

# SOUTH COUNTY Briefings:

NOVEMBER 2010



South County Economic Development Council

## National and Regional Leaders Discuss Opportunity and Progress in South County



**The 20th Annual Economic Summit brought together a host of elected and appointed officials from Sacramento, Baja California and San Diego to discuss achievements and goals in their jurisdictions.**

The 20th Annual Economic Summit brought together a host of elected and appointed officials from Sacramento, Baja California and here in our own backyard to discuss achievements and goals in their jurisdictions. The Summit, hosted by the South County Economic Development Council, was attended by more than 400 business and community leaders from both sides of the International Border. The Elected Official's Panel gave leaders the opportunity to touch upon the news, events and future outlook of their respective areas.

Congressman Bob Filner focused on what he considers to be South County's underutilized economic opportunity – renewable energy industries. He advised that the South County should form a united front to take advantage of the billions of federal dollars set aside for alternative energy projects. By bringing such industries to the region, not only is it another profit source created, but resources will trickle down to schools and training programs that support these companies.

From the State Senate's office, Senator

Denise Ducheny applauded the fast acquisition of a Presidential Permit for the Otay Mesa Port of Entry Crossing and commented that a 21st century border crossing was eminent. The Senator also shared her down-to-earth view on how to get a budget balanced.

"We need to focus on what we really need verses what we want," she said. "We need to ask ourselves what are the services we need and how do we pay for them?"

National City Mayor Ron Morrison encouraged a similar introspection on doing business.

"We need to look at procedures and evaluate those which are causing obstacles to growth and decide if we really need those," he said.

He shared the city's recent accomplishments of a 130,000-square-foot expansion of the Plaza Bonita shopping center and plans to bring a new shopping center to the Interstate 5/State Route 54 corridor that would straddle the city border with Chula Vista. He closed his comments by encouraging leaders to find

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## Presidential Permit Signed for Cross Border Terminal at Otay Mesa

A cross-border pedestrian bridge connecting a terminal in Otay Mesa to Tijuana's airport received a critical clearance in August with the issuance of a presidential permit. While this federal permit was the biggest obstacle, Mexico's federal government has not formally approved the proposal. The city of San Diego also is reviewing the project and must give its approval as well.

Plans for the cross-border pedestrian bridge call for an enclosed 525-foot bridge leading to the Tijuana airport and a two-story, 45,000-square-foot building on the U.S. side of the border that would house U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities. Only ticketed airline passengers would be able to use the crossing. Construction is expected to begin in 2011, and the facility could start operating in late 2012 or early 2013.

The estimated \$78 million, privately built and operated project would be the first of its kind along the U.S.-Mexico

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## Border Crossing Survey Provides Insight Into Low Use of SENTRI Passes

In May of this year, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Alan Bersin challenged stakeholders and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees to increase pedestrian Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) participation by 70 percent, suggesting this would dramatically reduce wait times. SCEDC, in turn, pursued a survey in order to find ways to increase SENTRI participation -- as a means of reducing border wait times and reducing economic losses due to delays at the border.

With unprecedented access at the Port of Entry and in collaboration with the CBP, SCEDC set out to interview 1,000 pedestrian border crossers during this past July in an effort to understand the reasons people cross from Mexico into the United States, quantify their wait times, determine the impact of SENTRI and determine the

potential to increase SENTRI enrollment. In total, 1,175 surveys were collected from pedestrian border crossers entering the U.S.

The following findings are based on the data and comments documented in the surveys:

- Typically, Mexican citizens do not know about the SENTRI program or did not know specific details about the program's qualifications, application process, price, or advantages of being a cardholder.
- There is no perceived value (time saving) in being a SENTRI cardholder.
- It's perceived that the SENTRI application process is lengthy.
- "Cutting" causes longer wait times and, typically, authorities do not supervise or deter "cutters" from getting in line.
- Cardholders do not feel they are treated as "trusted travelers."
- Wait times are unpredictable.
- Secondary inspection processing equates to lengthier wait times.

- Incorrect impression that each family member (including minors) counts as an individual application and requires separate additional payment, hence making the cost too high.

Based on the survey findings, SCEDC recommended better marketing of the SENTRI program, working to increase the perceived value of SENTRI and improving the cardholder crossing process. Several of these recommendations can be quickly implemented with little effort or cost.

