



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MICHIGAN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION PRESENTS INDUSTRY CHAMPION AWARDS

Winners from Boyne Falls, Royal Oak, and Grand Rapids

LANSING, MI – The Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) is pleased to announce the winners of the inaugural Michigan Restaurant Industry Champion Awards. The awards were presented at the Association's Dinner with the Champions event, held on April 21 at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids.

The Michigan Restaurant Industry Champion Awards recognize outstanding employees of the foodservice industry who have demonstrated professionalism in performing their jobs and have contributed to the positive image of Michigan's restaurant industry.

The winner of the **Front of the House Restaurant Employee of the Year** is Chris Webb from Lily's Seafood Grill and Brewery in Royal Oak. Webb is the standard for customer service at Lily's Seafood Grill and Brewery in Royal Oak, always making sure the entire dining experience exceeds the customer's expectations.

The winner of the **Heart of the House Restaurant Employee of the Year** is Jake Kibler at HopCat in Grand Rapids. Kibler is a dedicated, hardworking member of the team at HopCat Grand Rapids, and serves as a great leader and inspiration to the entire HopCat staff.

The **Restaurant Manager of the Year** is Bobbie Jo Benko from Boyne Mountain Resort in Boyne Falls. Benko has been an important member of the Boyne Mountain Resort team for 30 years, demonstrating outstanding leadership qualities and having the lowest turnover of team members in the Food and Beverage Department at Boyne Mountain.

"These awards are important as they put a well-deserved spotlight on the thousands of people in the state making a living in Michigan's restaurants," said Brian DeBano, president and CEO of the MRA. "Restaurant employees are hard workers, and recognizing Chris, Jake, and Bobbie Jo for their dedication and outstanding performance is an honor."

PHOTO: (left to right) Brian DeBano, president and CEO of the Michigan Restaurant Association; Jake Kibler from HopCat Grand Rapids; Chris Webb from Lily's Seafood Grill and Brewery in Royal Oak; Bobbie Jo Benko from Boyne Mountain Resort in Boyne Falls; and Brad Keen, Michigan Restaurant Association board of directors member.

The Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) is the recognized leader of Michigan's hospitality industry, providing essential services to the foodservice community. Founded in 1921, the MRA represents nearly 4,500 Michigan foodservice establishments. The industry plays an integral role in Michigan's economy, employing almost 400,000 people and creating more than \$13.4 billion in annual sales.

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