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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**DEREK FISHER, PATRICK MCCLENAHAN, MADELYN ALFANO & EXCEPTIONAL MINDS RECEIVE  
“STAR OF THE VALLEY” AWARD ON SEPTEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>**

Sherman Oaks, CA – Derek Fisher, Patrick McClenahan, Madelyn Alfano and Exceptional Minds received the “Star of the Valley” award at the **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Valley of the Stars Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony** on Friday, September 7, 2018 at the City of Calabasas Civic Center. Hosted by The Valley Economic Alliance (TVEA), the region’s premier economic development organization, the event celebrated leadership in arts and entertainment, business, education and humanitarianism.

“Since its founding, the Annual Gala has fast become one of the most prestigious event of its kind in our region,” said TVEA Chairman, Randy Witt. “With great pride, we honor individuals and organizations that have helped grow and strengthen our economy, improve the quality of life in our communities, and bring national recognition to the San Fernando Valley.”

**Derek Fisher**, five-time NBA champion who has played 18 seasons, eight of which with the Los Angeles Lakers, received the **Arts and Entertainment Award**. Fisher was also President of the National Basketball Players Association and head coach for the New York Knicks. Founder of The Derek Fisher Basketball Academy, focused on developing the basketball, leader and life skills of each camper.

**Madelyn Alfano**, one of California’s most successful restaurant owners received the **Business Award**. She founded Maria’s Italian Kitchen in Sherman Oaks in 1985, and now has 10 locations, 400 employees, provides healthy and quality food, hospitable and friendly service.

**Exceptional Minds**, a Sherman Oaks based non-profit vocational center, production studio and only school of its kind to successfully prepare and place young adults on the autism spectrum in visual effects and animation careers, received the **Education Award**. Yudi Bennett, Co-Founder and Director of Operations of Exceptional Minds accepted the award.

**Patrick McClenahan**, President and CEO of Goodwill Southern California’s 82 stores and 46 collection centers and the 2015 Special Olympics World Games; the largest sports and humanitarian event in the world, received the **Humanitarian Award**.

Randy Kerdoon was this year’s Master of Ceremonies, a multi-award winning sportscaster at KNX 1070 Newsradio and host and producer of the “Talking about Cars” podcast. Guests enjoyed an outdoor reception, presentation of awards, live music by OSTIA, dinner by Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, dessert by Maria’s Italian Kitchen and special Saddlerock wine selection.

Special guests included Congressmember Brad Sherman, Senator Bob Hertzberg, Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Calabasas Mayor Fred Gaines, Calabasas Mayor pro Tem David Shapiro, Los Angeles Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Calabasas Councilmember James Bozajian, Calabasas Councilmember Mary Sue Maurer, Calabasas Councilmember Alicia Weintraub, Burbank Councilmember Jess Talamantes, Calabasas City Manager Dr. Gary J. Lysik, Glendale Assistant City Manager Roubik Golanian and TV & Radio host Wink Martindale.

Gold event sponsors were City of Calabasas and Wells Fargo. Silver sponsors were Bill Allen, California State University Northridge, City of Burbank, City of Glendale, Richard Katz, Southland Regional Association of Realtors, Malibu Family Wines, Parker Brown Inc., Express Employment Professionals, and Union Bank. Bronze sponsors included Bank of America, Concorde Career College, Goodwill Southern California, Phillips Family, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, NBC Universal, Westfield Group and SoCal Gas.

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About The Valley Economic Alliance

*The Valley Economic Alliance is a non-profit economic development collaborative formed in 1994 to help businesses recover from the devastating effects of the Northridge earthquake. Its mission is to engage and unite Valley stakeholders to raise standards of living and economic vitality across the San Fernando Valley’s five-city region: Burbank, Calabasas, Glendale, Los Angeles and San Fernando.*