SCEDC considers this study as a benchmark and plans to continue to collect data quarterly throughout the year in order to collect a statistically significant representation that can be presented at the end of the year. Furthermore, SCEDC will continue to work with Customs and Border Protection and stakeholders to continue improving the San Ysidro pedestrian crossing.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By **Bill Clevenger**, South County Economic Development Council

The last few months have been very active for the South County Economic Development Council. The Annual Summit brought together members and guests to hear from elected officials representing all areas of South County. We also heard local success stories from Ralph Rubio of Rubio's Mexican Grill, Charles Wax of Waxie Corporation and Scott McMillin of McMillin Communities.

During this time, SCEDC also hosted events and conducted tours of South County to show business and federal government officials our economic development opportunities. Although knowledgeable about activities here, many of those guests had not seen the scope of progress and also the challenges in our area until seeing them firsthand.

While some leaders and officials visited the South County to get a better grasp on the unique issues we face here, myself, together with a group of more than 90 regional representatives visited Washington D.C. in support of issues affecting our border region. Our group consisted of representation from Baja California, as well as regional chambers of commerce, economic development councils, cities,

counties and businesses. Together we were able to advocate for many issues as a joint front, something rarely seen in Washington.

While there, our days were full of meetings with the State Department, Commerce Department, Department of Homeland Security, National Security Council, Custom and Border Patrol, GSA, Department of Transportation, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services and members of Congress. I also had the privilege of meeting with the embassies of Mexico, Canada and Germany.

We discussed a wide variety of issues important to our region including border mobility, border security, regional transportation, education, work force development, innovative technologies, energy and water. In many instances, we were able to receive commitments for assistance to our region. An important lesson I learned is about where the South County



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## SAN DIEGO

### Siliken Doubles Capacity of Local Workforce

Siliken Renewable Energy, a global leader in commercial and utility scale photovoltaic (PV) systems, announced that its manufacturing facility in Otay Mesa has more than doubled capacity and production capabilities. The company has expanded its local workforce from 60 to more than 130 employees.

The ramp-up in production is a direct result of Siliken establishing strong market position in both existing and newly developing PV markets across the U.S. and in Canada and Mexico. The Spanish solar company established operations in San Diego two years ago with the help from the SCEDC.

“San Diego was an attractive base to headquarter our North American operations because of the county’s statewide leadership in adopting and installing solar technology, favorable state level legislation and the California Solar Initiative project,” said Scott Sporrer, general manager of Siliken. “By establishing policy which provides companies with long-term visibility into market demand, California has created an attractive environment for manufacturers and system integrators to service local markets through local operations.”



**Mayor Sanders with members of the Siliken team toured the manufacturing facility in Otay Mesa.**

### Online Application Makes Life Easier for Businesses

New businesses can now apply for business-tax certificates online -- a process that will save time for the 16,000 new businesses a year that register with the City Treasurer’s Office. Tax payments can be made online 24 hours a day.

The new on-line application process will:

- 1) Eliminate the need for business owners to mail or drop off applications.
- 2) Help the environment by decreasing the need for paper documents.
- 3) Provide real-time confirmation that a business-tax application has been accepted.

The on-line business-tax application can be accessed via the Web at:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/treasurer/taxesfees/btax/btaxhow.shtml>

## NATIONAL CITY

### El Super Grocery Store Opens in National City

In September, National City welcomed a new brand of grocery store to its city. El Super, a grocery chain of 22 stores with locations in Southern California, Nevada and Arizona, recently opened a store at Sweetwater Square in the site vacated by Mervyn’s.

Operated by Bodega Latina Corp., El Super is one of a growing number of supermarket chains in Southern California targeting Latinos by seeking to offer unique blends of food, store designs and locations that set them apart from mainstream supermarkets. Latino-oriented stores often feature Mexican pastries and tortillas made fresh and expanded offerings of fruits, vegetables, herbs and condiments.

The wave of Latino supermarkets has grown steadily since the mid-1990s, according to Carlos Garcia, president of Garcia Research Associates. According to a food industry research group, the Latino food and beverage market in the U.S. will grow to an estimated \$8.4 billion in 2011 from \$5.7 billion in 2006. The El Super chain started in 1997 and now has an estimated annual volume of just over \$700 million.

National City has been focused on filling vacant spaces left by large anchor retailers closed due to the economic downturn.

