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**For Immediate Release**

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**PRIA Announces Ernst Scholarship Award Recipients for 2020-21**

RALEIGH, N.C. - The [Property Records Industry Association](http://www.pria.us) (PRIA) has announced the Black Knight Carl Ernst Scholarship Award recipients for the 2020-21 membership year, which began on Aug. 1, 2020. This award was established by Ernst Publishing Co., which was acquired by [Black Knight](http://www.blackknight.com) in 2018, in conjunction with PRIA, in recognition of the late Carl R. Ernst for his contributions to PRIA and the extended property records industry. This year marks the seventh year the awards have been presented.

Chad Montgomery, recorder, Box Elder County, UT, is the government recipient of the Ernst scholarship. He is an active member of the Utah Association of County Recorders (UACR), and the PRIA Local Utah Chapter. Box Elder County Recorder since 2011, he previously served three years as Deputy Recorder and prior to that he spent 17 years working in GIS mapping and writing cadastral grants. Montgomery holds a Bachelor of Science in Geography and has training in real estate transactions, recorded documents, legal descriptions and title searches from D.W. Moore Title & Escrow School.

He has completed the Certified Public Officials Levels 1-4, and is currently a Level 5 "Sr. Instructor" for the UACR. He was nominated as the Utah Recorder of the year in 2016.

Locally, he is a member of the Emergency Management Committee and the Brigham City Chamber of Commerce. He serves as Ambassador, Member Need's Committee, and is a Past Board Member for Boys and Girls Club, and the Community Resource Center.

John T. Lotardo, aka the "TITLEMAN"™, senior vice president, director of operations and national commercial counsel for Commonwealth Land Title Insurance Company, is the recipient of the scholarship for business. He is the former state counsel and senior underwriter for First American Title Insurance Company for the states of Arizona and Nevada. Prior to that, Lotardo was senior vice president and general counsel for Stewart Title & Trust of Phoenix Inc., as well as state underwriting and claims counsel for Stewart Title Guaranty Company. As an Arizona licensed attorney, Lotardo's practice entails all aspects of real estate,

title/escrow and corporate operations. He received his Bachelor of Arts with honors and academic distinction from C.W. Post, Long Island University and his Juris Doctorate degree from Arizona State University.

Lotardo is a past president of both the Land Title Association of Arizona and the Arizona Trustee Association. He has been a member of many real estate organizations, settlement groups, bankruptcy, lending, foreclosure, legislative, judiciary and corporate organizations locally and nationally. He is a 2016 inaugural recipient of the Arizona Land Title Professional designation and regularly a member on the Arizona Association of Realtors' Residential & Commercial Contract Work Groups and the Education Advisory Committee for the Department of Real Estate.

Former Governor Napolitano appointed him to the Electronic Recording Commission to develop statewide protocols for eRecording. Currently, he is chair and executive council member of the Real Property Section of the State Bar of Arizona, as well as chair of the Real Estate Advisory Board for the Maricopa County Recorder.

The Black Knight Carl Ernst Scholarship Award includes a one-year PRIA membership for each recipient, along with conference registration and travel to one PRIA conferences during the membership year. The awards are valued at \$2,000, plus the complimentary membership in PRIA.

According to PRIA President Jerry Lewallen, "The late Carl Ernst was one of the original members of the Property Records Industry Joint Task Force, the predecessor to PRIA, and a tireless advocate for the development of both eRecording and basic standards for the property records industry. We are pleased to partner with Black Knight in sponsoring this scholarship."

The award criteria, established in 2013, requires that eligible applicants have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments in their chosen fields, been active in their communities and proven to provide service consistent with the mission and values of PRIA.

"PRIA continues to be the preeminent advocate for the collaboration of business and government throughout the public records industry," states Richard Gagliano, president of Origination Technologies for Black Knight. "Increased membership and participation will only stand to further strengthen the association. Black Knight is proud to support these scholarships, and we congratulate this year's award recipients."

Scholarships are awarded annually assuming valid application submissions by qualified candidates.

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*PRIA develops and promotes national standards and best practices for the property recording industry by identifying opportunities for collaboration among industry stakeholders; developing recommendations for standards and best practices; encouraging the adoption of such standards and practices; providing a clearinghouse for property-records-related information; and educating members, stakeholders and the public about the property records industry.*

*For more information, visit [www.pria.us](http://www.pria.us).*