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For Immediate Release

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ABYC Announces Outstanding Technician Award Winners

Marine industry celebrates exceptional technicians that keep boating safe and reliable

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (April 23, 2026) – The American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) announced the recipients of its [2026 Outstanding Technician Awards](#) during International Marine Service Technician Week, held April 20–24. Sponsored by CWR Wholesale Distribution, the ABYC awards recognize 10 technicians for exceptional customer service, technical skills, training and mentorship. In addition, the New Achiever Awards recognize emerging professionals in the marine service industry who demonstrate strong potential and technical skill.

Now in its fifth year, the nominations were judged by a panel that included previous Outstanding Technician Award recipients.

“In reviewing the nominations, it was exciting to see such strong technical ability, along with a commitment to mentoring others,” said Tim Murphy, education director at ABYC. “It was tough to narrow it down to 10 winners, and that really reflects the depth of the talent we have across the marine industry.”

This year’s recipients are Kevin Anderson of Crate’s Lake Country Boats in Orillia, Ontario; Julia Briggs of Irish Boat Shop-Harbor Springs in Harbor Springs, Michigan; Dan Derfler of MarineMax Nisswa in Nisswa, Minnesota; Corey Mugaas of Hurst Marina Ltd. in Ottawa, Ontario; Andrew Sigler of Boston Whaler in Edgewater, Florida; Adam Smith of Marine Technical Services in Deale, Maryland; Scott Stephen of Walstrom Marine in Harbor Springs, Michigan; Chris Teal of Irish Boat Shop-Charlevoix in Charlevoix, Michigan; Tim Vandenheuvel of Emerald Marine in Anacortes, Washington; and Ryan White of Boyne Boat Yard in Boyne City, Michigan.

The 2026 New Achiever recipients are Nikita Davadilla of Solvere Technical Group in Virginia Beach, Virginia; Sam Hansz of Boyne Boat Yard in Boyne City, Michigan; and Alex Plante of Flux Marine in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Winners of the Outstanding Technician Award receive a \$100 Visa gift card and a technician prize pack.

For more information on the winners, visit <https://abycinc.org/2026outstandingtechs>.

To learn more about Marine Service Technician Week, visit <https://abycinc.org/thankyoutechs>.

The full list of winners appears on the following pages.

2026 Outstanding Technician Award Recipients

Kevin Anderson – Crate's Lake Country Boats



Training/Certifications: Volvo Penta Master Technician, Mercury Certified, ABYC Certified Systems Advisor

Kevin has been in the marine industry for more than 30 years and continues to be at the forefront of industry practices and advanced repairs. Crate's Lake Country Boats receives numerous jobs throughout the year from other qualified marine companies whose technicians are unable to successfully identify the problem. Kevin is known for diagnosing and repairing those issues efficiently and in a timely manner. He also continues to guide and mentor co-workers and spends a significant amount of personal time educating himself within the marine industry.

Julia Briggs – Irish Boat Shop – Harbor Springs



Training/Certifications: ABYC Master Technician (Marine Systems, Marine Electrical, Advanced Marine Electrical), certified underwater diver and welder

Julia is a trusted team member known for her resourcefulness and willingness to take on any task, no matter how unfamiliar or challenging. She excels in rigging while expanding her skills across multiple disciplines. She plays a key role in stepping and unstepping approximately 150 masts each season, working with precision and a strong commitment to safety, often aloft in a bosun chair. Julia's can-do attitude sets her apart. She readily tackles unfamiliar systems, removes and reinstalls complex components, and adapts quickly in the field. She also supports outreach as an instructor for Women at the Helm, sharing her knowledge of boating and splicing with patience and enthusiasm.

Dan Derfler – MarineMax Nisswa



Training/Certifications: Certifications with OMC, Volvo, MerCruiser, PCM, Indmar and Ilmor

Dan Derfler's 51-year career at Nisswa Marine/MarineMax is a testament to dedication to the craft. What began as a summer job repairing outboard motors at age 16 grew into one of the most remarkable tenures in the marine industry, a career defined by commitment to excellence, community and customer service. That breadth of knowledge was earned through decades of problem-solving and pride in the work. "Dan Derfler is exactly the kind of person this award exists to recognize: a craftsman, a community pillar, and a living example of what a career built on integrity and passion looks like," according to one nomination.

