



Chamber honors the region's business, community leaders

Winners recognized at 57th annual PACE Awards

PENSACOLA BEACH, Fla. – Feb. 1, 2017 – Tonight, the Greater Pensacola Chamber announced its 57th Annual PACE Award recipients during a special one-night event at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front. Each year, the PACE Awards are presented to outstanding individuals in the community who have made significant contributions to Greater Pensacola's overall economic progress.

"We are privileged to have an abundance of leaders devoted to moving the Greater Pensacola region forward with their talents, enthusiasm and spirit," said Clay Ingram, Greater Pensacola Chamber President & CEO. "We are honored to pay tribute to these individuals who continue to positively impact our community."

Public Information Officer for the City of Pensacola, **Vernon Stewart**, was named Emerging Business Leader of the Year for his vocation, advocacy and volunteerism in our community. A vital advocate for vulnerable adults, children, veterans, and cancer survivors, Stewart now serves as the face and voice of the American Cancer Society and Relay for Life in Pensacola. **Meghan McCarthy**, Director of Health and Wellness for Baptist Health Care, was named Emerging Advocate Leader of the Year for her endeavor to improve quality of life and strengthen businesses in our community. McCarthy implemented a voluntary workplace health program, Healthy Lives that gained ninety percent participation among her peers and saved the hospital's health plan over \$577,000 in the first year.

United Way of Escambia County's President and CEO, **Andrea Krieger** was named Professional Leader of the Year for restoring the community's confidence in one of our areas leading nonprofit organizations. In 2016 alone, each dollar donated to the agency, returned a \$4 local impact that led to a \$14.5 million impact overall. **J.T. Young**, Customer Service General Manager for Gulf Power Company, was named Community Leader of the Year for his dedication to ensuring that individuals and organizations are developed and their capabilities are maximized. Under Young's direction, his teams have helped to enhance the well-being of our community by providing safe homes for children, finding jobs for individuals with disabilities and distributing funds and aid during difficult times.

Bruce Vredenburg, President of Hancock Bank's Pensacola & Emerald Coast Markets was named Business Leader of the Year. Vredenburg is currently leading efforts with Florida's Great Northwest to raise annual funding of \$240,000 for each of the next three years to establish an Advocacy and Preservation Campaign related to Triumph Funds. **Quint and Rishy Studer** were awarded the Spirit of Pensacola Award for their vision, investment, and dedication to cultivating our community. The Studer's have been pivotal in the revitalization of downtown Pensacola.

The first annual Leader in Education of the Year Award was presented to **Dr. Ed Meadows**, President of Pensacola State College. Meadows was instrumental in introducing the region to SkillsUSA and winning the bid to host the state conference in Pensacola for the next three years. This conference has led to a more than \$10 million economic impact on our community. Finally, **Dr. Judy Bense** was awarded the Pioneer Award for her lifetime of, devotion, achievement and inspiration to our community. At the University of West Florida, Bense successfully built a solid network of community partners, identified regional workforce needs, increased student residents, expanded the athletic program and strengthened academic programs so that students are prepared for future leadership.

About the Greater Pensacola Chamber

Founded in 1889, the Greater Pensacola Chamber is driven to create a climate of growth and success, to ensure economic prosperity and to enhance the quality of life in Greater Pensacola. The Pensacola Chamber Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, oversees Leadership Pensacola and completed Vision 2015, a five-year plan for job creation that brought more than 8,000 jobs to the area within three years. These initiatives take a strategic approach to regional growth and community building with the goal of building a healthier, better-educated workforce; continuing to advance the region's economic positioning; and improving community infrastructure. For additional information, please visit www.pensacolachamber.com, facebook.com/pensacolachamber, linkedin.com/company/greaterpensacolachamber or follow [@pcolachamber](https://twitter.com/pcolachamber).