

# SPECIAL REPORT

## Philanthropy

### Burton S. August Sr. Prize for Community Leadership

#### Sergio Esteban

Sergio Esteban's penchant for giving back to the community started well before his immigration to America 40 years ago.

"From a young age my father back in Spain was a person who was very giving," says Esteban. "I grew up in a home where talking about other people and how to help other people was always part of the conversation. So I think giving back to the community is part of my DNA."

Esteban took with him the drive to help those around him, and when he joined LaBella Associates in 1981, he found that founder Sal LaBella and the company as a whole shared similar values. At LaBella, "social responsibility is very rooted in our values," says Esteban.

When Esteban came to LaBella, there were only eight to 10 people working for the company. Since then, Esteban has seen the firm grow exponentially, with over 600 employees all over the country and in Madrid. Esteban started out as a project engineer, later becoming project manager and ultimately rising to CEO and chairman. Beyond leading LaBella, Esteban is involved in many local organizations including Geva Theatre Center, Nazareth College and the MCC Foundation.

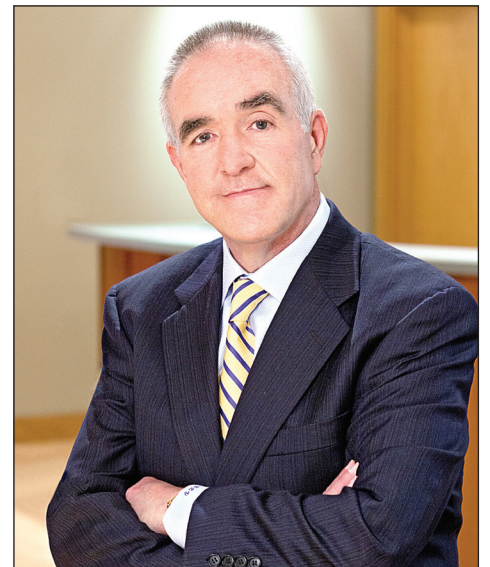
Kelly Gagan, one of Esteban's co-nominators for the Burton S. August Sr. Award for Community Leadership, notes that since Esteban joined the Nazareth board in 2004, he has been a "tireless champion" who has offered insightful advice and support, pushing the institution forward.

"He (Sergio) provides leadership as chair of the buildings and grounds committee," says Gagan, vice president of advancement at Nazareth. "We have seen a lot of expansion here at Nazareth College, and much of that has been because of his leadership in things like our arts center renovation and the construction of our science building and several other buildings."

Esteban is strategic when it comes to getting involved in different community organizations. One of the most important factors he explores is the organization's mission. If the mission aligns with his own values and is something that speaks to him personally, he offers his time and support to assist the organization achieve its goals.

"I always tell people, 'Don't join a community organization thinking about what you can get out of it. Join because you like what they do and you think you can make a contribution to help them.'"

Esteban has found that his younger em-



Submitted photo

**Sergio Esteban, winner of this year's Burton S. August Sr. Prize for Community Leadership.**

ployees have proven to be increasingly community minded, which inspires him and "reinforces my belief in community involvement even more," he says.

"Those of us who work with Sergio have such tremendous respect for his leadership and for who Sergio is as a person," says Gagan. "He leads a very good organization, and those who get to know him as a person have the utmost respect for him and what he has achieved in his career."

—Nicole Sheldon