“The Sweetwater Square shopping center, where the very popular El Super grocery store recently opened, is a case in point where the city stepped in to help,” said City Manager Chris Zapata.

As soon as it was learned that the Mervyn’s store was to vacate its site at Sweetwater Square, Zapata assigned staff to personally assist the owners in refilling the space.

“Business is the life blood of National City; we want to assist them in any way we can,”

Zapata said.

To continue keeping business in National City strong, the City Manager’s office will begin hosting quarterly “brown bag breakfasts” where new businesses can meet with key city staff to ask questions and address business concerns for discussion and resolution. The date of the first breakfast will be announced prior to the end of the year.



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## CORONADO

### Village Theater Renovation Project Kicked Off

The Community Development Agency (CDA) of the city of Coronado together with Five Star Theatres, Inc., celebrated the start of renovation of the Village Theater. The kick-off was celebrated at the end of September with an open house-style event hosted by the Village Theater Operator. At this event, the public was invited to the theater where they could view the interior design concepts for the lobby, main theater and two smaller theaters and of course snack on the movie theater staples of popcorn and soda.

“We are very excited that this renovation is happening and that the reopening of the theater is near,” said Coronado Mayor Casey Tanaka. “The history and charm of the Village Theater is the perfect complement to the atmosphere of our downtown. I am certain that when the Village Theater opens, it will be yet another draw to our downtown and the surrounding restaurants, shops and services will benefit from the increased foot traffic.”

The Village Theater originally opened its

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# REGIONAL ROUNDUP

(continued from page 3)

doors in 1947 and closed in 2000. In 2008, the CDA entered into a Participation Agreement with Five Star Theatres, Inc., for a \$2,675,000 grant for improvements to the Village Theater in exchange for the operator's commitment to showing first-run movies at the theater until 2026. The renovation is expected to take six months, with a projected opening in March of next year.



**The renovated Village Theater is projected to reopen in March 2011.**

## IMPERIAL BEACH

### Seacoast Inn Begins Demolition in Imperial Beach

After years in the planning, demolition of the Seacoast Inn marks the beginning of this hotel's long-awaited redevelopment. In mid-September demolition began on the old 38-room hotel so it could be replaced with a new, environmentally friendly, full-service 78-room boutique hotel.

The demolition is expected to take six weeks beginning with two weeks of salvage activities during which time windows, doors and other reusable items will be saved for sale, reuse or recycling.

Expected to open in summer 2012, the new hotel will include such amenities as underground parking, restaurant and cocktail lounge, meeting rooms, outdoor patio, a heated pool and spa and spacious guest rooms with ocean views toward downtown San Diego and the Coronado Islands.

In addition to the fresh architectural presence the new hotel will bring, the community will also benefit from the 35 feet of new beach width created during the construction process, as well as improvements to the end of Date Avenue, such as enhanced

paving, landscaping, parking and realignment of the seawall.

In step with Imperial Beach's desire to become an eco-tourism destination, the hotel will boast an "eco" design that uses up-to-the-minute technology to lessen its impact on the environment. Environmental sensitivity will be incorporated into the overall design, selection of materials, water and energy components, as well as operation and management of the hotel.

## PORT DISTRICT

### San Diego Unified Port District Partners with SCEDC for Tourism Initiative

The San Diego Unified Port District has awarded a \$10,000 grant to South County Economic Development Council to create a strategic plan to drive tourism to South San Diego County. Jackie Williams of the Port District and Julia Simms of j. simms agency will chair the initiative, which began by enlisting potential partners and gathering information from tourist destinations in the South County. Simms says the goal of the initiative, expected to be complete in March, is to create a tangible product -- either a website or brochure -- that promotes all the activities and services in the South County for visitors to San Diego. All members of SCEDC's marketing committee are assisting with the initiative as well.

Those interested in gathering the information on activities available for tourists in South County, or those who merely want to make sure a tourist destination or service makes it on the list, should send an email to [cindy@southcountyedc.com](mailto:cindy@southcountyedc.com). Enlisting partners and gathering data for the initiative is expected to be complete in November. At that point, those involved will be assimilating the data, creating messages that promote all of South County, and looking for low-cost ways to get the message out.

