

Locals' favorite places to live, work and play

Orlando Business Journal - by [Bill Orben and Kristen Stieffel](#)

Whether it was raising a glass for better times ahead or drowning one's sorrows in the fruit of the vine, *Orlando Business Journal* readers gave three cheers for **Vineyard Wine Co.**

The Lake Mary restaurant that doubles as a wine merchant won for the first time this year in the Orlando Business Journal's annual Readers Choice Awards.

However, readers apparently like the place so much that they handed Vineyard Wine Co. top honors in not just one, but three categories: best restaurant for a power lunch, best place to have dinner with a client and best restaurant wine list. It was the only business this year to win that many categories.

Multiple awards also went to:

- **Fairwinds Credit Union**, which won for best green business practices and tied with **Insight Financial Credit Union** for best credit union
- Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, which was named best hotel for an "in-town" weekend getaway and best spa.

Speaking of multiples, twice as many readers participated in this year's competition as last year to name favorite foods, meeting spots, places to stay and where to do business.

And, as usual, some of the readers' responses made us chuckle.

For instance, one nominated West Oaks in Ocoee as the best hospital. We're not sure what they meant, unless they thought Ocoee's only hospital, Health Central, looks like its only shopping mall, West Oaks.

In addition, a freelance artist nominated herself in the best accounting firm category, making us ponder whether or not accountants could be artistic or artists could be mathematically inclined.

We also got some unusual nominations for best hotel for "in-town" weekend getaway: Bradenton and Miami — neither one a hotel or in town.

And we're impressed by the rebel who suggested ladies get their haircuts at **Conway Barber Shop** because it has "no female customers." We haven't seen that sort of encouragement for women to infiltrate a male barbershop since the days when all the flappers were out getting their hair bobbed.

Then there are **Full Sail University's** fans, who are loyal, if not entirely sure what it does. Full Sail received multiple votes in multiple categories, including landscaping, residential construction, property management, and Best Central Florida business school for MBA. Although Full Sail does offer master's degrees, they are not in business administration.

When asked for a good place to buy women's business clothing, one male voter emphatically told us, "I don't do that!" OK, OK, we believe you, calm down.

We were unsure what to do with the lone vote cast for "Gray Harris." Mr. Harris is now with another firm, so Gray Harris, as such, is no more. We entered the vote as one for GrayRobinson, which is what the firm changed its name to after Stumpy Harris launched **Harris Harris Baurle & Sharma**. We could, perhaps, have counted it as half a vote for one firm and half a vote for the other, but we're journalists. Math is hard enough for us without fractions.

And we can only assume the person who nominated "the girl from 96.5 in the afternoon" is paying more attention to his driving than his radio host's name. We're OK with that.

Repeat winners from past years included **SunTrust Bank**; Fairwinds Credit Union; **Graham, Cottrill, Jackson & Hostetter** LLP; Dr. Clifford Clark; **Fannie Hillman & Associates**; **Hage Construction Co.**; Bubbalou's Bodacious BBQ; Interlachen Country Club and Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes.

There also were several newcomers to the list, including Ethos Vegan Kitchen, **Charles Clayton Construction Inc.**, Dobson's **Woods & Water Inc.**, Salon Elysee, Joseph A. Banks, Martha Sugalski, Vose Law Firm, **Adler Realty Services** and D&G General Contracting Co.

Harris Rosen: Someone to follow

Hotelier Harris Rosen, who earlier this year launched **Rosen Healthcare Solutions** to aid companies wanting to duplicate his employee-based health care clinics, was recognized as best corporate citizen. Rosen's chain of seven hotels is the largest independent hotel company in Florida. In addition to owning one of the first hotels recognized by the state Green Lodging Program, Rosen also created the Tangelo Park Pilot Program to benefit children and teens in that neighborhood.

Faith in finance

Readers gave high marks to SunTrust Bank, recognized as best business bank. SunTrust, the No. 1 bank in Central Florida, had nearly \$7.7 billion in Central Florida deposits as of June 30. Companywide, SunTrust had deposits of \$124.2 billion as of June 30 this year, compared to \$120.8 billion at the same time last year, said the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Winter Park-based **BankFirst**, which had \$285.9 million in deposits as of June 30, and the area's 20th largest bank, was your choice for best community bank. Companywide, BankFirst had \$415.2 million in deposits as of June 30 this year, compared to \$399.4 million at the same time last year, said the FDIC.

Fairwinds Credit Union won for best green business practices. It is Central Florida's second largest credit union with \$1.55 billion in assets as of June 30, compared to \$1.78 billion the same period a year earlier.

Fairwinds also tied with Insight Financial Credit Union for best credit union. Financial Credit Union is the area's fifth-largest credit union with \$443.5 million in assets as of June 30, compared to \$435.1 million during the same period a year ago.

In terms of keeping track of all of their money, readers again gave high marks to Graham, Cottrill, Jackson & Hostetter LLP as the best accounting firm. Founded in Orlando in 1975, its services include audits, tax planning, business advice, estate planning and more for a wide range of clients, including car dealers, banks, construction firms, manufacturers, health care providers, schools, software firms and securities dealers.

