

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Marine Trades Association of New Jersey Elects its 2026-2027 Officers and Directors and Presents Awards & Special Recognitions

Brielle, NJ - On April 16th, 2026, the Marine Trades Association of New Jersey (MTA/NJ) held its Annual Dinner & Elections at Jumping Brook Country Club in Neptune and elected its 2026-2027 Officers & Directors. The Association also presented three Top Sponsor Awards and gave special recognition to the retiring board members and to MTA/NJ Executive Director Melissa Danko for her 25 years with the Association.

Brian Houf of MESCO will continue to serve as President of the Association. Jerry Bench of Wintron Electronics in Manasquan remains First Vice President, and Karen Gruppuso of Coastal Environmental Consulting in Toms River continues as Second Vice President. Ed Harrison III of Baywood Marina in Brick will continue in his role as Treasurer, and Raymond Bogan of Sinn, Cantoli, Bogan & Steuerman in Point Pleasant Beach remains Secretary. Colleen Blake of All Points Marina in Point Pleasant Beach will also continue to serve on the Board as Immediate Past President.

The following directors were re-elected to begin a new two-year term: Lou Cecchini of Offshore Marine in Branchville, Aaron Held of Octopus Yachts: Marine Electrical Systems in Wall, Eric Traber of Pier 47 Marina in Wildwood, and Eliot Walters of Dillon's Creek Marina in Island Heights. Continuing their two-year terms are: Mark Cassidy of Cassidy's Breton Woods Marina in Brick, Pat Salinas of Morgan Marina in Parlin, John Leek of Viking Yacht Co. & Valhalla Boatworks in New Gretna, and Pat McGovern of Mack Boring & Parts Co. in Somerset.

The active Past Presidents that will continue to serve on the Board include Fred Brueggemann, Jim Cerruti, Don Ditzel of Comstock Yacht Sales & Marina in Brick, Tom Leaming of Leamings Marina in Waretown, Paul Terzian of Causeway Marine Sales in Manahawkin, and Rick Traber of Pier 47 Marina in Wildwood.



MTA/NJ Board of Directors & Staff

“It’s hard to believe I’ve already served one year of my term”, said MTA/NJ President Brian Houf. “On behalf of the Association, it was honor, as President, to present Cape May Tech with a donation of tools and products and I am looking forward to an even more productive year ahead.”

The Association also took a moment during the evening to honor the retirement of three long-standing members of the Board of Directors, all Past Presidents: Ed McCarthy, Greg Wright, and Ed Harrison Jr., in recognition of their many years of leadership, dedication, and service to the recreational boating industry. Each was celebrated for the significant role they have played in shaping and strengthening the Marine Trades Association of New Jersey.

A special tribute was paid to Ed Harrison Jr., whose remarkable 50 years of service on the Board have left a lasting legacy. In recognition of his extraordinary commitment, he was presented with an official proclamation from the Board of Directors naming him President Emeritus of the Association.

“There’s no shortage of accomplishments, accolades, or significant contributions when talking about Ed Harrison Jr. and his time with the MTA/NJ,” shared Paul Terzian of Causeway Marine. “His deep institutional knowledge, practical marina experience, and unwavering commitment to the industry have made him a trusted voice and someone we have always leaned on to help us through the many challenges we have faced. He will be deeply missed.”



MTA/NJ Past Presidents Paul Terzian (left) and Jim Cerruti (right) presented the proclamation to honor Ed Harrison Jr. (center)

The MTA/NJ also held its Sponsor of the Year Awards at the Annual Dinner. The MTA/NJ established this award over twenty years ago to show its appreciation and to recognize the leading sponsors and supporters of the Association. This year, the MTA/NJ was pleased to be able to award three very deserving and supportive companies. The Top Sponsor of the Year awards went to John B. Wright Insurance Agency, a Division of Oliver L.E. Soden Agency Corp. of Manasquan, Pettit Paint and ValvTect Marine Fuel in Greensboro, NC, and Travelers Ocean Marine Insurance of Edison.



MTA/NJ Sponsors of the Year

“We’re incredibly grateful for the amazing generosity of our sponsors, and we love being about to present our Top Sponsor awards every year to thank them for all that they do,” said Melissa Danko. “Their support really helps us push our mission forward, makes the whole industry stronger, and brings real value to our businesses and everyone in it.”

The evening concluded with a special recognition of Executive Director Melissa Danko for her 25 years of dedicated service to the MTA/NJ. Over the past quarter century, Melissa’s leadership, commitment, and tireless advocacy have played a pivotal role in advancing the Association’s mission to protect, promote, and grow New Jersey’s recreational boating industry. Her work has strengthened the organization, supported its members, and helped ensure a vibrant future for boating throughout the state.

“For 25 years, New Jersey’s boating industry has benefitted greatly from Melissa’s unwavering dedication, integrity, resilience, and vision,” remarked Houf. “Her impact reaches far beyond policies and programs - it lives in the strength, stability, and future of our industry.”

To close out the night on a high note, the 50/50 raffle winner was announced as Dane Gahr of Comstock Yacht Sales & Marina. In a generous show of support for the industry, Dane immediately chose to donate his winnings back to the MTA/NJ Foundation. His thoughtful gesture helps further the Foundation’s mission to support workforce development, education, and the future of the recreational boating industry in New Jersey.



Dane Gahr (right) graciously donated his 50/50 winnings back to the MTA/NJ Foundation.

About the MTA/NJ

The Marine Trades Association of New Jersey (MTA/NJ), established in 1972, is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, advancing, and protecting the recreational marine industry and waterways in the State of New Jersey. The MTA/NJ is dedicated to the interests of the industry for the benefit of its individual members and the consumers whom they serve. In addition to many accomplishments, the MTA/NJ produces two boat shows, the Jersey Shore Boat Sale & Expo held in September at ShoreTown Ballpark in Lakewood and the New Jersey Boat Sale & Expo held in February at the New Jersey Convention & Expo Center in Edison. The MTA/NJ proudly endorses the Discover Boating Atlantic City Boat Show produced by the National Marine Manufacturers Association.

For more photos from the Annual Dinner & Elections, visit the MTA/NJ on [Facebook](#).