

Stars of the Industry Awards

Honoring Past Winners

Restaurateur of the Year

This award honors a restaurant owner or company that is highly regarded by fellow operators, employees, and the community. Nominees must be restaurant members in good standing with NCRLA and demonstrate excellence in business operations and community involvement. This award also considers the nominee's contributions to the industry's image and commitment to promoting and protecting the foodservice industry.

2025	Matt Kelly <i>MK Hospitality</i>	2010	Sara Foster <i>Foster's Market</i>	1994	Wayne M. Bunting
2024	Keith Rhodes <i>Catch</i>	2009	Mickey Ewell <i>Chapel Hill Restaurant Group</i>	1993	Wayne F. Abele
2023	Scott Crawford <i>Crawford Hospitality</i>	2008	Billy Sewell <i>Platinum Corral</i>	1992	Michael W. Kelly <i>Kelly's Restaurant</i>
2022	Giorgios Bakatsias <i>Giorgios Hospitality Group</i>	2007	Ken Conrad <i>Libby Hill Seafood</i>	1991	Scott H. Richarson
2021	Charles Winston, Jr. <i>Winston's Grille</i>	2006	Tommy & Donna Haddock <i>Tri-Arc Bojangles</i>	1990	L. Dent Miller
2020	Jeff Mickel <i>Whiskey Kitchen</i>	2005	Charles Ervin <i>Ham's</i>	1989	Earl B. Taylor Sr.
2019	Lance Trenary <i>Golden Corral Corporation</i>	2004	Dennis & Nancy Quaintance <i>Quaintance Weaver</i>	1988	Charles F. Connor Jr.
2018	Clark Barlowe <i>Heirloom Restaurant</i>	2003	Dave Gronewoller <i>GC Partners</i>	1987	Thomas D. Mincher
2017	Gaurav Patel <i>Eschelon Experiences</i>	2002	Thomas Ruff <i>Biltmore Estate</i>	1986	Karl Lack
2016	Marty Kotis <i>Kick Ass Concepts</i>	2001	Ted Fowler <i>Golden Corral</i>	1985	James Maynard <i>Golden Corral</i>
2015	Chris Foote <i>Longhorn Steakhouse</i>	2000	Nick & Mayo Boddie <i>Boddie-Noell</i>	1984	Charles Winston <i>Winston's Grille</i>
2014	Lou & Joy Moshakos <i>LM Restaurants</i>	1999	Michael Olander <i>Apple Gold</i>	1983	J.W. "Slug" Claiborne <i>Claiborne's BBQ</i>
2013	Greg Hatem <i>Empire Properties</i>	1998	Van Eure <i>The Angus Barn</i>	1982	John Dombalis <i>The Mecca</i>
2012	Steve Frabitore <i>Tupelo Honey</i>	1997	Frank Freeman	1981	Jack Laughery
2011	Dean Ogan <i>Rocky Top Hospitality</i>	1996	Cameron McRae <i>Bojangles</i>	1980	Marshall Digh
		1995	R. Boys Morris	1979	Ray Lackey
				1978	B.C. Hedgpeth
				1977	Edward C. Thompson
				1976	Keith J. Dunn

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Restaurant Manager of the Year

This award celebrates a management-level restaurant employee who exhibits outstanding service, commitment to excellence, and leadership in hospitality. Nominees must have worked at a member restaurant for at least one year. Multiple nominations are welcome.

2025	Bruce Conyers <i>Biscuitville</i>	2017	Guy Murphy <i>Top of the Hill</i>
2025	Boone Hollar <i>Parks Hospitality Group</i>	2016	William Castenada <i>Golden Corral Corporation</i>
2025	Ruben Gonzalez <i>Tar Heel Capital (Wendy's)</i>	2015	Brian Rhue <i>Bluewater Waterfront Grill</i>
2024	Troy Stauffer <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>	2014	Jane Wong <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>
2024	Jill Highsmith <i>Angus Barn</i>	2013	Roy Durham <i>Rocky Top Hospitality</i>
2023	Igor Gacina <i>Giorgios Hospitality Group</i>	2012	Chris Moutos <i>LM Restaurants</i>
2023	Ashley Greene <i>LM Restaurants</i>	2011	Kim Almond <i>Apple Gold</i>
2022	James Holcomb <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>		
2022	Jim McGovern <i>Angus Barn</i>		
2021	Terriann Biagi <i>The Raleigh Times</i>		
2020	Roger Carter <i>Winston's Grille</i>		
2019	Megan Bailey <i>Carolina Ale House</i>		
2019	Vinnie Delillo <i>Mama Ricotta's</i>		
2018	Robert Montanari <i>Taverna Agora Greek Kitchen</i>		
2017	Brenda Johnson <i>Carolina Ale House</i>		



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Restaurant Employee of the Year

This award recognizes a line-level restaurant employee who displays exceptional service and dedication to hospitality. Nominees should carry themselves with professionalism, exemplify leadership, and have been employed at an NCRLA member restaurant for at least one year. Multiple nominations are welcome.

