### **Citizen of the Year: Gregory M. Chilton**

Greg Chilton has a long history of community involvement. Not only does he assist families in important planning decisions, he has contributed his time, talent and resources to many community agencies. He has served as an officer of the Salinas Jaycees, long-standing member of Salinas Rotary, board member of the Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Foundation, board member of Palma High School (where he chaired the Long Range Planning Committee), president of the board of Notre Dame High School, president of the board of Legal Services for Seniors, board member and treasurer for Public Recreation Unlimited, and is currently past-chair of the board for the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC).

Those who have worked with him at the Community Foundation have seen first-hand Greg's dedication to the community and commitment to excellence. During his year as chair, the Community Foundation set records for both gifts and grants. Not only did the CFMC grow significantly in 2016, it granted more than \$15 million to nonprofits in Monterey County. Greg took this responsibility seriously. He is a positive and constant partner in the success of the Community Foundation and in Salinas as a whole.

### **Ag Leadership Award: Dirk Giannini, Christensen & Giannini**

Christensen & Giannini farms over 3000 organic and conventional acres ranging from the northern Salinas Valley down south to San Ardo. As a fourth generation grower, Dirk was raised on the ranch. He has been active in the local Ag community for decades, serving on numerous commodity and advocacy group boards. Dirk sits on numerous boards and committees dedicated to promoting agriculture and the issues that surround it, including water quality, land use and food safety.

When called upon to be a leader, Dirk steps up and makes it happen; he is not one to shy away from a challenge. He is the leader of a local family farming operation, whose growth and success have been largely dependent on Dirk's management, interaction with the Ag sector, and involvement in the greater community. He and his company are stewards of the land and set an example for how upstanding farmers should operate.

Dirk also promotes a very important piece of agriculture - involving our youth. He has participated in Monterey County Ag Ed's Farm Day program for several years and is a key coordinator of its annual events. As his children have grown and now participate in 4-H, Dirk has exposed them to Ag by helping them raise animals and participate in our local fairs. Dirk is a tremendous example of Agricultural leadership that we should all be proud of.

### **Spirit of the Community: IMPOWER**

IMPOWER is a women's leadership group that brings together over 250 attendees for luncheons and mixers throughout the year. The events feature prominent speakers covering topics from health, careers, finances, family and philanthropy; all focused on making a difference in the lives of women, girls, and our community. The group promotes local businesses and vendors, provides supportive business networking opportunities, and engages its audience in powerful calls to action for featured nonprofits. The mission of IMPOWER is to Inspire, Motivate, Prepare and Organize Women to Engage & Reinvest. Formed in 2008 by co-founders Margaret D'Arrigo-Martin and Cathy Schlumbrecht, the 100% volunteer-based committee operates as an independent program of the Salinas Valley Chamber Foundation. Since its inception, IMPOWER has distributed over \$150,000 in philanthropic support to more than 30 people, organizations and programs in Monterey County.

**Event Presenting Sponsor:** Rabobank

**Corporate Sponsors** (to date):

Alvarez Technology Group; Chevron; Green Rubber - Kennedy Ag; Hartnell College Foundation; KSBW 8 (NBC) Central Coast ABC Estrella TV Central Coast; Mann Packing Company, Inc.; Natividad Medical Foundation; Taylor Fresh Foods; Union Bank; Pinnacle Bank

**Partner Sponsors** (to date):

1st Capital Bank; American AgCredit; California Water Service Co; CCFCU; D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of California; Geisler3; L+G LLP - Attorneys at Law; Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss

**Master of Ceremonies:** Brittany Nielsen, weekday morning anchor, KSBW Action News 8

For more information, call (831) 751-7725 or visit [www.SalinasChamber.com](http://www.SalinasChamber.com).

*The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is an association of nearly 700 businesses and organizations, representing thousands of local employees and stakeholders. The Chamber is dedicated to Creating a Strong Local Economy, Promoting the Community, Providing Networking Opportunities, Representing the Interests of Business with Government, and Taking Political Action. To learn more, visit [www.SalinasChamber.com](http://www.SalinasChamber.com) or call (831) 751-7725.*

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