

Chamber honors top businesses

By Cindy Beamon
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CURRITUCK — A growing Currituck Chamber of Commerce recognized businesses and individuals at an awards ceremony Thursday. The county's Tourism and Travel Department also awarded individuals for their contributions to the tourism industry.

Chamber President Josh Bass said this year's event was marked by an upswing in the business organization's membership for the second year in a row.

In the past two years, more than 100 new members have joined, after the economic downturn brought numbers to an all-time low in June/July 2011.

Bass credited the Chamber's members for attracting new recruits, now bringing membership to 309.

Part of the Chamber's focus this year has been linking companies with the employees they need, he said.

"We have heard that you have jobs available but can't find someone with the right skill set," said Bass. The Chamber has been partnering with the Northeast Workforce Development Board to link job seekers with businesses, he said.

Top awards at Tuesday's events went to two local businesses.

Winning the small business awards were Platinum Party Planning (business with under 10 employees); and Wild Horse Adventure Tours (businesses with more than 10 employees).

Currituck's Tourism Department awarded four individuals for its guest service excellence awards.

Among winners were: Front Line: Stephanie Gardner with Beach Bums; Management: Sue Ann Lewis with Carolina Shores Vacation Rentals; Behind the Scenes: Natalia Holshouser with Outer Banks Blue; and Tourism Leader of the Year: Jeanne Meiggs with the Whalehead Preservation Trust.

Tourism Director Diane Nordstrom praised award winners for their contributions to the tourism industry.

"It's the people who make Currituck so special ... (who) go above and beyond to make our visitors feel welcome," said Nordstrom.

Nordstrom praised Meiggs for building partnerships with other attractions in Currituck Heritage Park. Gardner, Lewis and Holshouser were recognized for their efforts to provide excellent customer service.

The Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Department also presented several other recognitions.

Chamber awards included: Mainland Ambassador of the Year: Jo Ann Mansfield of TowneBank of Currituck; Coastal Ambassador of the Year: Krista Tempelton of Village Realty; President's Awards: Currituck Relay for Life, Dr. Ed Houser and Rep. Bill Owens; Most Attractive Business: Beach Bums; The Leo Sheetz Award of Excellence: Mike Painter; Greg Shuk Exemplary Service Award: Walter Gallop; Non Profit of the Year: Currituck Kids; Corporate Community Service Award: Eldon L. Miller Jr.

Star Service tourism awards included: Behind The Scenes: Heather Day at Brindley Beach, Carol Harrell, Inn at Corolla Light and Floyd Hoskinson at Sun Realty; Front Line: Bret Ervin at Steamers Shellfish to Go; Bernie Spirito at Village Realty Corolla, and Pamela Geyer at Twiddy and Company; Management: Rick Robinson at Resort Realty; Alice Bradley at Corolla Wild Horse Fund; Lynn Kirisits at Duck Donuts Corolla.