



For Immediate Release

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**High resolution photos available*

Winners Announced for 2017 Employees First Award and Customer Service Award in Tourism

Vancouver, BC – Landsea Tours & Adventures has won the coveted 2017 Employees First Award, while Yolanta Malkovska from 8th Generation Vineyard took home the Customer Service Award, presented last evening at the BC Tourism Industry Awards Gala in Victoria. Both awards are sponsored by go2HR, BC's tourism human resource association, as part of the 2017 Tourism Industry Awards hosted by Destination British Columbia.

The Employees First Award

The Employees First Award recognizes a British Columbia tourism industry employer who has upheld high standards of excellence in human resources and people management practices. Landsea Tours & Adventures operates on the philosophy to "hire for personality and train for skill" with an extensive training program. Their initial 12-week "Blue Star Certified" in-house training program ensures guides are prepared for their tours, encompassing Class 2 driver training and licensing, two weeks of customer service, and support in building their tour repertoire. The training continues with spot training and driver refreshers every six months.

In addition, Landsea focuses on a family-like corporate culture and shared values for their employees. The company holds monthly social events, birthday celebrations, and seasonal parties. It offers flexible schedules for staff to accommodate work-life balance, school schedules, and secondary jobs.

As a result, Landsea enjoys an employee retention rate of 75 per cent. It has seen continuous year-over-year growth and its number of employees is up 17 per cent since 2015. For four consecutive years the company has been awarded the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence with 92 per cent guest satisfaction. It boasts the reputation of the best mini-coach company in Vancouver.

The Customer Service Award

The Customer Service Award recognizes a frontline tourism employee whose exceptional customer service contributed to outstanding travel experiences for visitors. The winner, Yolanta Malkovska, has been a tasting bar host at 8th Generation Vineyard in Summerland since it opened 10 years ago. "Hospitality is not just a word for her, it is her mantra," said owner Stefanie Schales. "She interacts with the young and old, and everyone feels her pride of our product and our company. Yolanta is able to switch like a button from a serious wine connoisseur tasting to a fun, relaxed tasting for a bachelorette group. If Granny is a part of the tasting you can make sure Yolanta offers her a chair. If kids are around Yolanta pulls out some colouring books and lollipops."

She exemplifies the Customer Service Award by going above and beyond: regularly offering for the wine to be shipped despite the extra workload for herself, always being ready to help out her colleagues when needed, and serving a vital role training new team members in the company.

In congratulating the winners, Arlene Keis, go2HR's CEO, said: "By creating an open, passion-filled work environment and providing ongoing professional development opportunities, Landsea Tours & Adventures puts their employees first and generates an atmosphere that encourages new staff to join and stay with them. And great hospitality employees like Yolanta create a shining example for our industry, delivering incredible experiences for visitors and, in turn, contributing to tourism industry success. We congratulate Landsea Tours & Adventures and Yolanta on their achievements."

To learn more about the BC Tourism Industry Awards, visit bctourismconference.ca/awards.

Photos

Arlene Keis, CEO of go2HR, with Employees First award winner Kevin Pearce, Co-owner of Landsea Tours & Adventures

Dennis Green, Director of Industry Training, go2HR, with Customer Service award winner, Yolanta Malkovska, Tasting Bar Host of 8th Generation Vineyard

Suggested tweet

2017 winners announced for @go2HR #EmployeesFirst Award & #CustomerService Award in Tourism at BCTIC <http://ow.ly/PzTT309kPZO>

About go2HR

go2HR is BC's tourism human resource association, responsible for coordinating the BC Tourism Labour Market Strategy and providing programs and resources in the area of recruitment, retention and training. Working in partnership with WorkSafeBC, go2HR is also the health and safety resource for BC's tourism and hospitality industry, and the certifying partner for the Certificate of Recognition (COR) Program. For more information, visit www.go2hr.ca.

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Media Contact:

Michelle Sz, Marketing and Communications Specialist
go2HR
604 633 9787 ext. 236
msz@go2hr.ca