



PHOTOS BY GREG LEE

Don Williams, Chloe Becks, Judd Van Gorder Ruth Linoz, Stan Simonsen, Cameron Reiten, Gary Manly, Candace Lamb-Solsbee and Dan Solsbee pose for a portrait of the 2018 Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce Board. The group gathered for the 70th Annual Chamber Awards Banquet held on Saturday, Jan. 19 at the Cottage Grove Armory. Awards were given out to teacher of the year, first citizen of the year, nonprofit of the year and business of the year. City Manager Richard Meyers took home the Presidents Award for Community Excellence Award. The new chamber board for 2019 was also sworn in during the festivities.



Banquet from A1

students. Sullivan read from Hilton's nomination letter: "On top of a full-time teaching job, helping students each day, somehow she spends what little time she has left in her evening translating materials so our students and parents have access to our information."

Moving to broader community influencers, Russ McGuire was the Distinguished Service Award winner for his many years of volunteerism and project work in the community including the effort to construct the Cottage Grove carousel.

Nadine Kelly, who spearheaded the Cottage Grove Airport Welcome Center project, took home the Impact Award in recognition of her efforts. The airport is credited with a rise in tourism in the city.

"I'm figuring (air) traffic is going to double this year," Kelly said.

Among local organizations, Community Sharing was awarded Nonprofit of the Year for its commitment to providing aid for families and individuals in need.

Diane Hazen from Family Relief Nursery said of the nonprofit, "[Community Sharing] is considered an outstanding model of mission achievement and community impact through innovation, leadership, partnerships and community empowerment."

Business of the Year award went to local manufacturing company Kimwood Machinery Inc.

On behalf of the company, President of Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel Committee Don Williams

accepted the award.

"They've been a stable employer for 67 years," Williams said. He praised the company's "longevity in the business community and making it possible for many, many employees to have a paycheck and bread and butter on the table."

While the night was filled with warm appreciations for each of the awardees, standing ovations were reserved for two standout individuals.

First among them was Ana Maria Dudley, who received the First Citizen Award. Dudley took the stage to rousing applause for her dedication to developing a secure network for Cottage Grove's Latino community to seek educational opportunities and access to health care.

"How lucky I am to live a community where all of us can make an effort to make sure that all of our citizens, no matter what their status, can get help and that all of us are here to support them?" Dudley said. She directed her gratitude to the many community members who helped her. "I couldn't do this without you," she said.

Also receiving a generous round of the room's enthusiasm was Richard Meyers, whose more than two decades of work as City Manager and participation in a multitude of community organizations was recognized with the President's Award for Community Excellence.

Meyers accepted the award while emphasizing his appreciation

for the city's involved citizenship. "All of the things that happen in this community are because of the community," he said. "It's just a wonderful place to call home."

As the function wound down, Master of Ceremonies and Chamber Director Travis Palmer paid tribute to nominees, past award winners and the spouses of the night's awardees. "We can't possibly thank them enough," he said.

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