

20TH ANNUAL MARITIME INDUSTRY NIGHT



2026 Winners Blog

Thursday, February 19, 2026

University Club of Tampa



PROPELLER CLUB
PORT OF TAMPA

20th Annual
Maritime Industry Awards
February 19, 2026



MEMBER OF THE YEAR

SUZANNE CHAMBERS

ROEBUCK TECHNOLOGIES/ BAMA



Nominated by: Nominating Committee

“Suzanne has been a member for just over two years, and she has truly made the most of every moment! As a Board Director of the Bay Area Manufacturing Association (BAMA), Suzanne spearheaded a trade partnership between BAMA and our Propeller Club, significantly expanding our organization’s reach and strengthening valuable industry connections.

Suzanne volunteers at nearly every Propeller Club event, always stepping up to serve our members and sponsors — even at Stone Crab Fest (and she doesn’t even eat seafood!). Her dedication and willingness to help never go unnoticed. She has a kind, servant’s heart and is always there when you need her. Suzanne is a passionate advocate for our club, proudly promoting us at external events and continuously championing our mission.

Suzanne, we appreciate you more than words can express. You truly embody the spirit of our organization, and you absolutely deserve to be our Member of the Year!”

UNSUNG HEROS

JOSEPH HOLT

U.S. Coast Guard

Unpictured, Could not Attend due to the Government Shutdown. We will have a photo shoot in the coming weeks.

Nominated by: LCDR Ryan Junod

Chief Warrant Officer Joseph Holt is a true unsung hero whose quiet dedication safeguards the Maritime Transportation System of Tampa Bay — a \$41.9 billion economic engine supplying over 45% of Florida's fuel. As Aids to Navigation Officer for U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, he ensures critical navigation aids are properly maintained, protecting lives and commerce each day.

He provides expert oversight to multiple Coast Guard units and played a key role in restoring operations after CGC VICE was struck by lightning, as well as establishing a temporary Port Entry Light following the destruction of the Mullet Key Range near the Skyway Bridge.

Respected across the maritime community, Mr. Holt is the steady professional who keeps our waterways safe and commerce moving.

UNSUNG HEROS

MARIANN PERSAD

NORTON LILLY INTERNATIONAL



Nominated by: Tim Dardar, Norton Lilly; Christyna Doege, Port Tampa Bay; Colt McCay, Mosaic

Mariann is hardworking, dependable and loyal. She takes extreme pride in her job, and treats her customers with respect and dignity, incorporating them as if they were a part of our team. Her commitment and dedication to excellence is second to none, and her knowledge of our business and willingness to learn are always on display. Mariann always goes above and beyond for our customers, always available and always willing to support team members and customers to make sure the job is done. Although not much glamour is associated with Mariann's job of documentation manager, Mariann's job is integral with the shipping industry.

She is irreplaceable, but you would not know her importance because she is humble and deflects praise by putting her company name before herself.

Mariann is a true Unsung Hero to everyone she knows in the port.

UNSUNG HEROS

SCOTT ROBINSON

SAVAGE SERVICES



*Nominated by: Todd McKenna,
Old School Brokers*

Scott Robinson is a hardworking, dependable, and exceptional Engineer who keeps his vessels running while staying ahead of maintenance needs. From his time at Signet, keeping trailer barges moving, to his current role at Savage, Scott has been an instrumental part of the operation's success. You don't often hear his name because he simply gets the job done.

As his nominator, Todd McKenna, who has known Scott for over 10 years, has seen firsthand the value of a dedicated engineer. Scott works around the clock to keep operations running efficiently while saving his company time and money.

UNSUNG HEROS

PAUL ROCHA

PORT TAMPA BAY, PATROL OFFICER



*Nominated by: Patrol Sergeant/Firearms Instructor
Joseph Slattery, Carlos Gomez, MPE, Patrol Captain*

Officer Paul Rocha is a standout member of Port Tampa Bay's Security Department and a deserving candidate for the Unsung Hero Award.

In his short time since joining in January 2025, Officer Rocha has demonstrated exceptional professionalism, dedication, and compassion.

He identified security issues during a patrol of a new property, coordinated with multiple agencies, and helped implement improvements that strengthened facility safety.

He has also gone above and beyond to assist the public, including helping an elderly, disabled cruise passenger arrange transportation and manage his luggage when others would not assist. Additionally, Officer Rocha's quick thinking and attentiveness played a key role in two medical emergencies, potentially saving lives.

Reliable, proactive, and always ready to help colleagues and the community, Officer Rocha exemplifies the true spirit of an unsung hero.

UNSUNG HEROS

NELLY ACOSTA-MARTINEZ

ARDENT MILLS



*Nominated by: Steve Neely – Plant Manager –
Ardent Mills*

Over the past thirteen years, Nelly Acosta Martinez has been a steady, reliable force at Ardent Mills, quietly shaping the success of every team she supports. She embodies the true spirit of an unsung hero—loyal, dependable, and always ready to step in wherever needed.

