



**FOR RELEASE:
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WESTMARC celebrated a milestone last Thursday evening with the 15th Anniversary of its annual *Best of the West* Awards. The presentations were made at the recently opened Glendale Renaissance Hotel, Conference & Media Center.

Nearly 800 business and community leaders and elected officials from throughout the valley gathered to share in this year's showcasing of the West Valley's *Best of the West*. *Best of the West* is the largest event of its type in the West Valley and one of the biggest in the entire state. Presented by Cox Communications, the Awards event also featured Titanium Sponsors, APS and The Arizona Republic, as well as Platinum Sponsor SCF Arizona.

"WESTMARC's *Best of the West* Awards is one of the Valley's premier business events," said Jay Ellingson, Chairman of WESTMARC's Board of Directors. "For the West Valley to attract so many leaders and community members during the height of the valley's event season is a testament not only to the attraction of West Valley but also to the quality of the projects and leaders we showcase."

WESTMARC received nearly 80 nominations in 8 categories: Architectural Innovation; Arts, Culture, & Entertainment; Attractions, Destinations & Tourism; Building Business; Education; Leadership; Service to Communities; and Sports categories. Nominees were judged and recognized for their outstanding contributions to the image, lifestyle and economic development in western Maricopa County – the portion of Maricopa County west of Interstate 17. (A complete list of award winners and honorable mentions is listed below.)

"These awards recognize what the *Best of the West* in the West Valley is truly all about," said WESTMARC President & CEO Jack Lunsford. "There are so many exciting things happening and so many well kept secrets, and WESTMARC is just extremely proud to illuminate them for everyone. The Awards were again a resounding success!"

Competition is always high among the *Best of the West* Award entries. A diverse panel of noted and outstanding community leaders chosen from Central Phoenix and the East Valley judges these entries.

"Our judges are valley leaders themselves," said WESTMARC Past Chairman Hal Dekeyser, "and they are critical to the integrity and success of *Best of the West*. We are most grateful to each of them for their time and commitment in helping WESTMARC honor the accomplishments of the West Valley."

This year's *Best of the West* judges were: Glenn Hamer, President & CEO, Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Becky Jackson, President, Chandler Chamber of Commerce; Alison Rapping, Executive Director, Valley Leadership; Steve Schenk, CEO, Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation; Dr. Linda Thor, President, Rio Salado College; and Sam Wercinski, Arizona Real Estate Commissioner.

Each year one of the highlights of the *Best of the West Awards* is the presentation of the Chairman's Award and the John F. Long Lifetime Achievement Award. The Chairman's Award is presented to "an individual, organization, or event which is so extraordinary that it merits special recognition".

The 2007 Chairman's Award went to Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs for her "forward looking leadership for tomorrow's Glendale".

The John F. Long Lifetime Achievement Award "honors a person, organization, business or entity that has exemplified outstanding service by contribution to the lifestyle to Western Maricopa County".

"For his leadership, commitment to community, integrity, and a lifetime of achievement," this year's recipient is State Representative John Nelson.

Jack Lunsford praised both Representative Nelson & Mayor Scruggs on behalf of WESTMARC. "John Nelson and Elaine Scruggs provide tremendous leadership for the West Valley," Lunsford commented. "Their legacy is one we should all aspire to, and WESTMARC is proud to recognize both of them."

Event Gold Sponsors were: Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona; Southwest Airlines; and TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

Event Silver Sponsors were: DMB/Verrado; Helmholtz Real Estate; Maricopa Community College District/Estrella Mountain Community College; Southwest Gas; Sun Health; and World Wildlife Zoo. Fourteen Bronze Sponsors and many individual table sponsors rounded out the sponsorships.

BEST OF THE WEST AWARD WINNERS

Architectural Innovation	Marley Park
Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (Tie)	West Valley Arts Council - West Valley Cultural & Heritage Blueprint
Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (Tie)	Tres Rios Nature & Earth Festival
Attractions, Destinations, & Tourism	Peoria Sports Complex
Building Business – 50 Employees or Less	West Valley National Bank
Building Business – 50+ Employees	Sun Health Research Institute
Education – Higher Ed (Tie)	ASU’s College of Teacher Education & Leadership In-MAC Program for Teach For America Corps Members
Education – Higher Ed (Tie)	Goodyear’s Recruitment of Private Institutions of Higher Learning
Education – Higher Ed (Tie)	Rio Salado College Lifelong Learning Center
Education – K-12	Alhambra Foundation for the Future
Leadership – Individual	Master Sergeant Curtis Crigger
Leadership - Organization	The Sky’s The Limit CTE Career Expo 2006
Service to Communities – Health (Tie)	Banner Thunderbird’s Children’s Safety Fair
Service to Communities – Health (Tie)	Dream Catcher Park
Service to Communities – Municipal	City of Glendale Foothills Recreation & Aquatic Center
Service to Communities – Other (Tie)	Luke Enlisted Force
Service to Communities – Other (Tie)	Maryvale Revitalization Corporation
Sports	Glendale’s Got Game – City of Glendale & Fiesta Bowl Partnership

BEST OF THE WEST HONORABLE MENTIONS

Architectural Innovation	Verrado High School
Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (Tie)	Peoria Center for the Performing Arts
Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (Tie)	Surprise Library Mural
Attractions, Destinations, and Tourism	Maricopa County Parks & Recreation Dept.
Building Business – 50 Employees or Less	AP Arizona West Office
Education – Higher Ed	City of Goodyear
Education – K-12	Litchfield Elementary School District Food Services Support West Valley Community
Leadership – Individual	Dianne Lorton, Ph.D.
Leadership – Organization	City of Tolleson Teen Council
Service to Communities – Health (Tie)	MEDIC 155
Service to Communities – Health (Tie)	Sun Health Community Education & Wellness
Service to Communities – Municipal	City of Surprise Fire & Police Departments
Service to Communities - Other	Back-To-School Clothing Drive Association
Sports	City of Peoria’s Rio Vista Park Host Dist. 2 Little League All Star Tournament