



Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

416 North Ashley Street, Valdosta, GA 31603

229.247.8100 ext. 231 FAX 229.245.0071 lharris@valdostachamber.com

Contact: Leslie Harris

February 26, 2016

For Immediate Release

VALDOSTA, GA- The Chamber and Renasant Bank hosted an evening of elegance and success in the business community at the Inaugural Chamber Annual Awards Dinner last Thursday. Awards were presented to the best of the best in the Valdosta-Lowndes County business community.

Guests were welcomed to the inaugural event with cocktails and mingling at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center. Afterwards, doors opened to the grand ballroom where dinner, awards and dancing awaited them. 400 people filled the room with white and gold décor and exquisite center pieces provided by the Flower Gallery.

Valdosta Market President for Renasant Bank Terry Bennett took the stage and greeted attendees with generosity and gratitude for their hard work and dedication in making the Valdosta-Lowndes County business community so successful.

Throughout the evening, awards were presented to many deserving candidates of our business community.

The first award of the night was presented by the 2015 Chamber Ambassador Chairman Joy Sumner. The Ambassador of the Year Award was presented to Scott Register of Comfort Keepers for his commitment in attending over 70 Chamber events in the past year.

The Members' Choice Award was presented by Tami Jackson, a representative from last year's winner, South Georgia Medical Center. This year's winner, Southeastern Credit Union, was a Chamber member favorite, receiving the most votes on an open survey. Southeastern is very involved with the Chamber, sponsoring events such as the Business Outlook Breakfast and "Building the Best Board."

Teamtemps Personnel Staffing generously sponsored the Most Valuable Employee Award, which recognized an individual who possesses impressive job knowledge and extraordinary work ethics, while demonstrating commendable effort in the workplace. Sean Panizzi presented this year's award to Roger McDonald, a cardiac nurse at South Georgia Medical Center who shows compassion to families during very difficult times.

Audrey King, a member of the Chamber Community Council, presented the Young Professional of the Year award. This award recognizes a young professional who has made a positive impact on his or her business, while maintaining a devotion to community service and civic engagement. The Chamber would like to congratulate Southeastern Credit Union's Courtney Gooding on receiving this award. Courtney organized a Business After Hours event with the Chamber, where the business community came together to "Fill-A-Truck" with non-perishable food items to combat hunger in our area.

The Small Business of the Year award recognizes a creative and innovative small business, with 100 or fewer employees, that demonstrates growth and stability in the business community. Prince Automotive Group generously sponsored this award, and Jay Prince was present to recognize this year's winner, Taylor Insurance Services. Taylor Insurance has been a staple of the Valdosta business community for three generations.

Each year, the Chamber recognizes a "BIG Thinker." This individual is a self-made visionary and successful entrepreneur who cares and gives back to his or her community. Steven Heddon, a member of the Chamber Board of Directors, presented this year's BIG Thinker award to Jim Worn, owner of South Georgia Pecan Company. South Georgia Pecan continues to have a strong presence in the Valdosta community and is one of the top pecan suppliers in the nation.

The final award of the night, presented by President of the Chamber Myrna Ballard and the Chamber staff, was the A.L. Girardin Award. Awarded by the Chamber Staff, the A.L. Girardin Award is presented to a member who has made extraordinary contributions to the Chamber and the local business community. Judy Martin Trexler of CR for Personal and Family Growth, LLC received this award after consistently showcasing her passion for serving our community of military families in the Valdosta-Lowndes area. "I'm being awarded for something I love....." said Trexler.

As the evening came to an end, Ed Barr's Big Band provided music and an opportunity for guests to take to the dance floor. Production of the event is credited to Event Point and Fusion Creative Marketing. If you missed this unforgettable event, you still have the chance to join us next year on Thursday, February 23, 2017.

For more information and pictures from this event, please visit www.ValdostaChamber.com

###

The Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce is a private, not-for-profit membership organization that serves as the voice of business in Lowndes County. The chamber advocates for more than 1300 area businesses led by a dedicated volunteer board of directors. The chamber has been Five-Star Accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce since 2008.