2025	Serena Ortiz <i>Grandover Resort</i>	2015	Johnnie Blango <i>42nd Street Oyster Bar, Big Ed's City Market</i>
2025	Edgar Aguilar <i>Charlotte Marriott SouthPark</i>		
2024	Kathy Baize <i>Biscuitville</i>		
2024	Alexander Collazo <i>Vidrio</i>		
2023	Tiffany Oates <i>Biscuitville</i>		
2023	Matthew Barry <i>Midwood Smokehouse</i>		
2022	Sarah Cooper <i>Burke Manor Inn & Pavilion</i>		
2022	Seth Wilson <i>Heirloom Restaurant</i>		
2022	Glaziela Mendonca <i>Heron's at The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>		
2022	Bonnie Davis <i>Biscuitville</i>		
2021	Mai Nguyen <i>Sitti</i>		
2020	Jeffrey Bryant <i>Golden Corral</i>		
2019	Philip Gomes <i>Winston's Grille</i>		
2018	Myles Scaglione <i>Heirloom Restaurant</i>		
2017	Sheri Costa <i>Golden Corral</i>		
2016	Mitzi Moreno <i>Homewood Suites Charlotte-Ayrsley</i>		

Stars of the Industry Awards

Honoring Past Winners

Lodging Operator of the Year

This award acknowledges a hotel owner or company admired by fellow operators, employees, and the community. Nominees must be lodging members in good standing with NCRLA and demonstrate operational excellence and community involvement. Nominees should also contribute to the lodging industry's image and show commitment to the hospitality sector. Eligible nominees include general managers, management company executives, and property owners.

2025	Daniel Lotz <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>	2012	Doyle Parrish <i>Summit Hospitality</i>
2025	Pete Byers <i>Summit Hospitality Group</i>	2011	Jim Beley <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>
2024	Russ Jones <i>LODEN Hospitality</i>	2010	Michael Martino <i>Sheraton Imperial Hotel</i>
2023	Gary Chabra <i>CMC Hotels</i>	2009	Russ Smith <i>Embassy Suites Raleigh Durham RTP</i>
2022	Ian Sauer <i>Summit Hospitality</i>	2008	Vinay Patel <i>SREE Hotels, LLC.</i>
2021	Tiffany Tucker <i>Canopy by Hilton Southpark</i>		
2020	Robert Dedman, Jr. <i>Pinehurst Resort</i>		
2019	Anthony Carey <i>The Siena Hotel</i>		
2018	John Beatty <i>The Dunhill Hotel</i>		
2017	Peter Grills <i>The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge</i>		
2016	Jeremy Miller <i>Hilton Garden Inn Kitty Hawk Pier</i>		
2015	Randy Kolls <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>		
2014	Joel Griffin <i>Griffin-Stafford Hospitality</i>		
2014	Doug Stafford <i>Griffin-Stafford Hospitality</i>		
2013	Ron Morin <i>Omni Grove Park Inn</i>		

Stars of the Industry Awards

Honoring Past Winners

Lodging Manager of the Year

This award recognizes a management-level hotel employee for exemplary service, leadership, and commitment to hospitality. Nominees must have been employed at a member hotel for at least one year. Multiple nominations are welcome.

