

Small Business of the Year honor shared by 2 owners



Small business of the year recipient Rita Shipley, owner of Bella Roma Pizza, President of the Bisbee Chamber of Commerce Lisa Westrick and Executive Director Nancy Jacobsen are shown on Friday night at Turquoise Valley Golf Course. (Melissa Marshall • Herald/Review)

Bisbee Chamber of Commerce recognizes area establishments with award

By Shar Poirer
Herald/Review

BISBEE — Two small business members of the Bisbee Chamber Of Commerce were recognized at the 66th Annual Awards Banquet Friday night at Turquoise Valley Golf Resort in Naco, Ariz.

Rebecca Mayer, chamber board of directors vice president, explained that each year a survey is sent out to members seeking nominations for large business and small business of the year based on outstanding service and excellence in their fields.

This year, no large businesses were nominated. When the board members reviewed the nominations for small business of the year, two names came to the top. The owners of Bella Roma Pizza and Leather and Lace Lodging were both named Small Business of the Year.

Bella Roma Pizza owners Rita Shipley and Oliver Searchfield have been at it for two and a half years

and are proud of their effort to make the best pizza in town. When presented with the award Shipley joked, "It's great to be out on a Friday night and have someone else do the cooking."

She said the dough is homemade, hand-tossed, loaded with veggies, meat and three cheeses and then baked in a stone hearth oven. "Our pizza crust and sauce are inspired by traditional Italian recipes like those found in Rome." They use healthy, all-natural, high quality foods using the freshest ingredients. "It's been a rewarding adventure," added Shipley.

Bonnie and Floyd Main, owners of Leather and Lace Lodging located in Palominas, have a mission to provide conscientious care for the pets entrusted to them and place the animals' welfare above all other business considerations. Mayer said they provide the best care for family pets. "They have a genuine love of animals."

An exuberant Bonnie said what sets their operation apart was "love, love, love." She told of an experience with a pet who was being dropped off for a visit. The dog wasn't happy about it, of course. But when he left, he was happy. "On his second visit, he jumped the gate to get in."

LaVerne Williams, also known as Bisbee's hugging mayor and the unofficial Bisbee ambassador, received the Volunteer of the Year Award. Williams served as Bisbee's mayor and continues to volunteer for many organizations. Mayer said, "She has been a role model for all women in business."

As a surprise, the chamber board members decided to bring Williams' family to town. Her daughter, Faye Griffith, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, came to the event. Griffith said, "We're not sure how she found time to care for a family. Even when she comes to visit, she always talks about Bisbee to everyone who'll give her a few minutes."

Williams said, "Bisbee has given me so much, I've spent my lifetime to give back what has been given to me."

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