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Ivan Martinez

Chamber

Bryan Fossen, General Manager of Special Devices Inc. is presented with the 2014 large business of the year award by Sally Harrison, president and CEO of Mesa Chamber of Commerce.



Posted: Sunday, May 10, 2015 4:30 pm

By Shelley Ridenour, Tribune

Mesa Chamber of Commerce members celebrated last week at the annual leadership awards banquet.

About 350 people heard a recap of chamber happenings in 2014 and honored winners in nine categories. Membership stands just shy of 1,000, outgoing chamber board chairman Craig Henry said.

The SouthEast Valley Regional Association of Realtors walked away with the title of small business of the year.

CEO Janet Kane said her organization helps preserve and protect the American dream. Every day Realtors get to experience the pride of homeownership when they give their clients keys to their new houses, she said.

The medium business of the year award went to Farnsworth Development Co., a builder of active adult communities.

President and CEO Craig Ahlstrom said the business is committed to making Mesa a better place to live, work and play.

Special Devices Inc. was named 2014 large business of the year.

SDI manufactures initiators for airbag inflators and blasting equipment for mining.

The company moved to Mesa mostly because of the presence of the air bag industry, General Manager Bryan Fossen said. His company has 400 employees "who come to a quiet place to work and manufacture hundreds of pounds of

explosives to save lives. We save lives and we are proud of what we do."

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Three awards recognized excellence in education.

Amber Miles, a senior at Skyline High School, was student of the year. Miles said she started writing at age 5 and now manages the school's art and writing club and is revising her novel.

She's an accomplished rider who owns and operates a horse-grooming business.

Miles plans to attend either Brown or Brandeis university and then wants to join the Peace Corps.

Westwood High School's Brian Buck was named teacher of the year. He's taught in the history department at Westwood since 1990.

Buck told the crowd every day he enjoys going to school and teaching.

"Westwood is a well-kept secret," he said. "It's a great place to be."

Mesa Community College professor Ann Ewing was selected professor of the year. She has taught psychology classes for nearly 30 years at MCC.

Oakwood Creative Care was chosen non-profit of the year.

Founded in 1975 as Serrine Adult Day Care of Mesa Inc., by four women who recognized a need, the entity now offers two day clubs.

Ambassador of the year was John Parrish, from Mutual of Omaha.

Mesa Community College was recognized, having recently celebrated its 50th birthday. The college opened in 1963 with 330 students. Enrollment now stands at 40,000. An estimated 870,000 students have attended MCC in 51 years.

Susan Carland was named volunteer of the year. Emcee Mark Cordes joked that Carland had volunteered somewhere else the night of the banquet and wasn't there to accept her award.

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