As Inventory Coordinator, Nelly does far more than manage inventory and logistics. She keeps teams aligned, ensures tours and visits run smoothly, and leads community service efforts as an enthusiastic Engagement Ambassador, strengthening both culture and connection.

What truly sets Nelly apart is her unwavering willingness to help—covering roles, assisting after hours, adapting to last-minute changes and taking on responsibilities beyond her job description, all with positivity and grace.

Her commitment, work ethic, and genuine care for others make her an invaluable team member and a truly deserving nominee for the Unsung Hero Award.

UNSUNG HEROS

NORBERTO SANCHEZ

PORT TAMPA BAY



Nominated by: Ashley O'Brien, Port Tampa Bay

Accepted in person by: Jorge Torres

Norberto could not be at the event

Norberto exemplifies leadership and work done behind the scenes which provides a strong baseline for the day-to-day operations at Port Tampa Bay. Having been working at Port Tampa Bay for over 20 years, Norberto is always the team member on call to help anyone out from any department with no limitation. He leads his team with strong communications and organization which proves itself throughout Port Tampa Bay on all levels.

Norberto is the first one to come to work in the morning and the last one to leave at the end of the day, with no limitation to weekdays, weekends, days or nights. From the time I have been working with Norberto at Port Tampa Bay he has always offered help to the Engineering department to get the job done not only efficiently but properly.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

CECILIA CINTRON

DHS/U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION



*Nominated by: Radames A. Torres, DHS/CBP
Tampa Area Port Director*

Assistant Director Cecilia Cintron exemplifies outstanding leadership through integrity, excellence, and dedication to the CBP mission and its people. She inspires trust, fosters collaboration, and sets a high standard of professionalism.

Cintron combines strategic vision with hands-on engagement in trade, agriculture, stakeholder relations, and emergency management. She leads decisively, balances big-picture goals with attention to detail, and consistently drives results.

Committed to developing others, she empowers her team, promotes growth, and cultivates a culture of accountability and respect. Her leadership strengthens teamwork, improves performance, and ensures lasting organizational success, making her highly deserved recognition in the leadership awards category.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

ERIC GARZA

U.S. COAST GUARD



*Nominated by: LT Amy Harrison
Chief, Incident Management
USCG Sector St Petersburg*

**Eric Garza could not be at the event*

CWO Eric C. Garza is highly deserving of the Maritime Industry Leadership Award for his exceptional leadership, operational excellence, and community service.

In 2025, he led the F/V NIGHT HAWK response after the vessel struck the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, successfully removing 4,200 gallons of oil and 115 tons of debris without incident. He also served as Incident Commander following Hurricanes Helene and Milton, directing 12 responders across 2,150 square nautical miles, identifying 652 pollution targets, and safely removing 1,460 gallons of oil—earning the Coast Guard Commendation Medal. Beyond operations, CWO Garza volunteered for the Wine Women & Shoes fundraiser, personally raising \$2,800 to support families facing pediatric cancer. He also enhanced regional preparedness by introducing advanced GIS tools to improve future hurricane response efforts.

CWO Garza's decisive leadership, dedication to safety, and commitment to his community make him an outstanding candidate for this award.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

JOHN SEWELL

FREEDOM BOAT CLUB - BRUNSWICK



*Nominated by: Les Ares
General Manager, Freedom Boat Club*

John Sewell exemplifies outstanding leadership in the maritime industry through his commitment to safety, accountability, and people-first management. As Manager of Environmental Health & Safety for Brunswick's Freedom Boat Club, he goes beyond his formal role, serving as a trusted mentor and steady guide during both routine operations and high-pressure situations.

John has strengthened safety culture across multiple marinas and teams, empowering staff to make informed, safe decisions while maintaining operational excellence. He demonstrates calm, decisive leadership during incidents such as environmental spills or regulatory challenges, protecting employees, members, partners, and the environment.

Committed to mentorship and continuous improvement, John conducts training, identifies risks proactively, and fosters open communication, trust, and collaboration. His work has elevated safety standards, reduced risk, and reinforced the organization's reputation for excellence.

Through initiative, integrity, and dedication to his people, John Sewell is an exceptional leader and highly deserving of the Maritime Industry Night Leadership Award.

DAVE SESSUMS EDUCATION AWARD

ALISON BARLOW

ST. PETERSBURG INNOVATION DISTRICT



Nominated by: Dee Garcia, Tampa Bay Wave

Alison is an invaluable leader for the Tampa Bay region, serving as Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Innovation District (SPID) for the past eight years. She oversees nearly 600 acres and 50+ organizations across education, entrepreneurship, life sciences, marine science, and technology sectors, including major tenants like Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, USF, Duke Energy, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Under her leadership, SPID continues to grow, including a 50,000-square-foot expansion that maximizes economic and community impact.

