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

**HISPANIC BUSINESS INITIATIVE FUND AND HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF METRO ORLANDO ANNOUNCE WINNERS OF THE 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DON QUIJOTE AWARDS**

*Six Leaders Awarded for Entrepreneurial and Professional Excellence in the Hispanic Business Community*

**ORLANDO, Fla.—December 9, 2013**—The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando (HCCMO) and the Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida, Inc. (HBIF) announced the winners of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Don Quijote Awards at a gala Saturday night. The gala took place at Epcot’s World Showplace Pavilion. Each year, the Don Quijote Awards recognize business excellence and outstanding professionalism in Central Florida’s Hispanic community.

“The 2013 Don Quijote Awards winners have stood out as leaders and among peers,” said HBIF President & CEO Augusto Sanabria. “Their vision and excellent work have positively affected their clients, employees and colleagues, and their contributions and legacy are making our business, Hispanic and Central Florida community better.”

“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. Rafael and Luisa Medina, the Lifetime Achievement award recipients, symbolize the spirit of Don Quijote in its true form,” said Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando President Diana Bolivar.

The Medinas received the Lifetime Achievement Award for their impact on the Hispanic community in Central Florida. The couple opened one of the area’s first bodegas in 1970. The bodega and adjoining restaurant quickly became a hub for the community, offering a taste of home to Hispanics living in the region.

In the 1980s, the Medinas held the first annual “Fiesta Medina” to celebrate the roots and presence of the growing Hispanic population. This event grew to be the longest-running celebration of Latino culture, food and music in Central Florida, eventually drawing more than 30,000 participants. This year, after 43 years in business, the couple retired and closed Medina’s Grocery.

In addition to the Lifetime Achievement Award, winners were named in five categories traditional to this event. This year, more than 150 nominations were received by the selection committee and only 15

finalists were chosen to continue to the final round. At the gala, five of those were named as winners in distinct categories. The winners of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Don Quijote Awards are:

- **Hispanic Business of the Year – 5 Years or Less:** Echo Interaction Group  
Owners: Carlos Carbonell and Mat Gaver
- **Hispanic Business of the Year – More Than 5 Years:** Kidsville Pediatrics  
Owners: Victor Pantoja and Dr. Francelis Gonzalez
- **Professional of the Year:** Leticia Diaz, Dean of the Barry University School of Law
- **Hispanic Community Champion:** Jerry Ross, Executive Director of the National Entrepreneur Center
- **Excellence Award:** Lt. Col. Wilson Ariza, Program Manager, US Army's Medical Simulation Program

The Don Quijote Awards serve three strategic objectives, which are:

- to recognize top Hispanic entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders of our community;
- to be the premier business recognition event for the Hispanic community of Central Florida; and
- to serve as a key fundraiser for HBIF and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The Don Quijote Awards was made possible thanks to the support of the Central Florida business community. The event sponsors include **Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Florida Blue, CenturyLink, Darden, Florida Hospital, Orlando Magic, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Fifth Third Bank, Orlando Health, Chase, State Farm, and jetBlue**, among others.

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

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership and support the economic development of the Hispanic business community of Metro Orlando. For more information about the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, please visit [www.hccmo.org](http://www.hccmo.org) or call 407-428-5870.

#### **About HBIF**

The Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida (HBIF) is the leading Hispanic economic development, nonprofit organization in Florida specializing in providing free bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their businesses. For more than 20 years 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).

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