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PRESS RELEASE

Florida Region of USA Volleyball Announces Class of 2025 Regional Award Winners

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball announces the award recipients for their 24th annual awards program in Orlando, FL.

Eustis, FL – March 17, 2025 – The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is excited to recognize several outstanding members for their dedication and commitment to furthering the sport of volleyball. Countless hours go into coaching a team, managing a club, attending clinics, earning certificates, organizing events, growing the game, and improving our Region each year. This year, the Florida Region will be presenting twenty-four (24) awards at the 2025 Florida Region Awards Ceremony. The ceremony will be held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL on May 1, 2025, at 6:30 PM ET, alongside the 2025 ASICS Florida Volleyball Challenge tournament.

Below is a list of the 2025 Award Recipients:

- Bruce Perry Volleyball Ambassador Award – **Sue Wainio**
- Ernest Langford Pioneer Award – **Gordon Mayforth**
- Extra Mile Award – **Joya Teter**
- Extra Mile Award – **Luke & Monica Ewalt**
- Meritorious Service Award – **Donna Beasley**
- Most Improved Juniors Club – **Tampa United Volleyball Academy**
- Outstanding Adult Referee (Ben Jordan Golden Whistle Award) – **Robert Owen**
- Outstanding Club Director – **Nicholas Behrens**, Elite Sports
- Outstanding Junior Coach – **Altone Williams**, Tribe Volleyball Club
- Outstanding Junior Coach – **Aaron Phillips**, Winter Park Volleyball Club
- Outstanding Junior Coach – **Miguel Dapena**, Florida Gulfside Volleyball Academy
- Outstanding Junior Coach – **Eric Marshall**, Gainesville Juniors Volleyball Club
- Outstanding Service Award – **Gear4All Foundation**
- Outstanding Service Award – **Terry & Barb Small**
- Florida Region Hall of Fame Inductee – **Maria Hardwick**
- Florida Region Hall of Fame Inductee – **Landon Thomas**

In addition to the 2025 award winners, the Florida Region officials that advanced to Jr. National or National during the 2024 season will also be recognized and presented with their official custom-embroidered jacket:

- **Cristina Gonzalez**, National Referee
- **Fernando L Ortiz-Boria**, Junior National Referee
- **Giovanna Corona**, Junior National Referee
- **Mineily Rivera**, Junior National Referee
- **Gabriel Mercado**, Junior National Referee
- **Ariadna Cruz Fernandez**, National Scorer

The **Executive Director and President** of the Florida Region, **Kurt Esser**, commented, “As my first Awards Ceremony as Executive Director, I am thrilled to celebrate the incredible individuals who have made such a significant impact on the sport of volleyball in the Florida Region. This event is an opportunity to recognize their dedication and hard work, and I am excited to be part of this special evening. Alongside honoring our award recipients, we will also be presenting scholarships to deserving high school seniors, supporting the continuing education of these young athletes through their upcoming college careers. This would not be possible without the generosity of our partners, and I’m looking forward to sharing this unforgettable night with our volleyball community here in the Florida Region!”

Additionally, this annual event is where the Florida Region awards scholarships to the very deserving high school seniors that are selected. Last year, at the 23rd Annual Awards Ceremony, over \$131,000 in scholarships were presented to high school seniors in the Region. The scholarship program began in 2007 with only four high school seniors receiving scholarships, and thanks to our generous sponsors and partners, the Florida Region has been able to grow the scholarship program and award over \$876,100 to 306 students!

Click the link below to learn more about this event and to purchase tickets!

<https://www.floridavolleyball.org/regional-awards-ceremony.html>

About Florida Region of USA Volleyball:

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is a 501c3 non-profit that began operations in the 1960’s and was officially incorporated in 1982 to promote the sport of volleyball and to create competitive playing opportunities for volleyball enthusiasts of all ages throughout the State of Florida. The Florida Region is one of the 40 regional volleyball associations under the umbrella of USA Volleyball and currently serves over 20,000 members. Indoor, outdoor, and para programming is available for adults, juniors, coaches, and officials. The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is headquartered in Eustis, FL. Additional information on the Florida Region can be found at: www.FloridaVolleyball.org

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