Corey Mugaas – Hurst Marina Ltd.



Training/Certifications: Certifications with Mercury, Volvo, Malibu, Yamaha, Indmar, NMEA and ABYC Marine Systems

Corey delivers exceptional technical expertise; he also teaches and mentors apprentices, investing in the next generation of marine technicians. He leads by example, instilling professionalism, safety and pride in the trade. Committed to continuous improvement, Corey actively pursues advanced training and ongoing education to stay ahead of evolving technologies and standards. His dedication to lifelong learning strengthens the team and helps ensure a high level of customer service.

Andrew Sigler – Boston Whaler



Training/Certifications: ABYC Marine Electrical Certification, ABYC Marine Systems Certification

Andrew began his journey with Boston Whaler as part of a temporary career deviation from aviation, but quickly became attached to the work. That was 13 years ago. Through his personal desire to hold himself accountable, he obtained multiple ABYC marine certifications in his role as a production assembler and became interested in marine electrical standards. Andrew went on to become a critical member of the Boston Whaler warranty team. His troubleshooting capabilities, coupled with his knowledge and understanding of ABYC standards, helped him provide world-class

customer service. Andrew has traveled the world to support the brand and consistently ensured product integrity by leveraging ABYC standards.

Adam Smith – Marine Technical Services



Training/Certifications: Certified in NMEA and ABYC Marine Electrical

Adam exemplifies high standards of professionalism, technical competence and integrity. Through meticulous workmanship, commitment to ABYC standards and dedication to customer safety, Adam consistently delivers results that exceed expectations. Customers routinely request Adam by name because of his ability to analyze complex problems, communicate clearly, and execute repairs and installations with exceptional precision. Adam approaches every project with a methodical mindset. He carefully diagnoses issues, presents multiple solutions when appropriate, and ensures that vessel owners understand both the technical considerations and the safety implications of the work being performed. Most importantly, Adam's work has directly prevented dangerous conditions aboard customer vessels.

Scott Stephen – Walstrom Marine



Training/Certifications: Master Certifications with Volvo and Mercury

Scott has worked in the boating industry for more than 20 years. He came in as a service writer and moved into fiberglass repairs. He taught himself much of what he knows and, while moving between fiberglass and mechanical work, took numerous classes and earned advanced credentials. He teaches those around him, sharing his knowledge to help others, and is considered a walking textbook. "He is very versatile and quite frankly the best technician I've ever met. He hasn't been fully recognized for all of his hard work and needs to be," said one nomination.

Chris Teal – Irish Boat Shop - Charlevoix



Training/Certifications: ABYC Master Technician (Marine Electrical, Marine Systems, Diesel Engines)

Chris brings nearly 50 years of experience in the marine industry and a lifelong passion for boating. During his seven years with Irish Boat Shop, he has been a valuable resource for fiberglass, mechanical, electrical and welding repairs, among many other

areas. His breadth of knowledge and hands-on expertise make him a trusted problem-solver. Equally important, Chris enjoys sharing his knowledge with others. He takes pride in educating fellow technicians and building strong relationships with customers.

Tim Vandenheuvel – Emerald Marine



Training/Certifications: Graduate of Skagit Valley College’s Marine Maintenance Technology program; ABYC Master Technician (Marine Electrical, Marine Systems, Diesel Engines)

Tim is a highly skilled and versatile marine professional with expertise in the design, installation, repair and troubleshooting of mechanical and electrical vessel systems. He currently serves as a full-time lead technician at Emerald Marine in Anacortes, where he is widely recognized for technical excellence, professionalism and commitment to quality workmanship. Tim is dedicated to developing the next generation of marine technicians and actively supports student training in Skagit Valley College’s Marine Technology Program and serves on the Technical Advisory Committees for both the SVC Marine Technology Program and the NCTA Maritime Program.

