



Pictured above are members of Love Catalina Island's 2024-25 Board including (left to right) Elaina Garcia, Sheila Bergman, Whitney Latorre, Jason Paret, Lisa Beach, Conrado Vega, Ben Villalobos, Amanda Bombard, Bart Glass, Yoli Say, Mesa Bradley, John Alkibay, Grayce Upton, Andrew Allen, Cinde MacGugan-Cassidy and David Maistros. President & CEO Jim Luttjohann is kneeling. Members of the board not pictured are Dave Stevenson, Megan Wright and Janet Flathers. Photo Credit Noelle Denisi.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Love Catalina Celebrates Award Winners and Installs New Officers & Directors** *75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting held July 18, 2024*

Over 70 guests gathered on the evening of July 18 for a dinner and celebration in honor of the organization's 75<sup>th</sup> year of providing economic vitality and tourism promotion for Catalina Island.

In addition to members of the board, attendees included Avalon Mayor Anni Marshall, Avalon City Council member Michael Ponce and County Supervisor Hahn's representative Jennifer LaMarque.

The evening began with comments from the new Chair of the Board, Dave Stevenson who stressed the need to grow overnight stays among visitors to the island and

promised that in his year as Chair, there would be many conversations focused on growing either the number of visitors staying overnight or the number of nights visitors stay. With the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2024, Directors and Officers were installed. The leadership team for fiscal year 2024-25 was announced as:

- Dave Stevenson, Catalina Island Company, Chair
- Amanda Bombard, Catalina Express, Past Chair
- Cinde MacGugan-Casidy, Chair Elect
- Ben Villalobos serving as Treasurer through December, then John Alkibay will assume that role effective January 2025.

Retiring Directors were honored with certificates from both Love Catalina Island and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Those who completed their terms on the board were:

- Tim Foley, US Bank
- Tim Kielpinski, formerly with the Catalina Island Conservancy
- Gail Fornasiere, formerly with the Catalina Museum for Art & History
- Nicole Hohenstein, Catalina Island Inn/Catalina Canyon Inn
- Bryce Noll, Catalina Island Health

At the Ceremony, new members of the board installed for three-year terms were:

- Yoli Say, Hotel Metropole/Metropole Marketplace
- Lisa Beach, Scuba By Design
- Grayce Upton, Wet Spot Rentals

Awards were presented for Harvey Cowell Business of the Year, Care For Catalina, Sustainable Tourism and the Wayne and Susie Griffin Award for Community Service.

Each Year community members nominate Island businesses for Business of the Year. The Award is named for Harvey Cowell, the proprietor of Island Pharmacy, a prominent Island Businessman and Avalon Council Member/Mayor who in 1949 led the formation of what is now known as Love Catalina Island. This year over twenty nominations were submitted and the Board agreed to award Catalina Island Mermaids as the winner.

In 2019 the Care For Catalina Sustainable Tourism programs were launched and each year community members are invited to nominate Island businesses that have been exemplary over the past year in support of sustainable tourism in Avalon. This year the Board awarded the prize to Bleu World, a nonprofit that has championed sustainable activities on the island and led the year's community clean-up events in addition to working on the annual underwater clean-ups and the first ever Kayak clean-up in partnership with Wet Spot and Love Catalina Island.

The Wayne & Susie Griffin Community Service Award is given at the Board's discretion when an individual or family demonstrates servant leadership through significant work in

the community. The recent death of Wayne Griffin deepened the importance of the award which is not given out every year. This year, one nominee was chosen posthumously as the winner, that person being Earl Schrader, who passed away earlier this month and for many years was a beloved member of the community who gave of his time and talent through youth football coaching, animal welfare and helped many island families make the dream of home ownership a reality. Accepting the award for Earl was Joanna Chavoya who shared stories of Earl's good deeds and the values that he instilled in so many Avalon youth.

Amanda Bombard made an Award as Chair to Lisa Beach acknowledging her community and visitor service by providing diving instruction and experiences for persons with disabilities and for hosting media interested in covering Catalina's diving opportunities. Beach also was acknowledged for her commitment to volunteering at and supporting events including community clean-ups and Catalina Pride.

Jim Lutjohann, made two President's Awards. The first Award was made to retiring board member Gail Fornasiere in thanks for her many years on the board (one of the longest ever) and for support of the organization and visiting media. A second Award was presented to Tyler Wilson for his volunteerism in community events and in support of Love Catalina's online meetings.

A written Annual Report that highlights the achievements of Love Catalina's tourism promotion and organizational work over the past fiscal year, was distributed to all in attendance and copies will be mailed to all Love Catalina Island Business and Friend members. Vendors who support those efforts and outcomes in attendance included representatives of 62Above, the Ad and PR Agency under contract with the organization, as well as BobCo Design which produces the Visitor Guide and Maps distributed in the Catalina Island Visitor Center and in hundreds of locations on the mainland. Not in attendance but also thanked, was Lynn Stevenson for her support through digital and social media.

The event was held at the Catalina Museum for Art & History and was catered by Sunset Bar & Grill.

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**About Love Catalina Island Tourism Authority:**

With 230+ members, the non-profit organization Love Catalina Island Tourism Authority is the champion of the island's business community. The organization fosters a successful economy through the promotion of the island as an attractive destination for travel with a focus on sustainability. For more information, please visit [www.LoveCatalina.com](http://www.LoveCatalina.com) and join the conversation on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/lovecatalinaisland](https://www.facebook.com/lovecatalinaisland)), Instagram (@lovecatalinaisland), and Twitter (@lovecatalina\_).