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## WSWA INTRODUCES THE RAY HERRMANN H.E.R.O. AWARD, SPONSORED BY BREAKTHRU BEVERAGE GROUP

*Honoring a Titan of The Wine and Spirits Industry, the Award will be Presented at WSWA's Access LIVE Event in April 2023 to an Individual Who Embodies Mr. Herrmann's Indelible Legacy*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) is pleased to announce the new Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. Award, sponsored by Breakthru Beverage Group (BBG). Herrmann, who passed away in 2021, is credited with one of the most accomplished, respected and distinguished careers in the wine and spirits industry. He was not only a beverage alcohol industry titan, but also a man of great character, ethics and philanthropy – a true humanitarian. WSWA and BBG have created the H.E.R.O. Award to promote his many venerable traits and inspire others to reach higher, do better and leave the wine and spirits industry and our world in a better place for those who follow. The award will be administered by WSWA and sponsored by BBG annually for a decade, effective 2023 through 2033.

“Ray was a great friend and mentor to many in our industry. He worked tirelessly to develop some of the best talent in the industry to ensure a successful, inclusive and bright future for the beverage alcohol industry,” said **WSWA's Chairman Tom Cole**. “The H.E.R.O. Award will allow for Ray's infectious character to live on and inspire members of our industry for years to come.”

The H.E.R.O. Award, representing Herrmann's vibrant qualities (Humanitarian, Ethical, Respectful and One-of-a-kind) will award one individual with \$20,000 to donate to a charity of their choice. This award will honor Herrmann's engaging, inclusive and humble demeanor that allowed him to build deep and respectful relationships.

“Ray was an industry giant and an instrumental leader in the formation of Breakthru Beverage. His impact on others, both inside and outside of our organization, is immeasurable,” said **Charlie Merinoff, Co-Chairman of Breakthru Beverage Group**. “Ray was the kind of partner everyone wanted. He was a man of deep integrity and anyone who met Ray couldn't help but like him.”

“I knew Ray for more than 40 years and he was one of the best our business has ever known. He had a way with people and forged deep bonds, he was truly a special man,” commented **Rocky Wirtz, Co-Chairman of Breakthru Beverage Group**. “We are privileged to partner with WSWA and sponsor the H.E.R.O. Award to further cement Ray's legacy and honor others who share his penchant for inclusion and connection.”

Herrmann was truly “one-of-a-kind” with a legacy of enduring noble qualities admired by all who had the wonderful opportunity to know him. He earned a degree from Princeton University and honorably served in the United States Army, 191 Field Artillery Group in the South Pacific Theatre from 1943 to 1946. Herrmann began his industry tenure as a salesman in New York and grew to leadership positions with McKesson Corporation, Schieffelin and Company and National Distillers Products Company. He founded Sunbelt Beverage Corporation in 1988 and, as Chairman and CEO, led its 1994 merger with Charmer Industries.

The nominated recipient of the award must be a member of the wine and spirits industry from one of the three tiers: supplier, distributor or retailer. The recipient must actively display a character dedicated to philanthropy, helping others, improving community, etc. They must also live a life focused on ethics, integrity, honesty, inclusiveness, humanity. An appointed executive selection committee will select the recipient. To nominate a member of the beverage alcohol industry for this award, please email Jo Moak ([Jo@wswa.org](mailto:Jo@wswa.org)). The award will be presented at WSWA’s Access LIVE event taking place April 2-5, 2023, in Orlando, Florida.

#### **About Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America**

WSWA is the national trade association representing the distribution tier of the wine and spirits industry, dedicated to advancing the interests and independence of distributors and brokers of wine and spirits. Founded in 1943, WSWA has more than 380 member companies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80 percent of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States.

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