The Volunteer of the Year Award was created to honor Frank Stewart for his selfless 18-year tenure as Treasurer of ESTA. This award recognizes extraordinary effort by a volunteer or group of volunteers during the previous year and is bestowed by the ESTA Board of Directors.

IN 2016, THE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD was given to two groups of volunteers, the ETCP Portable Power Distribution Technician Subject Matter Experts and the Technical Standard Program’s Stage Lifts Working Group. Thirty-two people in total were recognized for their substantial contributions of time and expertise. This year, it is my pleasure to announce that just one single person has captured the attention of the Association, 2017’s Volunteer of the Year, Michael Lay.

Michael has spent 10 years at the helm of the Control Protocols Working Group—nearly half the life of the working group. The CPWG is the TSP’s second largest working group, but the group with the most published documents and the most open, active projects. Michael uses his leadership and time management skills to help keep the group busy and on track, but not overworked. In addition to attending and running the CPWG meetings, Michael attends meetings of the Technical Standards Council to both report on the work of his group and stay up-to-date with the work of the TSP’s governing body.

Michael leads the Plugfest Marketing Task Group. This group is responsible for greatly increasing the profile and attendance of this key protocol testing opportunity for the industry. His ongoing work in promoting ESTA and the technical standards has strengthened the program and the association.

Michael is also the driving force behind the creation of the Above and Beyond Awards and enthusiastically encourages volunteers to recognize their peers. I believe part of the reason he does this is because he enjoys giving other people praise and recognition. Now, it’s time to turn the tables.

Proudly, and to be honest, I nominated Michael for this award. In my four years working closely with Michael, I have come to know him as a very warm, kind, gentle, level-headed, and intelligent person. I would like to personally thank Michael for helping me set up and strike the teleconferencing gear.

Awarding Michael Lay the Volunteer of the Year award is a small gesture in recognition of Michael’s long and prideful commitment to ESTA and the TSP.

Erin Grabe serves as ESTA’s Assistant Technical Standards Manager, facilitating hundreds of volunteer experts with their writing of American National Standards. In addition to working with the TSP, Erin manages the association’s database, working in some capacity with all of ESTA’s key programs and initiatives.
Thank you, Erin, for those very kind words—it really means so much to me to have you presenting this award today.

I’m quite humbled to be receiving this award. I’m so very grateful to ESTA for recognizing my small contributions to the association.

I have so many people to thank. I wouldn’t be up here today receiving this award without the mentoring of so many people who have “brought me along” in the entertainment industry—I’d like to particularly thank John McGraw, Steve Terry, Phil O’Donnell, and Peter Rogers. I hope one day to have given back as much as they have given me. I’d also like to thank the Control Protocol Working Group members, as well as Karl Ruling, Erin Grabe, and Lori Rubinstein.

ESTA is so fortunate in that it has so many wonderful volunteers. Hundreds of dedicated people passionately fuel the Technical Standards Program, the Entertainment Technician Certification Program, the Business Resource Group, and all our other industry-critical endeavors. It’s a labor of love for all of us, and everyone involved in our program is an award winner.

Thank you. ~ Michael Lay

Michael Lay is Senior Project Manager with Philips Lighting. A 34-year veteran of the lighting industry, Michael is Co-Chair of ESTA’s Control Protocols Working Group. Michael can be reached at michael.lay@philips.com.

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