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Unique Group of Leaders to be Honored

New Annual Event Showcases Efforts to Promote Community Harmony

Fremont, CA.— Five community leaders will be honored by the [Alameda County Human Relations Commission](#) (HRC) for working to make the County a safer, healthier, and more welcoming home for its diverse residents.

In previous years, the HRC presented awards at meetings of the County Board of Supervisors; however, this year the event will take on its own identity at a separate location. The ceremony will be held **April 30, 2016** at the Royal Palace Banquet Facility, 6058 Stevenson Blvd, Fremont, CA 94538, from **1:00-2:30pm**.

HRC Chair Aisha Wahab explained, “The time that was generously allotted on the Supervisors’ agenda has allowed these awards to draw attention to the importance of the work our awardees are doing. This year, we are raising the visibility of the awards ceremony and creating a larger spotlight for the awardees by holding the ceremony at an offsite venue.”

This year’s recipients are:

- Mark Burks, founder and director of Chosen 2 Lead Ministries which helps young men of color to identify their leadership potential and how to deal with everyday struggles while becoming a man.
- Raj Nathawat, President of the Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA). He also leads efforts to provide food, clothes, shoes, blankets and other necessary items for the homeless on almost monthly basis, and takes charge of float building for the Festival of India Parade.
- Nurges Gheyaszada, marriage and family therapist. Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, she was forced to relocate due to the Soviet invasion of the country. She has worked with immigrants, domestic violence victims, and with individuals who suffer from severe mental illnesses.
- Melanie Marie Tervalon, MD, MPH. With over 30 years’ experience in health care as a program director, advisor, teacher, clinician, strategist and consultant, she founded the Multicultural Curriculum Program as a practicing pediatrician at Oakland’s Children’s Hospital.
- Shamsa Rafay, who has worked within her community as a parent, PTA President, and in the interfaith community for over a decade. She has worked to cultivate and foster genuine understanding and respect for all people and the Muslim community within churches, hospitals and her own home.

The event will also feature a keynote address by journalist and author Michelle Smith-McDonald, who is currently the Public Information Officer for Dublin Unified School District and was a 2015 Alameda County Women’s Hall of Fame inductee.

The commissioners are appointed by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to advise them on community issues including but not limited to education, employment, and public safety.

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