## CHULA VISTA

### Preliminary Plans Announced for Chula Vista Centennial

Next year marks Chula Vista's 100th birthday and preliminary plans have been announced for its centennial celebration. The initial plan is to have a major event each month, from January through November with the official Centennial Expo planned for October -- the same month

Chula Vista was incorporated.

Although not carved in stone, some planned events include a Mayor's Ball honoring 100-year-old residents and all living past mayors; Centennial Concert; Historical Home Tour; Independence Day Family Reunion/Alumni Event for all high schools, Southwestern College and Rohr employees; and the extension of Harbor Days to be a week-long event that includes an art show. National and regional marketing and public relations will bring attention to the centennial celebration and position it as a catalyst to spur economic development in the city. The Chula Vista Centennial Celebration is being planned by the Committee of 100. Its meetings are held every other month at City Hall and are open to the public.

### Solar Panel Company Heads to Chula Vista

The city of Chula Vista is one step closer to producing advanced clean technology. The California Energy Commission recently announced the award of a \$3.3 million low-interest loan to Morgan Solar, Inc., to establish a concentrated photovoltaic solar panel manufacturing facility in Chula Vista.

Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, the CEC established the state's Clean Energy Business Financing Program for California-based manufacturers of solar products. The CEC funding will allow Morgan Solar to move their existing Canadian facility to Chula Vista. The facility will have an annual capacity of 10 megawatts and should be operational by November of next year.

"The addition of Morgan Solar to Chula Vista's business portfolio is another step toward our clean energy future, while creating jobs that will support our growth in this sector," said Mayor Cheryl Cox.

The project will create and/or retain an estimated 105 full-time jobs. The estimated annual production of solar panels from the facility will produce nearly 58 million kWh of electricity and offset almost 20,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Morgan Solar will provide an estimated \$3.3 million in leveraged funds.



**The Regional Leadership Award, sponsored by Union Bank, was given to Plaza Bonita Westfield Shopping Center.**



**Sponsored by Bank of America, the Outstanding Corporate Citizen Award was presented to Scripps Mercy Hospital Chula Vista.**



**The Corky McMillin Best of South County Award was awarded to the Chula Vista Nature Center.**

## Working Committees of the SCEDC

- Transportation and Infrastructure**
- Marketing and Membership**
- Workforce and Education**
- Loan & Finance**
- Public Policy**

For more information or to join any of these committees, contact:  
 South County Economic Development Council  
 phone 619-424-5143 fax 619-424-5738  
 Cindy@southcountyedc.com

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Patch.com
- PC & Associates
- e- academy
- Sweetwater Union High School District
- Adult School
- Cortes Communication
- Davy Architects
- Kid Ventures

### *Border Crossing (continued from Page 1)*

border. The arrangement would save travelers the time of driving across the congested San Ysidro and Otay Mesa ports of entry. Proponents also say it would ultimately relieve congestion at Lindbergh Field and increase flights at the underused A.L. Rodriguez International Airport in Tijuana. The investors plan to finance the project directly and then generate revenue through tolls for the pedestrian bridge, along with parking fees, light retail and proceeds from rental-car and other ground-transportation services.

There are a number of privately operated crossings on the U.S.-Mexico border that charge tolls, but this cross-border terminal would be the first one to connect directly to an airport.

### *President's Message (continued from Page 2)*

stands in relation to the rest of the country as well as to the world. An overriding message we consistently heard was that the San Diego County/Baja California region has much to offer and its development is the focus of our federal government. While it is refreshing to hear this from high-level officials outside of our region, we still must remember that the best advocates for South County growth comes from within. This is why the function of the SCEDC is so important – our organization brings together advocates from all walks of life and business who share the mission of the best South County possible. Thank you for being part of this organization and fulfilling the South County's potential.

## Sweetwater Union High Schools Show Great Increase in Test Scores

The Sweetwater Union High School District saw significant improvements across all grades and subjects, according to results from California Standardized Tests released by the State Department of Education. The California Standardized Tests are a battery of exams that measure achievement in English, math, science and history in grades 1st through 12th. More than 373,000 students from the county's 42 districts took the series of exams and the results across the board showed steady improvements.

Within the Sweetwater district, great improvements were seen in virtually all grades and subjects. All high schools showed improved freshman English scores, ranging from nine to 15 percentage points. Of all freshmen at Southwest High School, 48 percent tested proficient or better in English – an increase of 17 percentage points over last year. At Hilltop High School, 64 percent of freshmen tested proficient or better in English – a jump of 9 percentage points.

