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Sunday, October 30, 2005

Last modified Friday, October 28, 2005 11:49 PM PDT

NAACP to host awards banquet

By: BEN FRUMIN - Staff Writer

OCEANSIDE ---- The North San Diego County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will celebrate four decades of education and empowerment at a black-tie banquet Saturday night.

Several San Diego County residents will be honored at the Blue & Gold Awards Gala, which has been held annually for about two decades, said event chairwoman Michelle Howard.

This year's top honor, known as the President's Award, will go to San Diego businessman David Perez, who flew into the wake of Hurricane Katrina and returned to Southern California with 82 evacuees in tow. Nearly a dozen other residents and businesses will also receive awards distinguishing their community service.

"Without them, we can't exist," Howard said of the people and groups who support her organization. "We're doing this for the community. We want to appreciate and award the community for the things they've done."

Tonight's event will feature dinner, dancing, a silent auction and lots of entertainment, Howard said.

Comedian Daran Howard will act as master of ceremonies, and will also do about 20 minutes of family friendly, stand-up comedy toward the end of the evening.

The event's keynote speaker is Lisa Nichols, a contributing author to "Chicken Soup for the African American Soul."

"She's an awesome speaker," Michelle Howard said. "She brings people to their feet."

The black-tie gala will also feature a presentation honoring the recently deceased Rosa Parks, who helped spark the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her seat to a white man on an Alabama bus in 1955.

There will also be presentations honoring the past and current presidents of the local branch of the NAACP, and a slideshow highlighting the group's events this year.

Michelle Howard said she expects 350 people to attend the gala, which is one of her group's biggest annual fund-raisers.

The event starts 7 p.m. at the Del Mar Hilton, 15575 Jimmy Durante Blvd. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$85.

For more information, visit www.naacpnc.blackportal.com.

Contact staff writer Ben Frumin at (760) 901-4067 or bfrumin@nctimes.com.