Alison co-led the successful 2024 NOAA grant application for \$13.9 million, forming "The Continuum," a consortium of nonprofit maritime incubators. She supports entrepreneurial education, guiding small tech startups, STEAM workforce development, and attracting talent, investment, and new businesses to Tampa Bay.

She also leads the Tampa Bay Ocean Strategy, advancing regional collaboration in ocean economy growth, coastal resilience, and dual-use technologies. Beyond SPID, Alison actively contributes to the Propeller Club of Tampa, leadership programs, and local community organizations.

With her extensive experience in business, government contracting, and education, Alison exemplifies visionary leadership, collaboration, and dedication, making her highly deserving of recognition.

DAVE SESSUMS

EDUCATION AWARD

KERRI BANCROFT

OSG



Nominated by: Ashley O'Brien, Tampa Bay Wave

Kerri Bancroft has been a dedicated leader in supporting maritime education and the local community. A graduate of SUNY Maritime College, she has served as Vice President of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Alumni Association for over two years, helping organize and sponsor key events.

At OSG, Kerri champions local maritime education, founding a scholarship fund to help students attend maritime academies. Her efforts were recognized when she represented OSG at the 2025 SUNY Maritime College Admiral's Dinner for raising critical scholarship funds. She also actively participates in career fairs, Junior Achievement events, and school visits—including Admiral Farragut Academy—educating and inspiring the next generation of maritime professionals.

Through her tireless commitment, leadership, and advocacy, Kerri Bancroft has made a lasting impact on Tampa Bay's maritime community and continues to pave the way for future workforce development.

MAINSTAY AWARD

KATHRYN “KAT” MACLEOD PORT TAMPA BAY



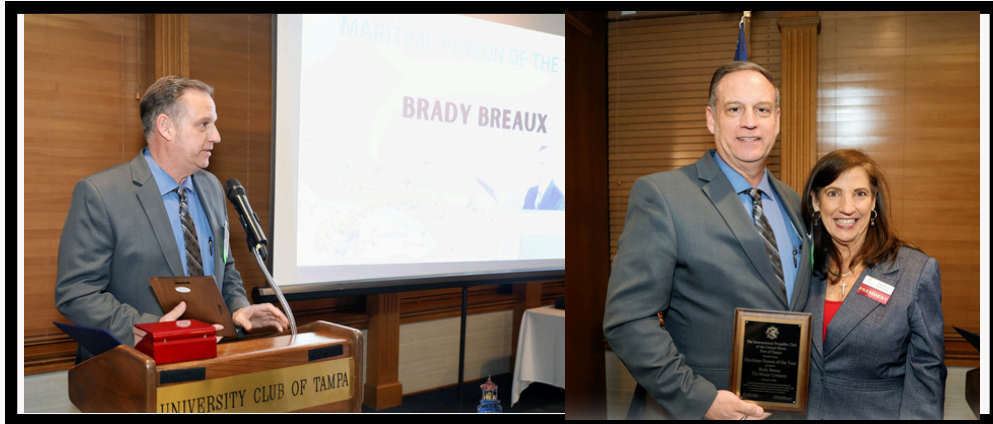
*Nominated by: Charles Klug, Port Tampa Bay & selected by
Nominating Awards Committee - Accepted by Charles Klug*

From Charles Klug, her nominator:

Kat has been my paralegal and legal assistant for approximately 20 years. She provides outstanding work every day and takes great pride in working at the port and contributing to its success. Her love and passion for the port extends to her days working for cruise lines and general cargo companies in Miami. After moving to Sumter County over 20 years ago, she realized that she missed the port community and applied for and was accepted to work in the legal department at Port Tampa Bay.

Each workday, Kat drives to and from Sumter County to work at Port Tampa Bay and never complains about the commute. Anyone who has worked with Kat has witnessed her enthusiasm for the port and her willingness to provide assistance in a kind and respectful manner. She makes each person feel valued whether he or she is an executive, attorney, or dockworker and usually far exceeds their expectations. Her perseverance, work ethic and common courtesy make her an indispensable part of Port Tampa Bay.

MARITIME PERSON OF THE YEAR **BRADY BREAU** THE MOSAIC COMPANY



*Nominated by: Travis Strickland & Selected by
Nominating Awards Committee*

In his role supporting Mosaic Distribution operations, Brady has been instrumental in building and strengthening relationships not only within the Mosaic organization but also across the broader Port Tampa Bay community. His ability to create meaningful connections has enhanced collaboration, improved communication, and solidified our team's presence as a trusted and engaged community partner. Brady has joined and is currently serving in key positions on several port committees including:

Vice President – Maritime Alliance

Vice President – Tampa Bay Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (TB-PORTS)

Vice Chairman - Tampa Port Authority Nominating Committee

Board Member - Tampa Bay Harbor Safety & Security Committee (TBHSSC)

His positive influence, relationship-building skills, and steadfast leadership have made a significant and lasting impact on both our internal teams and our community partners. For these reasons, and many more, Brady Breau stands out as an exceptional leader who demonstrates excellence in every facet of his work.