"We are very pleased because what we are seeing is the effect of our new districtwide effort to have consistent guidelines on how to place a student in specific courses," said Maria Castilleja, executive director of curriculum and instruction.



**Senator Denise Duchenev, second from the right, was among the many elected and community leaders in attendance at the SCEDC's Elected Officials Reception held at the end of September.**

*Leaders Discuss (continued from Page 1)*  
ways to work through the economic times and not dwell on the current woes.

State Assemblymember Mary Salas spoke in support of the Enterprize Zone program and gave real life examples of how small business were able to use program credits to increase their employee base and better train employees so they could rise through the ranks. She summed up her presentation with the final thought that there is no such thing as a "jobless economic recovery."

Fellow Assemblymember Marty Block said he is committed to bringing a university to South County and pledged that next year the South County University bill would be the first item he brought before the Assembly.

"We are primed to build a California State University or other four-year university in Chula Vista and we will get a university in South County," he promised.

Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox echoed the importance of education in Chula Vista and the great need for making sure our companies are supplied with people who are ready to work. She supports the concept of mentoring high school students and providing programs for skill certificates so students can make the informed choice of entering the workforce with a skill set if they so choose.

Greg Cox, San Diego County Board of Supervisors, referenced several government-funded construction projects, saying he couldn't remember a time when there have been more of such projects in the area. He said that these projects have been challenging considering the current climate but that he is happy to be able to invest in facilities that will serve the county and that these projects are an investment in the future.

"Good things are happening in the South County as a result of people working together," said San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders.

He continued by saying we need to

continue working together to fulfill the potential of the area and focus on aggressively recruiting and retaining new firms to the area, expedite people through the border and foster the development of the budding clean-tech cluster in South County.

In small cities, such as Imperial Beach, where resources are limited, partnerships are what get projects done, according to Imperial Beach Mayor Jim Janney. Janney touched on the city's opportunities to become a better place for the entire South County, citing the beach and its nationally recognized estuary. On speaking of redevelopment, he commented, "it doesn't have to be brand new, but it has to provide a better resource."

Ben Hueso, San Diego City Council president, stressed the importance of long-term strategic planning that addresses goals and steps to achieve them. He reminded the audience that revitalization doesn't just happen – it's a concentrated effort that requires long-term planning and government subsidies.

The city of Coronado's update, provided by City Councilmember Barbara Denny, included three important aspects that will affect the long-term outlook for the city. The first is that a surge of Naval ships and submarines will be coming to the island, increasing the current number of vessels from 60 to 85 by 2014. Second, a raise in transit tax will allow the city to engage in programs to increase its tourism potential. And lastly, the defeat of Proposition H (Coronado tunnel project) opens up possibilities to find a new traffic management plan for the Coronado Bridge and North Island.

The Mexico representative was Rosarito Mayor Hugo Torres Chabert. Torres acknowledged that, in 2007, the city's biggest problem was safety. Thanks to a program to clean up the police force that included training from the San Diego police department, Torres reported Rosarito has improved its safety and now has less crime

*Leaders Discuss (continued on Page 7)*

## December Holiday Breakfast Just Around the Corner

The annual Holiday Breakfast provides a great opportunity to strengthen the SCEDC by showing non-members the many benefits of joining the council. A December tradition and one of only two member-recruitment events of the year, this is one of the rare meetings of the SCEDC where non-members are encouraged to come, to network with our members and to find out what the buzz is all about in the South County.

You will be guaranteed to hear from a dynamic guest speaker as well as to have a fabulous and filling breakfast and to meet many of South County's movers and shakers. And did we mention breakfast is free?

Start making your list of who has been naughty and nice and invite them all to our

*Leaders Discuss (continued from Page 6)* than it did 10 years ago. While safety will continue to be at the forefront of policy, he voiced that the creation of jobs and increasing tourism are the next issues the city must tackle.

Master of Ceremony Robert "Dukie" Valderrama, commissioner of the Port of San Diego, wrapped up the morning session by encouraging those high school students in attendance to strive to take on leadership roles in their communities with the ultimate goal of one day sitting on the Summit panel.