Ryan White – Boyne Boat Yard



Training/Certifications: Universal Technical Institute, with an initial focus on automotive technology before transitioning into the marine industry; ABYC Marine Systems Certification, ABYC Diesel Engines Certification; Ilmor Platinum Dealer Certification

Ryan does not cut corners when it comes to quality and efficiency. He provides clear explanations of repair options and possible outcomes in a way that is easy for others to understand. The shop often relies on Ryan for complex diagnostics and challenging repairs. When others are stuck, he brings a methodical approach and strong mechanical knowledge to identify and resolve issues efficiently.

He also plays an important role in developing younger technicians by offering hands-on guidance, practical coaching and instruction aligned with manufacturer and ABYC requirements. He leads by example, approaching each job with precision, patience and a commitment to doing it right the first time.

New Achiever: Nikita Davadilla - Solvere Technical Group



Training/Certifications: ABYC Marine Electrical Certification

Due to the nature of the customer base for Solvere Technical Group, work is scrutinized to the highest standards. Nikita consistently meets and frequently exceeds those standards. Customers regularly praise her work and attitude. Since achieving her Marine Electrical Technician certification, Nikita has been promoted to lead technician and has taken a helper under her wing while teaching herself the mechanical systems on the multiple military boats serviced by the company. She is a motivated, hardworking employee who has become exceptionally knowledgeable in her craft. She arrives each day ready to take on any project handed to her.

New Achiever: Sam Hansz – Boyne Boat Yard



Training/Certifications: Graduate of both the Boat Building School and the Marine Technology program at the Marine Trades Institute in Cedarville, Michigan; ABYC Master Technician (Marine Systems, Marine Electrical, Diesel Engines and Gasoline Engines); training in custom inboard engine installation and Awlgrip finishing systems

From the start, Sam has shown a solid work ethic. He shows up early, ready to work, and is willing to take on whatever comes his way. He handles jobs of all sizes with focus and attention to detail and has picked things up quickly for someone at his experience level. Sam is motivated to learn and improve. He asks thoughtful questions, takes feedback seriously, and applies it right away. He is not afraid to ask for help when needed, which has helped him grow quickly and build confidence. He also brings a great attitude every day. He communicates well with both customers and the team and represents the shop in a professional and respectful way.

New Achiever: Alex Plante – Flux Marine



Training/Certifications: IYRS Marine Systems Program 2025 graduate; Chariho High School Marine Technology Program 2024 graduate; ABYC Marine Electrical Certification, ABYC Marine Systems Certification, and ABYC Fuel Systems Advisor Certifications; National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA) Basic Marine Electronics Installer Certification; OSHA 10 Certification;

Flux Marine High Voltage Safety Training

As a systems integration technician, Alex plays a key role in installing and integrating Flux Marine's 100% electric systems across both standard and custom hull packages. He demonstrates a deep understanding of vessel systems, electrical architecture and mechanical integration, with the ability to troubleshoot and resolve issues in real time during builds. His hands-on experience and knowledge make him highly effective in a fast-paced production environment.

Alex consistently demonstrates an exceptional work ethic and focus. He is reliable, detail-oriented, and maintains a calm, solution-driven approach even under tight timelines and heavy workloads.

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Social media suggestion: Congratulations to the 2026 ABYC Outstanding Technician winners, recognized during International Marine Service Technician Week for excellence in technical skill, customer service and mentorship.
#MarineServiceTechWeek #ThankYouMarineTechs

View the winners: <https://abycinc.org/2026outstandingtechs>

About Marine Service Technician Week

International Marine Service Technician Week is an annual social media-driven celebration held the last week of April to recognize the marine technicians who help keep boating safe, reliable and enjoyable. The week highlights the important work technicians do to inspect, maintain and repair boats, and draws attention to the growing need for skilled service professionals across the boating industry.

About ABYC

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.