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MICHIGAN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION PRESENTS INDUSTRY CHAMPION AWARDS

Winners from Northville, Caledonia, and Bloomfield Hills

LANSING, MI – The Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) is pleased to announce the winners of the second annual Michigan Restaurant Industry Champion Awards. The awards were presented at the Association's Dinner with the Champions event, held on April 27 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 JJ Caldwell from Rusty Bucket Restaurant and Tavern in Northville. Caldwell goes above and beyond to create a fun, hospitable environment for guests.

The **Heart of the House Restaurant Employee of the Year** resulted in a tie. Elliot Webb from Rusty Bucket Restaurant and Tavern in Bloomfield Hills, and Joe Marsalese, from Brann's Steakhouse and Grille in Caledonia, will share the award this year. Webb worked his way from a novice fry cook to gifted executive chef, never compromising on quality or standards and showing gratitude by providing his team an environment to grow and learn, just as he did. Marsalese gives the next generation of restaurateurs a good name, striving to lead by selfless example.

The **Restaurant Manager of the Year** is Lea Schofield from Bill's in Bloomfield Hills. Schofield provides world-class service to guests and is a well-respected leader to employees, treating both as if they are guests in her own home.

"Anyone who has worked in a restaurant will tell you that it's not easy work," said Brian DeBano, president and CEO of the MRA. "Restaurant employees are hard workers, and these important awards put a well-deserved spotlight on the thousands of people in the state making a living in Michigan's restaurants. I commend JJ, Elliot, Joe, and Lea for their dedication and outstanding performance."

PHOTOS OF WINNERS ATTACHED

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 more than 415,000 people and creating nearly \$14 billion in annual sales.

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