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Cal Water's Jose Espinoza Named Supplier Diversity Champion of the Year by ASIAN, Inc.

SAN JOSE, Calif., Oct. 09, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- (NYSE:CWT) -- At its annual gala Friday night, Oct. 6, 2017, ASIAN, Inc. named California Water Service's (Cal Water) Jose Espinoza its Supplier Diversity Champion of the Year. This award was presented to Espinoza for his efforts to advocate for the diverse business community.

Espinoza, Cal Water's Supplier Diversity Program Manager, is responsible for the utility's goal to enhance procurement sourced from minority-, women-, disabled veteran-, and LGBT-owned businesses. In 2016, Cal Water spent \$48.46 million on goods and services with certified diverse suppliers to support its utility operations statewide, compared to \$40.88 million in 2015. The utility did business with 216 diverse suppliers and expanded its certified diverse supplier database by 7% last year. This year, Espinoza also led a water utility industry effort supported by California Water Association to conduct four workshops on capacity building for diverse suppliers.

ASIAN, Inc.'s mission is to empower socioeconomic minority communities by reducing dependencies that block their access to opportunities in business development, housing, and financial education. Headquartered in San Francisco, the organization serves 20 counties in northern California and the state's Central Valley.

"One way we fulfill our commitment to providing quality, service, and value to our customers is to utilize suppliers who provide the highest-quality services at the lowest prices. We help achieve that by expanding our pool of diverse suppliers," said Martin A. Kropelnicki, President and CEO. "Jose has been at the forefront of this effort and integral in growing our pool of – and spending with – certified diverse suppliers. He has led the way for us to surpass the California Public Utilities Commission's goal of 21.5% spending with diverse suppliers for the last three years, and the benefit to our communities has been quite impactful."

"Jose has been an exemplary leader in supplier diversity; he not only actively engages local diverse businesses, but he has also been very engaged in working with local professional and business organizations, including Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) centers," said Raymond Au Yeong, Project Director of the San Jose MBDA Business Center. "His approachability and transparency has lent much visibility to Cal Water as a buyer as well as a role model in diversity."

In addition to his role at Cal Water, Espinoza serves as co-chair of the Utility Supplier Diversity Committee for California Water Association, is a member of the Intercultural Competency Advisory Council Workgroup of Santa Clara County, is a board member of the Rainbow Chamber of Commerce of Silicon Valley, serves as an advisory council member of the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of California, and is SV Next Committee co-chair for The Silicon Valley Organization.

California Water Service serves about 2 million people through 482,400 service connections in California. The company has provided water service in the state since 1926. Additional information may be obtained online at www.calwater.com.