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CHAMBER NAMES 2017 SMALL BUSINESS AWARD WINNERS

Honors recognize customer service, vets success, innovation, social impact, entrepreneurship

SAN DIEGO (May 2, 2017) – In celebration of small businesses throughout San Diego County and in conjunction with national Small Business Week, the San Diego Regional Chamber presented the 2017 Small Business Awards to five local businesses during its annual Small Business Awards, Expo and Mixer held today.

“At the Chamber, small businesses make up the majority of our membership and we are committed to providing the programs and resources that help small businesses grow and thrive,” said Jerry Sanders, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber.

Small businesses are an important economic driver for the region. In San Diego, 95 percent of companies are small businesses with fewer than 50 employees and their employees make up nearly one-half of San Diego’s workforce. The Chamber is dedicated to recognizing the hard work and excellence demonstrated by those companies who make up the foundation of our region’s business community.

“Today we recognized five really great local businesses that are making a difference in San Diego,” Sanders said. “Like all the various small businesses throughout the county these are the product of hard work, passion, and dedication and their success brings character to our communities, promotes innovation, and fuels the American dream.”

This year’s Small Business Awards were presented in front of an audience of more than 300 who took part in the Chamber event at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina. In addition to the awards ceremony the event also included a business showcase, small-business focused mini-workshops, and extensive networking.

The 2017 Small Business Awards winners are:

ElderHelp of San Diego – Winner of the **Bill Trumpfheller Social Impact award** for companies and nonprofits who are dedicated to helping others and making a positive impact.

- ElderHelp is enhancing the golden years for seniors throughout San Diego by providing no-cost programs and services to seniors in need, improving their physical and mental health through socialization, recreation activities, care coordination, and improved access to healthcare.

Online Trading Academy – Winner of the **Industry Game-Changer** award for companies paving the way in creative forward-thinking and innovation.

- Online Trading Academy took a new approach to an age old industry and through its patented visual investing approach has taught more than 250,000 the true skills of Wall Street professionals.

Pro Back Office LLC – Winner of the **Young Entrepreneur** award for companies founded and run by young professionals.

- The founder of professional services firm Pro Back Office started at a very young age setting high standards for herself and has continually built on that mentality through job loss and financial downturn to create a successful company forecasting a 40 to 50 percent increase in revenue for 2017.

VetPowered – Winner of the **Vets Success** award for companies owned by veterans or prioritizing the hiring of veterans.

- Owned and operated by a 15-year combat veteran, VetPowered is a manufacturing design, maintenance, and repair firm committed to supporting veterans and transitioning service members that also provides profits and resources to Workshops for Warriors - a nonprofit school that prepares veterans and wounded warriors for advanced manufacturing careers.

Southern Cross Property Consultants – winner of the **Customer Service Star** award for companies with exemplary customer service.

- The sole focus of construction management firm, Southern Cross Property Consultants, is protecting the clients' interests throughout construction. This customer-centric vision has garnered the company a tremendous following as they attribute over 80 percent of their work to referral or repeat business.

All award nominations were evaluated by a panel of four judges who reviewed applications based on criteria for each award category. After rating each submission, the small business with the highest score in each category was selected as the winner.

Judges for the awards competition were:

- Jim Berdeguez, owner of James Gang Company and a 2015 Small Business Award Winner
- Kevin Cortes, Chief Military Officer for Miramar Federal Credit Union, a 2016 Award Winner
- Dale Ganzow, Sales Manager at the San Diego Business Journal
- Lauren Tullis, Executive Fellow at Reality Changers, a 2016 Award Winner

For nearly 20 years, the Chamber has recognized small businesses that are leaders in the San Diego regional business community through this awards program. The event also provides small and large businesses an opportunity to connect and learn how the regional business community can better work together.

For highlights from the Small Business Awards, Expo and Mixer, search the hashtag #SDSmallBiz on social media.

About the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce

The San Diego Regional Chamber is the hub for connections and collaboration among the regional business community, and uses that clout to advocate for public policies and candidates that support economic growth and the creation of jobs for all businesses. As the largest local Chamber on the West Coast, representing approximately 2,500 businesses and an estimated 300,000 jobs, the San Diego Regional Chamber is fighting to make San Diego the most business-friendly region in California. For more information, please visit SDChamber.org or call 619-544-1300.

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