

South Coast Business & Technology Awards

Toggling Tech Awards and Community Benefits

By Isaac Hernández de Lipa / VOICE

HONORING INDUSTRY LEADERS AND RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS,

the South Coast Business and Technology Awards ceremony at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort attracted well over 500 guests with the theme, “celebrating leadership and ingenuity.” The benefit gala donated proceeds to the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara.

“Each year, the South Coast Business and Technology Awards (SCBT) ceremony showcases this community’s remarkable capacity to produce and attract high-caliber business talent, while underscoring the Scholarship Foundation’s undeniably important role in educating the workforce of tomorrow,” said Tim Dougherty, interim president and CEO of the Scholarship Foundation.

The SCBT Awards began in 1995, when QAD was named Company of the Year. In 2001, the event began raising funds for the Scholarship Foundation, providing a total of nearly \$3.7 million for area scholarships since then.

The evening, co-emceed by Danna McGrew and Matt Rowe, was a celebration supporting education and the hiring of young graduates, while underscoring the progress of AI. A case in point: Entrepreneur of the Year

honors went to William Wang, founder and CEO of ChipAgents, an AI-native platform redefining how semiconductors are designed and verified.



Erik Holliday

“We’ve been hiring 80 percent of our employees from UCSB and they’ve been wonderful,” said Wang, who’s also the Mellichamp Chair Professor of AI at UCSB, as he encouraged others to hire new graduates.



Tim Dougherty

The Department of Technology Management at UCSB, which “equips students with the skills to launch new ventures, manage cross-functional teams, and help organizations thrive in an uncertain world,” received the Excellence in Service Award. The department began with just two courses in the late ’90s providing business instruction to UCSB engineering students. “Today, the department offers more than 30 courses and serves almost 3,000 students from 50 majors,” said Dave Adornetto, Director, Entrepreneurship. “That’s over ten percent of the student population at UCSB.”



William Wang

Adornetto shared the three phases of a successful career: Learning, Earning and Returning or giving back. “I returned to UCSB after 25 years in the med-tech industry,” he said. “At the time I made a two-year commitment – that was 12 years ago. I’ve stayed because Phase 3 for me has been the most rewarding work I’ve done. Many of the lecturers and mentors in our programs have followed a similar path. If you get an opportunity to discover your Phase 3, take it!”

Trudi Carey, recipient of the Pioneer Award, shared her choice to become a licensed architect, real estate broker AND a general contractor so that she wouldn’t have all her eggs in one basket. If the real estate market were to crash, at least she’d make a commission when selling. She also spoke highly about the people who helped her along the way, including Montecito Bank & Trust founder Michael Towbes.

Mission Wealth, a Santa Barbara-based financial advisory firm founded in 2000, was named Company of the Year. The company manages billions of dollars in assets for thousands of families nationwide.

Executive of the Year Shane Trigg



Helene Schneider, Matt Rowe, Trudy Carey, Danna McGrew, and Dr. Susan A. Andrzejewski

described his fateful move to Santa Barbara to become president and CEO of AppFolio, a real estate technology firm.

As is customary, a scholarship recipient spoke. Erik Holliday shared his professional experience as an award-winning architect and how the Scholarship Foundation helped him gain his degree from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Rising Star honors were given to Dimer Instruments, the Goleta company providing



Janet Garufis and Dave Adornetto

instruments that enable real-time molecular analysis at multiple points during the pharmaceutical development process, and to the Santa Barbara software developer Unwrap, which uses AI to analyze customer feedback.

The Scholarship Foundation of Santa

Barbara is the nation’s largest community-based provider of college scholarships, having cumulatively awarded in excess of \$175 million to more than 66,000 county students since its founding in 1962. sbscholarship.org



Vince Caballero, Donna Weidl, and Larry Weidl



Michael Day, Kelly Knight, and Gabe Grandcolas

Photos by Isaac Hernández de Lipa

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