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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helene Caseltine, Economic Development Director

INDIAN RIVER CHAMBER HONORS LOCAL COMPANIES

Local Businesses Recognized for Architectural Achievements and Community Support

The Indian River County Chamber of Commerce celebrated the achievements of twelve local companies at its annual Industry Appreciation Awards luncheon on October 27, at the [Indian River State College Richardson Center](#). A list of the 2022 award recipients is posted on the Chamber's economic development [website](#).

Cathy Roberts, Banking Center Manager with [Seacoast Bank](#) in Vero Beach, opened the event, welcoming guests and serving as Emcee. Terry Schlitt, owner of [TE Schlitt Engineering](#) and Chair of the Awards Committee, announced the architectural awards.

Helene Caseltine, the Chamber's Economic Development Director, explained "our Industry Appreciation Awards program is an important component of the Chamber's overall business expansion program and our goal of job creation." She adds, "We like to recognize local businesses that have made a positive impact in our community, either through architectural enhancements or by way of community involvement and economic impact."

The Awards Committee of the Chamber seek out nominations throughout the summer. Committee members then vote on completed nominations, based on select criteria for each category.

There were 12 businesses awarded during the event, beginning with architectural awards and culminating with the Company of the Year awards.

Company of the Year 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. The awards are presented to a small, mid-size and large company, based on employment.

The Chamber's Large Company of the Year was presented to [The Dyer Auto Group](#). Dyer Auto has three dealerships and a Collision Center in Vero Beach, plus they are constructing a \$6-Million Subaru Dealership. The company employs 137 full-time workers, generating over \$9-million in payroll each year plus \$2.7M in annual taxes. Employees enjoy a wide variety of benefits, including employee discounts and continuing education. Dyer's Golden Wrench program offers a 24-month apprenticeship designed to grow automotive technicians from within the Dyer organization. Even through the COVID-19 pandemic, Dyer Auto continued its generosity to local charities and volunteerism within our community. Since 2008, the Dyer Difference Award has donated over \$500,000 to various 501(c)3 non-profits, directly benefiting local residents. Dyer has also sponsored 12 [Habitat for Humanity](#) homes in Indian River County. Will and John Dyer accepted the award.

[Marine Bank and Trust](#), with 56 employees, was recognized as the Chamber's Mid-sized Company of the Year. Established in Indian River County in 1997, Marine Bank is celebrating its Silver Anniversary. Bank employees take a genuine interest in customers' needs, and local businesses have come to depend on local decision-makers taking action quickly to ensure their businesses can succeed and grow. The company has seen a steady increase of sales and market share over recent years with new locations. Bank employees proudly support local community organizations with their time and their dollars. Marine Bank employees are often seen supporting events for [United Way](#), [Senior Resource Association](#), the [Mental Health Association](#), and the [Gifford Youth Achievement Center](#) plus a multitude of others. The bank, and its employees, are also active in a number of professional organizations. Bill Penney, President, CEO & Chairman of Marine Bank & Trust, accepted the award.

The Chamber's Small Company of the Year went to [Corporate Air](#) at the Vero Beach Regional Airport. Corporate Air is a fixed-base operator, providing aviation services at the Vero Beach Regional Airport since 1987. The company has grown from five hangars and an award-winning FBO terminal building to a multi-million-dollar expansion, which includes a 17,000 sq ft hangar and ramp space large enough to handle a Boeing business jet. Corporate Air offers its 17 employees a generous benefits

package, which may explain why several employees have been with the company over 25 years. Corporate Air's President, Mr. Rodger Pridgeon, was also recognized as the 2022 Small Business Person of the Year by the [Small Business Administration South Florida district](#). The company is involved in many local charities, including the [Jake Owen Foundation](#) and the [Children's Home Society](#), where Rodger has been on the Board for ten years, and two years as Board Chair. Mr. Rodger Pridgeon, President of Corporate Air, accepted the award.

