

Boating Industry Magazine Updates 2007 Top 100 and Leadership Alliance

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Jan. 2 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Under the gray skies of today's troubled economy, it's critical now more than ever that boating consumers find reliable, reputable dealers with the staying power to guide them through a lifetime of boating journeys. These consumers now have a trusted source they can turn to, thanks to Boating Industry magazine's third annual Top 100 Dealers.

This marine dealer ranking has resulted in an incredibly powerful group that collectively generates more than \$2 billion in annual retail sales. While the U.S. boat industry has recently experienced a decline in unit sales, this group has been thriving, delivering an average year-over-year revenue growth of almost 13 percent.

The Top 100 ranking recognizes those marine dealers that are unsurpassed in overall business operations, customer service, marketing and professionalism. Collectively, the 2007 Boating Industry Top 100 employ more than 5,250 people and operate 289 retail locations across North America.

When you add in Boating Industry's 2007 Top 100 Dealer Hall of Fame Award Recipient MarineMax Inc., those numbers become even more impressive. Total retail sales rise to more than \$3.2 billion – more than 8 percent of the entire \$39 billion marine market – employment figures jump to nearly 7,500 and total locations rise to 377.

"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 first time is Anna Maria, Fla.-based Galati Yacht Sales; followed by Skipper Bud's and Affiliates, Winthrop Harbor, Ill.; Seattle Boat Co., Seattle; Singleton Marine Group, Dadeville, Ala.; and Slalom Shop Boats & Yachts, Lewisville, Texas. Nearly 500 people joined Boating Industry to honor the Top 100 Dealers at a black-tie celebration Wednesday, Nov. 28, at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.

Boating Industry's editorial staff reviewed almost 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, vice president of Ehlert Publishing Group's Consumer Boating and Trade Groups. "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."

In addition to MarineMax's receipt of the first Top 100 Hall of Fame Award, following its retirement from the Top 100 in 2006, Boating Industry bestowed five additional Best In Class awards to dealers ranked at the top of their categories. Seattle Boat Co. (ranked 3), is the highest-ranking dealer with five or six stores. Action Water Sports (ranked 13), Hudsonville, Mich., is the highest-ranking dealer with three or four stores. Slalom Shop Boats & Yachts (ranked 5), Lewisville, Texas, is the highest-ranking dealer with one or two stores. Woodard Marine Inc. (ranked 21), Hydeville, Vt., is the highest-ranking dealer with revenue less than \$4 million. Quality Boats of Clearwater (ranked 31), Clearwater, Fla., is the most improved Top 100 Dealer.

To see the entire list, visit www.Boating-Industry.com.

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 2007 Leadership Alliance members include: BRP US Inc. /Evinrude, GE Capital Solutions & GE Money, Yamaha Marine Group, BoatTrader, Volvo Penta, ADP Lightspeed, Honda Marine, Channel Blade Technologies, Manheim Specialty Auctions and the Marine Retailers Association of America.

Meet the 2007 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 complete rank.

BRP U.S. 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 Bombardier ATVs and utility vehicles. Visit www.evinrude.com

As a recognized leader in the marine industry for more than 30 years, GE is focused on providing its customers with outstanding service through its two divisions that serve the marine industry extensively – GE Capital Solutions Commercial Distribution Finance unit (CDF) and GE Money. CDF, 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 is dedicated to helping customers improve cash flow and grow their businesses through an array of financing programs and services. GE Money Sales Finance provides marine dealers and manufacturers with retail finance

programs to help them sell more product, to more people, more often. Among the tools it offers its customers are private label credit card programs, marketing and installment lending and financial services for retailers. Visit: www.ge.com/cdf and www.gemoney.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

BoatTrader, the online portal for Boat Trader Magazine, is the nation's largest boating classified source. Headquartered in Norfolk, Va., BoatTrader 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, call 877-354-4069 or visit: www.BoatTrader.com

Volvo Penta is a leading global manufacturer of engines and complete power systems for marine and industrial applications. Founded in 1907, Volvo Penta has become the fastest-growing marine engine company in the world by constantly developing innovative products and services. The company introduced its first outboard engine in 1922, the first in-line, 6-cylinder diesel in 1946, the first sterndrive in 1959, the first duo-prop in 1982 and Electronic Diesel Control in 1995. Then, in 2004 Volvo Penta changed the face of marine propulsion forever with the Volvo Penta Inboard Performance System (IPS). In addition to the Volvo Penta IPS, the company introduced the Volvo Penta IPS Joystick, which allows boaters the easiest handling and maneuverability available. Visit: www.volvopenta.com

ADP Lightspeed is no stranger to the automotive, heavy truck and powersports markets where its software programs rank No. 1 in all three industries and have reigned there for years. Now, backed by the powerful Automatic Data Processing Co., the LightspeedMarine dealer management system is quickly growing toward becoming the No. 1 provider in the marine industry as well. LightspeedMarine features five integrated modules to help companies manage every element of their dealership more effectively and profitably. With LightspeedMarine on deck, dealers are able to steer their business with more precision than ever before. Visit: www.adplightspeed.com.

From automobiles and motorcycles to power equipment and outboard marine engines, the Honda name is synonymous with a proud legacy of technological innovation and leadership. Honda Marine has remained at the forefront of this tradition of innovation for more than 40 years, working to continually change the shape of the marine industry. In 1973, Honda introduced the first full

line of four-stroke outboard engines in the United States-long before other outboard manufacturers realized the advantages of this type of clean, reliable power and followed suit. The world's preeminent engine manufacturer, Honda sells nearly 20 million engines globally across all product lines each year. This high production volume, coupled with the company's deep level of experience and commitment to precision manufacturing techniques, has allowed Honda to remain the leader in four-stroke technology. Visit: www.hondamarine.com.

Channel Blade Technologies, branded for the company's sharp focus on the entire distribution channel of its clients, provides innovative Web solutions to the marine, RV and powersports industries. Channel Blade's development of eXceleratePro(TM), Branded Flow Technology(TM) and the Footsteps(TM) Customer Relationship Management tool revolutionized the way the recreation industry does Web-enabled business by driving customers from online leads to the showroom, ultimately resulting in more successful sales. Channel Blade believes in order to create solutions for customers, you need to have their input. Thus, throughout the process of bringing a solution concept from idea, to development, to deployment, their team engages with customers to ensure they are focusing on the functionality and benefits they need. Visit: www.channelblade.com.

Manheim, a trusted name in the auction industry for more than 60 years, created Manheim Specialty Auctions in 2003 to meet the growing needs of customers looking for vehicles other than the traditional automobile. Previously, Manheim sold boats and specialty units through the regular auction lanes alongside used cars. As the demand for specialty vehicles increased, Manheim created auctions with sales dedicated to boats, RVs, motorcycles, recreational vehicles and powersport vehicles at 20 locations nationwide. For more information, visit www.manheim.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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