

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

Aug. 27, 2015

CONTACTS: Judi Durant, Lee Rose, Francesca Donlan 239-338-3500

Hospitality industry awards honor outstanding customer service in Lee County

LEE COUNTY, FL – To increase public awareness of extraordinary customer service provided by hospitality employees throughout Lee County, workers were recognized by receiving the **Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards** at the 15th annual ceremony in Bonita Springs today.

Visitors from around the world submitted a record 636 nominations, giving high praise to those local employees who provided outstanding customer service. Produced by the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) and The News-Press Media Group, the “E Awards” is a collaboration with various local businesses to encourage and support service excellence provided by Lee County hospitality professionals.

Nomination criteria included service satisfaction, leadership, work ethic, job knowledge and performance skills, familiarity with the destination and assistance during an emergency.

Selected for their distinctive service and dedication:

- Nicole Logan, Holiday Inn Express & Suites at the Forum
- Bill Hammond, Endless Summer Charters
- David Rashty, Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina
- Jason Barrett, Lee County Port Authority
- Nicole King, Keiser University
- Skip Laney & Brian Holaway, Captiva Cruises
- Best tourism boss: Eric Ashton, Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village
- Honor of Distinction Winner: Kathy and Al Durrett, Fish Tale Marina

For summaries on the individual stories of the above-mentioned award recipients [click here](#).

The Honor of Distinction award, sponsored by Geraci Travel for best overall representative of outstanding service for the year, was given to Kathy and Al Durrett, Fish Tale Marina.

Although there are many nominees who exemplify the best in customer service and let their love of the job and destination show in their work, the Honor of Distinction winners are unique to an even greater degree.

A nominator describes Kathy and Al Durrett of Fish Tale Marina as her "angels."

She and her kids were victims of a Craigslist scam. The contract for the condo they thought they had reserved was fraudulent. The police got involved and tried to help but accommodations on Fort Myers Beach were booked or out of their price range. After filling out a police report, the helpful deputy took her along with her three children, to Fish Tale Marina where the kids were put on a dolphin and manatee trip while Al reviewed the contract to see what he could do.

Realizing the family had been "taken" for a lot of money, Al and Kathy had them stay in their beautiful guest home that usually rents for \$2,500 a week. Al gave the kids sodas and Kathy provided steaks, and told them to go to the beach and relax.

Over the next few days, the family was moved into Al and Kathy's home because the guest house was rented. The son was taken on a fishing trip. They cooked fish for dinner. Went to see Cinderella at the Beach Theater. Were provided with tee shirts and baseball caps. And the daughter was offered a job if she attends FGCU following her college-research trip.

"We could not have been made to feel more special. They saved us," says the nominator.

Sponsors of this year's E Awards include The News-Press Media Group and Geraci Travel, along with other businesses listed below.

-30-

Editor's note: Images of all winners available upon request.

E Award Sponsors:

Adventures in Paradise
ArtFest Fort Myers
Billy's Rentals
DiamondHead Beach Resort & Spa
Edison & Ford Winter Estates
GullWing Beach Resort
Key West Express
Miracle Baseball Club
Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina
Pointe Estero Beach Resort
Pure Fort Myers
South Seas Island Resort
Sun Harvest Citrus
Sun Splash Family Waterpark
Tarpon Bay Explorers
'Tween Waters Inn Island Resort
Veranda & Rib City Restaurants
Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village