

**Media Contacts:**

NMMA, Sarah Salvatori: [ssalvatori@nmma.org](mailto:ssalvatori@nmma.org)

## **Kris Carroll, Grady-White Boats, Inducted into National Marine Manufacturers Association's Hall of Fame**

### **First female honored with NMMA's highest award for achievement**

**Chicago, Ill. – Sept. 21, 2020** – The [National Marine Manufacturers Association](#) (NMMA) announced today the induction of Kris Carroll, president of Grady-White Boats, into the NMMA Hall of Fame. Carroll will be presented with the 2020 NMMA Hall of Fame Award – the Association's highest honor – during the [Opening Session of the 2020 IBEX Online: A Virtual Experience](#) (*pre-registration required to attend*) on September 29<sup>th</sup> at 10:30a.m. EST.

"I'm humbled and privileged to bestow the 2020 NMMA Hall of Fame Award to Kris Carroll, for her 45 years of dedication, love and service to Grady-White and the recreational boating industry," said Frank Hugelmeyer, NMMA president. "It is a particular honor to note that as our first female recipient, Kris has blazed a trail for future female marine leaders, and her legacy will be imprinted on our industry for generations to come."

Following a friend to Greenville, NC from Massachusetts in 1975, Kris (Keesler) Carroll knew she needed to find a job quickly so she could eat! She took a job as a production control clerk at Grady-White Boats. Kris always wanted to do the best at anything she ever did, so she learned everything she could about her job and the company. Kris did what she was asked and then, by her nature, gave some more, which always lead to greater opportunities and responsibilities.

She also naturally embraced the principles that the owner, NMMA Hall of Fame member, Eddie Smith, believed in, including strong dealer relationships, listening to customers and putting them first. Always looking for ways to make the company more effective, she was moved to engineering as a clerk, working her way up to leadership in that department. While there, she served as a member of the NMMA Technical Committee for 10 years.

In 1987, she was promoted to Vice President of Engineering, and in addition became Vice President of Manufacturing in 1989. Promoted to Executive Vice President in 1992, Kris ushered in the next stage for Grady-White's growth, building on Eddie's established legacy. Selected by him for her skills in leadership development, team-building, and strategic planning, she became President in 1993. She was the first woman to work her way up through the ranks to become president in the boat manufacturing industry.

Kris has always led Grady-White in her vision, *"Together, Delivering the Ultimate Boating Experience"* to customers, while fostering a company culture where everyone *"Enjoys coming to work on Monday...like they enjoy going home on Fridays."*

Enhancing Grady-White's brand further, Kris has taken Grady-White to the top of the industry through her passionate belief in creating exceptional one-on-one relationships with customers. This commitment results in Grady-White ranking at the top of every third-party customer satisfaction measure ever done, including NMMA and J.D. Power.

"Kris has been a mentor to so many in the boating industry. Throughout her career, she committed herself to the improvement of both Grady-White and the entire boating ecosystem," noted Ben

[Type here]

Speciale, Yamaha Motor Corporation, president Yamaha Marine Business USA. “Her ability to assemble and inspire, her steadfast beliefs, genuine attitude and hard work set an example for all of us. Congrats to my deserving colleague and friend on the NMMA Hall of Fame!”

Kris is now in her fifth decade of serving the recreational boating industry, which stemmed initially from Eddie’s principle of being deeply committed to the industry, conservation and advocacy. She continues to hold active leadership roles in the industry, in advocacy and her community. She is currently serving on the Board of Directors for the NMMA and the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce. She has served on the Advisory Council and Board of BoatUS, the Board of the Center for Coastal Conservation (now Center for Sportfishing Policy), and is the past chairwoman of the NMMA Boat Manufacturers’ Division Board.

An early champion of the BoatPAC and industry advocacy, Kris has fought her entire career to ensure that issues vital to recreational boating are front and center with the nation’s decision makers.

“She has always stepped up, for her company, for her peers, and for the industry, and in turn she’s taught us all to step up,” said Joe Neber, president, Contender Boats Inc.

“Kris embodies all the traits, characteristics and accomplishments of a Hall of Fame member. She has recruited many industry leaders to join the NMMA Divisional Boards and shared the gifts of her time, experience, knowledge and friendship,” echoed Joan Maxwell, president, Regulator Marine. “I am grateful for Kris’ mentoring and most of all for her friendship. Proverbs 27:9 says ‘A sweet friendship refreshes the soul.’ Thanks, Kris for refreshing my soul!”

Industry accolades include the Marine Retailer Association of the America’s 2002 Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year Award. She has also been celebrated by the Center for Sportfishing Policy with the 2012 Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year Award for her dedication to conservation efforts and service to the organization and the Board, as well as the NMMA’s 2018 Hammond Marine Leadership Award honoring her advocacy efforts.

Kris is a former board member of Pitt County, NC United Way, and a staunch long-time supporter. She provides leadership for many community outreach programs, as well as speaking often to outside groups like the Teacher’s Executive Institute, Pitt Community College, and East Carolina University. She has always had a heart for those who struggle and personally contributes to many initiatives for those in need in her community. She lives her personal mission everyday: to help others be the best of who they are meant to be, whether in the community, in the industry or at Grady-White Boats.

**All industry professionals interested in attending the Opening Session must [pre-register for IBEX Online](#), where access to the Opening Session is free.** The 2020 Opening Session includes the Hall of Fame presentation, plus a welcome address from Anne Dunbar, IBEX Show Director; state of the industry address from Frank Hugelmeyer, NMMA president; the 2020 Innovation Awards; plus appearances by some very special guests!

The NMMA Hall of Fame was established in 1988 and recognizes individuals who have made, or continue to generate, substantial and lasting contributions toward the advancement of the marine industry. It honors individuals whose names and deeds are synonymous with the pursuit of quality, innovation, and perfection within their respective spheres of expertise.

[Type here]

To learn more about past NMMA Hall of Fame inductees, visit the [NMMA Industry Awards page](#).

###

**About NMMA:** The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading trade organization for the North American recreational boating industry. NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, marine accessories and gear used by millions of boaters in North America. The association serves its members and their sales and service networks by improving the business environment for recreational boating including providing domestic and international sales and marketing opportunities, reducing unnecessary government regulation, decreasing the cost of doing business, and helping grow boating participation. As the largest producer of boat and sport shows in the U.S., NMMA connects the recreational boating industry with the boating consumer year-round. Learn more at [www.nmma.org](http://www.nmma.org) and get engaged with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

**About IBEX: About the International BoatBuilders' Exhibition & Conference (IBEX):** IBEX, Where Better Boats Begin ([www.ibexshow.com](http://www.ibexshow.com)), is the marine industry's largest technical trade event in North America and is powered globally by METSTRADe, the world's leading platform and community for professionals in the leisure marine equipment industry. IBEX is owned and produced by the National Marine Manufacturers Association ([www.nmma.org](http://www.nmma.org)) and RAI Amsterdam ([www.rai.nl](http://www.rai.nl)). The 2020 IBEX has transitioned to a virtual only event and will no longer take place as scheduled at the Tampa Convention Center, September 29 - October 1, in Tampa, FL USA. For more information, please visit [www.ibexshow.com](http://www.ibexshow.com).