

# Philanthropy awards in Fresno spotlight generosity and hard work

The Fresno  
Bee

Philanthropy awards were presented to seven people, an organization and a corporation by the [California Valley Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals](#) during a luncheon Thursday in downtown Fresno.

The awards were presented on National Philanthropy Day, which recognizes the dedication and generosity of philanthropists working to make the world a better place.

The honorees:

Spirit of philanthropy awards: Mardell Pedersen and her family donated 107 acres for the creation of West Hills Community College Lemoore that opened in 2002.

Jim Clark and his wife have given to the Saint Agnes Medical Center Foundation and print invitations, at an estimated value of \$5,000 each year, for the Saint Agnes Women's Club Fashion and Entertainment event.

Paul Mitchell has worked and volunteered with The Discovery Center for more than 20 years and has donated more than 8,000 hours in the center's cactus gardens. He has volunteered announcing football games at Reedley College since 1953. Mitchell also announces basketball games at the college.

Outstanding volunteer fundraiser: Louis Franco is a member of many community service groups in Selma. He helped establish the Selma Public Safety Ad-Hoc Committee and helped resurrect the Selma Public Education Foundation. He has worked with the Selma Community Enhancement Corp. since 2013 and has been the event organizer for two major fundraisers: the Selma Rock N Brews and the Selma Hot Dog Festival.

Outstanding philanthropic organization (nonprofit): Members of the Lost Girls Motorcycle Club have donated more than \$87,000 to the Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation through poker runs since 2005. They helped establish the Lost Girls Mammogram Fund that has helped 228 uninsured and underinsured people under 40 pay for mammograms and biopsies.

Outstanding philanthropic organization (corporation): Granville Homes, headed by president Darius Assemi, donates a new home every year through its Home of Hope program. All proceeds from raffle tickets go to support nonprofits. Since it was established in 2006, more than \$3.5 million has been raised for food, shelter, health care and education for the most vulnerable. Granville Homes also donated \$100,000 to a "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" campaign to boost the early brain development and language skills for children up to the age of 5. Assemi is board president of the Alliance for Medical Outreach and Relief. The group has established a hospital and clinics in Afghanistan and will begin construction in 2016 in west Fresno County on a rural health clinic, family enrichment center and youth center. Granville donates to many other community organizations and events.

Outstanding youth in philanthropy (ages 5-17): Grace Bernhardt has raised nearly \$185,000 of a \$200,000 goal to create a playground at the Mental Health Systems' Hacienda campus. A ribbon-cutting for "Grace's Place" will be held Dec. 10.

Outstanding fundraising professional: Teri Amerine has worked as a professional fundraiser in health care philanthropy in Fresno for nearly 30 years. She is currently vice president of the Saint Agnes Foundation. She played key leadership roles in the largest fundraising campaigns at Saint Agnes (\$20 million) and Valley Children's Hospital

(\$42.8 million), has been responsible for planning and organizing two of the largest fundraisers in the central San Joaquin Valley – Harvest Ball and Kids Day – and serves in many organizations.

Outstanding philanthropist: John Carey Sr. has raised more than \$400,000 for organizations, including more than \$193,000 for the Easter Seals of Central California, through the annual Century 21 C. Watson Bowler's Bash. Carey has received special recognition from the Central California Blood Center and Century 21.

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