Eight local professionals, businesses and community leaders will be honored Saturday, Feb. 11, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel during the annual Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce business awards and installation dinner.

“We are very excited and honored to pay tribute to such dedicated individuals who are passionate about our community and are constantly looking at ways to improve it for our residents and local businesses and institutions,” said Jay Tamsi, president/CEO of the KCHCC. “Their successes and involvement in the chamber have contributed in some ways to the achievements of the chamber overall.”

The honorees are as follows:

Steve Schilling, CEO of Clinica Sierra Vista, will receive the Man of the Year Award while Bakersfield College President Sonya Christian will be recognized with the Woman of the Year Award.

Schilling has been a longtime advocate of health care access for underserved, rural and low- to moderate-income families in the valley.
Schilling said Clinica is the now the fourth largest community health center system in the nation. He has led Clinica for almost 43 years.

Christian, who became president of BC in 2013, “has become an active champion of the college, focusing on student learning success and creating a stronger link between the campus and community and business,” Tamsi said.

He noted that during her time, BC has partnered with the chamber and Chevron on an Energy Academy, a four-week program designed for BC students interested in careers in the energy sector, and BC also became one of 15 community colleges in the state to offer a Baccalaureate degree in Applied Science in Industrial Automation.

Meanwhile, the Community Service Award will go to Robert Rodriguez of the California Highway Patrol, and the Nonprofit Award will be given to Self-Help Federal Credit Union, which is located in downtown Bakersfield with a branch in Lamont.

Rodriguez is a familiar face with the CHP appearing frequently on local media.

He also volunteers, including for the chamber, Tamsi said.

The nonprofit Self-Help Federal Credit Union “is one of the fastest-growing low-income designated credit unions” in the nation, according to Jose Gonzalez, branch/area manager of the credit union in Bakersfield.

Gonzalez said through volunteer work, Self-Help has been an additional resource for community partners and the Hispanic community; the credit union has hosted and partnered on community resource fairs and food distribution and has been able to help low-income families.

He added that Self-Help continues to provide financial education, support for the VITA program, and financial products and services to low-income communities in Kern County.

Another credit union, Kern Federal Credit Union, will be highlighted with the Corporation of the Year of Award while La Costa Mariscos Mexican restaurant will be saluted with the Large Business of the Year Award.

McMurphy's Irish Pub will be noted with the Small Business of the Year Award.

Established in 1949, KFCU was created by Kern County employees for the employees and their families. The credit union provides low-cost financial services to county residents.

Many may be familiar with La Costa, which was once a popular spot near Mill Creek. La Costa has been operating since 1992 but in 2014, moved to a new location on Chester Avenue near the Garces Circle, said restaurant manager Larissa Joya. The family-owned business will be celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

McMurphy's is owned by David and Tere Quintana. The business has been around for more than 40 years but the Quintanas became the first Hispanic owners in 2013.

The final award, which is the Chair’s Award, will be announced on the night of the event.

Carlos Navarro, the 2016 KCHCC board chairman, will select the honoree based on his or her contributions to the chamber and support of its services and programs, including business seminars and academies, cultural events and more.

Much kudos to all the honorees. It’s always exciting to see individuals and businesses recognized for continuing to thrive and grow over the years and in the process, continuing to make this town a better place.

For more information on the event, please contact the KCHCC at (661) 633-5495 or email: officeadmin@kchcc.org.

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