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Elgin chamber honors excellence, service with 'high five' awards

By: Elena Ferrarin



Courtesy of Elgin area Chamber of Commerce Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce chairwoman Yaneth Medina, left, stands next to **Tony Sanders, CEO of Elgin Area School District U-46** and 2019 chairman of the chamber board, and Linda Siete, manager of sales and operations of Reflejos. Sanders and Siete were among recipients of chamber "high five" awards last week.



The Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce gave out its annual "high five" awards during a reception and annual meeting Jan. 30 at Gifford's Kitchen and Social in Elgin.

The Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce honored volunteers and businesses at its annual meeting and "high five" award reception last week.

The awards were presented by Carol Gieske, president and CEO of the chamber; Tony Sanders, who served as chamber board chairman in 2019; and Yaneth Medina, current board chairwoman. The recipients "exemplify excellence, symbolize service and illustrate just how vibrant our business community is here in Elgin," the chamber officials said at the reception held Jan. 30 at Gifford's Kitchen and Social in Elgin.

- The small business award went to Andy's Frozen Custard, "a shining example of a successful family-owned small business that has now grown to the largest dessert-only franchise in the world." The company is nearing 90 stores in 13 states, including one on Randall Road in Elgin that has been "a generous corporate citizen, donating to our nonprofits, at community meal events and the community toy giveaway," they said.

- The volunteer of the year award went to Dan Fox, Don Waters and Ruth Munson, the volunteer coordinators of the chamber's Elgin Area Leadership Academy. Since launching in 1991, more than 535 students who have lived and worked in Elgin graduated from the academy. There are "hundreds and hundreds of volunteers serving as community leaders because of the generosity of Dan, Don and Ruth," they said.
- The community partner award went to the bilingual publication Reflejos and its manager of sales and operations, Linda Siete, a chamber board member. Reflejos is the sister publication of the Daily Herald. "Reflejos has had immeasurable impact and influence for decades that has enhanced the community and the Elgin Area Chamber," they said.
- The large business award went to American NTN Bearing Manufacturing, the world's third largest bearing manufacturer, which has one of its 10 North American factories in Elgin. "They are dedicated to our community through their volunteerism and reinvestment," they said.
- The Elgin Development Group award went to Elgin Sweeper Company, which has been in Elgin for more than 100 years. "They take great pride in their workforce by understanding that quality begins with the people that work for them," they said. Lisa Baran, the company's human resources director, has been the chair of our chamber's Elgin Development Group workforce committee.
- The Elgin Development Group's business development award went to Conor Commercial Real Estate. Headquartered in Chicago, Conor was most recently involved in the development of Northwest Corporate Park off Galvin Drive in Elgin. "By working with the community, they have built a legacy and can make things that truly have a lasting positive impact," they said.
- The showcase business award went to Watermark at the Grove, a new apartment complex on Randall Road and a project of Interstate Partners. The company "has planned and developed business parks in Elgin which emphasize open space views, pedestrian corridors and business service retail that services residents, commuter traffic and park residents," they said.
- The nonprofit award went to the Alignment Collaborative for Education, made of 150 business and community leaders from 11 communities working in partnership with Elgin Area School District U-46 "to deliver a qualified, future workforce eager to live and work within their communities," they said.
- The leadership award went to Tony Sanders, CEO of School District U-46, who serves as chairman of the chamber board. "A leader known for his hands-on approach, Tony is a positive influence on his students, staff and community members through his creativity and initiative," they said.