

The Salinas Californian

February 26, 2010

www.thecalifornian.com

Ag community gives to Natividad Medical Center

D'Arrigos earn Hero Award as foundation rakes in \$265,000

By Mike Hornick

SALINAS, CALIF. - Grower-shipper John D'Arrigo put together a team of rivals, and Natividad Medical Foundation is reaping the rewards.

The foundation collected \$265,000 at a Thursday luncheon held at the National Steinbeck Center to honor his parents, Andy D'Arrigo and Phyllis D'Arrigo, as the winners of its third annual Hero Award. The honorees accounted for \$100,000 of that and set the ball rolling toward creation of an industry group that could benefit more local charities in the future.

The six-week-old group is called the Agricultural Leadership Council and its members represent 21 grower-shippers. They donated \$165,000.

"We're all competitors," said John D'Arrigo, president of D'Arrigo Bros.

"We're fighting it out every day in the marketplace. But for a cause like this they all jumped on board."

Andy D'Arrigo, whose photo as a 3-year-old in 1927 became the iconic face of Andy Boy produce, said he felt a responsibility to the farm workers among Natividad Medical Center's patients.

"Almost everybody who walks through the door [at Natividad] is working in agriculture in this valley," he said. "That's a reason to give back."

The average patient there earns less than \$15,000 annually, according to a foundation video.

After touring neonatal, emergency and other care units with his parents, John D'Arrigo began to muse about what more could be done. The hospital handed him a list of needs that would be better mounted on a scroll than a clipboard. The donations will fund a variety of neonatal and surgical equipment.

But Natividad might not be the only beneficiary.



Andrew and Phyllis D'Arrigo, right, were honored with the "Hero" award, presented by Linda Ford, president and CEO of NMF and Dr. Marc Tunzi. (Richard Green)

"If I can activate a council of ag families and ag leaders, the sights can be set very high on helping other agencies," D'Arrigo said. "United Way, for example. We just wanted to get this thing going and see if the seed will grow. I expect to activate this group and meet needs as we see them."

Andy D'Arrigo and Phyllis D'Arrigo have a history of giving to Salinas-based organizations, among them the Kinship Center, Rancho Cielo and Palma High School.

"[Natividad] has not seen this breadth and depth of support from the agriculture community before, and we are so grateful to the D'Arrigo family and The Agricultural Leadership Council members for recognizing the need to help the hospital," said Harry Weis, Natividad Medical Center's chief executive officer.