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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helene Caseltine, Vice President of Economic Development

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 thirteen local companies at its 36th annual Industry Appreciation Awards event on October 3, at the [Indian River State College Richardson Center](#). A list of the 2024 award recipients are posted on the Chamber's economic development [website](#). Event sponsors were [Florida Power & Light](#), [Seacoast Bank](#), the law firm of [Rossway Swan Tierney](#), and [MBV Engineering](#).

Helene Caseltine, the Chamber's Vice President of Economic Development, 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 recognize local businesses that have made a positive impact in our community, either through architectural achievements or by way of community involvement and economic impact."

The 13 businesses recognized during the event represent both architectural awards and culminated 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 [Vero Orthopaedics](#), which was established in Indian River County in 1976 and offers a broad range of orthopaedic and neurologic injuries for children and adults.

[Rossway Swan Tierney Barry & Oliver](#) was recognized as the Chamber's Mid-sized Company of the Year. The company has a phenomenal impact on our local economy in not only its work environment and annual revenues, but the firm is very philanthropic in its support of local non-profit organizations.

The Chamber's Small Company of the Year went to the law firm of [Block & Scarpa](#). The firm has expanded its market share by 90% this past year, with its partners and staff very active in, and supportive of, the county's local non-profits.

Veteran-Owned Business of the Year award was presented to Francois "Frenchie" Pelletier, President of [Highland Homes Roofing](#) in Sebastian. With nearly all of his purchases made locally, the company has a major impact on our local economy.

The Chamber's Minority Business of the Year was presented to April Willis, owner of [The Venue](#), located on US-1 in Vero Beach. Opening in 2020, The Venue has seen a 50% increase in revenue this past year, and is the county's first and only venue owned and operated by an African American woman.

The Chamber's Entrepreneur of the Year award recognizes a business less than five years old that shows increased growth and a true entrepreneurial spirit, while overcoming challenges and becoming a good corporate citizen. The 2024 Award went to Ray and Mandy Hooker, owners of [Indian River Distillery](#). The company promotes itself through community outreach and involvement, with a 33% increase in revenues in just the past year. Indian River Distillery uses their brands to teach and inform their customers about the local history and culture.

The 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 went to [Dragonfly Boatworks](#), which specializes in custom-made skiffs, yacht tenders and stand-up paddleboards. Half of his products are sold outside of FL, and a small percent are sold overseas. Customers have included the late/great Jimmy Buffet, and golfers Davis Love Jr. and Jack Nichlaus.

Architectural Recognition awards were also presented, highlighting new construction, renovations, and adaptive re-use. 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

Small – Vakani Orthodontist on 20th Street, owned by Dr. Kevin Vakani

Mid-size - Squid Lips restaurant on Sebastian's waterfront, owned by Buz Underhill

Large – The new Dyer Subaru showroom on US-1

COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

Phase 3 of Grand Harbor Beach Club

ORCA's new location on 16th Street in Vero Beach

ADAPTIVE RE-USE – giving new life to a vacant building

VIP Care Medical Clinic, on the corner of US-1 and SR60 – a former convenience store that stood empty for 9 years.

For more information about the Industry Appreciation Awards program, or any of the Chamber's economic development activities, please call or email Helene Caseltine, Economic Development VP, at 772-567-3491 or helene@indianrivered.com.