With similar criteria as Company of the Year, the award for Veteran-Owned Business of the Year went to Steven Bates, the owner of [Bates Air and Heat](#). Bates Air and Heat is a full-service HVAC company that opened in August 2020, serving all of Vero Beach and the surrounding areas. Steven served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2007 to 2011, and was deployed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation Combat Action Ribbon, the Marine Corp Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Medal, and the NATO I.S.A.F. Ribbon which is awarded to those who served the multi-national military mission in Afghanistan. Bates Air and Heat is actively involved with, and generously contributes to, many local groups, including [4-H](#), the [Vero Beach Lifeguard Association](#), the [Inspire Kindness](#) initiative, and "[Do you Give a Ruck](#)". Steven Bates, the owner of Bates Air and Heat, accepted the award.

The Chamber's Minority Business of the Year was presented to Briana Tran, Owner and Manager of [Foxy Nails](#) and Oriental Market. As defined by Florida Statute, a minority business is one that is 51% owned by a person who is a member of a particular racial, ethnic, or gender makeup or national origin. Combined, the two companies have 30 employees who are all considered part of the family. Foxy Nails, which opened in 2012, has seen a significant increase in revenue and market share this past year, plus over half of their purchases are made locally. Company owners founded the only Buddhist Temple in Indian River County which also provides meals to local residents. The companies also donate to dozens of other local charitable organizations each year, including Senior Resource Association, The [Junior League of Indian River](#), and the [Buggy Bunch](#). Briana Tran, Owner of Foxy Nails and Oriental Market, accepted the award.

The Chamber's Entrepreneur of the Year award recognizes firms less than five years old that show increased growth and a true entrepreneurial spirit, while overcoming challenges and becoming a good corporate citizen. The 2022 Entrepreneur of the Year went to Esther Chin, owner of [Garden of Esther](#), a local producer and distributor of

fresh-made pasta in Vero Beach. In working to open her new business, Ms. Chin had to overcome many challenges, including being new to the area, new to the food industry and no transportation – all of which she solved and has since prospered. Through continued marketing via social media, customers' testimonials and selling at Farmers' Markets, revenue has increased over 250% in the past four years. Garden of Esther pasta is currently on the menu of eight restaurants in Southeast Florida, with plans to add new wholesale accounts each month. During the pandemic, Garden of Esther launched its "Feed A Neighbor With Pasta" initiative. The goal is to feed those in need in our community, whether it's overworked health care workers or those hit hard by the economic downturn. The company also collected donations and turned them into meals for local food banks. They donated 95 meals within the first month. Esther Chin, owner of Garden of Esther, accepted the award.

The Chamber's Manufacturer of the Year award considers success within the industry; how much of their products are exported out of the region, state, or country; distinctiveness of the company's product; and their overall positive impact on the County. The 2022 Manufacturer of the Year was presented to [Nylacarb](#), a family-owned plastic injection molding company. With over 100 years of experience in the industry, brothers Scott, Frank and Doug Cooley are hands-on managers who oversee the daily operations. The company has seen a steady increase in sales and revenue over the past year, with 80% of its products sold outside the region, and 20% outside FL. Nylacarb is an [I.S.O. certified](#) company, continuously improving their quality process, even adding a new robot. Nylacarb is active in the Chamber's Manufacturing Bootcamp program, hosting high school students and Career Counselors for industry tours. Scott Cooley, Co-owner of Nylacarb, accepted the award.

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

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Commercial Building Construction

Small – [Kiwi Car Wash](#) on SR60

Mid-Size – Vero Beach Veterinary Clinic on U.S. Highway 1 in Vero Beach

New Non-Profit Building Construction

The [Environmental Learning Center's](#) Thomas R. Schidel Education and Event Pavilion

New Project Construction

[Indian River MotorHaus](#) – on U.S. Highway 1 north

COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

[Nuttall, Donini and Associates](#) – renovated office building on North A1A

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