October 22, 2012
For immediate release
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ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAWS/ESOP AWARD WINNERS

The California/Western States Chapter of the ESOP Association announced the winners of its annual awards program during the 2012 Chapter Conference that was held October 3-5 in Phoenix Arizona.

The chapter awards program recognizes ESOP companies in several areas: Communications Excellence, Best ESOP Event, Most Effective ESOP Committee, Company of the Year and Employee Owner of the Year.

The Employee Owner of the Year award honors a non-management employee of an ESOP company who has taken the initiative to become an exemplary employee-owner by learning about the ESOP, helping to educate and motivate their colleagues, and actively promoting an employee ownership culture.

This year’s nominees were:

Hot Dog on a Stick - Anna Tomlinson
KAPCO - Martha Martinez
LeFiell - Tai Nguyen
Rainbow Environmental - Heriberto Contreras
Recology - Joe Rojas
RW Smith - Sandra Williams
RW Smith - Evelyn Roberts

Joe Rojas of Recology was recognized as the winner of this year’s award. Joe has been an employee owner for the same company for 29 years, and has had a perfect attendance record for all 29 years. His excellent representation of his company and of ESOPs is demonstrated by assisting and participating in all company and community events such as the parades, drill team,
company volunteer events, city-wide cleanups, and fundraisers. As one of the leads in their “Garbage Man Drill Team,” he performs at community events and parades on behalf of the company. This helps promote the ESOP concept to the community as it shows the public how involved the company and employee-owners are in the communities they serve. The “Drill Team” has received 26 1st Place awards in various parades and in 2011 they won “Best of Show.”

Joe has been labeled an Employee Ownership Foundation fundraising champion by his company because he always encourages fellow employee owners to contribute to raise money for the Employee Ownership Foundation no matter what fundraising project the group is working on. Because of his great ownership behaviors, he was selected to be Recology’s Company Wide 2011 ROC Star.

Joe Rojas will represent the CAWS Chapter at the May 2013 ESOP Conference in Washington DC.

The ESOP Company of the Year is presented to a company for its demonstrated commitment to employee-ownership and its success in maximizing the benefits of the ESOP regardless of company size or maturity of the ESOP.

This year’s nominees were:
Caltrol
Carl Warren & Company
Entertainment Partners
Hot Dog on a Stick
KAPCO
TravelStore

This year’s award winner is Carl Warren & Company.

Carl Warren & Company separated itself from the other nominees by its continued employee growth within their ESOP company, the increase of Employee Owners, their community involvement as an ESOP, and their support of business to business within the ESOP community.

During July 2011 during a difficult economic period, Carl Warren & Company grew from 200 employees in 25 nationwide offices to over 325 employees in nearly 40 offices by acquiring a non-ESOP company. They immediately wanted their new colleagues to understand each employee is an integral part of the success of the company and driving their ESOP’s value. So their newly acquired employee owners were introduced to the “Voice of the Employees,” which provides employees a forum to ask questions, give feedback and provide awareness to situations in a safe environment without fear of retribution.
The newest employees who became employee-owners this year, were introduced to the fact that being employee-owned has allowed the company to maintain a 97% customer retention rate with several customers being clients for over 20 years. Because of their continued success, their company’s share value has increased 30% since 2005, increasing 6 consecutive years in a row. The company truly believes being employee owned is the main reason for their success. You can see their pride in ESOP everywhere in their day-to-day business…from their company website to their company shirts proudly displaying the ESOP logo, to using other ESOP companies for their printing and health insurance needs.

**Carl Warren & Company will represent the Chapter at the May 2013 ESOP Conference in Washington DC.**

**Most Effective ESOP Committee award presented to two chapter members.**

![Most Effective ESOP Committee: Allison Hunter, Tesco Controls and Sara Jorgensen of Harrell Remodeling](image)

The Most Effective ESOP Committee award is presented to the ESOP Committee that has best coordinated activities to educate and motivate their fellow employee owners.

The first award went to **Harrell Remodeling** that has an ESOP Committee that is representative of the diversity of the company, with representatives from all departments who funnel information both to and from the committee.

They actively rotate members based on a charter established a few years ago for their committee that provides guidelines. They routinely invite new employees and others as meeting guests to give more ESOP education to individuals. Rotating members keeps the ESOP committee fresh with new ideas and as a whole, seeds the company with educated ESOP staff. All committee members discuss ideas with their coworkers, both before and after meetings to circulate information.

