

Women's construction association celebrates 50th

By CARLOS RICO

The Daily Transcript

More than 150 members and guests were on hand to commemorate a half-century of women in construction as the San Diego Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction held its 50th anniversary gala Tuesday evening.

The event honored the past, present and future of the nonprofit organization geared toward helping advance women in the construction industry through education, mentoring and networking.

Ten past chapter presidents were in attendance, as well as current president Anita Villani-Barnes and the national association president Pat McDonald, who owns a trucking company that serves central California.

"It is truly an honor to be at this event as Chapter 21 celebrates half a century of mentoring and educating women in San Diego," McDonald told the crowd. "You have changed careers and changed lives and changed the way women are perceived in the construction industry."

The past presidents in attendance included Patty Avallone, 1996-1997; Sallie Brannon, 1977-1978; Candace

Friedman, 2000-2002; Rukhsana Hafeez, 2003-2005; Vera Howell, 2002-2003; Kris Krosson, 1982-1983; Jan Parthemer, 1995-1996; Amber Schaefer-Smith, 2006-2007; Myrna Smith, 2007-2008; and Linda Young in 1989-1990, 1991-1992 and 2005-2006.

Also honored at the anniversary were the chapter's member of the year and executive of the year, which are awards given annually for service in the local construction community.

Pat Brown was named member of the year for her involvement in various chapter functions and her overall participation, support and professionalism in the construction industry.

"When I came in I wanted to be the ways and means of NAWIC and contribute to make (the chapter) better, so to accept this award on the 50th Anniversary is truly an honor from the bottom of my heart," said Brown, who has been a member for more than three years.

Jessica Fritchel was the recipient of the executive of the year award, which is given to the person based on her involvement outside of the association in the construction industry. She is a high school teacher at Construction Tech Academy in

Keanny Mesa.

"She is a great mentor to be teaching students of the future," said Laura Bellofatto, principal at Construction Tech Academy, who received the award since Fritchel was not able to attend the event. "She has changed lives of female students and pushes them to strive to be the best."

The anniversary extravaganza also awarded students for competitions put together by the association.

Throughout the 2008-2009 school year, various San Diego high school students from five schools participated in the CAD Drafting contest. This year, participants had to create a maximum 2,500-square-foot, sustainable home for a family of four using as many energy- and environmentally-conscious products.

The top three winners were Enrique Chavez of Construction Tech Academy, who won \$500; Eric Olivieri of Construction Tech Academy, who won \$300; and Andrew Ring of La Costa Canyon High School, who won \$100.

"It took a lot of hard work and time management was probably the most challenging part in the whole process," said Chavez, who will be attending the University of California,

San Diego, in the fall and majoring in mechanical engineering. "Learning how to do this, I feel, will really help me out in the future."

The winner of the Block Kids contest was also handed out. It went to fourth grader Jonah Hagan who built a bridge out of 100 Legos, a rock, a piece of string and some tinfoil.

Two \$1000 scholarships were given as well. One was awarded to Ashley Ann Taylor, who will be pursuing a civil engineering degree at San Diego State University, and the other was awarded to Claire Ruth Easterly, senior at Steel Canyon High School.

This year's special guest speaker was Diane Keltner, founder and president of Synergy Electric of San Diego. She talked about her trials and tribulations from the day she started her 29-year-old business in the construction industry to now, when she has recently been named the next — and first female — San Diego Chapter president of the Associated General Contractors.

"Over the years I've learned and strived to be the pace car," Keltner said in hopes to inspire other chapter members, "to be a leader and set out the standard."

Source Code: 20090416cd

Builders: 'Zero-net' bill

San Diego chapter of U.S.