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## HVAB awards recognize hospitality industry excellence

**State College, PA, Nov. 14, 2023** – The **Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB)** tonight honored several local hospitality community standouts at the second annual Happy Valley Hospitality Awards. Nearly 200 tourism and hospitality employees and leaders attended the celebration at Titan Hollow in Bellefonte, which recognized industry excellence in the local food and beverage, and lodging industries.

“All hospitality positions – from back-of-house support to customer facing and supervisory roles – are valuable to ensuring that visitors and residents have positive dining, entertainment and lodging experiences,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith. “The Adventure Bureau launched the hospitality awards because we want those working in the industry to know that whatever their role, they are valued and appreciated.”

Six awards were presented: Excellence in Lodging Service; Excellence in Lodging Leadership; Excellence in Food & Beverage Service; Excellence in Food & Beverage Leadership; Community Favorite; and the Peter J. Walker Spirit of Hospitality Award.

An independent selection committee chose this year’s honorees from among the nominees in five of the categories. This included the new “Community Favorite” award sponsored by Barash Media, which invited the public to nominate their favorite bartender/server, or other food & beverage worker.

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The HVAB selected the Peter J. Walker Spirit of Hospitality honoree. The award was named after the longtime, late manager of Penn's Cave & Wildlife Park, and exemplifies the traits that Pete brought to his role: leading by example with an incomparable work ethic; a commitment to serving others; and leaving a positive impact on those around him.

"We congratulate this year's honorees, and we thank our nominees and all the hardworking individuals who work in hospitality and tourism – our restaurants, lodging properties, event facilities and tourism attractions," Smith said, noting that the awards will expand beyond lodging, and food & beverage next year to recognize those working in the entire tourism space.

"Visitation is growing," he concluded. "People are interested in Happy Valley. We can't invite leisure, sports, and business travelers to enjoy our beautiful communities and valleys without dedicated people to provide a positive experience. To everyone who fills these roles, we say thank you. You are all stand outs."

Additional event sponsors are Blink, 3Twenty9 Design and Hello Social Co.

### **2023 Happy Valley Hospitality award honorees:**

#### **Lodging Excellence in Leadership**

**Alissa Kujawski**  
General Manager  
Country Inn & Suites

#### **Lodging Excellence in Service**

**William "Billy" Hague**  
Breakfast Attendant/Houseman/Grounds Crew  
Holiday Inn Express State College

#### **Food & Beverage Excellence in Leadership**

**Anne Bliss**  
Manager  
Titan Hollow

#### **Food & Beverage Excellence in Service**

**Scott Shive**  
Kitchen Manager  
The Corner Room

#### **Community Favorite**

**Matt LeClair**  
Owner/Bartender  
814 Cider Works

#### **Peter J. Walker Spirit of Hospitality**

**State College Downtown Improvement District Clean Team**  
**Damian Cabrera**  
**Joe Bellehumeur**  
**Denny Barnhart**

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