

# BUILDING OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Congratulations to 2015 WIB Award Winners**

Ventura, Calif.— The 2015 WIB Awards were presented at the annual meeting of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of Ventura County on June 18 at the Ventura County Office of Education. The annual awards program recognizes individuals, employers, organizations and partnerships for extraordinary work or volunteer efforts to advance workforce development in the Ventura County region.

“The WIB Award winners leverage workplace, partnership and networking opportunities to support work experience, training, and career advancement that benefit employers and job seekers,” says Cheryl Moore, executive director of the WIB. “The award recipients are making a real contribution to the strength and competitiveness of the Ventura County workforce.”

#### WIB Youth Opportunity Award

The WIB Youth Opportunity Award goes to two organizations for providing internships or employment opportunities that help to grow and strengthen Ventura County's future workforce. One recipient is Douglas Wood, general manager at the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach. For more than a decade, the hotel has welcomed more than 100 high school juniors and seniors from the Ventura Unified School District for one-month summer school internships. Students are given hands-on work opportunities in all phases of hotel management and are paired with Crowne Plaza mentors.

“Students benefit from real-life experiences and get a chance to see if hospitality is something that resonates with them,” says Wood. “While helping students, the internship program also helps our hotel to cultivate a workforce for the hospitality sector, which is one of the top three revenue-generating industries in the county. Through the program, we have hired full-time associates and part-time summer associates.”

Also receiving the WIB Youth Opportunity Award are Ralph Imondi and Linda Santschi, co-founders and scientific directors at Coastal Marine Biolabs (CMB) in Ventura. For more than six years, the company has taught science to Ventura County high school and community college students in an authentic research environment. Under the guidance of Imondi and Santschi, students gain an appreciation for the daily practice of science. Through national funding, students have been able to participate in educational programs at no charge. Coastal Marine Biolabs also makes training available to teachers.

“To participate productively in the 21st century scientific workforce, students will need to be conversant in a universal scientific language that bridges multiple life science domains,” says Santschi. “CMB’s programs are inherently multidisciplinary in scope, introducing students to scientific issues, concepts and methodologies with a level of depth and rigor that cannot be replicated in traditional learning settings.”

#### WIB Collaborative Action Award

The WIB Collaborative Action Award is for partnerships that help to meet employer needs, improve the relevance and capacity of education and workforce training and/or support business retention in Ventura County. There are four award recipients this year.

Tiffany Morse, Ph.D., director of career and technical education with the Ventura County Office of Education in Camarillo has facilitated collaboration across multiple school districts, adult education, and community colleges through the California Career Pathways Trust Grant initiative. "VC Innovates represents an unprecedented collaboration countywide to connect employers, education and the community to advance workforce education," says Morse. "It has been a privilege to work with so many different organizations towards the same goal and to see that work rewarded with another \$10 million investment from the state to expand and enhance our efforts."

The WIB Collaborative Action Award also goes to biotechnology professor Subhash Karkare, Ph.D., at Moorpark College, Bill Pratt, vice-president of operations at Kinamed, Inc. in Camarillo, and manufacturing technology professor Scot Rabe at Ventura College. The trio are recognized for their collaborative problem solving and long-term commitment to developing a two-campus Biomedical Device Manufacturing Certificate of Achievement program for Ventura County.

"The Biomedical Device Manufacturing Certificate provides students with an entry point to mid-level skilled positions in the medical device industry," says Pratt. "These roles integrate the hands-on world with the intellectual disciplines required to maintain control and quality in the manufacturing environment. Similar programs recently instituted in other community college districts are graduating students into full-time employment after about two years of study."

#### WIB Champion for Prosperity Award

The WIB Champion for Prosperity Award is presented to an individual or organization for supporting workforce development in Ventura County through job creation, job retention and business expansion or attraction.

This year, the award recognizes Tejas Patel, president of Laksh, Inc./Aishu, Inc. in Camarillo. Already employing more than 30 workers, the full-service trucking company also has plans for growth. Since 2013, the company has worked with the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) to offer opportunities to seven trainees. Trainees have moved forward in their careers and now have roles such as dispatcher, human resources recruiter and vehicle maintenance coordinator at the company.

"My experience with WIB-funded training is very positive," says Patel. "The AJCC staff response to our needs has been excellent. We absolutely will use the program again."

#### WIB Leadership Award

The WIB Leadership Award provides special recognition for a role model whose efforts and accomplishments embody the spirit and purpose of workforce development in Ventura County. Manuel Vega, CEO of Anacapa Water Blasting, Inc. in Oxnard is this year's award recipient. The company accesses WIB-funded training to help support workforce development, and Vega has helped to spread the word to other employers. Because of his endorsement, five other companies now successfully use WIB-sponsored employee training programs.

"The WIB program is a diamond in the rough for the small business person struggling to find quality employees. With the training funds, we have been able to develop several great long-term employees," says Vega. "The WIB program provides the needed means to help both the employer and employee through the "learning curve" cycle."

Members of the WIB are appointed by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and include leaders from business, economic development, education, labor, government and community-based organizations.

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#### About the Workforce Investment Board

The Workforce Investment Board administers federal funds that help to support America's Job Center of California (AJCC) locations and other free job seeker, youth, and employer programs and services in Ventura County. For more information, visit [www.wib.ventura.org](http://www.wib.ventura.org).