

Entrepreneur has made difference in Long Beach

By Karen Robes Meeks, Staff Writer

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LONG BEACH - Craig C. Barto, president and chief executive officer of Signal Hill Petroleum Inc., was named City National Bank's Entrepreneur of the Year Award at the Hyatt Regency Long Beach.

More than 600 people watched Barto receive the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce's most prestigious honor on Thursday. It is given to business leaders who have made a significant impact in the business and philanthropic communities.

The chamber also honored Bancap Investment Group Inc. principal and founder Steve Conley with the Kingdom Partner Solutions LLC Community Spirit Award, and Toyota Auto Body California with the Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt Corporate Citizen Award.

Barto joins a group of high-profile people in the past who have been honored with the award, including Grand Prix founder Chris Pook, Mario and John Molina of Molina Healthcare, former Long Beach City Manager and Harbor Commissioner Jim Hankla.

In a video featured at the event, Mayor Bob Foster said Barto exemplified good corporate citizenship.

"He's a person of integrity, he's a person of intelligence and more than anything, he's a

person of compassion for the communities in which he does business," Foster said.

Barto, who started his career in real estate with his father and partner Jerrel Barto, helped guide the family real estate business into oil.

The elder Barto said thinking outside of the box, whether in real estate or oil ventures, is one

of his son's greatest strengths.

"He can see opportunities that many people couldn't see," his father said.

Today, the business includes most of the wells and mineral rights in the Long Beach/Signal Hill oilfield, natural gas wells in Northern California, oil and gas exploration in Texas and retail shopping centers and office buildings in the Long Beach/Signal Hill area.

The company annually produces about a million barrels of oil.



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The younger Barto said he was humbled and excited by the honor and spoke of working through tough times filled with sleepless nights, rollercoasting oil prices and housing cycles.

"Through hard work, tenacity - certainly a bit of luck - you can really make your dreams come true," the honoree said.

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