



American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC)
613 Third St. Suite 10 • Annapolis, MD 21403
410-990-4460 • www.abycinc.org

Read online: <https://abycinc.org/news/outstandingtech2025/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Shannon Aronson, saronson@abycinc.org, 410.990.4460 x105

ABYC Announces Outstanding Technician Winners

Marine industry celebrates ten exceptional technicians during recognition week

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (April 23, 2025) – The American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) has announced the recipients of the 2025 Outstanding Technician Awards during International Marine Service Technician Week, held April 21–25. Sponsored by Yamaha, the awards recognize 10 technicians who have demonstrated exceptional customer service, technical training, and industry involvement.

Now in its fourth year, the judging panel included past Outstanding Technician award winners.

This year's recipients are: Brandon Aitken of Hucks Marine & Resort in Rockport, Ontario; Charles Beaver of Safe Harbor Westport in Denver, North Carolina; Mick Belfy of Irish Boat Shop in Harbor Springs, Michigan; Adam Lass of Flux Marine in Bristol, Rhode Island; Brian Lentell of Walstrom Marine in Cheboygan, Michigan; Toby Merritt of Precision Boats in Idaho Falls, Idaho; Carlos Roman of Bluff Creek Marina in Strawn, Texas; Christian Schade of Flux Marine in Bristol, Rhode Island; Jeremy "J.T." Taylor of Slidell Marine in Slidell, Louisiana; and Garrett Zell of Port Diesel in Wilmington, North Carolina.

The New Achiever Award recognizes up-and-coming professionals in the marine service industry who demonstrate outstanding potential and skills. The 2025 New Achiever recipients are Delaney Huffman of Boyne Boat Yard in Boyne City, Michigan, and Taven Larrance of Big Thunder Marine in Lake Ozark, Missouri.

Winners of the Outstanding Technician Award receive a \$100 VISA gift card and a technician prize pack, sponsored by Yamaha.

For more on each of the winners, visit abycinc.org/2025outstandingtech.

2025 Outstanding Technician Award Recipients:

Brandon Aitken – Hucks Marine & Resort



Training/Certifications: Sheridan College Toronto; ABYC Master Certified; MerCruiser and Mercury Certified; Seakeeper Certified; Yamaha Silver Certified

Brandon Aitken has an innate skill as a technician—persistence. His technical expertise and commitment to excellence have earned him a reputation for professionalism and reliability. For complex upgrades, he often walks customers through the options, explaining what's being seen and helping them make informed decisions. He takes an "Option 1 or Option 2" approach to help customers save money without compromising quality.

Charles Beaver – Safe Harbor Westport



Training/Certifications: ABYC Certified; MerCruiser/Mercury Master; Volvo Penta Certified; Power Pole Certified

Charles Beaver has worked at Westport for more than 28 years, building a wealth of knowledge and experience. His hard work and dedication have earned him the role of lead foreman at the Westport location. He also oversees the satellite site at Safe Harbor Kings Point and is the primary mobile technician for Safe Harbor Skipper's Landing. Customers regularly request Charles by name, bringing their vessels specifically to have him assigned—testament to his outstanding reputation in the industry.



Mick Belfy – Irish Boat Shop

Training/Certifications: ABYC Electrical, ABYC Marine Systems, Welding; working toward ABYC Advanced Electrical for Master Technician status

With more than 20 years of experience, Mick Belfy is a versatile and highly skilled technician specializing in mechanical systems, electrical work, welding, and fabrication. In addition to his technical work, Mick serves on profit-sharing and safety committees, responds in emergencies, and mentors new employees. Known for his problem-solving abilities and meticulous attention to detail, Mick seamlessly balances boat repairs with the broader technical needs of marina operations.

Adam Lass – Flux Marine



Training/Certifications: Associate Degree in Engineering Science, Bristol Community College, RI; Flux Marine High Voltage Safety Training

Adam Lass is the sole Mechanical & Operations Technician at Flux Marine's rapidly growing marine tech start-up. Adam has been instrumental in developing the assembly processes for their all-electric outboard motors. He has led this highly technical effort through multiple design iterations from early prototype builds to a streamlined and efficient multi-unit production operation. His positive attitude and work ethic are invaluable.

Brian Lentell– Walstrom Marine



Training/Certifications: Master in Yamaha, ABYC, and Seakeeper

Brian Lentell is currently a service leader for Walstrom Marine Cheboygan. Having been in the industry for 25 years, his knowledge and skills are well known throughout New England. Brian is known as the guy you call when no one else can solve a problem. His skills and expertise are only surpassed by his attention to detail, work ethic, and pride in his work.

