

## **Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad**

P.O. Box 1031

Santa Maria, CA 93456

For Immediate Release

May 14, 2015

### **First Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad's Fundraising Gala Puttin' on the Ritz a Success!**

The Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad hosted a fundraising Gala Puttin' on the Ritz on Thursday April 23 at the Trilogy in Monarch Dunes in Nipomo. Attendees enjoyed a 1920's theme dinner and auction emceed by former KSBY journalist Monica Quintero. The event raised funds for both first responders in the Santa Maria Valley and to the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum for the restoration of their 1926 Pullman Observation Car.

The Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad presented Kevin O'Roark with the first Annual G. Allan Hancock Award for History Preservation in recognition of his work preserving the rich history of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad. Captain Hancock and his family owned the Santa Maria Valley Railroad from 1925 to 2006. Captain Hancock was instrumental in building the Santa Maria Valley Railroad up to one of the busiest short line railroads in the western United States by the 1930's. Friends Chairman Jeff Karsh and Jane Brennan, the great granddaughter of Captain G. Allan Hancock, presented the award.

Our event sponsor, Santa Maria Valley Railroad, was proud to honor Dottie Lyons as the first recipient of the Railroad Public Safety Award for promoting local railroad safety in our community. Ms. Lyons was instrumental in bringing the Santa Maria Country Club and the Santa Maria Valley Railroad together for a solution for a new entrance for members who reside in the Foxenwood Estates after an unsafe and illegal opening to the railroad tracks were closed. Ms. Lyons used her own funds to construct a locked keyed entry to the Country Club for a safe and convenient entrance for Country Club members. Rob Himoto, President of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, and Al Sheff, General Manager of the Railroad, presented the award.

On Saturday May 9 during the christening of the newly renamed La Cuesta, the museum's 1926 Pullman Observation Car, Rob Himoto, President of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, on the behalf of the Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad presented a check for \$2,500.00 to Karl Hovanitz, President of the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, and Store Manager and Publicity Chairman Diane Marchetti. The proceeds will be used to renovate the La Cuesta. Sydney McGovern, the great-great granddaughter of Captain G. Allan Hancock, had the honors of breaking the champagne bottle christening the La Cuesta. The museum stored the La Cuesta for 7 years from 2007 to 2014 as it was used for private excursions and various events on the Santa Maria Valley Railroad.

A check presentation to the City of Santa Maria Fire Department for first responder equipment and materials will be held at a future date.

The Friends would like to thank the event sponsors Santa Maria Valley Railroad, San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, G.A. Hancock Family, Coast National Bank, and Searchlight Realty.

Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad are a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad and to educate the public about the current railroad industry. For more information go to our website at [www.friends-smvrr.org](http://www.friends-smvrr.org).

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