

For Immediate Release

**45th Annual SCORE Awards Honors Exceptional Business Owners
in Southwest Florida Area**

Fort Myers, Fla. (March 24, 2016) – Southwest Florida SCORE held their 45th annual luncheon at the Gateway Golf and Country Club on Monday, March 21, 2016 honoring recipients. Sharing in honoring the award winners were Mayor Nick Batos of Village of Estero, Ralph Warmack, District Director of SCORE, and Tina Davis of the Small Business Administration (SBA). Sylvia Dorisme of Southwestern Vocational Training received the Client of the Year award, Ali Frantz of Emmeline Textiles received the Businesswoman of the Year award, and Pedro de Armas of Naples Mural received the Minority Owned Business Person of the Year award. Each of these recipients displayed the ingenuity and diligence to take their businesses to the next level, due in large part to their work and mentorship of Southwest Florida’s chapter of SCORE.

SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and has been [mentoring](#) small business owners for more than forty years.

Sylvia Dorisme was honored for her work in expanding her business. At the young age of 25, Dorisme embarked on opening a vocational school in Cape Coral. Upon starting her business, things began to grow faster than anticipated and she sought out assistance. “A couple of years ago, I started looking online for some free business resources,” shared Dorisme. “After reviewing the SBA website, I came across SCORE and it was the best thing that could have happened for my business and the continued success of our students”. Having followed the guidance and mentorship offered through SCORE, Dorisme was able to make valuable connections in the community, expand her growing business from a 700 square foot facility with a staff of two to an over 6500 square foot facility with a contracted faculty staff of 12 and 6 office staff. “My advice to business owners is to take your goals seriously, take the actions you need to succeed and definitely seek the guidance and mentorship to take your company to new heights. This is how you plan to succeed and thanks to the wonderful mentorship I have received through SCORE, my dreams are an exciting reality,” Dorisme continued.

Ali Frantz came to SCORE seeking guidance in how to grow her business in 2014. Starting a line of baby slings and embracing her passion she modestly started her business doing everything on her own. “When I came to SCORE, my gross sales were around \$5,000. From the mentorship I received, our gross sales increased by five times in a year and we are projected to more than double that this year! It seems so surreal to have been honored with this reward,” shares Frantz. “It is all because of SCORE; from formulating my business plan, to legal and technical, to marketing and more. If you are starting a business or looking to grow your business, you definitely should come to SCORE and listen to them. They know what they are doing.”

Pedro de Armas came to the United States in 2009 from Havana, Cuba with a goal and dream, as do so many immigrants. With a love of the arts and painting, he started Naples Murals. In order to provide for his family, he worked in a shipyard sanding hulls on boats while also trying to grow his mural business. de Armas, who became a US citizen last month, started with SCORE in July 2015. Within months of doing the work his mentors provided, he landed a Collier County School District contract to

provide 41 murals in cafeterias and gymnasiums. In addition he has continued to grow his business providing murals in libraries, private homes and churches. Much of de Armas' work also hangs in galleries in Miami and Amsterdam. "I am beyond surprised and honored to have been selected as the Minority Owned Business Person of the Year. My business could not have grown so quickly if it had not been for SCORE. I sincerely thank my mentor Jack Dunigan for his belief in me and the invaluable wisdom he shared."

Steve Records, SCORE VP of Field Operations shared in his Keynote Address "We are changing the world. People are not interested in what you do, but why you do what you do. Our valued volunteers and mentors get to the why. Whether you are a volunteer, partner, member or business owner seeking guidance, we are here to help change the world. We are creating jobs, bettering our economy and making changes one step at a time."

For more information, please visit SCORE Southwest Florida Chapter 219 located in the Social Security Building in Suite 231 at 3650 Colonial Blvd. in Fort Myers visit the website southwestflorida.score.org, email score219@embarqmail.com or call (239) 489-2935.

About SCORE

Founded in 1964, SCORE is headquartered in Herndon, VA and has 364 chapters throughout the United States and its territories, with over 13,000 volunteers nationwide.

SCORE is a valuable network of 13,000+ volunteers who offer small business entrepreneurs confidential business counseling services at no charge. SCORE volunteers have the knowledge and experience to help any small business owner get the help they need. Our dedicated volunteers represent over 3,000 years of experience across 62 industries.

SCORE also provides local workshops and events throughout the country to connect small business owners with the people and information they need to start, grow, and maintain their businesses, as well as online workshops available 24/7. SCORE provides resources, templates and tools to assist entrepreneurs in developing tools and plans they need to navigate their way to small business success.

Our experienced counselors provide FREE small business counseling for business owners in the Southwest Florida area from our Fort Myers office. Southwest Florida SCORE conducts approximately 1000 counseling cases each year. In doing this our counselors spend approximately 4500 hours each year in this volunteer venture.

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