



The Valley Economic Alliance

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The Sky's the Limit for the Valley Economic Alliance 2022 Valley of the Stars Awards Gala

Christy Vega "Cooking" as the Trailblazer Award Recipient as the San Fernando Valley's highly-anticipated event returns in-person to celebrate the business community and economic vitality of the region.

SHERMAN OAKS, CA (March 17, 2022) Christy Vega, owner of Casa Vega, will be the recipient of the Trailblazer Award Recipient at the 2022 Valley of the Stars Awards Gala held the evening of April 8, 2022, at Castaway in Burbank, CA. This award is announced in advance of National Burrito Day, which will be on April 6, 2022.

Vega was selected this year as the James Beard Culinary Classics Award Winner for the California region for her restaurant, Casa Vega. With timeless appeal, the

restaurant is beloved regionally for quality food and reflects the character and cultural traditions of the community.

“Vega is a trailblazing woman, a trailblazing chef, and an incredible business leader in the San Fernando Valley,” stated Sonya Blake, President and CEO of The Valley Economic Alliance. “She has forged her own unique trail in business that we are proud to celebrate,” said Blake.

Vega and her family are the ultimate trailblazers and this is why Christy Vega was selected for the Valley of the Stars Trailblazer Award. Christy’s grandparents, who came from Tijuana to Los Angeles in the 1930s, were the proprietors of Cafe Caliente, a famous restaurant and nightclub on Olivera Street for 18 years. Christy’s father, Rafael Vega, carried on the family restaurant tradition when he opened Casa Vega in 1956 in Sherman Oaks, CA, at the age of 22. Christy studied business at Saint Mary’s College in Northern California before heading back home at age 22, like her father had done previously, to learn the restaurant business from the family.

Since the restaurant opened it has been popular and has continued to thrive and win culinary awards under Christy Vega’s leadership. Christy, always an innovator, pivoted during the Covid pandemic to focus on takeout as she created a new makeshift drive thru. She debuted online ordering and reservations and outdoor dining for the first time in the restaurant’s history. To adapt to the challenges of the pandemic, Christy adapted, streamlining the menu and lowering prices. She implemented tech and internal systems to ensure both her customers and her staff’s safety. Vega introduced a series of taco collaborations including with Fall Out Boy, the Foo Fighters, and Dakota Fanning with proceeds benefitting No Us Without You, a pandemic born nonprofit benefitting back of house restaurant workers and their families.

“It is an honor to be recognized by the business community for our family’s three generations of blazing trails,” said Christy Vega. “I am particularly proud to receive this award after the challenges of the past two years. I think the secret to Casa Vega’s success is the love and respect our family has for the restaurant. I honor the history and tradition of Casa Vega and am always trying to improve the experiences for our customers.”

Now in its 24th year, the highly anticipated in-person, annual Valley of the Stars fundraiser offers all the inspiration and entertainment the San Fernando Valley business community has come to expect while generating critical funds to sustain the Alliance’s Business Assistance Program in the coming year.

This star-studded event features Master of Ceremonies Jerry O’Connell, San Fernando Valley resident and host of THE TALK, CBS’ Daytime Emmy Award-winning talk show. O’Connell returns to the Gala following his role as emcee of the 2021 virtual event. Musical talent Alex Nester and accompaniment will provide the evening’s entertainment.

“This will surely be the event of the year for the San Fernando Valley offering all the inspiration and entertainment our guests have come to expect,” O’Connell said. “The gala serves to strengthen the valley’s economic recovery and support provides critical business assistance for local small businesses, job search assistance for local residents, advocacy for improving the quality of life in the San Fernando Valley region.”

Awards are the centerpiece of the Gala. The prestigious Star of the Valley Award – one of the most anticipated honors bestowed in Los Angeles – celebrates the businesses, people, and personalities that contribute to the vitality of the San Fernando Valley. After nearly two years of pause, pivot, and pandemic protocols, the Valley rebounds as an economic driver poised to shine with a renewed brilliance, energy, and strength.

Honorees include:

- Eric Dickerson, former LA Rams star and NFL running back as the Sports & Entertainment Honoree
- Menchie’s Frozen Yogurt as the Jane and Bert Boeckmann Business Leadership Honoree
- Ken Craft of Hope of the Valley as the Humanitarian Honoree
- Christy Vega, owner of Casa Vega, as the Trail Blazer Honoree

“It is only through the generosity of our sponsors that our economic development programs are made possible. These programs are especially critical during this time of economic recovery. Thank you in particular to our lead sponsors Mission Valley Bank and Payscout,” stated Sonya Blake, President and CEO of The Valley Economic Alliance.

Gala sponsors at the Trail Blazer level include Mission Valley Bank and Payscout. Game Changer level sponsors include the City of Glendale, EVERYWARE®, Gaspar Insurance Services, Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission, Maximus, Southland Regional Association of Realtors, Inc., Union Bank, and VISA. Influencer sponsors include Aszkenazy Development, Inc., Casa Vega, Century Housing, City of Burbank, City of Calabasas, City National Bank, Child Care Resource Center, CMTc, Express Employment Professionals, Gaines & Stacey, LLP, Goodwill Southern California, JP Morgan Chase & Co., Kaiser Permanente, Los

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Sponsorship and registration information is available at TheValley.net/Gala.

ABOUT THE VALLEY ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

The Valley Economic Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization comprised of business, government, education, and community leaders. Our mission is to engage and unite Valley stakeholders to raise standards of living and economic vitality across the San Fernando Valley, a five-city region encompassing Burbank, Calabasas, Glendale, Los Angeles, and San Fernando. This region consists of more than 1.9 million residents, over 160,000 businesses, and covers more than 350 square miles. To learn more about The Valley Economic Alliance, visit www.TheValley.net.

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