2025	Mijan Sarwar <i>Sheraton Four Seasons</i>	2015	Kathryn Leonard <i>Hilton Garden Inn Charlotte/Ayrsley</i>
2025	Bernadette Atwater <i>Courtyard by Marriott</i>	2014	James McDermott <i>Summit Hospitality</i>
2024	Diane Tighe <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>	2013	Megan Quesenberry <i>Ballantyne Hotel and Lodge</i>
2024	Xiomara Toldeo <i>Hampton Inn & Suites</i>	2012	Theresa Thorb <i>Sheraton Imperial Hotel & Convention Center</i>
2023	Jason Whitaker <i>Extended Stay America</i>	2011	Amy Petro <i>Summit Hospitality</i>
2023	Mike Masri <i>Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte Uptown</i>		
2022	Lee Stell <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>		
2022	Nicole Ebersole <i>Parks Hospitality Group</i>		
2021	Christina McCall <i>Pinehurst Resort</i>		
2020	Melissa Bach <i>Raleigh Marriott City Center</i>		
2019	Robert Foster <i>Biltmore Farms Hotels</i>		
2018	Kevin D'Amico <i>Renaissance Raleigh North Hills Hotel</i>		
2017	Dan McLaughlin <i>Hilton Durham</i>		
2017	David Press <i>Hyatt House Raleigh North Hills</i>		
2016	Michael Rayfield <i>Ballantyne Hotel and Lodge</i>		

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Lodging Employee of the Year

This award recognizes a management-level hotel employee for exemplary service, leadership, and commitment to hospitality. Nominees must have been employed at a member hotel for at least one year. Multiple nominations are welcome.

2025	Mehdi Boujoud <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>	2015	Carla Elliott <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>
2025	Ofeliya Gadzhiyeva <i>The Ballantyne Hotel</i>		
2024	Porcha Overbey <i>Pinehurst Resort</i>		
2024	Debra Thompson <i>TownePlace Suites Wilmington</i>		
2023	Charles Prince <i>TownePlace Suites</i>		
2023	Regina Triche <i>Hampton Inn & Suites</i>		
2023	Faustina Tagoe <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>		
2022	Zhongwhen Sui <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>		
2022	Vera Cobbs <i>Charlotte Marriott Southpark</i>		
2022	Carl Stuck <i>DoubleTree by Hilton Downtown Asheville</i>		
2021	Marie Mosoti <i>Omni Charlotte Hotel</i>		
2020	Kevin Cottet <i>Beacon IMG</i>		
2019	Solida Richmond <i>Burke Manor Inn & Pavilion</i>		
2018	Patrick Hawthorne <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>		
2017	Tommy Turrentine <i>Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club</i>		
2016	Alberta Travis <i>Pinehurst Resort</i>		

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Honoring Past Winners

Hospitality Supplier of the Year

This award is given to an individual or company in good standing with NCRLA who represents an allied member of the hospitality industry. Nominees should be highly respected by fellow operators, employees, and the community. They should demonstrate strong business ethics and contribute positively to the industry's image.

2025	Chris Strickland <i>ALSCO Uniforms</i>	2011	Greg Weathford <i>Sysco Raleigh</i>
2024	Josh Cooke <i>Raise the Grade</i>	2010	Mac Sullivan <i>Pate Dawson</i>
2024	SpotOn <i>Aimee Guthinger</i>	2009	Randy Laster <i>Pepsi Bottling Ventures</i>
2023	Steve Troxler <i>NC Department of Agriculture</i>	2008	Judy Jarmon
2022	Andy Clark <i>US Foods</i>	2007	Lisa Haines
2021	Kevin Osterman <i>Employers</i>	2006	Dan Harris <i>US Foods</i>
2021	Wayne Hilston <i>Employers</i>	2006	Smokey Norris <i>US Foods</i>
2020	Stephanie Gaston Poley <i>Cranfill, Sumner, Hartzog, LLP.</i>	2005	James L. Nicholas, Jr.
2019	Scott Meltzer <i>Ecolab</i>	2004	Charles H. Wright
2018	Angie Packer <i>Tryon Distributing</i>	2003	Gregory Patterson
2017	Christina Clark <i>Shelton Vineyards</i>	2002	James Bean
2016	Danny Dorsett <i>Alsco</i>	2001	Tom Stroozas
2015	Stephanie Shear <i>Pepsi Bottling Ventures</i>	2000	Bartlett Winkler
2014	Jeff Grun <i>Electrolux</i>	1999	G. Steve Nivens
2013	Alan Hilton <i>S&D Coffe</i>	1998	Robert J. Davis
2012	Lee Wodham <i>Freshpoint</i>	1997	William G. Therien
		1996	J. Michael Hill
		1995	A. Norman Watson
		1994	William Hyatt
		1993	Richard Strickland
		1992	Samuel Kennedy
		1991	Robert Hinson
		1990	Ann C. Marco
		1989	David A. Stansfield <i>Pate Dawson</i>
		1988	Kimberly Wordsworth
		1987	William (Marty) Kotis

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Honoring Past Winners

Griff & June Glover Award

This award celebrates an NCRLA member who has shown exceptional dedication to supporting NCRLA's mission. This award is named in honor of Griff and June Glover, longtime NCRLA members known for their commitment to service.

