

media release

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The Malta Tourism Authority awards tourism industry 'Stars'

The Special Thanks And Recognition (STAR) Awards presentation ceremony organised by the Malta Tourism Authority took place on Thursday 23rd February at the Radisson BLU Resort in St. Julian's. Now in its 12th year, this annual event recognises exceptional service by people who work in the tourism industry.

The STAR awards is an initiative which sees the tourists themselves nominate people they have met during their holiday who, in their view, offered outstanding service and helped make their stay better. In 2016 the MTA received almost 5,500 tourist nominations for individuals from all sectors of the tourism industry.

Another important award on the night was the Hotel Worker of the Year. For this award, employees are nominated by the hotel where they work and the winner is chosen by the STAR committee which has five members hailing from different tourism-related organisations, namely FATTA, ITS, MAHE, MHRA and the MTA.

During his address, the Minister for Tourism, Hon Edward Zammit Lewis emphasised the importance of offering high quality service with a product to match. He also cautioned against the risks of complacency, mentioning that one cannot rely on past successes, but needs to continue working hard and improving one's product offer in order to remain competitive.

The MTA CEO Mr. Paul Bugeja, referred to the fact that the tourism industry relies heavily on human resources and that these awards aim to recognise those people who are its foundation. Mr Bugeja said that hospitality has always been a strong national trait and continues to be one of the characteristics of Malta that are most appreciated by holidaymakers, as confirmed in all surveys conducted by MTA.

This year's ceremony also featured the launch of the new STAR Awards website **www.starawardsmalta.com** which will serve as an online platform for the industry to participate in the scheme whereas tourists can submit their nominations and also avail of numerous vouchers and discounts. Newly designed printed brochures were also launched on this occasion.

During the event, 7 nominees received a STAR Award, consisting of a glass trophy, a certificate and a monetary gift. These were:

- Mr Ridha Ben Moussa, Front Office Manager, Salini Resort Hotel
- Ms Patricia Flores Martin, Tourist Guide
- Mr Warren Galea, Falconer, Malta Falconry Centre
- Ms Natalene Smith, Sales Representative, Supreme Travel
- Mr Mark Dove, Boatman, Paradise Diving and Water Sports
- Mr Martin Hall, Diving Instructor, Neptunes Diving Centre

The Hotel Worker of the Year for 2016 was awarded to Ms Doreen Bonnici from the Pergola Hotel & Spa.

