

Boating Industry Magazine Updates 2006 Top 100 and Leadership Alliance

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Nov. 28 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Buying and servicing a boat has become a much easier task for consumers around the country, thanks to Boating Industry magazine's second annual Top 100 Dealers, a ranking of an incredibly powerful group of marine dealers that generated more than \$2.88 billion in retail sales, or nearly 8 percent of the entire \$37 billion marine market.

The ranking recognizes those marine dealers that are unsurpassed in overall business operations, customer service, marketing and professionalism. Collectively, the 2006 Boating Industry Top 100 employ more than 6,500 people and operate 357 retail locations across North America.

"While most industry awards are given to those dealers that sell the most boats, our Top 100 program is much more qualitatively focused," said Matt Gruhn, Editor-in-Chief of Boating Industry, "thereby leveling the playing field for all dealers and directing consumers to those dealers that can best deliver on the dream that boat ownership promises."

Topping the list at No. 1 for the second-consecutive year is Clearwater, Fla.-based MarineMax, followed by: Galati Yacht Sales, based in Anna Maria, Fla.; Singleton Marine Group based in Dadeville, Ala.; Hall Marine Group, based in Lake Wylie, S.C.; and Crystal-Pierz Marine, based in Crystal, Minn. Nearly 400 people joined Boating Industry to honor the Top 100 Dealers at a black-tie celebration Wednesday, Nov. 15, at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.

Boating Industry's editorial staff reviewed more than 400 applications, culled from more than 3,000 nominations. The applications asked both quantitative and qualitative questions regarding all aspects of marine dealer operations.

"The Boating Industry Top 100 has, in short order, become the most coveted award in the marine market," explained Tammy Galvin, Group Publisher for Ehlert Publishing Group's trade magazines. "Marine dealers are on the front line with consumers every day, and this is one way we can help provide much needed benchmarking information for all other dealers to measure themselves against."

Having passed the billion-dollar mark for total revenue in the last year, MarineMax is now six-times larger than any other dealer in this year's ranking and has the revenue to fuel countless business initiatives not otherwise an option for smaller dealerships. Perhaps on a store-by-store basis, dealers could compete with a single MarineMax location, but as a corporation, its inclusion in the Top 100 creates a contest that would most likely find MarineMax atop the list every year. In that light, Boating Industry retired the company from the list of Top 100 Dealers and has honored

it with an ongoing "Best In Class" designation, which MarineMax must continue to apply for.

Boating Industry also bestowed five additional Best In Class awards to dealers ranked at the top of their categories. Gordy's Lakefront Marine (ranked 15), based in Lake Geneva, Wis., is the highest-ranking dealer with only one boat brand. Russell Marine (ranked 10), based in Alexander City, Ala., is the highest-ranking dealer with five or six stores. Parks Marina (ranked 9), based in Okoboji, Iowa, is the highest-ranking dealer with three or four stores. Slalom Shop Boats & Yachts (ranked 6), based in Lewisville, Texas, is the highest-ranking dealer with one or two stores. Clark Marine (ranked 31), based in Manchester, Maine, is the highest-ranking dealer with revenue under \$3 million.

For the full list of Boating Industry's 2006 Top 100 Dealers, visit www.boating-industry.com/output.cfm?ID=1168849.

To help bring the Boating Industry Top 100 to life, Ehlert Publishing Group, the magazine's parent company, created the Leadership Alliance, an elite group of the marine industry's leading suppliers. These companies were invited to participate because they possess, as one of their corporate values, a true belief in and commitment to raising the bar of professionalism across all marine industry sectors, and particularly for dealers.

The 2006 Leadership Alliance members include: BRP US Inc. /Evinrude, GE Capital Solutions & GE Money, Yamaha, Watch Captain, BoatTrader.com, SHURflo and the Marine Retailers Association of America.

Meet the 2006 Leadership Alliance:

Boating Industry magazine, a 78-year-old business-to-business publication owned by Ehlert Publishing Group, a subsidiary of Ventura, Calif.-based Affinity Group Inc., is the most authoritative and widely respected magazine serving the marine industry. Visit www.boating-industry.com to learn more about the Top 100 and view the inaugural winners.

BRP US, Inc./Evinrude, Sturtevant, Wis., has been delivering quality recreational experiences for people around the world for more than six decades. In 2001, Evinrude and Johnson outboard engines joined the Bombardier family, and in 2003 after extensive R&D, the company released Evinrude E-TEC, which revolutionized the outboard engine industry. BRP also produces such innovative products and brands as Sea-Doo watercraft and sport boats, Ski-Doo and Lynx snowmobiles, Rotax karts and engines and CanAm ATVs and utility vehicles. Visit www.evinrude.com

GE Capital Solutions & GE Money, Hoffman Estates, Ill., creates customized financing programs to help manufacturers sell more products and dealers stock optimal levels of inventory to drive more sales. With more than 50 years of experience serving the marine industry, CDF supports its customers with the industry's most knowledgeable staff and provides a single point of contact for support. CDF is a recognized leader in the marine industry because it is dedicated to helping customers improve cash flow and grow their businesses

though an array of financing programs and services. Visit:
www.gecommercialfinance.com

Yamaha Marine Group, Kennesaw, Ga., has quickly become a leader in product quality and technology by providing superior value and customer satisfaction. The company has built a strong brand and loyal customer base in the marine market for its outboard engines as well as its Skeeter, Century and G3 boat brands. In 2000, the company introduced its High Pressure Direct Injection technology that swept the top three industry awards for innovation, design and engineering-the marine equivalent of racing's Triple Crown. A more recent award-winning and industry-defining introduction is the F225, the world's first V6 four-stroke outboard. Visit: www.yamaha-motor.com

Watch Captain, the only Microsoft.Net-based dealer management technology built specifically for the marine industry, makes life easier for dealers by streamlining everyday business processes. Watch Captain, Marion, Mass., technology integrates every aspect of the business, from point-of-purchase and sales functions to service and inventory management. As a result, not only are dealers better informed, they are able to better manage their resources, serve their customers and sell more boats. As a Microsoft Certified Partner, Watch Captain can offer its customers the advantage of Microsoft's continuous research and development as well as the ease of a true Windows-based application. Visit: www.watchcaptain.com

BoatTrader, the online portal for Boat Trader Magazine, is the nation's largest boating classified source. Headquartered in Norfolk, Va., BoatTrader.com displays more than 110,000 boats to an audience of 2.2 million visitors nationwide each month. It serves as a convenient and effective advertising forum for boat dealers and brokers. The company's goal is to make it easier and faster for its dealers to expand their online presence and to ultimately sell more boats. For more information on BoatTrader.com, visit: www.boattrader.com.

SHURflo has been the marine industry's leading supplier of plumbing products for more the 20 years. Through innovative product design, superior service and close customer relationships, SHURflo's solutions support the growth of the marine industry and ensure the satisfaction of boaters around the world. A commitment to quality is at the heart of SHURflo's success, beginning in the company's state-of-the art product testing and quality control labs at its Cypress, Calif., headquarters. Through lean manufacturing, continual process improvement and a team-oriented culture, SHURflo's market and customer responsiveness is unsurpassed. Visit: www.shurflo.com

The Marine Retailers Association of America is the leading not-for-profit organization aimed at promoting the recreational marine industry and the welfare of the marine retailer. The association raises the standards of retailing within the industry, provides its members a common source of information concerning all aspects of marine retailing and serves as the voice within the industry and in Washington regarding issues concerning marine dealers nationwide. Visit: www.mraa.com.

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