

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Contact: Marissa Martinez, Communications + Fund Development Specialist

Phone: (408) 786-7791

Email: marissam@svcn.org

Website: <https://www.svcn.org/be-our-guest>

Nonprofit Association Honors Santa Clara County Nonprofit Leaders at Virtual Event

San José, CA – This Friday, October 23, the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits (SVCN) will be recognizing a number of nonprofit leaders, community-based organizations, and nonprofit supporters for their impactful work over the last year. Awards will be made at SVCN’s 13th annual Be Our Guest event – the virtual edition.

An emotional center of the event will be the renaming of SVCN’s coveted Changemaker Award after its longtime Executive Director Patricia A. Gardner, who retired in 2019. The first ever recipient of the **Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award** will be Milan Balinton, Executive Director of San Jose’s African American Community Service Agency (AACSA). As Rita Holiday stated in her nomination of Milan, “With the tragic murder of George Floyd and the uprisings of protest that followed, Milan was called on as a Black leader in Santa Clara County to respond and offer guidance to the City’s and County’s response. Milan consulted with elected officials in producing solutions that best aligned with AACSA’s mission to preserve the dignity and culture of a diverse African American Community and to provide services that promote full participation for all. To ensure real long-term change, Milan is spearheading the establishment of an Advocacy/Policy Department at AACSA which will seek to undermine and disrupt policies that have created racially-based disparities in income, home ownership, health, education, and employment.”

In reaction to the recognition, Patricia said, “In the inaugural year of this Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award, it is fitting that it begins with our new generation of nonprofit leaders who are leading the way in racial equity. My friend Milan Balinton exemplifies strong leadership and a powerful voice in moving us all forward to become a more inclusionary, diverse, and equitable community. Bravo, Milan,”

Another incredibly timely award is the **Nonprofit of the Year Award**, bestowed upon Second Harvest of Silicon Valley. Marsha Hovey, CADRE’s Board President, nominated Second Harvest and pointed out the herculean task in “responding to COVID-19, Second Harvest quickly added

lines to their call center, acquired new warehouse space, added distribution sites, coordinated new volunteers—including staffing from the National Guard and San Jose Conservation Corps—to triple their monthly food distribution activities to support our community. They are working with 300 partner organizations and, each month, serving 11,000,000 pounds of food to approximately 350,000 individuals with food insecurity in Santa Clara County and 250,000 in San Mateo County.”

Melissa Johns, Executive Vice President at Pivotal, and Rachel Carlos Colston, Director of the Santa Clara County office of First Place for Youth have been named dual recipients of the new **Nonprofit Leadership Award**. SVCN added this award this year because the organization feels strongly that the future of the nonprofit community is in the hands of emerging leaders who are shaping the sector through their energy, creativity, and exceptional leadership. This award is for individuals working in the nonprofit sector who are early to midway in their careers.

During the first week of Shelter-in-Place, Melissa came up with the idea to have Pivotal create an emergency fund to support foster youth facing financial hardships. Guided by Melissa’s leadership, Pivotal was able to distribute over \$500,000 dollars in funds to young scholars in need. Likewise, Rachel has been a trailblazer for foster youth within the community. Since opening a Santa Clara office almost 5 years ago, Rachel designed a program that now serves over 70 youth in building the skills necessary to be more active members in their community.

The Silicon Valley Organization (SVO), the SJ SHIP Kits team, Gordon Biersch Brewery/Frank-Lin Distillers, and dozens of local businesses have been awarded with the **Nonprofit Ally Award** because of their work during the pandemic to supply nonprofits and the communities they serve with life-saving personal protective equipment (PPE) and other needed supplies. Matt Mahood, CEO of SVO, personally reached out to numerous local businesses to help SVCN and American Leadership Forum (which partnered with SVCN to establish the PPE for Nonprofits Project) locate PPE that was incredibly hard to find in the early months of the pandemic. Eric Glader of Urban Community helped birthed the idea of SJ SHIP Kits that include a variety of nutritional support (canned goods, nutrient-dense food, non-perishable food), health supplies (toilet paper, hand sanitizer, soap), as well as wellness items (puzzles, cards, coloring books). Gordon Biersch Brewery, in partnership with Frank-Lin Distillers, provided thousands of gallons of hand sanitizer to nonprofit essential workers as well as first responders and medical institutions, through SJ SHIP Kits.

And lastly, Destination: Home, Sacred Heart Community Services, and 68 partner nonprofits are being honored with the **Collaborative Impact Award** for their COVID-19 Financial Assistance Program. This award was initiated to recognize impactful collaboration or partnership that inspired action, especially among nonprofits and other partners who worked together to address this year’s especially challenging circumstances. To respond to the dire need to make flexible cash assistance accessible to the most disadvantaged individuals and families in our communities, Destination: Home and Sacred Heart Community Service jointly supported the mobilization of 68 nonprofit organizations to distribute more than \$20 million to 12,000 households in need in a matter of months. “It was extraordinary to see so many grassroots

nonprofits working in sync to address a massive community in need. We need more leadership of this quality and we should recognize and reward it,” said Janette Stokley, Executive Director of Housing Choices.

About Be Our Guest

SVCN’s Be Our Guest is a fun Halloween twist on traditional rubber chicken luncheons where local “celebrities” serve lunch to nonprofit staff and other community leaders. This year however, our former celebrity servers have been transformed into Zoombie Room Hosts! These Zoombie Hosts, *a.k.a.* “Trick or Trivia” Team Captains, will be leading a team of nonprofit staff in online competitive games against other nonprofit teams, and even showing off their own elaborate pumpkin designs. Guests can chat with elected officials, funders, radio and TV personalities, and other “celebrities” in an informal, light-hearted setting while nonprofit staff have a chance be thanked and honored for their dedication to the community. Most importantly, we will be honoring community leaders who have risen to the challenge during the pandemic in addressing the needs of the community.

Full details about the event can be found at <https://www.svcn.org/be-our-guest>.

About SVCN

The Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits unifies and strengthens the voice of local community-serving nonprofits so they can become more effective advocates for their organizations and our diverse community. SVCN’s training program focuses on organizational effectiveness and capacity-building within nonprofits, while its cohort facilitation approach for collective impact forges collaboration across diverse entities to tackle community challenges together. SVCN advocates at the city, county, and state level on behalf of nonprofits on policies that affect the sector, and acts as a watchdog for ensuring community organizations are properly funded to continue providing high-quality and accessible services. SVCN also advocates for the policy priorities of our nonprofit community, focusing on policies that bring equity to underserved communities.

To learn more about SVCN please visit www.svcn.org.