At quarterly Full Staff meetings, they discuss the ESOP, the current status, and the company financial reports. Annually, they have a “Guess the share value” – one year, a black SUV rolled up to the Full Staff meeting with the management team dressed in black suits and carrying in a suitcase (accompanied by the “men in black” theme) to announce their share value – and then announcing the employee owner with the closest guess. – They have created an ESOP Brag Wall in the lobby that includes the employee owner of the year and quarter picture, and informational “Fun Facts” about the ESOP.

The ESOP committee is charged with reviewing and analyzing the results of the annual Employee Owner survey and they present the results at the Full Staff meeting so all the Employee Owners know that that the survey is objective and comments are taken seriously.
**Tesco Controls** was also awarded the **Most Effective ESOP Committee** Award. Tesco’s committee is comprised of six members who all Promote ESOP culture and are responsible for New Employee Meet and Greets and employee-owner birthday recognitions that include singing birthday cards and distributing balloons/cards and goody bags on employee birthdays.

The Committee understands that in order to educate Employee Owners they themselves must be thoroughly educated. With all of their activities, they organize the program into regular events, which assures continuity and individual commitment to the program. They hold a semi-annual committee meeting with the ESOP Trustee. They are also committed to annually attending the ESOP Association California/Western States Chapter Spring and Fall Conferences and the ESOP Technical Conference.

The Committee also embraces hosting ESOP Association meetings at their facility, which provides the opportunity to learn from other ESOP company committee members and employees. They also find time to meet with other local ESOP companies from around the area to exchange ideas. All Committee activities are funded by outside sources that they manage (scrap metal collection/sales, surplus parts sales, and other activities).

Each quarter, organized by the Committee and presented by the CFO and executives, this meeting is to "share the $ numbers" with all EOs. The company believes that only when EOs clearly see the bottom line will they understand their direct interest in the company's long-term success. At this meeting, all EOs have the opportunity to understand that they share a common agenda and goals with the executive management team and that they succeed together. Annually they hold a Share-price presentation with all EOs and the ESOP trustee.

The company’s experience as counsel to hundreds of ESOP companies has taught them that integrating ownership culture into the EOs' everyday thinking is the most difficult task for any ESOP company. This ESOP Committee works tirelessly to develop a culture of ownership thinking among professional and manufacturing staff, including English-learning employees.

The **Best ESOP Event** award winner was **Entertainment Partners**. This award is presented to the company that has recently sponsored an event demonstrating their commitment to employee ownership.

Entertainment Partners, in March 2012, planned a “Meet the Trustee Chili Cook-Off” during the company valuation process.

For the cook-off, 12 Employee Owners entered their best homemade chili for a chance to wow their Trustee’s taste buds. Along with their Trustee as a judge, other judges included the company’s general counsel and Director of HR. Each chili sample was judged on aroma, consistency, taste, and aftertaste. After the scores were tallied up, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes were awarded along with “The Trustee’s Favorite” prize.
After prizes were awarded, tasting of the chili entries was opened up to all Employee Owners as red-checkered tablecloths and vases of bright sunflowers set the scene, welcoming people to sit down and enjoy the chili and each other’s company.

While everyone enjoyed the Employee Owned chili, this company had a “Meet the Trustee Trivia Challenge.” During the week leading up to the Chili Cook-Off, the company posted articles on their Intranet to promote the chili cook-off along with personal information about their Trustee, his role as the Trustee, ESOP valuation in general, and key items that can affect their share price.

During the cook-off, five committee members walked around in cowboy hats, in honor of their Trustee being from Texas, and asked trivia questions regarding the articles sent out the week before. If the Employee Owner answered the question correctly, they would receive a sticker to place on their Trivia Challenge Card. If the Employee Owner could fill up five spaces on their card, they would be entered for a raffle at the end of the day.

The event allowed everyone to get to know their Trustee on a personal level while also educating the Employee Owners on share price, the valuation process, and ESOP communications.

The **Communications Excellence** award recognizes the benefits to ESOP companies of all sizes, achieved through their communication of the value and importance of ESOPs, using a variety of media. The chapter awarded four awards this year: Print, Media, Intranet and Overall Excellence in Communications.

**Communications Excellence for Print** was awarded to **Hot Dog on a Stick** for its use of an educational flyer to engage their over 100 stores in discussions about employee ownership and to celebrate being 100% employee owned. The educational flyer properly named “A Splash of ESOP,” is aimed to educate and motivate every employee owner in the company. This one page flyer, sent at the beginning of each quarter to every store, has enough information and questions to engage the employee owners, but also short enough to avoid any overload of material. Every issue of “A Splash of ESOP” includes one question that requires stores to email back their feedback. This not only ensures that the stores and employee owners are reviewing the material, but it engages them in the ESOP process, helping them take ownership.

