



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Robert Agrusa  
President / CEO

Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association  
(407) 907-8082

[Robert.Agrusa@cfhla.org](mailto:Robert.Agrusa@cfhla.org)

## **CFHLA ANNOUNCES THE 2026 GOLDEN PINEAPPLE AWARD WINNERS**

*This Annual Signature Event Recognizes Hospitality Employees for Superior Service*

**ORLANDO, Fla.** (February 13, 2026) – On Thursday, February 12, 2026, at the Orlando World Center Marriott, the Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association (CFHLA) hosted its annual Golden Pineapple Awards dinner and celebration.

This year, CFHLA recognized over 261 “front line” employees from 68 different Central Florida lodging properties for their exemplary service and outstanding customer satisfaction throughout 2025.

Additionally, for the third year in a row, Ybeth Bruzual of Spectrum News 13 served as the event’s emcee, which attracted more than 950 attendees.

Throughout the evening, CFHLA recognized and honored the following thirteen hospitality employees as the winners for each of the designated categories.

The 2026 Golden Pineapple Award winners include:

**Outstanding Back Office Employee of the Year**

Kat Maldonado, Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort

**Outstanding Bell Person/Concierge Employee of the Year**

Alexa Perez, Loews Portofino Bay Hotel

**Outstanding Community Service Employee of the Year**

La Creashia Blash, Westgate Resort Vacation Villas & Town Center

**Outstanding Convention Center/Banquet Employee of the Year**

Jose Mendoza, Wyndham I-Drive Avanti Resort & Conference Center

**Outstanding Culinary Employee of the Year**

Amanda Kenyon, Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes

**Outstanding Engineering Employee of the Year**  
John Martinez, Holiday Inn Orlando International Airport

**Outstanding Food & Beverage Service Employee of the Year**  
Russ Robers, Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport

**Outstanding Front Office Employee of the Year**  
Susan Connelly, Orlando World Center Marriott

**Outstanding Housekeeping Employee of the Year**  
Ivelliss Alvarez, Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld

**Outstanding Laundry Employee of the Year**  
Libia Mendenhall, Holiday Inn Club Vacations - Orange Lake Resort

**Outstanding Recreational Employee of the Year**  
Kathy Alexis, Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center

**Outstanding Security/Loss Prevention Employee of the Year**  
Prakash Chowti, Hyatt Regency Orlando

**Outstanding Steward/Dishwasher Employee of the Year**  
Pierre Ernest Dor, Caribe Royale Orlando

To learn more about each of our 2026 Golden Pineapple Award winners and their stories, please visit [www.cfhla.org/golden-pineapple-award-winners](http://www.cfhla.org/golden-pineapple-award-winners).

### **About Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association**

The Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association's mission is to represent the Central Florida Hospitality Industry, by setting the standard of excellence through advocacy, collaboration, education, recognition, and service.

As the largest regional lodging association in the United States, CFHLA represents approximately 80 percent of the more than 129,500 hotel rooms throughout the Central Florida region, (including but not limited to Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk and Seminole Counties), and more than 500 "supplier" organizations that do business with the hospitality and tourism industries.

For more information on the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association, please visit [www.cfhla.org](http://www.cfhla.org).

###