

## FIRST-TIME AWARD WINNERS BRING SPECIAL MEANING TO BEST OF MARATHON

By **Alex Rickert** - September 26, 2025



While some categories are cornerstones of the annual Best of Marathon Awards, the Keys Weekly does our best to listen to suggestions from the community, adding, subtracting and combining categories when necessary to make sure we arrive at a competitive slate each year. Every year we're reminded – there's nothing like your first BOM win. Cheers to those who made it to the mountaintop for the first time in 2025 – or went down in the record books as the first winners in brand-new categories. See all the winners [here](#).

New category winners included:



Best Celebrity Pet – Zeke (accepted by owners Darby Sheehan and Jake Long)



Best Day Care – Grace Jones Day Care Center

First-time local champs were:



Best Cup of Coffee AND Best Cuban Sandwich – LJ's Cafe



Best Lunch- Brutus Land & Sea



Best Bartender – Rachel Bowman



Best Taco – Takeria La Palapa



Best Sports Coach – Joey Gonzalez



Best Educator – Mac Childress



Best Thespan – Ella Dunn



Best Fishing Charter – Main Attraction



Best Pet Service – Sailor’s Dog Spa



Best Realtor – Nate Bartlett



Best Overall Business – Coldwell Banker Schmitt Real Estate Company



Best New Business – Rafa Management Group

Photos by Natalie Danko and Doug Finger



Trending

## FLORIDA KEYS INVENTOR TAKES ON MARINE INDUSTRY GIANTS FOR ALLEGEDLY RIPPING-OFF HIS PATENT DESIGN



### ALEX RICKERT

Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.