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## IBEX 2021: 'From Adversity Comes Growth and Change'

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With more than 800 people in attendance at yesterday's Industry Breakfast — the kick-off for the International BoatBuilders' Exhibition and Conference — it was clear that the industry is thrilled to be back to an in-person format after last year's virtual show.

"Thank you for 30 years of great service," show director Anne Dunbar said during opening remarks at the breakfast and awards ceremony, held at the JW Marriot across the street from the Tampa Convention Center, where IBEX is staged.

Dunbar recognized the changes and challenges the industry has faced since the last in-person show, as well as the incredible impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the business. "From adversity comes growth and change," Dunbar said. "What the marine industry has accomplished in the last year has been astounding."

National Marine Manufacturers Association president Frank Hugelmeyer followed Dunbar with the State of the Industry address. Hugelmeyer also pointed out the strides that the industry has made in the last 18 months, but with a caveat.

“Recreational boating is winning, but we’ve not won,” Hugelmeyer said.

In addition to retaining the tens of thousands of people who have become boaters since the pandemic hit, he said there’s work to be done in conservation, repealing European Union tariffs, infrastructure and more.



### **NMMA Hall of Fame Award**

NMMA honored this year’s Hall of Fame inductees during the breakfast: Joan Maxwell, co-founder and president of Regulator Marine, and Bill Watters, president of Syntec Industries.

Accepting the award, Maxwell recognized her business partner and husband, Owen Maxwell. “Together, we have built a company and a life,” she said. “I’m leaping with joy on the inside. As we say in the South, I’m standing in high cotton.”

Maxwell also pointed to the “tenacity, joy, and incredible knowledge and wisdom” of the women in the industry, citing Grady-White president and Hall of Fame inductee Kris Carroll and *Soundings Trade Only* publisher Michele Goldsmith as exemplars.

Watters was introduced by American Boatbuilders Association president Jay Patton, who said Watters “has worked tirelessly to build Syntec Industries into one of the most successful and innovative marine suppliers [and] has been a champion for the boating industry, dedicating his time and efforts to numerous boards and committees, advocating for the greater good and leaving a lasting legacy.”

Watters was followed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who spoke about the economic impact the marine industry has on the Sunshine State.



## Mel Bar Award

The Mel Barr Award was posthumously given to Larry Porche, **who died earlier this year.**

Porche served the marine industry for 44 years, including more than 20 years with Land 'N' Sea, where he most recently was director of strategic business development. He also was involved with several acquisitions and integrations, including Bell Recreation, Kellogg and Diversified Marine.

“We were so pleased to hear about Larry being accepted for this prestigious award,” said Land 'N' Sea president Mike Connors in a **separate statement.** “Larry was an icon in our industry and mentored so many of us over the years with his knowledge, leadership and appreciation for our industry. I can’t think of a more deserving person to receive this award. Larry would be so humbled and honored to be considered for this achievement.”

The award is named after National Marine Representatives Association co-founder Mel Barr.



## IBEX Innovation Awards

The IBEX Innovation Awards also were handed out, with 11 winners and three honorable mentions selected.

“This year’s Innovation Awards program saw an incredible collection of entries,” Dunbar **said in a statement**. “The judges from Boating Writers International had their work cut out for them to select winners to join the ranks of hundreds of marine manufacturers who have been recognized through the history of the program.”

The 2021 winners:

- Boat Care and Maintenance: Gibco Flex-Mold, Re-Deck
- Boatbuilding Methods and Materials: Sika Corp., Adekit A236
- Deck Equipment and Hardware: LilliPad Marine, Ghost Mount
- Electrical Systems: Discover Battery, Lithium Blue
- Entertainment: RideController, LED+
- Furnishings and Interior Parts: Guardtex, Kanvaslight
- Mechanical Systems: Xylem, Jabsco Quiet Flush E2
- OEM Electronics: Volvo Penta, Assisted Docking

- Propulsion Parts, Propellers: HydroFin Super Fly
- Safety Equipment: OSCAR Navigation, Sentry
- Trailers, Parts and Trailer Accessories: Innovative Group, Roller Bunk.

Honorable Mentions were given to Seaworthy Innovations (Deck Equipment and Hardware, Scuppers), Raymarine (Electrical Systems, YachtSense Modular Digital Control System), and inteliPlug (Safety Equipment, The Vault).

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