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**ELIZABETHTOWN – WHITE LAKE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNOUNCES 2023 ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS**

The Elizabethtown-White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce honored several individuals and businesses at their Annual Awards Program on Thursday, January 25, 2024. The awards were presented in five categories to worthy individuals and businesses who have impacted Bladen County in 2023.

Award winners are:

**OUTSTANDING CHAMBER MEMBER OF THE YEAR:** The Outstanding Chamber Member of the Year is given to a member organization or business that has shown exceptional service and dedication throughout the prior year. The Award recipient may be celebrating a milestone, have accomplished remarkable achievements, and overcome tremendous obstacles. The Award recipient embodies the values of the Chamber and is involved in the overall success of the Chamber and our Community.

**AWARD WINNER: CAMPBELL OIL**

Campbell Oil, led by Mac and Sylvia Campbell and their family, celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 2023. Starting out as a small enterprise in Elizabethtown in 1948, Campbell Oil now provides a full line of petroleum products to residential & commercial consumers in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. The complete line now includes Automotive, Industrial, Commercial, Aviation lubricants and more.  From Short Truck Deliveries to Tank Installation, Campbell Oil has you covered on Fuel. In addition, their Minuteman Food Mart division is quickly growing and becoming a sought-out convenience store while traveling. With its roots in the Mother County, Campbell Oil remains family owned and focused.

**OUTSTANDING SMALL BUSINESSPERSON AWARD**

The Outstanding Small Business Award is given to an individual(s) who represents a Chamber Member. The individual receiving this award is invested in the success of the Chamber, local businesses, and the community.

**AWARD WINNER: Bo and Kelly Barefoot, Barefoot Sandwich Shop, Barefoot Brew, and Barefoot Boujee Boutique**

The Barefoots are an example of how to do small business right. They have set a standard in customer service for their employees through cross training while giving the youth a sense of empowerment in the promotion of the businesses through social media. They continuously look for ways to serve the community whether it’s hosting a Paint the Town Pink event, actively participating in the Downtown Committee, promoting other businesses, supporting the activities at the Farmers Market, cheering on the local sports teams or lending a hand wherever needed.

**CARING PERSON AWARD**

The Caring Person Award is given to an individual (who may or may not be a Chamber Member) for meritorious service to the community. This award is presented to the individual who understands and demonstrates how the public, business community, and government work together to provide service to the community. The individual receiving this award has played an important and sustained role in numerous community activities, often behind the scenes. He/she may have also received prestigious awards for the various activities in which he/she has been involved. This individual has given not only his or her time to these activities, but also donated needed resources.

**AWARD WINNER: Greg Brinson, Cape Fear Sorba**

Brown’s Creek Nature Trail and Mountain Bike Park is growing as fast in popularity as it is in miles of trails. In a few short years, the Bike Park has exploded to over 17 miles of trails with a 2-plus mile beginner loop added in 2023. The park is increasingly used for regional and statewide competitions and training events. This brings families to our area who eat at our restaurants, shop at our retailers, and stay overnight. The park would not exist without the vision of Cape Fear Sorba and the donations of materials and manpower spearheaded by Greg Brinson. Behind the scenes, Greg plans new attractions on the trails, organizes work dates, and maintains the complex system of trails – all for his love of the sport.

**HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP AWARD**

The Honorary Lifetime Membership award was established to recognize and to give the highest regards to an individual who has served the Chamber in an outstanding and on-going manner. The award is presented to an individual who has been a model Chamber member, a caring businessperson, an active community participant, and an all-around good citizen. The award recipient will have demonstrated the Golden Rule in his/her endeavors.

**AWARD WINNER: Dr, Douglas Genzel, Elizabethtown Veterinary Hospital**

Dr. Gensel is an incredible father, mentor, and employer who strives to give his employees opportunities for growth and success. In 2006 Dr. Gensel took over Elizabethtown Veterinary Hospital, It was then that Dr. Morton handed him a thick file of "thank you" cards and challenged Dr. Gensel to make a difference in the community just as he had. That file has now grown into two boxes that are overflowing. He also helps the community by hosting A Low Cost Spay/Neuter clinic through A Shelter Friend as well as the famous Rabies clinic that he's carried on for the late Dr. Midyette. He also holds a seat on the health department board and is the Animal Control Doctor. Dr. Gensel truly has an undeniable passion for our clients and the health of their pets in our community.

**LEGACY AWARD**

The Legacy Award recognizes a person who through the course of their employment and their day-to-day job, has supported the efforts and initiatives of the Chamber. They have taken an active leadership role and provided valuable counsel in important business development matters. They are honored for their level of collaboration. This nominee can be a Chamber Member, an elected official or county/town employee.

**AWARD WINNER: Greg Martin, Bladen County Manager**

Greg Martin has served as an ex-officio director on the Chamber Board, representing the Bladen County Commissioners. Greg’s guidance and advice has helped develop the Chamber over the last 5 years into a stronger organization. By making sure that the Chamber was an active member of the Bladen County Strategic Planning Team, Greg has shown great vision in including the small business community in discussions about future growth for the county. Greg has been a proponent of the Mother Nature’s Playground brand and supported the concept with the County Commissioners, which led to our involvement in both the UPLIFT Tourism Strategies Program and the Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies Programs.

Awards were presented at the Annual Banquet on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at Lu Mil Vineyard.