

ORLANDO Business Journal

Reader's Choice Awards orlandobizjournals.com

Establishments without equal

Locals' favorite places to work, live and play

By **BOB MERVINE** | Staff Writer

More than ever before, our reader's favorites in this year's battle of the brands reflects a broader, more eclectic preference in the 79 different categories that make up the Reader's Choice Awards.

We also got the largest number of nominations ever again evidence of Central Florida's varied tastes and interest in spotlighting their personal favorites.

Better business

Competition was fierce for the king of the hill award: Most Respected Executive. It ended in a two way tie between **Jim Seneff**, CEO and chairman of CNL Financial Group Inc., and **John Hitt**, president of the University of Central Florida.

Also ending in a two-way tie were two well-known Central Florida corporate entities in the category of Best Corporate Citizen. Both **Darden Restaurants Inc.** and **RDV sports** were honored for their community contributions.

Favorites in the Best Company to Work For category also came in at a dead heat. You've chosen to give the honors this year to Lakeland based **Publix Super Markets** and the Universal **Orlando Resort**.

Professional services



Other professional services that measure up include the law firm **Pohl & Short**, founded by Frank Pohl, which describes itself as a "business boutique law firm in Winter Park" and an "alternative to the large commercial law firms." They get the nod from our readers as the Best Small Law Firm.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the Best Large Company, handily won by **Walt Disney World**. Disney employs nearly 60,000 people and has operated its extensive resort since 1971. It includes four theme parks, two water parks, 32 resort hotels, 99 holes of golf on six courses and an extensive lineup of retail outlets, entertainment and restaurants venues.

Real estate

Home is where the heart is, and our judges had to count hundreds of votes to determine the winners among the categories related to the construction, design, sales and furnishing of both residential and commercial real estate.

That leads to honors in the Best Residential Real Estate Office for **Fannie Hillman & Associates**, a repeat winner, and **NAI Realvest**, winner in the Best Commercial Real Estate category. Best Residential Construction, **Morrison Homes**; Best Custom Home Builder, **Brewer Homes**; and Best Commercial Construction, **McCree Inc.**

Finally, someone needs to dress them up, and that job falls to the Best Interior Design Firm. This year, voters applauded **Marc-Michaels Interior Design**.

Better than a Big Apple

It appears the simple things in life count the most. You picked orange juice as out top homegrown product and that just seems to sum up the best of Central Florida.



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