Toby Merritt – Precision Boats



Training/Certifications: Eastern Idaho Technical College in 2017 with an Advanced Certificate in Automotive; Indmar Advanced Certified Service Technician—holding the highest level of certification through Indmar University—and is Platinum Certified with Indmar Marine Engines; Factory trained by Supra, Moomba, and Tigé Boats

Toby Merritt is recognized as a local expert in Indmar’s 2.3L and 6.2L engines and is known for his commitment to staying at the forefront of marine engine technology. He consistently seeks opportunities to expand his knowledge and support fellow technicians. His meticulous attention to detail, high-quality workmanship, and willingness to take on complex challenges beyond the typical scope of work make him an invaluable asset. Customers and colleagues alike rely on his expertise and dedication to delivering top-tier service.

Carlos Roman – Bluff Creek Marina



Training/Certifications: Currently working towards Mercury and Yamaha Certifications

Carlos Roman joined Bluff Creek Marina from Puerto Rico, bringing exceptional talent in 2-stroke engine work and overall boat repair. When he first started, he spoke only Spanish. Now, more than six years later, he has taught himself English and built a stellar reputation among both colleagues and customers. He is recognized not only for his technical skill but also for his determination and work ethic. As a nominator shared, “He’s the best boat mechanic we have ever seen.”

Christian Schade – Flux Marine



Training/Certifications: IYRS Marine Systems Program graduate; ACMA Open Molding and Vacuum Infusion; ABYC Master Advisor (Electrical, Marine Systems, and Diesel); NMEA Marine Electronics and NMEA 2000 Installer; Flux Marine High Voltage Safety Training

Christian Schade joined Flux Marine in early 2024 as a Marine Systems Intern, highly recommended by the IYRS School of Technology and Trades. He quickly proved himself as a skilled and dedicated team member and now leads the company’s growing service operations. Christian works directly with customers and partners in Rhode Island and abroad, ensuring timely, professional support.

Jeremy "J.T." Taylor – Slidell Marine



Training/Certifications: Master Tech for Yamaha

With 20 years of experience as an outboard mechanic, J.T. Taylor has been in the field since graduating high school. He is known for his relentless dedication to providing customers the best service possible. He completes ongoing training annually with Honda, Mercury, Suzuki, and Yamaha, and is working toward additional master certifications. Professional and approachable, he is frequently praised by customers for his deep knowledge and ability to clearly explain complex problems.

Garrett Zell – Port Diesel



Training/Certifications: Diesel Industrial and Technology Degree from Universal Technical Institute in 2009; Numerous Cummins and Zeus certifications; Master Cummins Tech

After graduating from Universal Technical Institute, Garrett Zell worked for Cummins before branching out to start his own marine diesel service and repair company, Port Diesel, in Wilmington, North Carolina. Now in its ninth year, the business serves pleasure craft owners, commercial fishermen, and large vessels—handling everything from basic maintenance to full repowers. With a 5-star business rating over the years, Garrett Zell has proven his knowledge, capabilities, and dedication to the marine service industry.

New Achiever: Delaney Huffman – Boyne Boat Yard



Training/Certifications: ABYC Master Technician (Gasoline Engines, Diesel Engines, Marine Systems, Marine Electrical); Certificate of Completion- Marine Service Technology at Great Lakes Boat Building School (Marine Trades Institute); Mercury Marine Systems Technician; Ilmor Inboard/Stern Drive Training

Delaney Huffman's journey to becoming an outstanding technician began with a passion for working on vehicles during high school. In June 2022, she joined Boyne Boat Yard for a summer job and quickly discovered her love for the boating industry. With a scholarship from Boyne Boat Yard/Van Dam Custom Boats, she attended the Great Lakes Boat Building School (now the Marine Trades Institute) to further develop her skills.

New Achiever: Taven Larrance – Big Thunder Marine



Training/Certifications: Impact Institute - 2 year HS program; MMI 52 week Marine program; Continued Education from Big Thunder; Certified in Merc Outboards, MercCruiser, Yamaha and Suzuki

In his time at Big Thunder Marine, Taven Larrance has demonstrated strong work ethic, timeliness, and great character. He was accepted at Marine Mechanics Institute in Orlando, Florida and was awarded the John McElroy memorial scholarship from Impact. During his training at MMI, he worked at Craig Cat Boats, a manufacturer in Orlando, running a rigging department. In the nomination, it was stated, "In my opinion this is exactly the type of student we want to run our industry for years to come!"

###

Since 1954, the nonprofit American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) has developed safety standards for boat design, construction, equipage, repair and maintenance. The essential global source of marine industry technical information, ABYC's product safety standards, credentialing, education, training, and other tools help members make boating safer.