



VAN NESS BUTLER, JR. HOSPITALITY AWARD

Recognizing Walton County Hospitality Excellence

This annual hospitality award was established in 2003 by the Walton County Tourism Department to encourage and recognize excellence in hospitality service, travel/tourism marketing, advertising, promotion and contributions to the local community.

The award honors the legacy of service embodied by the Van Ness Butler family who acquired the land now known as Grayton Beach in 1922. The Butler family built the Grayton Beach Hotel, and through their family's passion, determination and energy, truly defined Grayton Beach and set the stage for the tourism industry. Following his grandfather's legacy, Van Ness Butler, Jr. served as the first chairman of the TDC, as interim executive director for two years and continued to serve the Tourist Development Council for more than 13 years. This award also honors the Florida Tourism Hall of Fame inductees and pioneers of Walton County's hospitality and tourism industries.

Nominees for the Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award are judged on their initiative, merits and innovation in achieving organizational success and on working with other community businesses or organizations to enhance Walton County's local, national or international standing as a travel destination.

Announcement of the 2026 Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award winner will be made at the Walton County Tourism annual meeting in October 2025.

AWARD CONCEPT/CRITERIA:

1. Nomination is open to any person residing or working in Walton County who has been an outstanding force in promoting tourism and hospitality in Walton County.
2. Eligible employees work in hospitality service, travel/tourism marketing, advertising or promotion at businesses or organizations including area accommodations, attractions, eco-tourism activities, retail shops, art galleries, restaurants, transportation or online travel guides **AND** have made significant contributions to the local community.

3. Entries will cite the individual who consistently strengthens the Walton County destination brand in the tourism marketplace and works to enhance Walton County's standing as a travel destination. All entries become property of WCT.
4. Anyone may nominate an individual, and an individual may nominate himself or herself. The online or digital nomination form must contain the full name, position, contact information and signature of the person making the nomination.
5. WCT staff will record and process the entrants, verifying the nominee as a member of Walton County's tourism or hospitality industry.
6. The nomination forms will be reviewed and scored by a panel chosen by WCT.

NOMINATION INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Individuals or anyone familiar with the nominee's accomplishments may submit the person for consideration. Individuals may also nominate themselves. Previous winners will not be considered for nomination.
2. The complete and signed Nomination Form must accompany the application.
3. The application should include a short biography of the nominee as well as a summary description of the qualifying nominee's accomplishments which support the nomination.
4. A digital version of the completed application may be sent to Lisa Foster at Lisa@WCFLTourism.com or completed online on the [Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award](#) webpage. Supporting or substantiating attachments are permissible so long as they relate to the qualifying criteria.
5. The submission period for the Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award opens **August 18** and closes **September 5, 2025 at 5 p.m. CDT.**

Please contact for more information:

Lisa Foster, Industry Relations Specialist
(850) 333-2728

Lisa@WCFLTourism.com
waltoncountyfltourism.com/van-ness-butler-jr-award

**VAN NESS BUTLER JR. HOSPITALITY AWARD
NOMINATION FORM**

Nominator's Name:

Business and Job Title:

Phone:

Email:

Nominee's Name:

Title:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone:

Email:

Nominee's Biography (key career highlights and achievements in 150 words or less):

Nominator's printed name: _____

Nominator's signature: _____

Date: _____