

# Industry Celebrates 2022 RV/MH Hall of Fame Induction

by Rick Kessler | Aug 16, 2022

Marked by smiles, tears, humility, thankfulness, a step stool and a mic drop, more than 450 friends, family and colleagues gathered Monday (Aug. 15) at the Northern Indiana Event Center for the 2022 RV/MH Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

Prior to the inductee ceremony, RV/MH Heritage Foundation President Darryl Searer led the audience in a toast to the organization's 50th anniversary. A video, narrated by Hall of Fame Executive Vice President Ryan Szklarek, chronicled the Foundation's half century, which earlier that afternoon held a ribbon cutting for its MH Museum and is about to renovate the RV Museum and build a 36,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art event-center addition.

Also, **Kevin Clayton**, CEO of Clayton Homes, was recognized with the Darryl R. Searer Spirit Award, in part for his generous contributions to the foundation as well as the contribution of a Clayton CrossMod home that is on display just outside the newly opened MH Museum.



Fig. 1 From left, Darryl Searer, Kevin Clayton and Ryan Szklarek

After that, though, it was time to celebrate the 11 inductees – five from the RV industry, five from manufactured housing and a COVID carryover – who with humility and grace offered their heartfelt remarks on being recognized with the ultimate achievement for their careers.

The 2022 RV inductee class included:



Fig. 2 Mick Ferkey

When it was his turn to take the stage, **Mark "Mick" Ferkey** – owner of Greenway RV in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisc., and a longtime support of the RV Dealers Association (RVDA) and RV/MH Hall of Fame, among other organizations – brought with him a step stool as a humorous nod to his height.

"On a more serious note, I would like to take a moment to thank the selection committee and the people that nominated me to be inducted into the RV Hall of Fame. I'm very humble and honored to be here tonight," he said.

"I've enjoyed getting involved in RVDA

and the Hall of Fame and lots of other organizations. I made a lot of friendships over the years."

Having started in the industry at Starcraft RV, **Don Gunden** eventually made his way to Forest River Inc., where he is now a Group General Manager overseeing the company's Rockwood/Flagstaff and Palomino brands.

Noting that he also was celebrating he and his wife's 50th wedding anniversary, Gunden said the induction was "quite an honor."

"I have way too many co-workers to thank in a two-minute speech," he said. "That being said, I've been extremely fortunate to have been associated with a lot of strong, hard-working people. Years ago, someone told me that if you surround yourself with people that are smarter or more talented than you are, it should work out pretty well. It turns out that was really great advice.



*Fig. 3 Don Gunden, right, with Pete and Sharon Liegl*



*Fig. 4 Bill Redmond, left, with presenters Debbie Brunoforte and Joe Stegmayer*

The former President of Bucars RV Centre in Calgary, Alberta, **William "Bill" R. Redmond** said he was "very humbled when I got the phone call that I'd been selected to this elite group of individuals."

"I accept this reward on behalf of a whole bunch of people that helped me along the way," he said, starting with his wife, Maggie, who "put up with peculiar hours of operation and a long time away from the dealership, my two sons who filled in the gaps when I was away doing other things and had brought the dealership to new heights and success.

"I'd also like to thank those members of the staff who are represented here tonight by four of our managers, the people that work for us, those whose shoulders we stand on that make our success," he added.

Fighting back emotions, **Veronica "Ronnie" Hepp**, who recently retired from the RVDA, succinctly said that it was "kind of funny that I got here simply by doing my job, but that's exactly what happened."

She then unfurled a poster of past and current RVDA chairmen and women with whom she's worked – among countless others in the industry – and noted how those business relationships became deep friendships.



*Fig. 5 Ronnie Hepp*

“I’ve been included in family weddings, birthdays, grand openings, and funerals. I’ve become welcome to the lives of families of not just that people on this poster, but also there’s those who served on other boards and committees with me,” she said before ending her remarks with a “mic drop.”



Fig. 6 Lewy Shaum with Brunoforte

The former president of the Elkhart Supply Company (ESCO), **Lewis “Lewy” Shaum** thanked everyone who nominated him for this “incredible award” and his family, friends and employees for their support.

“I feel honored and humbled to be part of this industry. It’s been a wonderful journey over the 50-some years, from seeing RVs with 2×2 outside walls, an extension cord for the power systems, radios for the entertainment centers, to what we have now: a home on wheels so that every American family can enjoy all the beautiful sights of America,” he said.

Also honored this year was **Eleonore Hamm**, president of RVDA of Canada, who is a member of the Class of 2020 but was unable to cross the border last year due to pandemic-related travel restrictions.

When she received the call notifying her she was to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, Hamm said she was “very shocked, excited, overwhelmed, and almost speechless – which, if you know me, is no small feat. I never would’ve considered this to be realistic, but I am truly honored,” she said.

“So, unlike many of you, I did not grow up in the RV industry,” Hamm said. “My family did not camp. I didn’t know much about RVs. I didn’t know there were motorized and towables. I didn’t know there were Class A’s and Class B’s and C’s. My first time in

an RV, I was 19 years old – and my son’s here with so I don’t know if he needs to listen to this – I was hitchhiking in Estes Park, Colorado, with a couple of my friends. And we were picked up by this lovely family, which I now know was a Class A, motorhome. And we were just, ‘Wow! This is phenomenal’ because we’d been traveling on the Greyhound bus and so in comparison, this was a much better way to travel.



Fig. 7 Eleonore Hamm with her son, left, and Doug Gaeddert, right

“But not only did this family take us inside, but the mom also fed us,” she continued. “She made us snacks, made sure that we were well taken care of – and that was a lot better than the peanut butter sandwiches we’d been living on. So, we were over the moon and that really kind of just stuck with me.

“Fast forward a few years when I found myself working for the RVDA of Canada. When I joined the industry, I still didn’t know much about what RVs were, but I still discovered that what made it special were the people,” Hamm concluded.

In addition, one of the MH inductees, the late **David Carter** of David Carter & Associates, has strong ties to the RV industry. Accepting on his behalf was David Froom, VP Sales, who said Carter was “an incredible human being.”

“The fact that we’re standing here right now will lend credibility and credence to his business sense. But what I wanted to talk about tonight was not Dave Carter the businessman, but Dave Carter the man,” Froom said. “Dave was generous beyond what you could imagine. Dave gave to charitable causes, and if you were a champion of the kids – a coach, a volleyball team that needed travel money, a baseball team that needed uniforms – Dave was your best friend.”

The rest of the MH inductee class included:

- Raylen Gritton; MH Dealer / Retailer, California
- Harry Karsten; OEM – MH Manufacturer, California
- Eugene W. Landy; MH Community Owner, New Jersey
- Tim Williams; MH Finance Lender, Tennessee