

Midwest Rigging Intensive trainers receive ESTA's Frank Stewart Volunteer of the Year Award

ESTA IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE a team of nine ETCP Recognized Trainers as the recipients of the Frank Stewart Volunteer of the Year Award for service in both 2022 and 2023: **Bennett Brian** (Reed Rigging, Inc.), **Tyler DeLong** (DeLong Rigging Solutions), **Brent "Mickey" Henry** (ETC), **Shane Kelly** (DePaul University), **Rebecca Knipfer** (ETC), **Ed Leahy** (The Chicago Flyhouse, Inc.), **Verda Beth Martell** (DLR Group), **Tracy Nunnally** (Vertigo), and **Patrick Stewart** (ETC), whose father is the award's namesake. These trainers tirelessly volunteered around their busy schedules to plan, design, and deliver a curriculum for the Midwest Rigging Intensive (MRI) two years in a row.

"Being recognized by ESTA for doing MRI is one of the highlights of my career thus far," said DeLong, whose company, DeLong Rigging Solutions, is a sponsor. "I support MRI because it is a unique event driven by a group of world-class trainers

who are allowed the freedom to create an all-encompassing curriculum of their choosing. We are passionate about our material, and it shows. I lovingly refer to MRI as the geekiest weekend in rigging, and we wouldn't have it any other way."

The Volunteer of the Year Award was originally created by ESTA to honor Frank Stewart's incomparable service over the eighteen years he served as its Treasurer and the additional twenty years he served as bookkeeper. This award recognizes extraordinary effort by a volunteer or group of volunteers and may be awarded for work on a specific project. The Volunteer of the Year Award is not presented every year, but only when there are exemplary candidates whose service to ESTA and the greater industry is to be commended. Patrick Stewart shared his memory of the inaugural award:

"At a tradeshow in 2005, I was told that I needed to attend an ESTA function.

Actually, I wasn't given a choice; I wisely did what I was told. At that event, my father was recognized with the Volunteer of the Year Award, which was named after him. I distinctly remember that moment. And given that I barely remember things from yesterday, it really was a significant moment for me. I even remember the room. I remember how proud I was of him and how proud I was to be his son. I was given the opportunity to be one of the first to congratulate him. After, as I stood in the back of the room and watched the line of others congratulating him, I realized he had set a new marker for me to achieve. I never had a plan on how to achieve this goal. That is probably the point. We don't do things for recognition. We do them because we love it. I hope that between the two of us, we have inspired others to be giving of their time. And I hope we will leave this industry better than we found it." ■



The winners of ESTA's Frank Stewart Volunteer of the Year Award 2022-2023: Beth Martell, Ed Leahy, Tracy Nunnally, Patrick Stewart, Bennett Brian, Shane Kelly, Tyler DeLong, Rebecca Knipfer, and Brent "Mickey" Henry.