

SCRATCHPAD

And the Readers' Choice winners are...



By ERICK BENDEL
COAST WEEKEND

Man alive, this is a big Coast Weekend! Thirty-two pages!? Full color!? Jeepers!

In this special issue, we reveal the results of the 2017 Readers' Choice Awards, our annual contest honoring excellence in Columbia-Pacific business, dining and activities — as chosen by you, our discerning readers. (Turn the page for a full list of winners,

runners-up and honorable mentions.)

More than 2,000 people voted online, while dozens upon dozens of folks turned in paper ballots.

A handful of first-place winners held onto their titles. Some victories, however, were utterly unexpected. Reach Break Brewing, for example, was voted Best Bar — and the Astoria watering hole opened in early 2017!

In our two new categories, the Illahee Apartments won

Best Apartment Complex, and Dr. Angela Stock Narin, of Pacific Family Medicine, won Best Local Physician.

Although our online ballot drew a lot of eyeballs, sometimes the paper ballots made the biggest difference (and justified our decision not to go online-only this year). The people who took the time to cut out and mail in their ballots broke ties and, in several categories, flipped around first-, second- and third-place winners. They

were a powerful force in this year's Readers' Choice.

While we celebrate the winners' achievements, let's keep in mind that such contests are inherently subjective, and that they frequently depend on voters' routines and peer groups — factors that influence our tastes and voting habits. What does it mean, really, to say that one business or restaurant "beat" another, especially when so many nominees landed but a few votes apart? If a handful of

people had chosen to vote, or not, we'd be looking at a very different list of winners. Anyone who finds the strength in this wackadoo world to get out of bed and put in a good-faith effort at improving their community ... those people are winners, straight-up.

But, though Readers' Choice participants cast their votes for personal reasons, these votes are not arbitrary. In the aggregate, they offer an objective look at what our region happens to prize at

this moment in history. Like elections, these contests are snapshots of our values — social, economic, aesthetic, even spiritual.

And these Readers' Choice special issues are time capsules, bearing out the journalist's imperative to gather news and report it to those who can use the information.

Here's to the contest winners, the voters and our readers, who take first place in our hearts.

coast weekend INSIDE THIS ISSUE arts & entertainment

BUSINESS

BEST APARTMENT COMPLEX.....	12
BEST ART GALLERY.....	10
BEST BARBERSHOP.....	11
BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE.....	8
BEST DANCE STUDIO.....	10
BEST FLORIST.....	13
BEST GARDEN CENTER.....	13
BEST GIFT SHOP.....	9
BEST HAIR SALON.....	11
BEST LOCAL PHYSICIAN.....	15
BEST REAL ESTATE.....	12

BEST BREWPUB.....	7
BEST BURGER.....	16
BEST CATERING.....	8
BEST CHEF.....	16
BEST CLAM CHOWDER.....	16
BEST DESSERT.....	8
BEST FINE DINING.....	16
BEST PIZZA.....	7
BEST RESTAURANT FOR KIDS.....	9
BEST SERVER.....	5
BEST WINE SHOP.....	7

DINING

BEST BAR.....	6
BEST BARISTA.....	5
BEST BARTENDER.....	6
BEST BREAKFAST SPOT.....	8

ACTIVITIES

BEST GOLF COURSE.....	14
BEST HIKING TRAIL.....	14
BEST LIVE THEATER.....	17
BEST LOCAL SPORTS TEAM.....	15
BEST MUSIC VENUE.....	17

ON THE COVER

Photos by Dwight Caswell, Robert Hilson, Colin Murphey, Patrick Webb

FURTHER ENJOYMENT

FULL LIST OF WINNERS.....	4
CW MARKETPLACE.....	24, 25
MUSIC CALENDAR.....	26
CROSSWORD.....	27
SEE + DO.....	28, 29



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