Top docs

Readers may have embraced Vineyard Wine Co. as something new, but they also still clung to something old, naming the 101-year-old Florida Hospital — a 2,188-bed health system with seven campuses — as Central Florida's top hospital system.

Also in the medical category, 475 votes were cast for local dentists. Winning in that category was Dr. Randall Sipp, a general dentist with an office on West Fairbanks Avenue in Winter Park. He scored higher than the national average in HealthGrades' patient ratings for things such as ease of scheduling urgent appointments, office environment, staff courtesy and wait time before seeing the dentist.

Dr. Clifford Clark, whose office is at 701 Morse Blvd. in Winter Park, was named best plastic surgeon. Clark was chairman of the department of plastic surgery at **Winter Park Memorial Hospital** in 2000 and at Florida Hospital in 1998-2000 and got the "top doctor" designation in 1999-2001 from the Center for the Study of Services.

Dr. Anthony Douglas won as best general practitioner. Douglas, affiliated with the Florida Physicians Medical Group, is based at Maitland Internal Medicine.

The recognition of best eye surgeon was a draw for readers, who gave an equal number of votes to Dr. Konrad W. Filutowski and Dr. Brock Magruder Jr. Filutowski is chief surgeon and medical director of the Lake Mary-based **Filutowski Cataract & LASIK Institute** he founded in 1990. Magruder, based at LaserVue, has performed more than 20,000 LASIK procedures at the Orlando facility.

Cora Rehabilitation Clinics, which has 18 locations in Central Florida, was noted by readers as the best physical therapist. The Lima-Ohio based company has clinics in Florida and Michigan and provides outpatient rehabilitation therapy for orthopedic, work-related injuries, sport injuries and other neuromuscular and neurological conditions.

Property pursuits

Although readers again recognized perennial winner Fannie Hillman & Associates as the best residential real estate office, most of those in the other real estate categories were not repeat winners.

Baker Barrios Architects Inc. was named best architect. The firm has been involved in Dynetech Centre, the Plaza, 55 West and was hired to design the \$383 million Dr. P. Phillips Orlando Performing Arts Center in downtown Orlando.

Hage Construction Co., which tied for best residential construction company last year, won the award outright this year. The Orlando-based company describes itself as building affordable luxury homes. It won first place in the 2009 Home Builders Association of Metro Orlando Parade of Homes competition in the \$250,000-\$300,000 price category of custom homes for its Venetian floor plan.

Charles Clayton Construction Inc. was named by OBJ readers as the best custom home builder. It built the Baldwin Park show home for the National Association of Home Builders Conference held in Orlando last year.

Readers gave their nod to **SoCo Interiors Inc.**, a women-owned firm based in Winter Park, as best interior design firm. The design company won two 2009 Aurora awards for interior merchandising and four awards in the 12-state competition for builders and designers.

For best landscaping company, readers picked a 25-year-old Orlando firm, Dobson's Woods & Water Inc. With seven locations in Central Florida and the Tampa Bay area, the company offers landscape and irrigation design, installation and maintenance, and pest control.

For those contemplating a commercial construction project, readers recommend Apopka-based D&G General Contracting Co., the builder of Waterford Park at Waterford Lakes and the Apopka branch of **Old Florida National Bank**.

BE&K Building Group, with six offices in the Southeast and one in Washington, D.C., was recognized as the best green building contractor. The Orlando office is seeking gold level certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for the \$33.5 million, 220,000-square-foot International Speedway Corp. headquarters BE&K is building in Daytona Beach.

In need of some office space? OBJ readers recommend turning to Adler Realty Services. The Miami-based commercial real estate firm launched a joint venture this year with **Holly Sime Realty/TCN Worldwide** to manage and lease Class A office space and was seeking to raise \$65 million for acquisitions for its parent company, The Alder Group.

Crossman & Co. was chosen by OBJ readers as the best property management company. It landed the management contract for Orlando Fashion Square, Lake Nona Village and more than 100 Publix-anchored centers in the Southeast.

Let's eat

Readers were split on a mix of old favorites and newcomers to the OBJ Readers Choice Awards. **First Watch Restaurants Inc.** again received readers' nod as the best restaurant for a power breakfast. The Bradenton-based company opened its sixth Orlando location near the **University of Central Florida** and serves breakfast and lunch at its 79 restaurants in 11 states.

Amura Japanese Restaurant returned as the favorite for sushi. Amura, with locations in downtown Orlando, Heathrow and Dr. Phillips, features everything from baby octopus to Kobe beef to teppan dinners.

Del Frisco's Prime Steak & Lobster repeated as the winner in the best steak category. Owned by Carole and David Christner, the Winter Park steakhouse opened in 1993 and has a wall full of dining awards. It features USDA prime aged beef, fresh seafood and more than 6,500 bottles of wine in its cellar.

