



**GRADY-WHITE BOATS**

Exceptional attention to detail.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Eddie Smith Jr., Grady-White Boats Owner and CEO, Presented Prestigious Award for Employee Dedication**

**Greenville, North Carolina (6/8/2026)** – Grady-White Boats is proud to announce that Owner and CEO Edward C. “Eddie” Smith Jr. has been awarded the *Order of the Tar Heel*, the highest honor bestowed by the North Carolina Commissioner of Labor. The *Order of the Tar Heel* recognizes individuals whose lives and accomplishments embody the very best of what it means to be a North Carolinian. The award honors those who have made a lasting impact on the state through exceptional leadership, dedicated service, and contributions that strengthen local communities and the workforce.

North Carolina Commissioner of Labor Luke Farley presented the award to Smith in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to North Carolina manufacturing, workforce development, education, and community service. “The Tar Heel spirit is defined by hard work, service, and a commitment to making North Carolina stronger,” said Commissioner Farley. “Eddie Smith has lived those values throughout his career. His leadership, generosity, and dedication to our state have created opportunities for countless North Carolinians, and he is a deserving recipient of the *Order of the Tar Heel*.”

Under Smith’s visionary leadership, Grady-White Boats has grown from a local boatbuilder into a world-class manufacturer. Today, the company produces offshore and family fishing boats from 18 to 45 feet that are recognized globally for their exceptional quality, craftsmanship, innovation, and safety.

“I’m deeply honored to receive Commissioner Farley’s Order of the Tar Heel. I am so proud of our dedicated craftsmen here at Grady-White and feel that any honor that comes my way is greatly due to their efforts, and I’m very happy to share it with them,” said Smith.

Smith has always prioritized employee well-being, fostering a culture centered on safety, health, and work-life balance. Under his direction, Grady-White became the first boat manufacturer in North Carolina to air-condition its entire production facility, setting a new industry standard for workplace comfort.

### **About Grady-White Boats:**

*Founded in 1959, Grady-White builds boats from 18 to 45 feet at its plant in Greenville, North Carolina. The company has been under private ownership by National Marine Manufacturers Association Hall of Fame member Eddie Smith since 1968. Grady-White is led by President Kris Carroll, a 50-year company veteran and fellow NMMA Hall of Fame member. Producing 28 models in five different categories including center console, dual console, coastal explorer, express cabin, and walkaround cabin boats, the company has earned every third-party customer satisfaction award ever presented in the marine industry, including all 8 of the J.D. Power and Associates Customer Satisfaction Awards for their category and all 24 years consecutively of the NMMA Customer Satisfaction Index awards.*

*Visitors are welcome to tour the factory in Greenville, North Carolina, to see first-hand the exceptional attention to every detail used to create the very best fishing and family-oriented boats and meet the passionate craftsmen that build them. For more information about this legendary company's heritage and innovative products, visit [gradywhite.com](http://gradywhite.com).*

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

Left to right: Grady-White Boats owner and CEO, Eddie Smith accepts the Order of the Tar Heel award from the NC Commissioner of Labor, Luke Farley. There to accept the award with Smith are company craftsmen who Mr. Smith credits for his success.

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