

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

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Hospitality industry awards honor exceptional customer service in Lee County

LEE COUNTY, FL – For commitment to outstanding customer service and contributing to business success, eight workers were recognized by receiving the Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards at a ceremony in Fort Myers today.

Sponsored by the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), the program acknowledges employees within the hospitality and associated industries who positively influence a visitor or resident's experience. The "E" Awards is a collaboration with various local businesses to increase public awareness of, and to encourage and support, the extraordinary service excellence being provided by Lee County hospitality professionals.

From 222 nominations, those selected for their excellence in service and dedication included:

- Anthony Almeida, Inn at the Springs, Bonita Springs
- Barbara Prater, Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers
- Dr. PJ Deitschel and Dr. Amber McNamara, C.R.O.W., Sanibel Island
- John Bradfield, Johnny Myers Discount Tires, Fort Myers
- Jose Cereceda, Carrabba's Italian Grill, Bonita Springs
- Edward Brown, Standard Parking, Fort Myers

For summaries on the individual stories of the above mentioned award recipients, log onto http://www.eawards.org/2009_winner%20stories.htm.

The Honor of Distinction award for best overall representative of outstanding service for the year was given to Jennifer Wilson of the Lee County Port Authority Police.

This security agent was directing traffic when a woman began yelling for help. The elderly woman was an Alzheimer patient and was upset, accusing her husband of 51 years of violence. Wilson approached the gentleman and he showed her the bracelet on his wife's arm identifying her as an Alzheimer patient. Wilson called a fellow officer who offered to seek medical assistance, which the gentleman denied. After the police officer left, Wilson stayed with the woman, reassuring her that she was in no harm. Wilson walked with the couple to their car to pick up the passenger they had been waiting for. The woman embraced Wilson and remembered her husband for a brief moment, kissing him and holding his hand. Again, the woman became afraid of her husband, held Wilson's hand, and stated that Wilson was her best friend.

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The husband was so moved by Wilson's kindness and compassion that he submitted a letter to the Lee County Port Authority that stated, "Having met this security agent, Jennifer Wilson, I can honestly say that she has restored my faith in human kindness, caring, and compassion. In my opinion, it is very rare to see people with these kinds of outstanding qualities. Thank you for having her at a place and time she was needed the most."

Named for former Lee County VCB Executive Director Elaine McLaughlin, the "E" Awards exemplifies her core belief that providing outstanding customer service is one of the major cornerstones of success for all businesses. Nomination categories included: Accommodations, Attractions, Restaurants, Transportation, Good Samaritan and Other Services/Businesses. Winners were chosen by a steering committee of business representatives.

"High level customer service is essential to repeat business," said Suya Davenport, VCB executive director. "Whether they are visitors or local residents, the degree of service a business provides its customers is critical to the business' success or failure. The recognition these people earned is very well deserved."

Sponsors of this year's "E" Awards include The News-Press, Realmark Cape Harbour Vacation Rentals, Rumrunners Restaurant, The Veranda restaurant, Captain Tony's Great Getaway, Key West Express, and SunStream Hotels & Resorts.

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