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MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah Spoonholtz

Email: SSpoonholtz@smrchamber.com

Phone: (269) 932-4040

2021 BUSINESS RECOGNITION BREAKFAST SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL CHAMBER and CORNERSTONE ALLIANCE WINNERS ANNOUNCED

ST. JOSEPH, MI - A celebration of local businesses and business professionals happened Wednesday, March 10th at the 2021 Business Recognition Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony. A total of 17 combined businesses and individuals were recognized by their colleagues and the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber and the Cornerstone Alliance. The event was sponsored by Chamber member's Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Comcast Business, Horizon Bank, Kruggel Lawton CPAs, Mid-West Family Southwest Michigan, MoodyontheMarket.com, Lake Michigan College Mendel Center and United Federal Credit Union.

Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber President and CEO Arthur Havlicek said, "While hosting our event virtually wasn't ideal, the ability to celebrate and recognize the businesses, organizations, individuals, and leaders that have come together for Southwest Michigan in 2020 was of incredible importance." Cornerstone Alliance President Rob Cleveland added, "2020 was a difficult year for everyone, but seeing the community step up and support our business community only aided in their resiliency and ability to survive."

NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARD

2020 proved to us the importance that non-profits play in our community. Our Non-Profit Excellence Winner is the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA).

As a private, non-profit Community Action Agency, part of the state and national network. In 1982 they began servicing Van Buren County, before becoming incorporated and expanding to Cass County with the addition of human services. In 1992, Berrien County was officially added to their service delivery area.

SMCAA brings together federal and state grant funds as well as dollars from local, private, and public sources. These resources are then directed into programs which aid the low income and otherwise disadvantaged throughout the age spectrum, from preschoolers to the elderly of Southwest Michigan. The funds include dollars which are targeted at very specific problems, as well as dollars which are more flexible in nature.

The SMCAA is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security. Our vision is to be a beacon of support in a strong thriving community by helping people and changing lives.

In 2020, the SMCAA was able to service 54,634 households with food and personnel hygiene products from April through December. They assisted in avoiding over 424 household evictions, provided 2,047 bed nights at their homeless shelter, distributed 16,936 masks to the vulnerable populations in the tri-county area, and had over 7,200 volunteer hours at their warehouse.

