



NEWS

South Bay Workforce Investment Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

South Bay Workforce Investment Board
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**South Bay Workforce Investment Board Honors Workforce Achievements at the
29th Annual Alumni Awards Ceremony**

HAWTHORNE, CA – On November 14th, the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) hosted its 29th Annual Alumni Awards Ceremony at the iconic Los Angeles Clippers' INTUIT Dome in Inglewood. Approximately 500 civic leaders, educators, training partners, and employers were in attendance to celebrate individuals who have overcome barriers to employment through SBWIB programs and recognize businesses that partnered with the organization to advance workforce development in the South Bay region.

Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts, Jr. opened the ceremony with welcoming remarks and presented the SBWIB's highest honor, the **Esther Williams Award of Excellence**, to Steve Ballmer, owner of the Clippers and builder of the INTUIT Dome. Accepting on his behalf was Gillian Zucker, CEO of Halo Sports and Entertainment.

Other elected officials also in attendance included Assemblymember Tina McKinnor, and elected officials from the cities of Carson, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, and Torrance, along with Trustees from the Centinela Valley Union High School District and the Hawthorne School District.

SBWIB Chief Executive Officer Jan Vogel honored **State Senator Steven Bradford** with a special award for his decades of public service that included 12 years on the Gardena City Council, five years in the State Assembly and seven years in the State Senate; Vogel also thanked Bradford for his long term steadfast support of SBWIB initiatives over the years.

Additional highlights included the presentation of the **Wayne Spencer Community Service Award** to Susan Senior, who has dedicated over 30 years to advancing workforce development through the California Department of Rehabilitation and her volunteer service to the SBWIB board of directors as chair of the One-Stop Policy Committee and member of the Executive Committee.

Spotlight on Alumni Success

The event honored 21 program graduates and featured inspiring stories from SBWIB participants:

- **Maria Salazar Rivera**, a Lawndale native and graduate of Leuzinger High School, successfully completed an Aero-Flex pre-apprenticeship program offered in partnership with SBWIB, El Camino College, and Northrop Grumman Corporation. She progressed from a high school apprentice to a full-time machining apprentice at Northrop Grumman while pursuing

her engineering degree at Cal Poly Pomona. This past winter, she completed her apprenticeship, continuing to excel in her field and laying the groundwork for a promising career in mechanical engineering.

During her speech, Rivera posed a thought-provoking question: *"How can we truly challenge ourselves if we don't step out of our comfort zones?"* She credited SBWIB and its partners for equipping her with the tools to succeed and emphasized the importance of continuous learning.

- **Abdul Robertson**, an Inglewood resident, transformed his life after seeking help from the South Bay One-Stop Employment Service Center. After a period of unemployment, he leveraged SBWIB's resources to complete project management and human resources certifications at the University of La Verne. The program also provided essential tools like a laptop, enabling him to update his resume, attend interviews, and ultimately secure a leadership role as Director of Operations.

Reflecting on his journey, Robertson asked: *"Why waste time living someone else's life when you can chart your own path?"* His heartfelt message highlighted the resilience and determination required to overcome setbacks, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both alumni are shining examples of the transformative impact SBWIB programs have on individuals striving to overcome employment barriers and achieve success in their careers.

Inspiring Words from Leadership

SBWIB Executive Director Jan Vogel delivered a moving address, reflecting on the mission and impact of the organization. *"Every individual we celebrate tonight is a testament to the power of resilience and opportunity. When given the right tools and support, people can achieve extraordinary things,"* Vogel said. He emphasized that the success of the honorees and partners demonstrates the effectiveness of SBWIB's innovative programs and the importance of continued community collaboration. *"Our work is about more than just jobs—it's about transforming lives, strengthening communities, and creating a brighter future for all,"* Vogel concluded.

Business Partners Driving Change

The event also celebrated exemplary business partners whose collaboration with SBWIB created pathways to employment:

- **West Basin Municipal Water District** employed youth interns, offering career training while reducing costs.
- **Boeing** connected suppliers to SBWIB services and explored opportunities through SBWIB pre-apprenticeships in aerospace and advanced manufacturing.
- **D&W Trucking, Inc.** supported justice-involved individuals with career opportunities, fostering community growth
- **OSI Systems, Inc.** partnered with SBWIB to place youth in internships, leading to permanent employment.
- **Eravant** in Torrance established new federal apprenticeships and empowered a diverse workforce through on-the-job training.

Supporting the Mission

For more than 42 years, the SBWIB has championed workforce development in the South Bay region, providing job training and placement services to youth and adults. The annual gala raises essential funds for youth-focused programs like the Inglewood and Hawthorne Teen Centers and the Blueprint for Workplace Success Program.

For more information about SBWIB's programs and services, visit www.sbwib.org.



Photo caption: South Bay Workforce Investment Board's 29th Annual Award Recipients at Intuit Dome





Photo caption: Spotlight on Alumni Success, award recipient Abdul Robertson, Inglewood resident.



Photo caption: Spotlight on Alumni Success, award recipient, Maria Salazar Rivera, Lawndale resident.



Photo caption: Special recognition of long-time supporter of SBWIB awardee Steven Bradford, State Senator, alongside Jan Vogel, SBWIB, Inc. CEO.



Photo caption: Wayne Spencer Community Service Awardee Susan Senior, One-Stop Policy Chair, Executive Committee Member, retired – Department of Rehabilitation, alongside Crystal Spencer, Wayne Spencer’s daughter and SBWIB Board Member; Patricia Bennett, SBWIB’s Board Secretary, Executive Committee & One-Stop Policy; and Jan Vogel, SBWIB, Inc. CEO.