2025	Burney Jennings	1995	Van Eure
2024	Lou & Joy Moshakos	1994	T. Jerry Williams
2023	Dave Gronwoller	1993	Cameron W. McRae
2022	Vinay Patel	1992	Edward C. Thompson
2021	Steve Thanhauser	1991	Earl B. Taylor, Sr.
2020	Jim Beley	1990	Marshall Digh
2019	Michael Martino	1989	Mickey Ewell
2018	Scott Maitland	1988	Michael W. Kelly
2017	Lance Trenary	1987	Charles Winston
2016	Ed Tubel	1986	Frank Freeman
2015	R. Frank Gray	1985	Charles F. Connor, Jr.
2014	Robert Poitras	1984	W.W. Bill Laws
2013	Christina Larson		
2012	Jimmy Sizemore		
2011	Billy Sewell		
2010	Brad Hurley		
2009	G. Samuel Hobgood		
2008	Thomas Stroozas		
2007	Peter Cotter		
2006	Ted Rhodes		
2005	Tommy Haddock		
2004	Steve Yoxsimer		
2003	Tom Allen		
2002	John McLellan		
2001	Michael D. Olander		
2000	Ted Fowler		
1999	Ken Conrad		
1998	Wayne F. Abele		
1997	William L. Rogers		
1996	David Huskins		



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Ken Conrad Award for Service to the Community

This award is in honor of Ken Conrad and recognizes NCRLA members who have made a meaningful charitable impact in their communities.

2025	Melissa Bruno Johnston <i>Tryon Distributing</i>
2024	Sera Cuni <i>Root Cellar Cafe</i>
2024	Leonardo Williams <i>Zweli's Ekhaya</i>
2023	Steve Thanhauser & Van Eure <i>Angus Barn</i>
2022	Tim Goss <i>Firehouse Subs</i>
2021	Fred & Doris Huebner <i>F&D Huebner McDonald's</i>
2020	Jim Noble <i>Noble Food & Pursuits</i>
2019	Buddy Bengel <i>Bengel Hospitality</i>
2019	Dean Ogan <i>Rocky Top Catering</i>
2018	Jason Smith <i>18 Restaurant Group</i>
2017	Doris Huebner <i>F&D Huebner McDonald's</i>



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NCRLA Lifetime Achievement Award

This award is bestowed upon a member who has achieved extraordinary success in the North Carolina hospitality industry, awarded as appropriate.

2024	Jim Beley <i>The Umstead Hotel & Spa</i>
2024	Cecilia Saleh <i>Neomonde, Sassool</i>
2024	Fred & Doris Huebner <i>F&D Huebner McDonald's</i>
2023	Lance Trenary <i>Golden Corral</i>
2022	RB Fitch <i>Fearrington House Inn & Restaurant</i>
2020	Maurice Jennings <i>Biscuitville</i>
2020	Sam Saleh <i>Neomonde</i>
2018	Barry Doyle <i>Barry's Cafe</i>
2017	Christina Larson <i>Darden Restaurants</i>
2016	Ken Conrad <i>Libby Hill Seafood</i>



Stars of the Industry Awards

Honoring Past Winners

Hospitality Champion Award

This award honors a state legislator who has made the most significant legislative progress for North Carolina's hospitality industry in the preceding legislative session.

2025	Sen. Michael Lazzara
2025	Rep. Mitchell Setzer
2024	Sen. Bill Rabon
2024	Rep. Robert Reives
2023	Rep. John Bradford
2023	Sen. Phil Berger
2022	Speaker Tim Moore
2022	Rep. Jason Saine
2022	Sen. Paul Newton
2022	Sen. Kirk deViere
2021	Rep. Julia Howard
2021	Sen. Chuck Edwards
2020	Rep. Becky Carney
2020	Sen. Jerry Tillman
2019	Sen. Dan Blue
2019	Rep. Chuck McGrady
2018	Sen. Rick Gunn
2018	Rep. David Lewis
2017	Sen. Rick Gunn
2016	Rep. Jason Saine
2015	Sen. Harry Brown
2014	Sen. Tom Apodaca