

# Towing Museum Announces Hall of Fame Class of 2025

*Nine individuals will be honored for their contributions to the towing and recovery industry later this year.*

CHATTANOOGA , TN, UNITED STATES, April 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum](#) announced nine inductees into its Hall of Fame, Class of 2025, from six states and Japan, who will be honored at a special ceremony later this year.



"This year's exceptional class of inductees truly embodies the diverse spectrum of leadership that has shaped the international towing and recovery industry," said Jeffrey Godwin, first vice president of the towing museum. "From trailblazers and visionaries to hands-on operators, television personalities, and industry influencers, this group represents the very best of our field and is highly deserving of this prestigious recognition."

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The inductees for 2025 include:

- FRANCIS GEOFFREY RUSSELL of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, has been in the towing and recovery sector for 50 years and is the co-founder of Guardian Fleet Services, the largest towing and specialized transportation company in the U.S. He had many industry mentors throughout his

career and has reciprocated by becoming a mentor to friends and colleagues, including counseling and supporting fellow company owners. "Geoff has been a staunch advocate for elevating the towing industry's reputation among law enforcement, fellow first responders, and the motoring public."

- JOANNE BLYTON, Billings, MT, was launched into towing and recovery as a teen at her parents' company. Four decades later she remains active in the towing, recovery and automotive

industries, receiving awards and accolades for her commitment to the industry. A long-time owner and president of Billings Towing & Recovery, Blyton also served a four-year term as the first female president of the Towing & Recovery Association of America. "Joanne has given her voice, heart, time, energy and dedication to the entire towing and recovery industry."

- JOHNNY GRANT of Chattanooga, TN, passed away in 2024 and is being honored posthumously. Grant became enamored with cars and tow trucks when he began sweeping floors at a service station. He worked for wrecker manufacturer Ernest Holmes and later Miller Industries in sales and demonstrating equipment for 50 years. He also worked for local towing operators, at one point owning his own tow truck. After retirement, he still answered calls, was featured on podcasts, and even provided information for the documentary "Highway Thru Hell." "I know of no other individual within our industry possessing the breadth of knowledge that Johnny possessed in the evolution of industry products covering five decades."

- JON KUPCHIN is owner and CEO of Santa Fe Tow Service in Stillwell, KS, where he has been actively involved in the community, sponsoring charities, supporting community events and volunteering during emergencies. In business for over 35 years, he is a believer in maintaining high standards through continuing education, training and development, state-of-the-art equipment and following towing and recovery best practices. "Jon understands that true success goes beyond business — it's about giving back and building trust with the people the company serves."

- KIKUO YAMAGUCHI of Yokohama, Kanagawa, Japan, owns and operates three respected companies in Japan and Southeast Asia, including Yamaguchi Wrecker founded in 1986 by his father. Yamaguchi joined the company after university, dedicating his career to building the business. He officially took the reins of the company at age 34. Yamaguchi was instrumental in developing towing and recovery equipment with narrow bodies on very short chassis to maneuver the streets of Asia. "I have never met another man more passionate about the towing and recovery industries."

- RALPH HANSER, Billings, MT, is the head of Hanser's Towing & Semi Truck Heavy Wrecker, in business for over 50 years. He has received praise for his experience and industry know-how,



The names and photos of Hall of Fame inductees are displayed at the towing museum's headquarters in Chattanooga.

and is considered an early pioneer in air-cushion recovery and mechanical technology. Hanser's may be the only company in Billings that handles hazardous oil and fuel spills. "This honor is a very well-deserved recognition that was built from one truck to what it is today Hanser's incredible hard work and commitment to doing it right."

- WELDON T. WRIGHT of Land O Lakes, FL, has been in the towing industry since 1971. He has worked for the nation's two leading towing equipment manufacturers: Jerr-Dan Corporation and Miller Industries. Wright made many product innovations, including the Jerr-Dan rotator and Poly Body technology. Wright helped push for the national Fair Tow Act in 2015 to exempt heavy-duty tow and recovery vehicles from certain highway weight limitations. "He is well respected by his peers for his knowledge and willingness to go the extra mile to solve problems. His tireless efforts have made the industry safer and more productive."

- WILLIS "HENRY" HEATH JR, Fairfax, VA, is being honored posthumously for his leadership role in towing and recovery, including as owner of Henry's Wrecker Service still in operation today and for being a co-founder and first president of the Virginia Association of Towing & Recovery Operators. Known as an innovator, Heath invented the "Henry Hitch" used on Holmes 750 wreckers as well as improved tow bars for the safe transport of buses. A volunteer firefighter, Heath helped with fire and police training and community events. "Henry's work ethic and direction supported many individuals in the surrounding community. Many of the 'old towers' around today received their start from Henry Heath."

- WILLIAM GRATZIANNA, Downers Grove, IL, helped found one the nation's most successful towing companies, O'Hare Towing, which was featured in a TV series, titled, "Wrecked: Life in the Crash Lane," emphasizing the extreme nature and physically dangerous work of towing and recovery. Through the years, he has been involved in local fire and police training as well as an annual Christmas toy drive. He is president of the Towing Museum, helping guide the organization with profitable fundraising and encouraging the public to take interest in the history of towing. "Bill has showed not only exemplary dedication to the towing industry, but also leadership and professional achievement."

The Towing Museum was founded in 1986 to recognize outstanding individuals in the towing industry and record and display the industry's history. Learn more about the Towing Museum at [towingmuseum.com](http://towingmuseum.com).

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