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EAST COUNTY

Six women honored for their leadership

Chamber of Commerce recognizes those who made a difference in health care, law and education

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ALPINE — Six women were honored last month at the 19th Annual Women In Leadership Luncheon at Viejas Resort & Casino.

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan, Santee School Board Member Elana Levens-Craig, Lions Tigers & Bears CEO Bobbi Brink, advocate for the homeless population Anna Marie Piconi Snyder, SHARP Grossmont Hospital leader Louise White and St. Paul's senior services CEO Cheryl Wilson were this year's honorees at the event, hosted by the San Diego East County Chamber of Commerce.

Keynote speaker Rose Schindler, an author and survivor of the Holocaust, shared a video that drew many of the 450 gathered at Viejas to tears.

Event emcee Kristine Costa shared short biographies of all the winners:

- Stephan is a national leader in the fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation, Costa said. She served as chief of the District Attorney's North County Branch and the Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division, a special victims unit she pioneered, and is vice president of the National District Attorneys Association, co-chair of the California District Attorneys Association Human Trafficking committee and the National Association of Women Judges Human Trafficking committee.
- Levens-Craig "possesses unique and valuable talents that generate lasting and meaningful impacts" in many organizations, Costa said. She is past chairperson of the Grossmont Union High School District Citizens Board Oversight Committee and past president of the Santee-Lakeside Rotary Club. She volunteers for East County Meals on Wheels,

Father Joe's Villages, Jewish Family Service, Ethics in Business, Susan G. Komen, Salvation Army, San Diego Book Project and Santee Santas.

- Brink is the founder and director of Lions Tigers & Bears, a globally accredited big cat and exotic animal sanctuary in Alpine. "(Brink) has been working with and advocating for captive big cats, bears, and other exotic animals since the early '90s, after witnessing firsthand the abuses and neglect inflicted on captive animals victimized by the exotic animal trade," Costa said. She has worked across the country to coordinate the rescue of over 600 big cats, bears, wolves and others exotic animals and the relocation of hundreds of animals.
- Snyder is the founder and CEO of You Did It For Me, Inc., a nonprofit that helps individuals in East County secure and maintain housing, food, health care, education and work. She served as consulting project director for the East County Homeless Task Force and is a lay minister at Our Lady of Grace Parish in El Cajon, where she has worked and volunteered for over 25 years.
- White is the vice president of patient care services and chief nursing officer for SHARP Grossmont Hospital, where she has been leading the clinical team through the COVID-19 pandemic. She has more than 40 years of international health care experience. White has extensive experience in the clinical and research arena as well as more than two decades as a hospital executive for a variety of medical centers.

The event's Michele Tarbet Award, named for the late nurse and former CEO of SHARP Grossmont Hospital who died in 2014, went to Cheryl Wilson. The award recognizes women going above and beyond in the health care field.

- Wilson has served as the chief executive officer at St. Paul's Senior Services for more than 30 years. "(Wilson's) passionate yet tenacious qualities have taken St. Paul's from a small independent living community, with 45 staff serving 200 seniors, to a revolutionary San Diego landmark in senior care," Costa said. "Today, St. Paul's Senior Services is San Diego's largest nonprofit exclusively dedicated to senior care.