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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

## **HISPANIC BUSINESS INITIATIVE FUND AND HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF METRO ORLANDO ANNOUNCE WINNERS OF THE 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DON QUIJOTE AWARDS**

### *Six Leaders Honored for Entrepreneurial and Professional Excellence*

**ORLANDO, FL (December 8, 2014)**—The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando (HCCMO) and the Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida, Inc. (HBIF) announced the winners of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Don Quijote Awards at a gala on Saturday, December 6. The Don Quijote Awards recognize business excellence and outstanding professionalism in Central Florida’s Hispanic community.

“The 2014 Don Quijote Awards winners are each exceptional in their field of work,” said HBIF President and CEO Augusto Sanabria. “They are some of the top professionals in our community and have demonstrated hard work, commitment and perseverance. Their contributions help our local economy thrive.”

Co-hosted by HBIF and HCCMO, the Don Quijote Awards gala is an annual tradition in Central Florida’s Hispanic community. The gala raises funds for both organizations to provide advocacy and resources for local Hispanic businesses.

“Saturday’s Don Quijote Awards gala was memorable! This event has become an annual tradition in our community as it allows us to celebrate the success of our outstanding business and civic leaders whose contributions impact economic development in Central Florida. They symbolize the spirit of Don Quijote in its true form,” said HCCMO President Diana Bolivar.

Blanquita Trabold received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her impact on the Hispanic community in Central Florida. Blanquita first arrived in Orlando 50 years ago at a time when her Mexican heritage and culture made her unique.

The values of culture and compassion are the hallmark of Blanquita’s work as the executive director of Casa de México. As the nonprofit arm of the Mexican Consulate in Orlando, Casa de México is committed to charitable giving and to the promotion of Mexican culture.

This year, more than 220 nominations were received by the selection committee and only 15 were chosen as finalists. At the gala, five were named as winners in distinct categories. The winners of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Don Quijote Awards are:

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- **Hispanic Business of the Year, 5 Years or Less:**  
Monica Oganés & Associates  
Owner: Monica Oganés
- **Hispanic Business of the Year, More Than 5 Years:**  
COMELCO, Inc.  
Owner: Jesse Gonzalez
- **Professional of the Year:** Elisha González Bonnewitz, Director of Community Affairs, Valencia College; Executive Director, Orange County Take Stock in Children
- **Excellence Award:** Dr. Gregor Alexander, Chairman, Arnold Palmer Medical Center Foundation

As part of the annual tradition, HBIF and HCCMO also gave the Hispanic Community Champion Award to a non-Hispanic person who has made significant contributions to the Hispanic community. This year Dr. Kathleen Plinske was named the winner for her work as President of the Osceola and Lake Nona campuses at Valencia College. Dr. Plinske is deeply committed to increasing access to college for young Hispanics. Under her leadership, the five year graduation rate of college-ready Hispanics at the school is higher than any other student group.

The Don Quijote Awards are made possible thanks to the support of the Central Florida business community. The event sponsors include **Walt Disney World Resort, Florida Blue, CenturyLink, Darden, Florida Hospital, Orlando Magic, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Orlando Health, Chase, OUC The Reliable One, and jetBlue**, among others.

For more information on the Don Quijote Awards, please visit [www.donquijoteawards.com](http://www.donquijoteawards.com).

#### **About the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando**

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando (HCCMO) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership and support the economic development of the Hispanic business community of Metro Orlando serving a seven county region. Its focus is on return on investment and value added propositions for its members through networking events and programs for entrepreneurs and professionals. For more information about the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, please visit [www.HispanicChamber.net](http://www.HispanicChamber.net) or call (407) 428-5870.

#### **About the Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida, Inc.**

The Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida (HBIF) is the leading Hispanic economic development, nonprofit organization specializing in providing free bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their businesses in the state of Florida. Since 1991, HBIF has promoted the Hispanic entrepreneur, offering programs and creating partnerships to advance economic development and foster job creation. HBIF is headquartered in Orlando and has offices in Miami, Tampa and Kissimmee. For more information, visit [www.HBIFFlorida.org](http://www.HBIFFlorida.org) or call (407) 428-5872.

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