

John Horne

ANNA MARIA OYSTER BAR

With nearly 40 years in the hospitality industry to his credit, John Horne began his career as a bus boy working for a small chain of restaurants on Anna Maria Island. In 1996, after 10 years of working his way up the ladder, he took the leap and opened the first of his four restaurants.

At all of the Anna Maria Oyster Bars, you will find a fun, friendly place with great staff serving the freshest food at reasonable prices in a family-friendly atmosphere. John and his 325 co-workers have received many accolades over the years, including Small Business of the Year awards from both the Manatee and Sarasota chambers, over 70 People's Choice Favorites as well as community, volunteer and tourism awards culminating in the 2018 Restaurant Neighbor Award, presented by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation.

John is very passionate about education and helping his community, but life is not all about work. Along with his wife, Amanda, John enjoys traveling anywhere where there's a cooking class with wine involved!

How did you get started in the hospitality industry? I started as a busboy for a summer job on Anna Maria Island in 1981 ... it's been a great summer job since then.

Early in your career what was the most valuable lesson you learned? People are the most important part of our job, customers obviously, but our staff more importantly. They have to have same passion for our guests as I do to keep everyone happy and returning.

Do you have any mentors who were instrumental in helping you achieve your goals? Several, and in so many capacities, good and bad. I've learned what to do from good mentors and what not to do from bad mentors/bosses. You can always learn from both, and with so many retirees in our market/state, there is unlimited knowledge to harvest from former executives.

What is the single greatest factor in the success of your career? Surrounding myself with the best people possible.



How have your philanthropies and giving back to the community affected your business decisions? With great frequency, guests comment on how much we do in our community for education, for this club, for this event and that, teaching second graders to love to read, reading on Dr. Seuss' birthday to elementary students and more. We've been incredibly honored for volunteerism and our grade-level reading programs over the years, and it has helped get our name and our giving spirit out in our community. People love to shop and dine where they know it is being paid back and staying to help build our communities.

Is there anything you would like to share with Florida's hospitality industry members? Our staff gets more out of our community outreach than we do sometimes. We just partnered with the Early Learning Coalition in our town and installed book nooks for our young guests, so they can read a book while dining with us instead of coloring a kids' menu or playing on their iPad. And they get to take the book home to finish reading if they want. Parents love it, the kids love it and our staff thinks it is awesome that we're helping bring literacy to our community. It's such a simple idea that we can all take on and grow. Try it. We've heard that the kids beg to come back to the "Oyster Bar Book Store!"