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7TH ANNUAL FRIENDS OF THE SANTA MARIA VALLEY RAILROAD DINNER GALA AND FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS

The 7th Annual Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad Dinner Gala and Fundraiser was held on Saturday May 21, 2022 at the Santa Maria Fairpark after a two-year hiatus. The Dinner Gala honored four individuals who are instrumental in a concerted effort in the cleanup of the railroad right of way. Also honored are the excursion operations of the restored former Santa Maria Valley Railroad steam locomotive No. 205 operating in Lebanon Oregon.

The Santa Maria Valley Railroad's Annual Railroad Public Safety Award went to City of Santa Maria's Code Enforcement Supervisor Joylyn Castaing, Senior Park Services Officer Casey Stone, and Police Department Beat Coordinator Officers Matthew Jensen and Kenneth Mize. Together they organized a massive cleanup on the SMVRR right of way and came up with a long-term plan to mitigate the encampments and trash problems. Presenting the awards were Rob Himoto, President of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, and Nathan Paul, Director of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad.

Excerpts from Rob Himoto's presentation of the award, "The annual Railroad Safety Award is presented to the recipients for promoting railroad safety in our community. This year's award goes to a group who worked together to come up with a long-term solution with the trespassing, homeless encampments and trash along the railroad right of way.

The homeless problem is getting worse not just here but all over the nation. It is a problem with no simple solution. The only resolution in our case would take coordination and cooperation with the city, adjacent landowners, adjacent businesses, and nonprofits to address this complex situation. It would take a lot of effort and creativity for someone to coordinate such an effort.

Our safety award recipients have one thing in common with prior award recipients such as two-time recipient Dottie Lyons. This year's recipients really care about our community. In the course of their day, they experience the worst parts of society. Yet they still put the effort in to make even the worst parts of the community better. They have put the extra effort to pull this project together coordinating different resources and entities to bring this project to fruition.

Homeless encampments and trash have been a major problem along the main line between Blosser Street and Depot Street, along the West Leg of the Wye, and the southern portion of the historic Airbase Branch. The railroad was outgunned and outmatched with this massive homeless population. It took this group who beyond their job descriptions and who really

care about our community to put the effort and coordinate this project. The railroad applied for and successfully won a grant for the cleanup. The cleanup was coordinated with organizations reaching out to try to offer assistance to the homeless and try to get them reconnected with family and friends. They coordinated with Serve Santa Maria last month and graffiti was covered up. The next phase is landscaping that will be a deterrent for homeless encampments.”

The G.A. Hancock History Preservation Award is being awarded to Rick Franklin of the Santiam Excursion Trains and the Albany and Eastern Railroad. Albany and Eastern Railroad purchased the newly restored former SMV 205 steam locomotive and the Santiam Excursion Trains currently operate the locomotive. After being retired from the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, the 205 was on display at the Santa Maria Fairpark for many years before Mr. Lavacot purchased the locomotive in 1983.

The presenter of the G.A. Hancock History Preservation award were Jeff Karsh, Chairman of the Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, Jane and Steve Brennan, great grandchildren of Captain G.A. Hancock, and Sydney McGovern, great great granddaughter of Captain Hancock.

The Non-Profit Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad is dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad as well as educating the public about the railroad industry.

Fundraising efforts raised money for programs to educate the public about the role the Santa Maria Valley Railroad played in the development of the Santa Maria Valley.

Event sponsors were the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, G.A. Hancock Family, Brandt Ag, and Valley Petroleum Services.