Over lunch, keynote speakers Ralph Rubio, Rubio's Mexican Grill; Charles Wax, Waxie Sanitary Supply; Scott McMillin of McMillin Communities, Jose Galicot, International Entrepreneur and Joel Ayala, director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development addressed the audience.

Rubio told his story of how his desire to bring the bold flavors of Baja-style fish tacos to San Diego more than 25 years ago, set into motion a career that would establish a



***Cindy McKim has been appointed as the new director of the California Department of Transportation. As director, McKim is responsible for the maintenance and operations of more than 50,000 lane miles of roadway in the State Highway System, a budget of more than \$13.8 billion, and providing leadership to more than 22,000 employees. She has been with the department for more than 30 years.***

upcoming Holiday Breakfast on Dec. 7 at Frida Mexican Cuisine in Chula Vista.



***U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development John Fernandez addressed the issues of the current economic conditions and looking toward innovation as a path to prosperity during a reception for SCEDC members in September.***

190-unit restaurant chain under his surname. The backbone of Rubio's account was that as an entrepreneur, hard work, support from family and dedication were the keys to his success. Wax recounted his family's successful business history and cited that this success couldn't have come without always looking ahead for the next expansion. A solid workforce, that also includes extended Wax family members, was another contributor to Waxie's achievements. McMillin, also part of a family-owned business with a long history in San Diego, explained his strategy for getting through the difficult economic times is to keep pushing forward with developing new homes because leaders can't dwell on the current situation – they have to keep looking to the future. The sentiment of looking to the future was echoed from leaders from both sides of the border.

An international perspective came from Galicot who reminded the audience of the mutually-beneficial relationship between the South County and Baja California and spoke in favor of Tijuana better marketing

itself as a production center. Galicot helped to illuminate the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico and how goods and services are exchanged across the international border.

All the way from Sacramento, Ayala spoke on behalf of the state and explained how his department was making it easier to start, expand or keep a business in California. He explained how he will work to facilitate and stimulate economic growth through the development and implementation of strategic policies and partnerships with the private sector, community, local, and national organizations that enhance human and capital infrastructure development as well as increase California's competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

## SCEDC Recognizes Outstanding Leaders

Several well-deserving local community and business leaders in the South County were recognized at the 20th annual Economic Summit.

The Bi-National Endeavor Award is presented to a leader who has committed extended efforts to continue fostering relationships and promoting economic growth. Sponsored by Parsons Brinckerhoff, the Bi-National award was given to International Community Foundation. The International Community Foundation was able to raise \$5.2 million in grants to non-profits with 80 percent of the foundations benefitting public charities in Mexico. Notable work includes their efforts toward poverty alleviation, humanitarian efforts and production of the first ever guide to bi-national giving.

Sponsored by Union Bank, the Regional Leadership Award honors a South County company that has served as

a leader in establishing benchmarks and that has made a significant impact in the South County. Plaza Bonita Westfield



**Sponsored by Parsons Brinckerhoff, the Bi-National award was given to International Community Foundation. (More photos on Page 5.)**

Shopping Center's \$134 million expansion set a new mark for retail centers and earned it the Regional Leadership Award this year. In the midst of an economic downturn, the investment was bold yet a huge success.

The Outstanding Corporate Citizen Award honors a business that has made a remarkable contribution to South County. Sponsored by Bank of America, the Outstanding Corporate Citizen Award was presented to Scripps Mercy Hospital Chula Vista. Scripps was recognized for investing \$15.7 million in community health services. In addition, Scripps employees volunteered more than 58,000 hours of their personal time to support Scripps-sponsored community benefit programs.

The Corky McMillin Best of South County Award is presented to a local business that has a history of consistent excellence, customer satisfaction and overall performance. Sponsored by McMillin Communities, this year's award recipient is the Chula Vista Nature Center. During difficult budget constraints the Nature Center rose to the challenge and reinvented themselves as a non-profit. The center hosts more than 15,000 students and 62,000 visitors each year.

*The South County Economic Development Council is funded in part by grants from the cities of Chula Vista, Coronado, Imperial Beach, National City and San Diego, the County of San Diego and the Port of San Diego and our members.*

Published by the  
**South County  
 Economic Development Council**  
 1111 Bay Blvd., Suite E  
 Chula Vista, CA 91911  
 (619) 424-5143  
 (619) 424-5738 fax  
 www.SouthCountyEDC.com

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