**Caltrol, Inc.** also received **honorable mention in Communications Excellence in print.**

**Communications Excellence for Media** was awarded to **The Sleep Train.** The Sleep Train’s project brought together employee owners from all over the company, primarily from the ESOP Communications Committees, to put words to their culture and to create a strong image of what they are to employee owners, their community and business partners.
Rather than having senior management create the Purpose, Values and Visions (PVV) with no input from owners, they selected owners from throughout the company to come to their corporate office in Rocklin, California to recreate the PVVs. This project, a video that provides a snapshot of the events that took place to create their PVVs, was facilitated by employee owners in the training and human resources departments.

The company reported in its nomination form that during the months since the release of the new PVV’s to all of its 1200+ current employee-owners, there has been a noticeable difference in the language used by the employee owners. Terms like “healthier lives”, “Integrity”, “Ownership”, “Community” and many others are now more prevalent in how they all communicate with customers, employees and to the community. There is also a strong sense of pride in regards to the Triangle of Success, and you will hear “Win-Win-Win” used when they determine decisions that may not have a clear answer. The company’s PVV’s are used from the top down and are often referenced in communications to owners.

**Recology** also received **honorable mention in Communications Excellence in media**.

**Communications Excellence for Intranet** was awarded to **Entertainment Partners**.

Entertainment Partners launched its intranet in August 2011 in response to feedback received from employee owners in their company survey, and during a series of town hall meetings held by the CEO. Employee owners expressed that the company could improve internal communications and provide access to information in a more timely manner. The internal newsletter was generated once every two months in the year before the launch of the intranet, and company emails were clogging inboxes to the point that no one read them. The ESOP Communications Committee wrote the initial “here’s why we need an intranet and what it should do” paper, then handed the project off to Marketing Communications who worked with key stakeholders from across the company to develop a Microsoft SharePoint intranet with features that would accomplish what their committee outlined. With the company’s new intranet, its goals are to foster the company, community, ownership culture, and communication, and to increase work efficiency.

The intranet is now the main place where office locations, work teams, and committees around the company share internal news and resources. There are quick links to company values, frequently accessed pages, and forms used on a daily basis. Having this access has increased company efficiency and saved a lot of time that would normally be spent on the phone or on email trying to track things down. Now, accessing a form is a quick search and click away, so employee-owners can focus energy on helping clients, which helps grow the company’s value!

Also receiving **honorable mention in Communications Excellence in Intranet** was **KAPCO**.
The award for **Overall Excellence in Communications** was presented to **Rainbow Environmental**.

Rainbow Environmental prepared a project that was implemented in 2011 to allow management to produce an informative outlet to address new and ongoing company projects and changes as well as allowing an outlet for the building of a cohesive company mindset about employee ownership to all employees.

The company’s Executive Vice President developed a PowerPoint presentation to relay informative company information to employee owners. This project allowed a platform in which employees felt at ease to inquire about their role as employee owners, as well as allowing the company to further emphasize the great benefits of employee ownership. This outlet has allowed for the company to thank employees for their role in the success of the companies’ growth by recognizing each department and special employees who have gone above and beyond the call of their work descriptions to make their company grow.

The company also created a, “Blue Blood Award,” recognizing outstanding employees. The presentations also served to allow the company to recognize newly vested employee owners in each department and thank them for their work. The goal of the project was to inform all employees of the company’s new projects, the benefits of employee ownership, and to build a culture where every employee is made to feel like they make a difference because of their participation in employee ownership. The project also wanted to bring a real perspective of the benefits of employee ownership with a video of retired employee owners speaking on the great difference that being a past employee owner has made in their retirement. This video brought home the idea that employee ownership is an added financial benefit for the retired employee and their household.

Through these employee owner meetings the company found that employees are more aware of the importance of employee ownership. Employees are now more willing to ask questions about the benefits of employee ownership. During the presentation they found employees were very receptive to the video presented of their retired co-workers bringing to life the idea that employee ownership benefits can be a real substantial benefit to them in retirement. The overall feelings during the meetings were positive with employees being engaging and attentive to the information being given. The efforts of this company have heightened awareness of employee ownership through employee owners referring to themselves more and more as owners.

About the CAWS Chapter Awards Program:

*Winners are chosen by a panel of judges, both management and non-management, from different companies, each of whom has demonstrated active experience and interest in the field of ESOPs.*

About The ESOP Association:
Founded in 1978, The ESOP Association is the national trade association for companies with employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) and the leading voice in America for employee ownership. The core cause of The ESOP Association is the belief that employee ownership will improve American competitiveness, increase productivity through greater employee participation, and strengthen our free enterprise economy. The ESOP Association represents approximately 1,400 ESOP companies.