

## Chamber celebrates '05 achievements

RICK CUNDIFF  
STAR-BANNER

OCALA - The Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce wrapped up 2005 and set its sights Wednesday on 2006.

More than 300 Chamber members and guests attended the organization's annual dinner and corporate meeting.

Manal Fakhoury took over the role of Chamber board chair from outgoing chairman Bill Evans. Fakhoury, clinical coordinator of the pharmacy department of Ocala Regional Medical Center, said she looks forward to the challenges of the new year.

"The Chamber has a large agenda. We have a lot going on," she said. "I'm really proud of our Chamber. That's how you measure the vitality of your community."

Fakhoury also was named a "Star of the Chamber," as was Pam Joranlien of First American Title Insurance. The award is given for selling at least 25 Chamber memberships in a year.

SunTrust Bank President Evans praised the work of Chamber members in 2005.

"As an individual, we don't matter a whole lot," he said. "But in a Chamber, as a group, as a team . . . we're pretty powerful."

Evans was optimistic about the coming year as well.

"We look very bright in the future because of the folks involved," he said.

The Chamber presented its Walt Driggers Environmentalist of the Year award in three categories. Photographer Don Browning won the individual award for his work to bring together both grassroots support and government agencies to improve boating safety, reduce airboat noise and protect rookeries around area lakes.

The PAWS (Promoting Awesome Watershed Stewardship) program at Dunnellon Middle School won the Driggers award for nonprofit civic or school groups. The program teaches students about watershed preservation and other water-related issues. A total of 160 students have contributed more than 6,000 hours to protecting the Withlacoochee River watershed, master of ceremonies Chip Morris said.

The Marion County Health Department's PACE Environmental Health program won the Driggers award for business or professional groups, for its work to reduce environmental hazards in West Ocala and Marion County.