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2023 Award Winner Announced by North American Renderers Association (NARA) J.J. Smith Receives “Don Franco Distinguished Service Award”

ALEXANDRIA, VA, November 9, 2023 – The North American Renderers Association (NARA) is pleased to announce that the 2023 “Don Franco Distinguished Service Award” has been presented to J.J. Smith for his longtime leadership and commitment to NARA, the association’s research and related programs, and the entire rendering industry. The award was presented to Mr. Smith at NARA’s recent 2023 Annual Convention in Naples, Florida.

The Don Franco Distinguished Service Award is NARA’s highest honor. It recognizes truly outstanding work on behalf of the rendering industry in science, policy, marketing, or communications, and is presented to a member, staff, or friend of the North American Renderers Association for their exceptional contribution and service on behalf of the rendering industry.

J.J. Smith became President of Valley Proteins in 2003. During his time there, he was an influential leader in the North American Renderers Association (NARA) and the Fats and Proteins Research Foundation (FPRF) as well as a strong supporter of the foundation’s research projects.

Smith’s commitment to FPRF has been robust, donating generous amounts of both time and money to the foundation. He was also one of the early proponents of founding The Animal Co-Products Research & Education Center (ACREC), a joint project with Clemson University established in 2005, which helps to develop new market opportunities for the rendering industry through research funding.

From 1996 until his retirement in 2022, Smith has held dozens of volunteer positions within the NARA and FPRF organizations including the position of FPRF Chairman from 2009-2011, and Chairman of the North American Renderers Association (at the time, the National Renderers Association) from 2011-2013. He assisted in leading the organization through multiple regulatory threats and was a major asset on the many committees he was involved with and chaired.

“J.J.’s efforts over the last few decades have helped shape the rendering industry,” NARA and FPRF President and CEO, Kent Swisher said. “His approach, demeanor, and accomplishments more than merit this recognition and award.”

On receiving the award Smith said “I am very honored to be selected for the 2023 Don Franco Award by my many long-time friends in the rendering industry. Seeing my name along with Dr. Don Franco’s on the same plaque is humbling since he was a close friend to me and all renderers for an entire generation, and a man who contributed greatly to our industry. I immensely enjoyed the entire 37 years I worked with and, at times led, the North American Renderers Association (then the NRA), the Fats & Proteins Research Foundation (FPRF), The Animal Proteins Producers Industry (APPI), and the Animal Co-Products Education & Research Center (ACREC).”

About Dr. Don Franco

Dr. Don Franco, who passed away in 2015, was a highly respected and influential leader as NARA’s former Vice President for Scientific Services and President of the Animal Protein Producers Industry (APPI) organization. He was one of the editors of *The Original Recyclers*, published by NARA in 1996, and was a contributing author to *Essential Rendering* in 2006. Dr. Franco held a master’s degree in Public Health and a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. Today’s North American rendering industry benefits greatly from his work.

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About the North American Renderers Association

The North American Renderers Association (NARA) represents the interests of the North American rendering industry to regulatory and other governmental agencies, promotes the greater use of animal byproducts, and fosters the opening and expansion of trade between foreign buyers and North American exporters. In addition to its U.S.-based headquarters, the association maintains offices in Mexico and Hong Kong, and has market consultants in strategic locations around the world. NARA publishes a bi-monthly trade magazine, *Render*. For more information, visit www.nara.org.