

being named one of the 2016 Businesses of the Year at the Des Moines East and South Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony earlier this year.

The Business of the Year award celebrates a local business that is dedicated to serving their community. RDG Planning and Design has helped to design numerous buildings, landscapes and interiors across the Midwest, but the company's dedication extends beyond their office walls. Their employees help embody one of the company's core principles of giving back to the community. From schools to churches, neighborhood associations to charities and non-profits, you'll find RDG employees devoting their time to making their communities a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent Iowa businesses like RDG Planning and Design in the United States Congress and it is with great pride that I recognize them today. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating them for this outstanding recognition and in wishing them all nothing but continued success.

2017 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD  
WINNER—BARBARA COTTER

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 1, 2017*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Barbara (Babs) Cotter of Yuba City, California, who exemplifies the qualities of selfless service and possesses a deep desire to help others in the community.

Barbara Cotter, a retired educator dedicated her entire career doing what she loved best; making a difference in the lives of elementary school children. Her career spanned over a period of 38 years; 33 in the Yuba City Unified School District. As an elementary school teacher, she was inspiring, beloved, and revered by her students and fellow teachers alike.

In 1986, after surviving a life threatening medical diagnosis, she had an overwhelming desire to give back to a community that helped her through her recovery. She became a Reach to Recover coordinator, and eventually a board member for the American Cancer Society. Barbara's heart of service didn't stop there, she also volunteered for the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County, the State Convention Planning Board for Philanthropic Educational Organization, Middle Mountain Foundation, and Girls on the Run.

In 2009, Barbara Cotter was honored with the Caroline S. Ringler Perpetual Service Award for outstanding service to the Museum and has been appointed to a lifetime position on the Museum Commission.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 1, 2017*

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for

Roll Call vote 591 on Tuesday, October 31, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on Roll Call vote 591.

IN RECOGNITION OF MASTER  
SERGEANT PAUL CONTRERAS

**HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 1, 2017*

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I, along with my colleague Representative ROBERT WITTMAN, rise today to recognize the twenty-five years that Master Sergeant Paul Contreras has served in the United States Marine Corps. MSgt Contreras is a true patriot who has significantly contributed to the defense of our Nation. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in April, 1992 and was assigned to Recruit Training Center, San Diego, CA. He subsequently attended Marine Combat Training before being transferred to Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, GA where he trained as a Packaging Specialist. Lance Corporal Contreras' first assignment was to Supply Company, 1st Supply Battalion, 1st Service Support Group, Camp Pendleton, CA. Within his first month of this assignment, LCpl Contreras volunteered to deploy in support of OPERATION RESTORE HOPE in Mogadishu, Somalia. Upon completion of this deployment, he was selected to attend Marine Security Guard training, transferring to Marine Security Guard Battalion, Quantico, VA. Upon graduation from this rigorous course, LCpl Contreras' first assignment was to U.S. Embassy Abidjan, Ivory Coast. In July 1995 Cpl Contreras was transferred to U.S. Embassy Santiago, Chile for his second post.

Upon departure from Chile, Sergeant Contreras served with 1st Supply Battalion until early 1998 when he began the process of applying for the Marine Corps' Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence (CI/HUMINT) occupational specialty. Staff Sergeant Contreras was competitively selected to train as a CI/HUMINT Marine, attending school from January to June, 1999. SSgt Contreras' first assignment was with 1st CI/HUMINT Company where he served until being selected to deploy with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit. During this deployment, SSgt Contreras participated in recovery efforts following the bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen. In 2000, SSgt Contreras returned to 1st CI/HUMINT Company where he served until June, 2001 before being reassigned to 2nd CI/HUMINT Company, Camp Lejeune, NC. During this assignment, SSgt Contreras supported various exercises including BATTLE GRIFFIN in 2002, and deployed in support of combat operations to Kabul, Afghanistan in 2002 and Babil, Iraq in 2004.

In 2006, Gunnery Sergeant Contreras completed his active service to pursue a civilian career but remained committed to the Marine Corps, joining the Select Marine Corps Reserve later that year. His first reserve assignment was with the Marine Forces Pacific G2X office. From 2006 to 2008 Master Sergeant Contreras supported exercises and operational requirements for Marine Forces Pacific. During this same time, MSgt Contreras was a part owner of a small defense contracting company dedicated to the further development and

training of Department of Defense CI/HUMINT professionals prior to their deployments into Iraq and Afghanistan. In the fall of 2008, Master Sergeant Contreras returned to the CI/HUMINT school to provide support to the training staff. His next assignment in March 2009 was with Marine Forces Command G2X office. Due to his excellent reputation, MSgt Contreras was requested by name to mobilize with Marine Forces Europe from November 2011 until August 2013 where he served as Counterintelligence Operations Chief. He returned to the United States for assignment to Intelligence Support Battalion, Marine Forces Reserve in Quantico, VA. In his civilian career, MSgt Contreras also joined the Defense Intelligence Agency's Counterespionage Division. He remained on Marine Reserve duty with Bravo Company until November 2014, upon which time he transferred to Individual Ready Reserve Status intending to retire. Recognizing the immeasurable contribution that MSgt Contreras had made to the CI/HUMINT profession, the senior leadership of Intelligence Support Battalion compelled MSgt Contreras to consider withdrawing his retirement request in order to serve one final tour with the Battalion and in February 2016 MSgt Contreras returned to Bravo Company. He subsequently participated in a US Army exercise at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and served as both Company CI/HUMINT Chief and Senior Enlisted Advisor until his retirement in November of 2017. During this same time, MSgt Contreras was hired by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity in the Office of the Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority where he is able to continue to support his beloved Corps by influencing the development and direction of counterintelligence activities for the Marine Corps into the future.

Mr. Speaker, few can match the dedication and Esprit de Corps that Paul Contreras has displayed over his twenty-five years of service to Corps and country. We wish Paul continued success in his future endeavors. Many thanks to Master Sergeant Contreras. Our Nation has benefited from his outstanding leadership.

2017 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD  
WINNER—BALJINDER DHILLON

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 1, 2017*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Baljinder Dhillon of Yuba City, California, who has dedicated her life to education. She currently serves as the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools. Her career began as a fifth-grade teacher at Tierra Buena Elementary School in the Yuba City Unified School District. After earning her master's degree she moved into administration, serving as the assistant principal at Tierra Buena and Barry elementary schools. She later became the principal at Rio Del Oro Elementary in the Plumas Lake Elementary School District.

Dr. Dhillon is dedicated to finding ways to fund programs that benefit teachers, staff and students. She is credited with authorizing cost-saving measures for the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools office by becoming more energy efficient, she's authored proposals to fund the California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Grant and