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SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CHAMBER ANNOUNCES 2018 SMALL BUSINESS AWARD WINNERS

Five local businesses recognized for customer service, vets success, innovation, social impact, and entrepreneurship

SAN DIEGO (May 3, 2018) – The San Diego Regional Chamber presented the 2018 Small Business Awards to five local businesses during its annual Small Business Expo and Awards Mixer held today. The annual event was hosted in conjunction with national Small Business Week to celebrate the critical role small businesses play in the San Diego economy.

“Small businesses are crucial to our region’s economic engine, creating jobs, fueling innovation and bringing character to our communities,” said Jerry Sanders, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber. “Through the expo and awards we are building more awareness of our small business community and together we’re helping build a better San Diego.”

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees make up 90 percent of businesses in San Diego county and account for jobs that employ one-half of San Diego’s workforce.

“Today we recognized five outstanding local businesses that are really making a difference in San Diego,” Sanders said. “The winners and applicants highlight the diversity of the county’s vibrant small business community and together they share a common theme of hard work, passion, and dedication. Their impact and success is what makes our region unique.”

This year’s Small Business Awards were presented to an audience of 300 attendees at Building 117 in Liberty Station. The 2018 Small Business Awards winners are:

Support The Enlisted Project – Winner of the **Bill Trumpfheller Social Impact award** for companies and nonprofits who are dedicated to helping others and making a positive impact.

- Support The Enlisted Project builds financial self-sufficiency with San Diego’s junior active-duty enlisted service members, recently discharged veterans, and their families, who are in a state of financial crisis. The privately funded program has moved nearly 3,000 families out of crisis and

issued \$1.4 million in grants to help military personnel facing eviction, vehicle repossession, or disconnection of basic utilities.

COOLA – Winner of the **Industry Game-Changer** award for companies paving the way in creative forward-thinking and innovation.

- As one of the first companies to manufacture and distribute organic sunscreen, COOLA is revolutionizing a stagnant industry and their commitment to sustainable practices and represents what is best about California - the intersection of wellness, lifestyle and commerce.

Shore Solutions – Winner of the **Up & Comer** award for young professionals who are rising to the top of their field, or companies founded and run by young professionals.

- Shore Solutions was about to close when a 29-year old employee cashed out her 401K and asked to buy the company. Almost two years into taking over, she has beat previous company records, added employees, and is on track to have their best year yet.

Cammies & Canines – Winner of the **Vets Success** award for companies owned by veterans or prioritizing the hiring of veterans.

- A true Cinderella story, Cammies & Canines was started after the founder's personal experience with homelessness propelled him on a mission to empower other homeless veterans and help them transition off the streets while also saving homeless dogs from being euthanized. The 100 percent veteran-run organization has helped 17 veterans transition off the streets and created a cumulative 200 hours of employment for 23 homeless veterans.

America's Local Lender – winner of the **Customer Service Star** award for companies with exemplary customer service.

- A boutique mortgage broker with 26 years of industry experience and five star reviews across the board, America's Local Lender focuses on communication, transparency, authenticity, and being available for their customers when they are needed most. This commitment to individual attention has earned them a steady stream of referrals from happy clients.

All award nominations were evaluated by a panel of judges who reviewed applications based on criteria for each award category. The finalists then pitched their company to the Chamber's Small Business Roundtable, which scored them based on how well they met the award category criteria. After rating each submission, the small business with the highest score in each category was selected as the winner.

For nearly 20 years, the Chamber has recognized small businesses that are leaders in the San Diego regional business community through this awards program. In addition to the awards ceremony, the event also included a business expo and extensive networking, providing small and large businesses an opportunity to connect and learn how the regional business community can better work together.

For highlights from the Small Business Awards, Expo and Mixer, search the hashtag #SDSmallBiz on social media.

About the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce

The San Diego Regional Chamber is the hub for connections and collaboration among the regional business community, and uses that clout to advocate for public policies and candidates that support economic growth and the creation of jobs for all businesses. As the largest local Chamber on the West Coast, representing approximately 2,500 businesses and an estimated 300,000 jobs, the San Diego Regional Chamber is fighting to make San Diego the most business-friendly region in California. For more information, please visit SDChamber.org or call 619-544-1300.

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