Making its debut on the list was Ethos Vegan Kitchen, recognized for the best vegetarian food. Debuting in December 2007, Ethos is one of the few vegan restaurants in Orlando.

Returning to the awards after some years absence was La Coquina at Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress, recognized as having the best brunch. Transformed into a French marketplace, the restaurant — which also features a chef's table on Saturday nights — serves brunch from September through June.

Also returning to the list: Puff 'n Stuff, which readers said was the best caterer. Owned by Warren G. Dietel, who bought the company from his parents in 2003, Puff 'n Stuff has more than 20 chefs on staff to whip up food for a special event in its 30,000- square-foot facility.

Let's meet

When a large group needs a place to meet, readers recommend heading to Kissimmee to the 1,400-room **Gaylord Palms Resort**. The property, with 400,000 square feet of meeting space, has drawn raves from readers for several years running.

For small gatherings, head a little further down Interstate 4 to the 720-room **Omni Orlando Resort** at ChampionsGate on the county line of Polk and Osceola counties.

If that meeting involves hitting the links, **Dubsdread Country Club** was recognized by readers as the best public course. Opened in 1924, the 18-hole golf course is owned by the city of Orlando. The Tap Room at Dubsdread has been recognized by Orlando Business Journal readers in the past as the best place for a power lunch, and its Historic Dubsdread Ballroom & Catering is the site for weddings and other special events.

The race for best private golf club was a tie between Interlachen Country Club of Winter Park and Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes in Longwood. Interlachen, which was redesigned by golf course architect Steve Smyers in 2007, includes the Highland Grille & Tartan Lounge. Previously honored by Golf Digest as a best place to play, the Legacy Club features a 7,160-yard, par-72 layout and 11,000-square-foot clubhouse.

For those looking to improve their skills or maybe embark on a new career, OBJ readers gave the nod to the **Roy E. Crummer Graduate School of Business** at **Rollins College** as the best Central Florida business school for an MBA. The school ranked first in Florida and 22nd in the nation by Entrepreneur magazine and The Princeton Review and its MBA program was rated tops by Forbes and BusinessWeek magazines.

Full Sail University, which announced plans in September to nearly double its online staff, was named by readers as the best company. Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, Full Sail has about 7,000 students and employs 1,450 people.

These people rock

Recognized as the best car dealer was Fields BMW, which won the same category last year. Owned by **Fields Auto Group**, the 19-year-old dealership underwent a \$7 million expansion project that doubled its size in 2005.

When it comes to attorneys, OBJ readers recognized Vose Law Firm, a 19-year-old firm making its debut on the list. Founded by Becky Vose, it was named best law firm. It has represented a number of Central Florida municipalities, state agencies and companies and individuals worldwide.

Men looking for a makeover should head to Kennedy's **All-American Barber Club**, named by readers as the best place for men to get a haircut. Launched by Chris Hurn, president and CEO of **Mercantile Commercial Capital**, the company has five locations in Central Florida, one in South Florida and franchises planned for Tennessee, Maryland, Connecticut and New York.

Also check out Joseph A. Banks, which readers recommended as best place to shop for men's business clothing. Based in Hampstead, Md., the company has 467 stores in 42 states and the District of Columbia — including five in Central Florida — and a nationwide catalog and online store.

For women, readers advise a stop at Salon Elysee for a new 'do and Ann Taylor for a new outfit. Located in The Plaza of the Solaire building, the salon also has sites in Paris and Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Ann Taylor's Central Florida presence includes one store, seven Ann Taylor Loft stores and two factory outlet stores.

The Orlando Museum of Art was recognized as the best art gallery. The museum, which is showcasing "Global Lens 2009" through Nov. 1, features a cloth and textile collection from the Norma Canelas and William D. Roth Collection of African Art and 180 works from the museum's "Art of the Ancient Americas Collection" through Dec. 31.

Although Marla Weech and Wendy Chioji may have long disappeared from the TV news channels, they still rated high on readers' list of favorite TV personalities, garnering several votes. The two women may no longer be seen on the local TV market, but readers named two of their colleagues — WESH's Martha Sugalski and WFTV's Bob Opsahl — as Central Florida's top TV personalities.

With more than 15 years covering Florida, Sugalski — a former reporter and anchor at WTVJ-TV in Miami — came to WESH in 2006. Opsahl, who has been at WFTV since 1978, is a graduate of the University of Central Florida. His weekly segment called Wednesday's Child has enabled more than 500 children to be adopted.

And when picking someone to spin their tunes on the radio, readers moved Jayde of WXXL-FM, XL106.7 from runner-up last year to winner this year. The 26-year-old, who is part of the Johnny & Jayde in the

Morning show on XL 106.7, headed the Operation Princess Project that collected prom dresses for middle school and high school girls who couldn't afford to buy them.

Taking recognition for best local male radio personality was last year's winner Scott McKenzie, WOMX-FM 105.1. McKenzie, who has been at the radio station for 18 years, teams up with Erica Lee, last year's winner of top local female personality, each weekday morning on the Scott & Erica Morning Show.

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