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LEAD SAN DIEGO HONORS REGIONAL LEADERS FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The 24th annual Visionary Awards celebrate leaders driving innovation and positive change in the San Diego region.

SAN DIEGO (September 18, 2026) – Last night, [LEAD San Diego](#) brought together business, community, and elected leaders for its 24th annual [Visionary Awards](#). Six individuals were honored for their contributions to making positive change in the community and leading San Diego forward.

“The Visionary Awards celebrated the bold, forward-thinking leaders driving meaningful change across our region,” said **LEAD San Diego Board Chair Enrique Meza, San Diego Community Affairs Manager, U.S. Bank**. “This is where San Diego's innovators, advocates, and changemakers come together to celebrate those reshaping our region; the leaders creating stronger communities, industries, and neighborhoods for future generations.”

LEAD San Diego is dedicated to cultivating and empowering civic and business leaders in the San Diego region. Through comprehensive leadership development programs, LEAD San Diego provides participants with the tools, insights, and connections needed to

address the region's most pressing issues. LEAD San Diego's annual Visionary Awards celebrate innovative, collaborative, and change-making leadership. Leadership that makes meaningful, long-lasting impacts on the people, neighborhoods, and industries of our bi-national region.

“For 45 years, LEAD San Diego has brought people together to learn about our community, build meaningful connections across sectors, and engage in shaping San Diego's future,” said **Veronica Perondi, LEAD San Diego Executive Director**. “This year, we're honored to celebrate leaders who truly bring that mission to life, championing bold ideas, fostering collaboration, and driving the kind of progress that will shape a stronger, more vibrant San Diego for years to come.”

This year's Visionary Awards honorees:

The Neil Morgan Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement:

Sam Attisha, Senior Vice President of Network and Field Operations, Cox Communications

LEAD Graduate of the Year:

Risa Baron, Municipal Manager, Republic Services

Innovation & Economic Opportunity Award:

James T. Harris, III, D.Ed., President, University of San Diego

The Ronald Kendrick Memorial Award for Regional Collaboration:

Tina Ngo Bartel, Ed.D. Executive Director, San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence

The Charles Nathanson Memorial Award for Cross-Border Region Building:

Maritza Diaz, Chief Executive Officer, ITJ

2026 Community Spotlight Award:

Shamine Linton, Sharia's Closet

To set up an interview about LEAD San Diego, please contact Hayley Marting at HMarting@sdchamber.org or 559-514-1649.

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About LEAD San Diego

LEAD San Diego aims to create a network of leaders equipped with the skills, insight, and passion needed to work collaboratively across industries and issues to positively transform their communities and country. As the nonpartisan, leadership development arm of the San Diego Regional Chamber, LEAD San Diego offers a diverse suite of programs designed to mobilize leaders by enhancing knowledge of key regional issues, strengthening personal leadership skills, and establishing strong community connections. For more information, please visit sdchamber.org/lead.