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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helene Caseltine, Director of Economic Development

INDIAN RIVER CHAMBER HONORS LOCAL COMPANIES

Vero Beach, FL. The Economic Development Division of the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce celebrated the achievements of local companies at its annual Industry Appreciation Awards luncheon. Two hundred people attended the sold-out event held at the Indian River State College Richardson Center. Eighteen businesses were recognized for their architectural achievements and their positive impact on our community.

The local branch of [Caliber Home Loans](#) was named Small Company of the year, while [Dale Sorensen Real Estate](#) and [Oak Harbor Club](#) were honored as the Chamber's 2017 Medium and Large Company of the Year, respectively, based on employment levels. [Florida Power & Light](#) sponsored the event.

Earlier in the week, the [Indian River County Board of County Commissioners](#) presented a Proclamation to the Chamber and several members of the Awards Committee designating September 18-22, 2017 as Industry Appreciation Week in Indian River County.

Bill Penney, President and CEO of [Marine Bank & Trust](#), and Chairman the Chamber's [Economic Leadership Alliance](#), served as Master of Ceremonies for the event. Helene Caseltine, the Chamber's Economic Development Director, explained that "the awards program is an important component of the [Chamber's](#) overall business retention program and our goal of job creation. We show our appreciation to local businesses that have made a positive impact in our community during the past year, either through architectural achievements or by way of community involvement and

economic impact.” Anna Valencia-Tillery with [White Glove Moving, Storage & Delivery](#) Chairs the Industry Appreciation Awards Committee and shared the podium by announcing the Architectural Recognition awards.

The Chamber’s Company of the Year award recognizes local businesses that stimulate the Indian River County economy, make contributions back to the community, provide quality year-round employment, and have an overall positive impact on our county.

[Oak Harbor Club](#) was recognized as Company of the Year for a business with more than 75 employees. Oak Harbor was established in 1997, providing a range of business and lifestyle services to its residents. The company generates over \$285,000 in annual payroll and property taxes, while revenue and market share have both increased nearly eleven percent over the last year. Oak Harbor and its 87 employees have donated over \$30,000 to local non-profits, primarily: [Keep Indian River Beautiful](#), and the [We Care Foundation of Indian River](#).

[Dale Sorensen Real Estate](#) was recognized as the Chamber’s Medium-sized Business of the Year. Dale Sorensen, Sr. and his wife Matilde Sorensen, founded Dale Sorensen Real Estate in 1978. The company’s 200 sales agents reported sales of more than \$648 million in 2016. The firm and its employees clock hundreds of volunteer hours annually and donate thousands of dollars on behalf of a multitude of non-profit and charitable organizations in the community and around the world. Since 2013, Dale Sorensen Real Estate has donated over \$250,000 per year in advertising space in the [Press Journal](#) for local charities to promote their events. The company’s philosophy is to set a shining example for true philanthropy.

[Caliber Home Loans](#) was named the Chamber’s Small Company of the year. The firm opened its Vero Beach office in 2015 and currently has 12 employees who earn well above the county’s average annual wage of \$39,400. The firm has experienced a fifty percent increase in sales and in market share over the past 12 months, while promoting a customer-centric culture. The company and its employees are active in several local programs and trade organizations, donating an estimated \$5,000 in cash or in-kind goods and services annually.

The Chamber’s Minority Business of the Year was awarded to [Marsh Landing Restaurant](#), owned and operated by Fran Adams and her daughter, County Commissioner Susan Adams. The restaurant opened in 2001, located in the restored sales office of the Fellsmere Estates Building in Fellsmere. Owners of the company

believe their employees are the key to their success. They also believe in giving back to the community, donating \$15,000-\$20,000 per year to local non-profit organizations, including the annual [Frog Leg Festival](#).

The Entrepreneur of the Year award recognizes firms that have been in business for less than five years and show increased growth and a true entrepreneurial spirit, while overcoming challenges and becoming a good corporate citizen.

Alan Dritenbas and Mike Malone, owners of [Walking Tree Brewery](#), were recognized as the Chamber's 2017 Entrepreneurs of the Year. Walking Tree produces malt beverages (beer) for distribution and sampling in their on-site tasting room. Having to overcome many challenges, including financing and upgrading a very old building, the owners never gave up. With a capital investment of \$1.3-million, plus many months of unpaid sweat equity from the owners and volunteers, the business opened in 2015. Production capacity has already expanded, and the company expects to be canning beer for retail outlets in early 2018. The owners designed and built their brewery with the idea of it being a hub for community interaction, and strive to be as involved in the community as possible.

The Chamber's Manufacturer of the Year award considers growth of the company, quality of the jobs, its economic impact, and sales that are primarily outside our region or state, making them a contributory company.

The 2017 Manufacturer of the Year was presented to [Perfect Stix](#), which produces high-quality wooden products for a wide variety of uses, such as ice cream and popsicle sticks, tongue depressors, coffee stirrers, and paint paddles as well as a variety of straws, with twenty percent of the materials sourced locally. The company has seen a ten percent increase in sales over the past year, with fifty percent of its products shipped outside of Florida.

Architectural Recognition awards were also presented. Award criteria includes: impact on immediate area; building's unique features; and the building or project being "user friendly". The following architectural projects were recognized:

New Multi-Family Residential

Surf Club townhomes, located on A1A north of Jaycee Park

New Single-Family Residential

Summer Lake by GHO Homes

GREEN award

Captain Forster Hammock Preserve restoration project on the Jungle Trail

Renovation of a Commercial Project

Strike Zone Entertainment Center, located in Chesser's Gap Plaza in Sebastian

Redevelopment of a Large Commercial Property

Renaissance Senior Living, located on US1 in Vero Beach

Renovation of a Large Non-Profit Building

Habitat for Humanity Re-Store on US 1 in Gifford

Renovation of a Small Commercial Building, less than 10,000 square feet

Ay Jalisco Restaurant on US 1 in Vero Beach

New Project Construction

Indian River Transit Hub, operated by the Senior Resource Association

New Large Building Construction for a Non-Profit

Christ Church of Vero Beach, located on 6th Ave and State Road 60

New Large Commercial Building Construction, over 20,000 square feet

Quail Valley at the Pointe on Royal Palm Pointe

New Mid-Size Commercial Building Construction, between 10,000 and 20,000 square feet

ABC Fine Wine & Spirits in the Miracle Mile Plaza

New Construction of a Small Commercial Building, less than 10,000 square feet.

Pawprints Boarding, located at 7920 12th St.

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