



Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

8401 73rd Ave. N. Suite 71, Minneapolis, MN 55428

Phone: 315-692-4533 E-mail: liz@mraa.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 11, 2017

Contact: Liz Walz, 315-692-4533 or liz@mraa.com

Wanda Kenton Smith named Darlene Briggs Marine Woman of the Year

MINNEAPOLIS — Wanda Kenton Smith of Freedom Boat Club has been selected as the recipient of the thirty-first annual Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year Award, announced the MRAA Educational Foundation yesterday. The scholarship was presented to Kenton Smith on Sunday evening, Dec. 10, during the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas Opening Night Awards Celebration at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Fla.

Joining the marine industry in 1980, Wanda wears multiple hats on a daily basis, including chief marketing officer of Freedom Boat Club, president of Kenton Smith Marketing, marketing columnist for *Soundings Trade Only*, president of Marine Marketers of America, chair of RBLC New Market Task Force, and member of Boating Writers International. During her career, she has been an editor of *WaterSki Magazine* (formally *World Waterskiing*), *WaterSki Business*, and *WindSurf Magazine*. A pioneer, Kenton Smith was the first to provide a unified voice to marine marketers when she founded the Marine Marketers of America. She was also the first to recognize outstanding achievements in marine marketing professionals through the creation of the annual Neptune Awards nine years ago. She launched Freedom Boat Club's national charitable campaign with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, All On Deck, providing boating opportunities to young people who may never otherwise have boating opportunities. And she developed Boaterz n Bikers of America, a touring group of industry enthusiasts that bring awareness to the recreation.

Wanda's contributions to the advancement of women in the marine industry are astounding. She founded Marine Marketing to Women, an educational firm that provided training on the impact of women on buying decisions for consumer products, including boats. Kenton Smith also created an organization called International Women in Boating, reaching a membership of 350 before it was taken over by NMMA. Her most recent contribution was the launch of Freedom Boating Divas, an educational and networking program for female members of the Freedom Boat Club.

The Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year Award is named after the late Darlene Briggs of Wayzata, Minn., who was admired for her tireless dedication to the marine industry. The MRAA and *Boating Industry* magazine together present the award to honor her memory. It is presented annually to an outstanding woman who is actively involved in the marine industry at any level. It recognizes long and devoted service, untiring commitment, and the advancement of women in the marine business. The recipient receives an award and a check for \$500 to be used for her professional development.

“Wanda Kenton Smith’s continued pioneering for the advancement of women in the boating industry over the past 37 years makes her an obvious choice for this year’s Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year Award,” comments Jeff Siems, president of the MRAA Educational Foundation Board of Directors.

In her application, Kenton Smith wrote “I feel extremely fortunate to have worked my entire adult career other than one year in the boating industry. I have been taught and inspired by many women along my walk, and I’m grateful for the experience and the people who have crossed my wake, and for the opportunities I’ve had to grow and continue to learn.”

About MRAA Educational Foundation

As part of its mission to create a strong and healthy boating industry, the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas is committed to offering training, education and professional development opportunities to its members and the entire marine dealer community. In 2004, the association launched the MRAA Educational Foundation, a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 corporation, to provide financial support for education, training and professional development in the recreational marine trades. For more information or to donate to support the foundation’s mission, visit MRAA.com/foundation.

About the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

At the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA), we believe that for the marine industry to thrive, the companies that interact with the boater in their community must thrive. Those businesses determine the boater’s experience and are the leading factor in the industry’s success. MRAA works to create a strong and healthy boating industry by uniting those businesses, providing them with opportunities for improvement and growth, and representing them with a powerful voice. For more information, visit MRAA.com.

###